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# ISA Training

## Hair and beauty trainees take advantage of technology (May 2016)

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### Summary

ISA Training based in south Wales is taking steps to upskill its staff and learners in digital literacies in order to make most effective use of technology in delivery and assessment of courses in hairdressing, beauty therapy and business management. To increase the flexibility and efficiency of its provision, the company has adopted the Learning Assistant e-portfolio system.

### Organisation

With over 500 apprentices, ISA Training is the largest, privately-owned, work-based learning provider of hairdressing and beauty apprenticeships in Wales and is also sub-contracted from Lifetime via the Skills Funding Agency to deliver training to around 100 apprentices in south west England.

Programmes offered by ISA Training include apprenticeships and traineeships in hair and beauty accredited by awarding organisations, **VTCT** and **City and Guilds**, as well as programmes for 14 to 19-year-old learners in Welsh schools. In addition to work-based learning programmes, ISA delivers a range of commercial courses to the hair and beauty sector. The company has also been contracted to quality assure training for City and Guilds qualifications in Cyprus.

ISA Training was established in 1998 and its board's chair, Shirley Davis-Fox MBE, has taken the lead in raising the professional profile of the sector's workforce through state registration.

### Challenge

ISA Training's aim is to enable all its learners to experience a highly professional and modern training programme to raise the profile of the sector no matter where the training takes place. At the same time, as a training provider, ISA must take employers, assessors and learners along with it when introducing new technologies to raise standards in assessment.

With the introduction of the City and Guilds Learning Assistant e-portfolio system, apprentices are able to complete their qualification online with a training consultant, increasing the flexibility of training provision but also placing the digital literacies of learners, assessors and trainers under the spotlight.

## Making it happen

ISA Training has looked to technology to meet challenges of assessing learners in dispersed locations but recognises that digital literacies have to go hand in hand with technology use. Since 2015, digital literacies are the third essential skill for Welsh learners, but trainers equally need to know what this means for their practice.

In March 2016 using funding from the Welsh Government's Quality Improvement Fund, the company ran an event with a consortium of other training providers to look at **digital literacies** through the eyes of the learner and to share best practice with technology. This event highlighted the value learners find in capturing evidence via smart phones to upload into their e-portfolios, but also how important it is to be aware of and effectively manage your digital footprint. Trainers at the event shared the value of a range of technologies, including apps on a smartphone to familiarise learners with terminology used in the industry and to translate into Welsh. PowerPoint and other formats also gave learners greater variety over how they submit evidence for assessment.

## Outcomes

Understanding of best practice in the use of technology in the assessment of hair and beauty courses is growing at the company, boosted by the inclusion of digital literacies as an essential skill in Wales and the expectations of today's IT-competent learners.

Nonetheless, the use of technology in assessing learners can still be extended. Salons delivering training are widely dispersed, so assessors still have to travel to undertake assessments face to face, although they also verify e-portfolio evidence remotely. Learners can illustrate their skills via videos and digital images captured on smartphones but awarding organisations still require trained assessors to conduct face-to-face assessments in many cases.

Many learners enjoy building an e-portfolio of evidence for assessment; the immediacy of technologies such as smartphones makes them ideal for capturing the visual and artistic skills of hair and beauty trainees. However, some learners view e-portfolio systems as complex and trainers still need to sell the advantages of the technology to them.

## Impact

Technology is coming strongly to the fore at ISA Training as a means of holding meetings and standardising practice across different locations. ISA Training is using Skype, for example, to quality assure training in Cyprus and has taken steps to prepare for greater use of technology by investing in digital literacies training for learners, assessors and trainers.

The introduction of the Learning Assistant e-portfolio system has saved considerably on printing costs and improved tracking of learner progress now that learners have online access to workbooks and can start and finish their training courses flexibly. The technology also helps the training provider manage its provision more effectively:

*"Previously, we had no means of checking how far our learners had got. Now we can retrieve data much more easily and can take action to ensure all learners achieve their qualifications within the time period."*

Berni Tyler, managing director, ISA Training

## Benefits of the technology

- » Efficient tracking and management of learner progress
- » Increased flexibility
- » Costs savings and quality assurance gains for the training provider
- » Ability to manage large numbers of trainees on a range of training programmes across dispersed locations

## Tips for effective practice

- » Before introducing technology-enhanced practice, clarify for learners, assessors, trainers and employers what the benefits are
- » Exploit funding opportunities to share best practice via face-to-face sessions; new ways of working can take time to establish and many value face-to-face opportunities to understand better what technology can offer them
- » View the training of learners at a holistic level; learners need a wide range of skills, including digital literacies, to improve the professional standing of the sector

## Find out more

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**Web:** <http://www.isatraining.co.uk>

**Additional resources:** <https://www.youtube.com/c/IsatrainingUk>