



Inducing VET trainers with mentoring skills to boost entrepreneurial growth

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## I. WHAT IS BLENDED LEARNING?

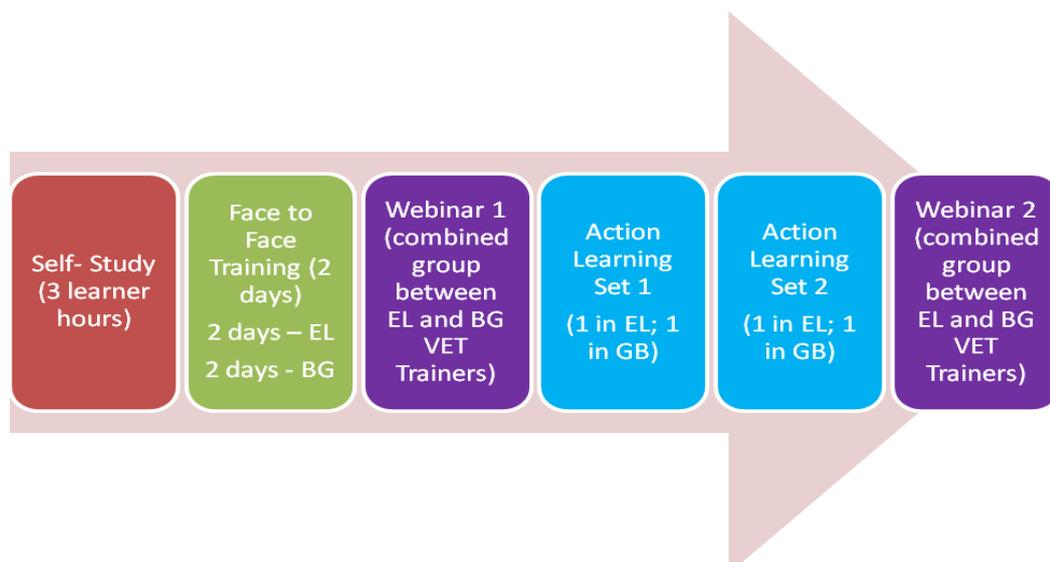
*Blended Learning* is the use of two or more distinct methods of training. This may include a variety of combinations of 'brick' (some form of face to face method) and 'click' (some form of e-learning or online learning experience e.g. social media sites, webinars). Traditionally blended learning consisted of classroom teaching mixed with e-learning, but this is now moving more towards a mix and match approach where different methodologies are brought together in order to make the best of strengths of each method and limit weaknesses. The advantages to learners are:

- A more dynamic delivery experience
- Methodologies that are varied can tap into different individual's learning styles
- More opportunities for learning to be embedded as it is provided across several mediums

It is envisaged that the training programme will take place over 6 months with the following timelines:

- Self-study delivery starting in Jan 2013
- Face to face training taking place in Feb 13 (EL)
- Face to face training taking place in April 13 (BG)
- Webinar 1 - April 13
- Action Learning Set 1- May 13 (BG and EL)
- Action Learning Set 2 – June 13 (BG and EL)
- Webinar 2 – June 13

The diagram below illustrates the blended methodology and process which will be undertaken for mENTERing.



## II. THE MENTERING BLENDED METHODOLOGY

For the mENTERing project, a blended methodology has been chosen in order to ensure that mentors who undergo the training receive a holistic training programme which includes self-directed study, face to face training, online webinars and Action Learning sets. A blended methodology is one which combines different methods and mediums of delivery in order to strengthen the learner experience and is particularly useful when training competences which have theoretical as well as practical components to it.

The training methodology to be used for mENTERing will be a blended approach in order to equip mentors with the KSAs (Knowledge, Skills and Abilities) in order to better support and mentor individuals wanting to start up or develop their own businesses.

The blended methodology within mENTERing has been designed to cover a number of competences which have been selected as the most appropriate for VET trainers looking to increase mentoring skills for entrepreneurs. Once learners have knowledge and experience in all these competences, it is expected that they would have the ability to practice competently as a mentor to entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs.

A series of competences were developed and are outlined in full detail in the *Mentor's Training Manual for Entrepreneurship*. The following competences originally developed for the MAITRE project will be transferred to the new target group of VET trainers:

- *N.2: Understanding the role of mentor – with focus on entrepreneurship;*
- *3. Understanding the stages of the mentoring relationship*
- *7. Understanding boundaries and confidentiality*
- *12. Action planning and goal setting*
- *15. Use of technology 2(e-mentoring)*
- *17. Listening skills*
- *19. Non-verbal communication*
- *20. Questioning skills*
- *22. Giving and receiving feedback.*

The following competences have been newly developed for mENTERing:

- *32. Basic Knowledge of entrepreneurship*
- *33. Creativity skills*
- *34. Solution focused thinking*
- *35. Contracting skills*
- *36. Group process skills*

## 2.1 Self-Study

The first component of the methodology will be a **self-study** component (approximately three learner hours) which will begin the process of reflection for mentors with regards to their current knowledge regarding entrepreneurship and equip them with a solid foundation of knowledge about the topic. Self-study is an important first element to the course as it provides initial space and time for learners to reflect on their knowledge about the topic of mentoring and entrepreneurship before embarking on the face to face components. T

he self-study aspect of the course will provide learners with the time to study materials at their own pace initially in order to get a good overview about the topic of entrepreneurship so that they can also reflect on any gaps in learning which can be brought to the face to face sessions to discuss with other learners and the trainer.

## 2.2 Face to Face Training

**Face to face training** is an integral part of the methodology for mENTERing, enabling experiences to be shared both between learners and between facilitators and learners. The face to face training will be two days duration and will focus on providing training in 9 of the identified competencies for mentoring entrepreneurs. The face to face training component will use a mixture of didactic approaches (information sharing) and practical tools and exercises wherever possible in order to give participants the opportunity to enrich learning experiences. A mixture of some theory in combination with pair exercises, small group work and whole group discussions will be blended in the face to face training in order to vary the pace and style of training.

Research shows that for effective transfer of training to take place, learners need to be trained in the practicalities of implementing a new skill which they can then go away and practice further. The focus during the training for the methodology will be on providing participants with tools that they can take away and practice implementing directly with their mentees in the field of entrepreneurship. Learners will be encouraged to get involved in a mentoring relationship as soon as possible following the face to face training completion in order to apply techniques to real world mentees and to provide the remainder of the learning experience with practical examples for learners to draw from with other learners. At the end of the face to face training, learners will be informed of the webinars and Action Learning Sets dates so that they feel confident that they will continue to be supported in their learning journey to becoming confident mentors to entrepreneurs.

## 2.3 Webinar (Online Seminars)

Two **webinars** will take place at an interval following the training (approximately one month following face to face training) to provide further opportunities for advancing knowledge and information sharing between participants and facilitators and participants. Each webinar will focus on a specific topic as well as general discussion e.g. contracting with mentees, and also provide time for learners to share any queries or concerns they have in terms of putting the training into practice i.e. the transfer of training – crucial for any true learning to take place.

The webinar will be predominantly led by the facilitator but will also have designated points for reflection and shared learning between learners present online who can contribute questions and comments via chat. Any notes shared on the webinar will be shared with participants online after the webinar finishes.

## 2.4 Action Learning Sets

The final component of the methodology will be two sessions of **Action Learning**. The Action Learning sets will be for up to 10 participants in Bulgaria and 10 participants in Greece. This can either be offered as two sessions for the same 10 participants or one session for one set of 10 participants and another session for a different set of 10 participants. The two sessions will be delivered face to face with facilitators who have been trained by Inova (UK) who are experts in Action Learning to the target group of entrepreneurs and mentors.

This methodology itself combines coaching, mentoring and information in order to further consolidate and build on participants' practical abilities to be good practice examples of mentors to entrepreneurs. Action learning is underpinned by a belief in individual potential: a way of learning from our actions and from what happens to us, and around us, by taking the time to question, understand and reflect, to gain insights and consider how to act in the future. In the context of mentors, this means that it is expected that mentors are actively involved in a mentoring relationship by the time they enter an Action Learning Circle so that they can bring their real-life experiences to the group.

Action Learning Circles fast track learning of participants by supporting them to:

- Share knowledge and learn from each other
- Learn from reflecting on their own experiences and experimenting with new approaches
- Learn from and bounce ideas off an experienced facilitator.



The diagram above illustrates the circular process involved in Action Learning which involves the process of participants learning to ask the right questions and actively listen as well as engaging in active reflection in order to develop individually.

It is expected that this final part of the methodology will enable participants to build their peer learning network so that they can continue to meet and reflect on learning experiences as a mentor, even after the two sessions have been completed.