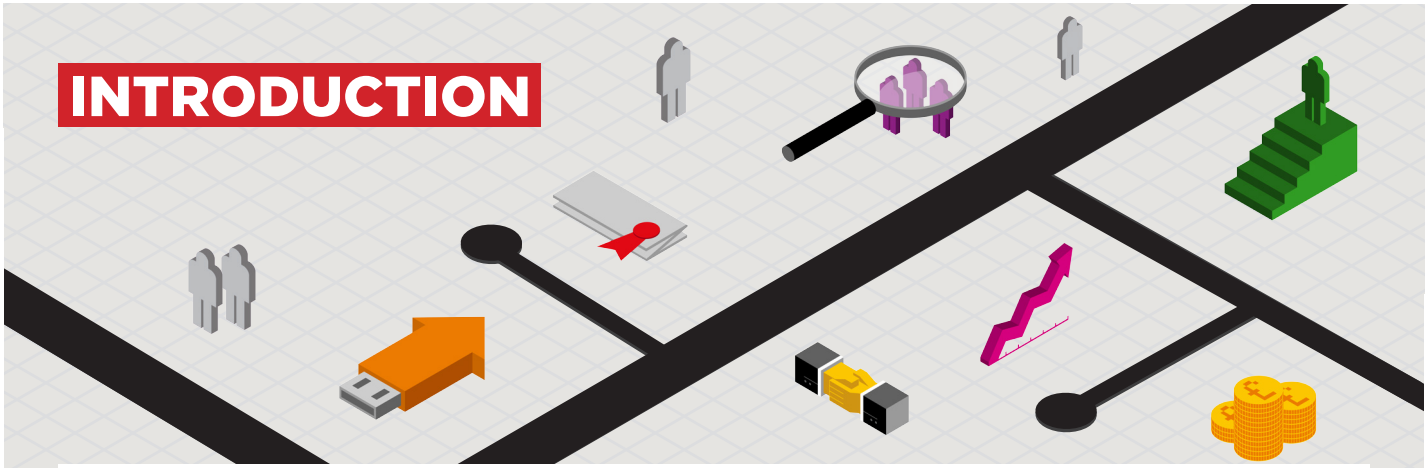
City & Guilds LearningAssistant

LAKEFIELD SAVES TIME AND BOOSTS ENGAGEMENT THANKS TO LEARNING ASSISTANT

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN HOSPITALITY
Lakefield

GROW YOUR BUSINESS

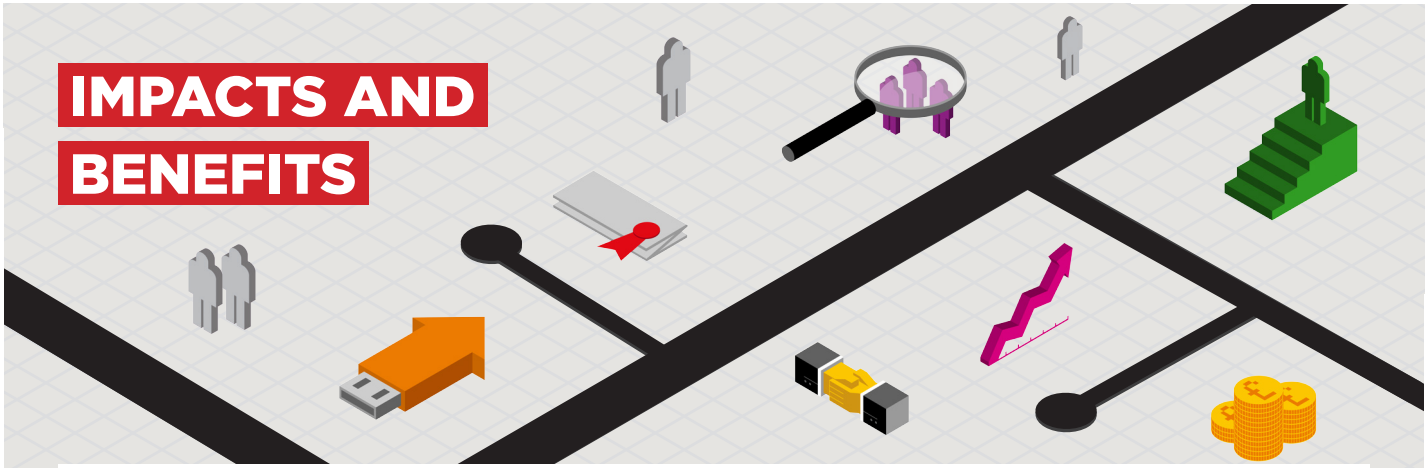
INTRODUCTION



Lakefield has offered training in cookery, food and drink service and housekeeping from its centre in the leafy suburbs of Hampstead for over 50 years. The Lakefield diploma is highly respected in the hospitality sector and there was no obvious reason for this successful training centre to change its methods, which consistently see graduates attain high levels of employment.

Last year, however, Lakefield decided to implement Learning Assistant, an e-portfolio system from City & Guilds, and the pilot has nothing less than revolutionised learning and assessment at the centre. It has also opened up exciting vistas of new business models for the organisation, although the problem that initially needed solving was far more mundane – a paperwork mountain.

IMPACTS AND BENEFITS



PAPER MOUNTAIN CLEARED...

Kristen Frost, Course Director and Training Manager of Lakefield advised that the hard copy folders compiled by students took up a lot of space and the viewing of them by assessors and verifiers had to be carefully scheduled: “Now with the e-approach, assessors and internal verifiers can access the virtual, or online, folder at the same time. This means they can schedule their work in a way that suits them, rather than being dictated by the availability of a student folder.”

20% TIME SAVINGS

Frost believes that this way of working saves a lot of time for the internal verifier in particular, estimating as much as 20% of their day: “It’s possible to look at an assessment in real time and to offer feedback or make an intervention before the end of a course.” Traditionally stakeholders had to wait for students to finish a module before they could release their folder of work.

COST SAVINGS ASSURED

Lakefield is in the early stages of implementation and the pilot hasn’t yet yielded a clear picture of the expected savings. However, according to Frost: “We should see a drop in costs this year in terms of printing, etc. – and that will only show at the end of the academic year.”

HELICOPTER VIEW IMPROVES QUALITY AND OUTCOMES

Likewise, this helicopter view, and the ability to sample many different folders concurrently, makes it easier to compare assessments. Internal verifiers can therefore ensure that different assessors are adhering to the same standards. For the assessor it means it’s possible to spot the student who is falling behind early on and to make appropriate interventions or suggestions.

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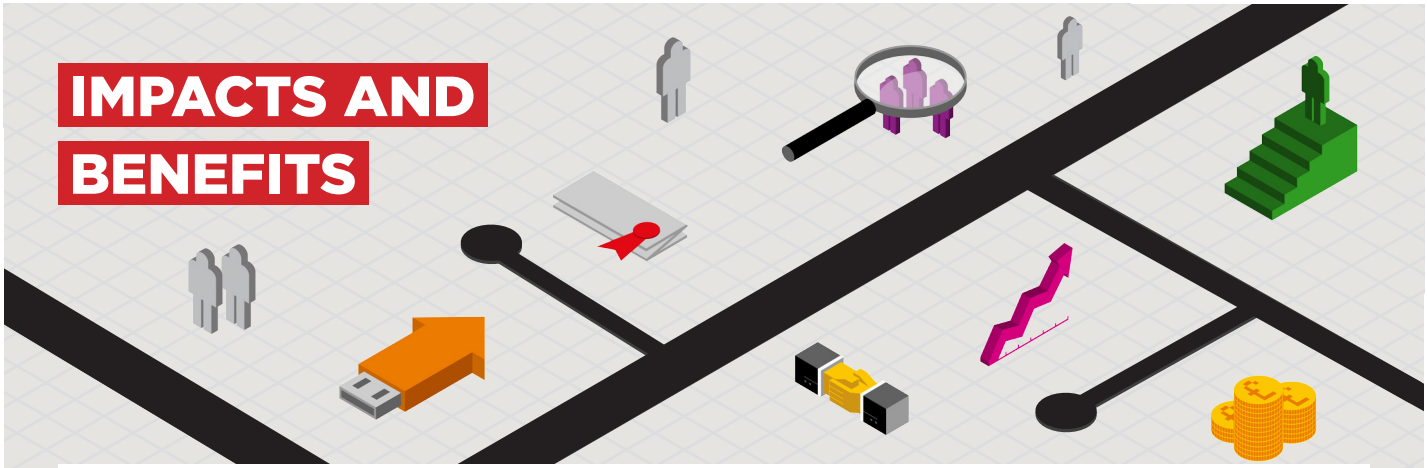

DIGITAL EVIDENCE IS MORE RELIABLE

Importantly, Lakefield is not a college but a training centre with 120 students all being trained in live situations. The amount of daily observation makes it a unique environment to assess and critically, the digital medium of Learning Assistant offers new opportunities to gather evidence. Video footage and photos can all be uploaded by students, which is a far more reliable source of evidence than a ticked box.

E-PORTFOLIO OFFERS A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

The constant availability of digital sources of evidence, and the ability to view the work of multiple students simultaneously, has given assessors a new perspective – and offered some surprises. “We found that students’ concept of teamwork was wanting and this led to lower marks than expected in the kitchen. Students weren’t aware of each other and were not aware of the importance of working with each other as well as on their own,” says Frost.

FACEBOOK GENERATION LOVES IT

Students were very engaged with the e-process from the outset and more comfortable with uploading files than the assessors and verifier. Clearly a generation gap is at play here, with the Facebook-savvy students far happier manipulating the Learning Assistant app and assisting the assessors where necessary. It all makes for a very interactive and friendly learning environment.

LEARNING ASSISTANT PROMOTES MORE REFLECTIVE LEARNING

Again, the improved and more interactive style of communication that Learning Assistant facilitates has led to improved learning and outcomes. In the past, communication consisted of a few face-to-face meetings. Now students and assessors can review the same evidence and message each other on the e-portfolio, leading to more thoughtful conversations.

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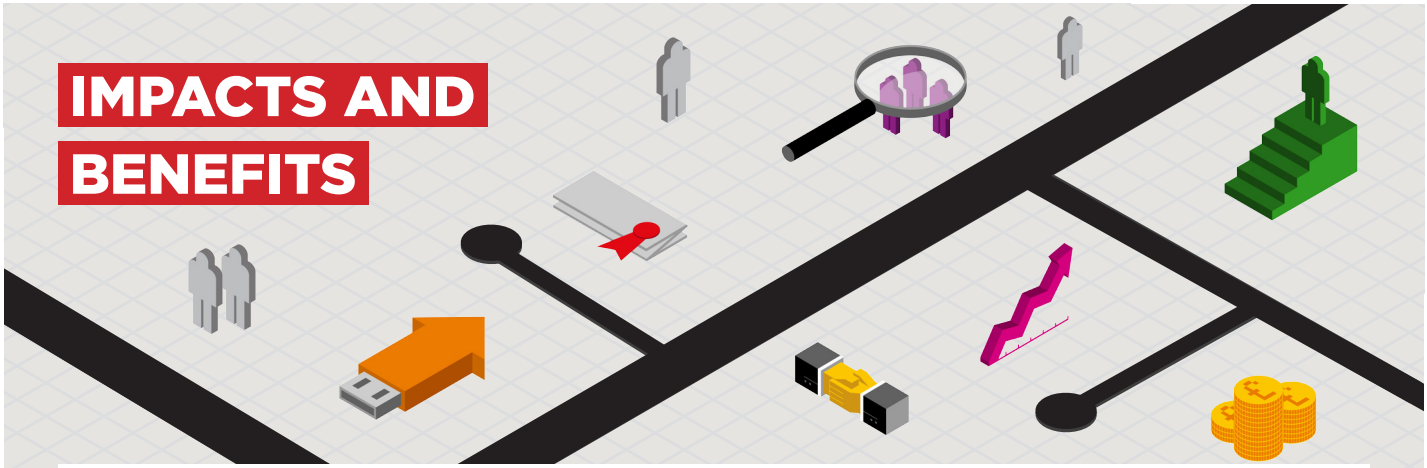

TRANSPARENT AUDIT TRAIL PUSHES OUTCOMES

Another plus of Learning Assistant is the transparent audit trail between student, assessor and internal verifiers. All conversations are captured, logged, maintained and backed-up online, so no one has the excuse of a folder 'going missing' or a conversation not being heard properly. Furthermore, action plans can be agreed and set to help achieve the desired outcomes for students. "There's no hiding!", as Frost points out.

FACILITATES BETTER ORGANISATION

The management reporting feature of Learning Assistant enables employers to track their staff remotely and strengthens dialogue between training provider and client. While Lakefield piloted the platform with their internal students only last year, the feature did prove an asset among its own staff. Department managers, as well as assessors, could use the function to observe the progress of learners, adapting their rotas in order to move candidates around to fulfil both daily work and assessment needs.

NEW BUSINESS MODELS AND GROWTH OPPORTUNITY

Clearly the introduction of Learning Assistant has had a huge impact on the day-to-day learning of students and the way it is assessed and verified. More critically for the future, too, Lakefield has realised that Learning Assistant will enable a new business model in the way that the business delivers training. The training centre has decided that it can upscale both the number of students and the locations where it can offer assessment and verification.

Chiefly, this is down to the ability to review evidence that has been uploaded remotely. And so there is the opportunity to offer training and certification to students working in hotels or other enterprises, such as care providers. "As a business we can expand into different fields and that is now part of future plans," confirms Frost.

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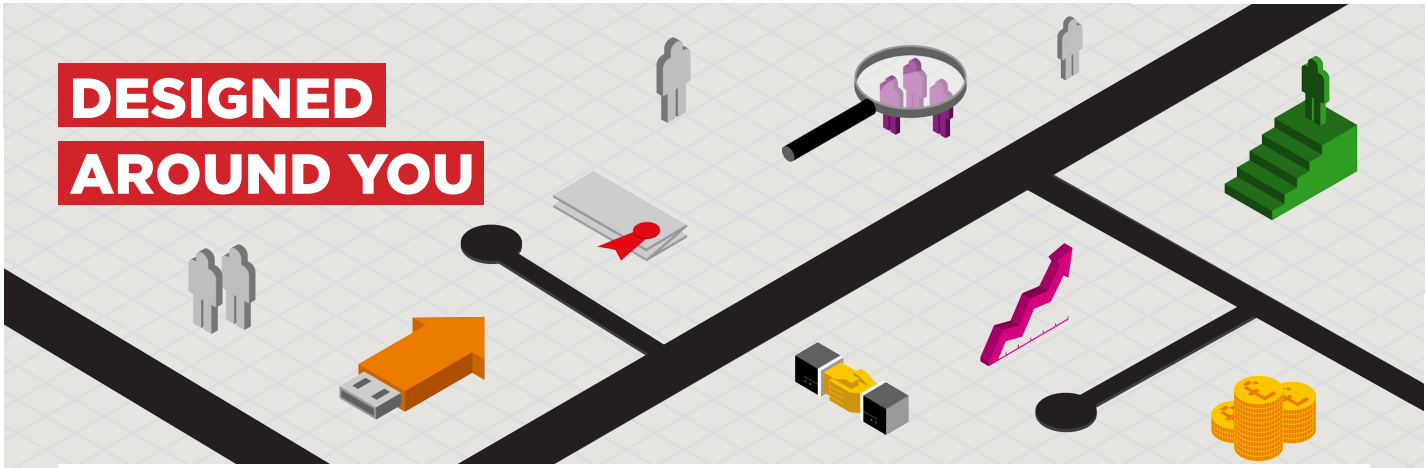

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KRISTEN FROST
LAKEFIELD

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