

Walsall College selects Promethean for college of the future.

Walsall College is a vocational further education (FE) college in Walsall, West Midlands. As part of the Government's 'Building Colleges for the Future' scheme, Walsall College has received a £64 million investment to develop a new 'future-proof' teaching and learning environment for the next generation of learners.

In creating the state-of-the-art Wisemore campus, Walsall College looked to implement the latest interactive technologies, which will support teaching and learning now and into the 21st century, and ensure the college meets the objectives of the Government initiative.

The Challenge

The Building Colleges for the Future programme marks an unprecedented investment in England's FE estate, with the goal of creating innovative and inspirational facilities that cultivate highly skilled and proficient workers.

To realise the benefits of the programme, Walsall College sought to develop a cutting edge teaching and learning space that encourages educational attainment. Recognising the importance of ICT within this overall vision, and looking to extend its current use of interactive technologies by implementing more integrated solutions, Walsall College undertook a comprehensive evaluation of available technologies.

Walsall College also wanted to partner with an interactive technology provider that would deliver exceptional support during each stage of the new-build process, and provide ongoing assistance beyond implementation.

The Solution

Promethean offers a comprehensive support programme, designed to assist effective planning, selection, implementation and adoption of interactive technologies in capital investment projects. As part of this programme, Promethean is able to offer consultancy services, such as expert advice and support at any stage of a new build or refurbishment project, as well as product demonstrations, visioning sessions and ongoing training beyond installation.

To help Walsall College develop a clear vision for its Wisemore campus, Promethean arranged for key members of staff to visit a neighbouring FE college that has successfully adopted its technologies. Impressed by the innovative, forward-thinking design of its



Walsall College selected ActivClassroom solutions to equip new campus solutions, and their natural fit with a vocational teaching environment, Walsall College chose to invest in a range of ActivClassroom technologies for all learning areas within the new campus, transferring from the competitor interactive whiteboard used previously by staff.

At the heart of the campus' new learning areas is the Promethean 95-inch ActivBoard, an advanced interactive whiteboard, which is designed by teachers, for teachers. Operated by electromagnetic grid technology and a battery-free/wireless pen, the ActivBoard delivers excellent on-screen accuracy and allows students to lean against the board while writing, without affecting the content displayed. The 95-inch board also provides teachers and students with a large area to share ideas, view multimedia clips, and interact with lesson content.

The ActivBoard is supplied with a choice of Promethean award-winning age specific software. Intuitively designed, the software allows teachers to create electronic flipcharts, incorporating a range of text, image, video and sound files, quickly and easily. This new generation of software allows teachers to save multiple profiles, customising the toolbar, layout and operation of the program. Alongside its flexible and functional design,

Promethean's interactive software enables full integration of its ActivClassroom technologies, making it an ideal platform for the evolving learning environment.

Walsall College also deployed Promethean's ActivExpression Learner Response System. The world's first system to offer full sentence and character texting, ActivExpression enables students to input complete sentences, making it an ideal tool for stimulating discussion, especially within a vocational adult learning setting. The device also facilitates a wide range of questioning formats such as sequential ordering, likert scale, numeric and free text response, across a range of subject areas and topics.

To ensure staff encounter a smooth transitional period to Activboards, Promethean arranged for the installation of an ActivBoard and accompanying software within the college's professional development suite. Promethean has also delivered face-to-face training sessions to 30 key members of staff to establish a team of 'Advanced Practitioners'. These practitioners will cascade training and share best practice with their colleagues.

In addition, all teaching staff will also be able to access additional support by becoming a member of Promethean's global teaching community, PrometheanPlanet, and complete online training programmes via the ActivLearning Virtual Learning Environment PrometheanPlanet.com.

The Benefit

Jayne Holt, director of e-learning at Walsall College has been impressed by the ongoing level of help and advice offered by Promethean in developing the new campus: "From the outset, Promethean has provided an outstanding level of support. By arranging a visit to a neighbouring college, we were able to experience the latest interactive technologies first-hand and establish a clear vision for our facility."

Jayne continued: "Alongside the company's in-depth understanding of education and the FE sector, solutions such as the ActivBoard represents the future of collaborative technologies, and so when aiming to develop a college that will educate learners well into the future, Promethean was the ideal partner."

Jayne has been also overwhelmed by Promethean's support in easing the transition from competitor technologies to ActivBoards. "Moving to an entirely new building is quite a daunting prospect for some of our staff, so helping them make the changeover to new technologies before the move has removed some of the stress," said Jayne.

"As well as conducting expert-led sessions at the college, Promethean has also showed us the free online courses on ActivLearning that may be completed by staff at their own pace. These courses are specifically designed to support those migrating to new interactive whiteboard software, so will help our teachers develop confidence and a fundamental understanding prior to the move."

In addition to supporting teachers and students in making the most of its new technologies, Promethean and channel partner, Elementary, have been on hand to ensure the effective implementation of ActivClassroom solutions during planning stages. "Working with site contractors, they have advised on practical details such as the positioning of interactive whiteboards within a classroom in terms of sightlines and the number of power points required," added Jayne. "This holistic approach Promethean will make sure our new campus is the best possible for both staff and students."

Promethean is the world's pre-eminent education solutions provider, guiding and supporting forward-thinking institutions in Education, Business and Government in their pursuit of achieving more.

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