

# PROGRAMME INFORMATION



## *Introduction*

This programme is a joint initiative run by Northumberland Business Service Ltd and its partners. 'Three Pebbles' is the name of the partnership that will deliver the online learning materials and, in some cases, provide teaching support.

The training is particularly useful for people who may have just started or are seeking to start running their own business. It is also useful for people who are in employment but who have direct responsibility for running a department within a larger organisation.

## *What is it all about?*

### **What does it involve?**

- A structured programme of learning, working through key concepts and knowledge
- Coaching and assessment to help your business idea work
- Individual study and research
- Development of your business plan

### **What can I use this for?**

- Use the business skills that you develop to set up and run your own business
- Apply skills you develop to improve and expand your existing business
- Informed access to specific Business Link support
- Apply the business plan that you develop in the programme to access wider business

- support and available funding
- Possibility of a recognised academic qualification for your CV – a stepping stone/ progression to further higher study



## *What do I need to make the programme work for me?*

### **What skills do I require to undertake the programme?**

- Basic computing skills...word processing & basic online navigation skills
- Desire and motivation to run your own business!

### **What equipment will I need?**

- Access to a computer & software (Word processor, Spreadsheet & Email)
- Access to the internet

If you do not have access to a computer or the internet at home it would also be possible to use public facilities, such as those found in some libraries. Alternatively, your Business Link advisor may be able to suggest some other access options.

The system has been designed to be as accessible as possible; however, because it uses advanced technologies to provide a complete learning experience, there are some technical criteria for accessing the system. This includes the Web Browser that you use. The compatible browsers include:

On a PC	On a Mac
Internet Explorer 6+	Mozilla 1.7 (OS X only)
AOL 9+	Firefox 1.0 (OS X only)
Mozilla 1.7+, Firefox 1.0, 1.5+	Mozilla 1.5+, Firefox 1.5+ (OS 9 and earlier)
Netscape 7.2+	Safari 1.2, 1.3, 2+
Opera 9+	

Most newer computers will have Internet Explorer or Safari installed, and you can update this for free. AOL subscribers may be able to use Internet Explorer to access the system if they don't have the most up-to-date version of the AOL software.

If you do not have access to the Microsoft Office™ suite of products, you could consider looking at "OpenOffice" – an organisation that provides free software which is totally compatible with Microsoft files and formats. Visit [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org) for more information.

The online learning system requires certain functionality on your computer (Java™, Javascript, Pop-Up windows etc.). When you first access the system you will be taken through the process of checking what your computer has already, and if you are missing something you will be shown how to install it. For most computers this should not cause a problem; however, if you have a very old system with old software then you may have

compatibility issues. If you do encounter any problems then there is an extensive help network available to you (see the "Getting online" document in this pack").



## *How will the programme be delivered?*

### **What can I expect from the programme?**

- Learning materials, assignments, interactive exercises and other resources are delivered to the student through an online learning platform, which is essentially a structured, interactive web site
- Progress through the programme will be supported with individual coaching and academic mentoring
- Students can interact with other students through the use of guided discussion forums
- Students have their own dedicated area within the system to store their assignments and learning resources
- Access to the system at anytime of the day to allow a flexible approach to your study, accommodating your individual work/home commitments, whilst progressing through the learning modules at your own pace

### **What support will I be given?**

- Coaching support will be provided throughout the time the learner is engaged with the programme
- Students will undertake an introductory module that details the programme requirements and provides an insight into how the learning platform operates
- Included in this pack is a laminated instruction leaflet to help you access the learning platform for the first time

### **How much time will I need to complete the programme?**

- In total you will need to spend 35 – 40 hours with the online learning materials. In addition, you may need to spend additional time doing research or working on your assignments – the time commitment for this is up to you, but remember you'll only get out what you put in!
- There is no deadline for completion of the programme, and you can work through it as fast as you are able to, but we would recommend aiming to complete it in around 6 months.



## *What is the registration process?*

### **What forms do I need to complete?**

- There is just one form you need to complete, and it is included in this pack. However, if you are applying for this course via another institution (e.g. a college) then you probably won't need to fill it in - just talk to your tutor/admissions advisor.

- Once your details have been processed, you will receive an email with your access details for the system. You can then follow the instructions in the “Getting online” document in this pack.
- You will also receive an email from your new online coach to welcome you to the programme and to help you get started.

### **Where do I submit the form?**

- If you are applying for this course directly you can visit your local Business Link Centre, who will collect the form and send it to the right place.

### **What will happen next, and how long will it take?**

- Your application information will be processed and then you will be registered on the online system. Within two working days you will receive an email giving you a username and password to access the online system.
- After receiving the login details, follow the instructions on the “Getting online” document included in this pack.

### **Who do I contact if I have any further queries about starting my own business?**

- If you have any more questions you would like to ask about the process of starting your own business please visit your nearest Business Link centre, where a representative will be happy to help you. You can use their web site to find contact details:  
[www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)