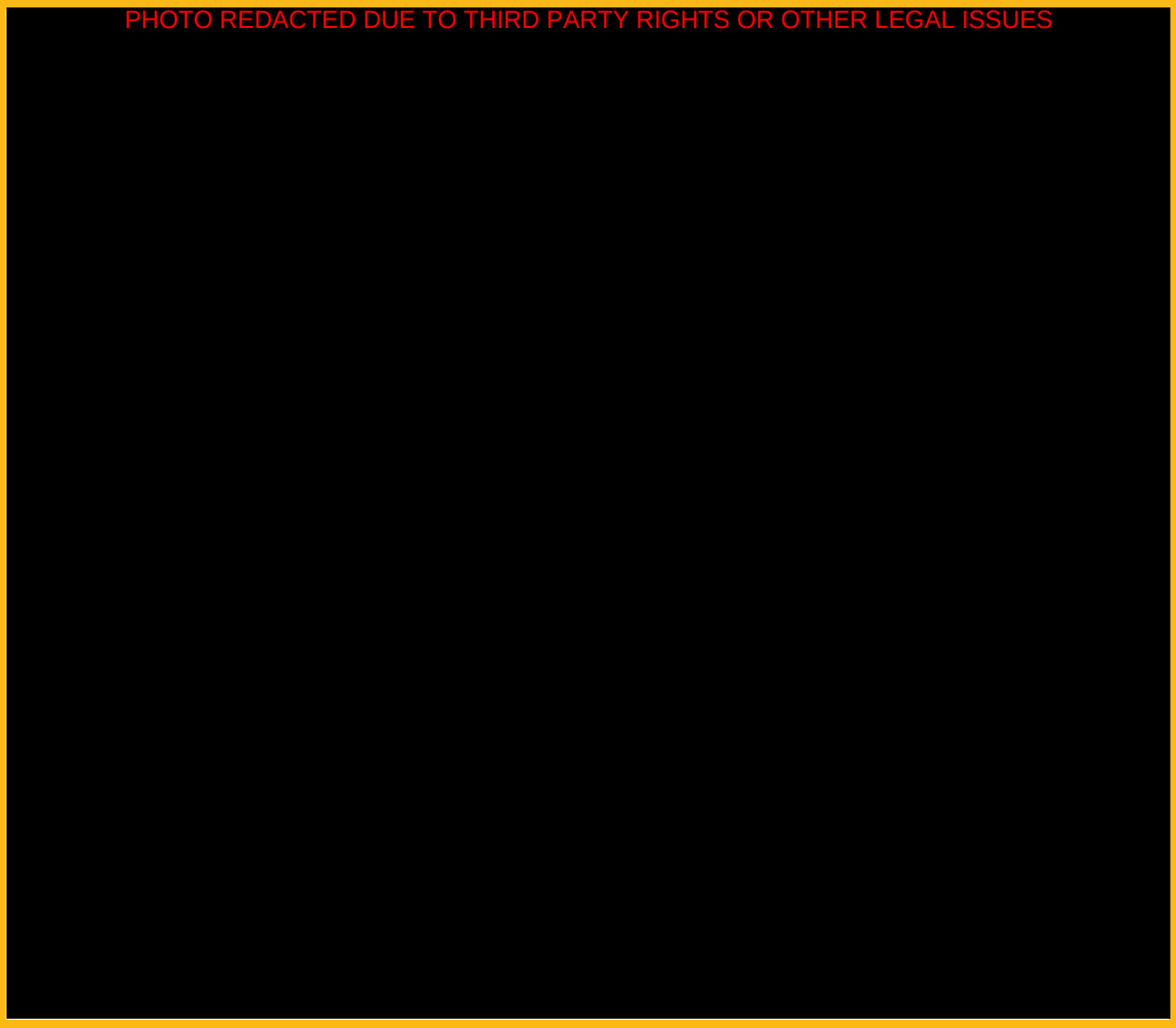
March 2009/**05**

Good practice



Supporting higher education in further education colleges

Policy, practice and prospects

HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND

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Supporting higher education in further education colleges

Policy, practice and prospects

This publication is aimed at managers and practitioners providing higher education courses in further education colleges. It contains information on policy context and strategy, and good practice guidance, with examples from 60 institutions and organisations.

This publication is for information and guidance.

HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND
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Contents

Foreword

This good practice guide is a significant revision of the 2003 publications HEFCE 2003/15 and 2003/16. It takes account of the increasing emphasis on the need to develop higher-level skills for economic success and social justice. It reflects the outcomes of HEFCE's review of its policy towards higher education (HE) in further education colleges (FECs), which advocates a key role for FECs in being more strategic about the development of their HE provision in order to build on their strengths, develop distinctive provision, vocational progression and accessibility. It will be of interest to those new to HE taught in FECs as it covers a wealth of information including funding, models of collaboration and developing new programmes. This is combined with illustrations and explanations of good practice, which will be of particular interest to those with longstanding experience of HE in FECs. Thus, whether a senior manager in a college, manager of partnerships in an HE institution or practitioner, this guide should have something to offer. We believe many will find the whole guide valuable, though each chapter can be read independently of the others.

The previous guides were among the most requested of our publications, and building on that success we involved some of the people who authored the first publication in the writing of this new edition. The project has been ably managed by University of Sheffield's School of Education. Excellent case studies were offered by a large number of institutions, reflecting the enthusiasm for a publication of this kind. Critical comments were provided by readers from a range of organisations to help the authors improve the relevance of the material.

We shall continue to work with FECs and partnerships in enhancing excellence in learning and teaching and widening participation, and I am sure that staff in colleges and HE institutions will find this a valuable guide.

Professor David Eastwood

Chief Executive

Higher Education Funding Council for England

Introduction: using the guide

In 2003, HEFCE published two good practice guides titled 'Supporting higher education in further education colleges'. The one subtitled 'Policy, practice and prospects' (HEFCE 2003/16) was concerned with strategy and aimed at senior managers, while 'A guide for tutors and lecturers' (HEFCE 2003/15) dealt with implementation.

This revision of the guides has occurred in the context of HEFCE's review of its policy for supporting higher education in further education colleges (HE in FECs), as set out in the consultation in November 2006 (HEFCE 2006/48). This policy focused on four main areas: HEFCE's view of the role of HE in FECs; strategic development of provision; proposals for centres of higher education excellence in colleges; and funding and relationships. As a result of strong support for the proposal to require FECs to set out a strategy for HE, a pilot exercise was conducted in 2008. Publication of the revised good practice guide coincides with guidance on the requirement for FECs to have an HE strategy. This revised version brings together the two original publications in one volume designed to meet the needs of all managers and practitioners in FECs. It will also be of interest to staff in higher education institutions (HEIs) with partner colleges.

The content focuses on provision in England, since this falls within HEFCE's remit. However, while funding, statutory and regulatory regimes (for both higher and further education) vary across the countries of the United Kingdom, some aspects of the guidance – on quality assurance in particular, the framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and a credit framework – address England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

When the previous guides were published, the introduction described the guidance as 'produced in a time of rapid change'. Their publication coincided with the 2003 Department for Education and Skills (DfES) White Paper ('The future of higher education'), and in the Foreword the Chief Executive noted that:

> … the Government's White Paper has marked out an important role for further education colleges in developing capacity for higher education, contributing their particular strengths to meet local and regional skills needs, and providing routes for students to progress into higher education.

Since then, a continuing series of changes in policy and practice has significantly impacted on and continues to shape the landscape of HE in FE. Arguably, 2003 was a cusp in the development of higher education provided in colleges. 'HE in FECs' has now become an established term, taken to denote a sub-set of the higher education system, with committees, working groups, publications and representative bodies (see Annex E). In compiling this update the authors have found a change in attitude and confidence across the sector, demonstrated by a readiness to provide examples and comment on the drafts.

Section 1 examines the policy context in late 2008 at a time of particularly rapid change. The following are some of the main changes since 2003:

- the 2004 Higher Education Act deregulation of fees and the establishment of the Office for Fair Access (OFFA)
- publication of the Foster Report in 2005 and the Leitch Review in 2006

- the focus on and definition of higher level skills
- the growth of foundation degrees (Fds), along with a new target of 100,000 for 2010
- the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA) publication of the foundation degree qualification benchmark (FDQB)
- the pilot and introduction of Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER)
- the creation of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) from the DfES in 2007
- the standardisation of requirements for teacher training and professional development in both further and higher education
- changes to the HEFCE funding methodology, including the basis for allocating additional student numbers (ASNs) and the equivalent or lower qualifications (ELQ) ruling
- the introduction of the National Student Survey (NSS)
- the 2007 Further Education and Training Act and foundation degree awarding powers (FDAP)
- the proposed change to the funding of colleges and the creation of the Skills Funding Agency (SFA)
- the 2008 revision of the FHEQ
- the 2008 guidance developed by the Credit Issues Development Group (CIDG) – 'Higher education credit framework for England: Guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England' (QAA, 2008).

The content of this guide addresses all these changes. Initially conceived of as an 'update', it has become a root and branch revision. The focus of the 10 sections of HEFCE 2003/15 has been retained, with the strategic emphasis of HEFCE 2003/16 addressed not only within Section 1 but also throughout the other sections.

Change in higher education and the context in which colleges provide HE is likely to continue at a rapid pace, so this guide is inevitably time-limited. Its production over the spring, summer and autumn of 2008 has coincided with a series of legislative changes, policy initiatives, consultations and guidance which will impact on practice in HE in FE from 2008-09. These have been addressed in the guide, and we have indicated in the text where changes can be anticipated. Annex E provides sources of information and web-sites where the currency of referenced documents can be checked; we caution readers to do so.

When the guides were first developed it was in the context of HEFCE's responsibility for all prescribed higher education, which was implemented in 1999. This significantly increased the numbers of directly funded colleges. To help build capacity in the sector and support growth, HEFCE announced a new strategic HE in FE Development Fund in 2000. This was allocated to colleges with over 100 full-time equivalents (FTEs) and HEFCE-recognised funding consortia over the period 1999-2000 to 2003-04. Much of 'Policy, practice and prospects' addressed this development, so its focus was on directly funded colleges. This revision has addressed directly and indirectly funded provision equally.

The mode of HEFCE funding – direct and indirect – has a significant impact on practice in colleges. Additionally, differences remain in the funding of prescribed and non-prescribed higher education (NPHE), including high level vocational and professional qualifications. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has the power, but not the obligation, to fund NPHE. HEFCE requires colleges to have HE strategies, which should cover NPHE as well as HEFCE-funded higher education. This requirement is reflected in the guide as appropriate. However, while addressing NPHE, we do not explore issues related to any LSC funding of higher education.

We hope this guide will provide a comprehensive resource for those directly involved in managing HE provision in FECs. It is designed to support a range of readers, from senior strategic managers to those involved in specific aspects of teaching, learning, assessment and support. The guide has a dual function: a reference source providing precise information about formally prescribed aspects of funding and quality assurance, and more informal guidance with examples of effective practice.

Some of the text addresses strategic issues, some operational matters. We hope that some managers, notably those responsible for managing or co-ordinating higher education in colleges, will find all the guide of interest, and can pass on selected sections or sub-sections to colleagues. The sections are of particular relevance as follows:

- Sections 1, 3, 4 and 11 for strategic managers
- Sections 2, 6, 7 and 8 for curriculum managers
- Sections 6 and 7 for staff teaching on higher education programmes
- Section 5 for marketing managers
- Sections 5 and 8 for learning support managers
- Section 9 for human resource managers
- Section 3 for finance and management information system managers
- Section 10 for quality assurance managers.

Each section is designed so that it can be read in isolation by college and partner institution staff with particular briefs and varying levels of familiarity with the particularities and history of HE in FE. Consequently there is some repetition, and the scope and generality of the content varies. Related elements of single themes are addressed in detail in different sections, depending on the level of relevance to the topic – most notably the components of the Academic Infrastructure (the FHEQ in Section 2, programme specifications and subject benchmarks in Section 6, and the code of practice in Section 10). Cross-references indicate where supporting information is available.

The sections summarise key themes and issues, and include examples provided by colleges of practice they have found to be effective. Additionally, there are examples from organisations and networks. The examples are boxed and shaded blue.

Other boxed text represent guidance or comment from organisations such as QAA and the Higher Education Academy (HEA), and are outlined in blue.

Some of the tables and illustrative examples could be used in staff development or as a checklist for course or other managers.

We have kept referencing to a minimum in the guide. Where a document or publication is referred to once only, the full reference is given. For multiple instances, only an indicative reference (e.g. the Leitch Review) is given. See Annex F for a full list of references. Web-site links have been included in the text (and Annex E); general practice is to include only the main address, but where a particular source of information is cited the whole address is given. Readers are cautioned that links operational at the time of publication may lapse.

1 Higher education in further education colleges

1.1 HE in FECs: setting the context

Introduction

The introduction to this guide draws attention to the main changes impacting on higher education and further education colleges since 2003 when the original guides were published. At the time of writing this updated guide in 2008, there has been a series of consultations, government policy initiatives, legislation and responses by HEFCE and QAA.

The immediate context for publication of the guide is HEFCE's implementation of a requirement for FECs providing higher education to have an HE strategy setting out the rationale for this provision in a local, regional and national context. The policy agenda in 2009 continues to focus on expanding and widening participation in higher education, and in particular on skills development, the contribution of 'higher level' skills to society in a global economy and 'employer engagement'. Further education colleges are well placed to address this agenda, which is explored below to set the context for Sections 2 to 10 of the guide, where particular aspects of HE provision in colleges are examined. The position in 2008-09 is addressed, and changes for this academic year and beyond are noted where known. However, at a time of such rapid change the guidance is necessarily time-limited; readers are cautioned to use the sources of information in Annex E to establish the position at the time of reading.

HE in FECs

At its simplest level, 'higher education' comprises awards above level 3 in the qualifications framework. The frameworks covering England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA); Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS); Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA); QAA) have been revised since publication of the original guides in 2003 to provide an aligned framework from entry level through levels 1 to 8 (see Section 2).

English further education colleges can provide 'prescribed' higher education (see Annex D) with funding from HEFCE. This higher education provided in the further education sector has become known in shorthand as 'HE in FECs'. Colleges remain

responsible to the LSC for their infrastructure and operations, but accountable for their use of funding and quality of provision (via an HEI as appropriate) to HEFCE and QAA (see Sections 3 and 10). Higher education delivered in further education colleges has often been taken to be HEFCE-funded (directly or indirectly) provision. However, a significant amount of provision at level 4 and above may be funded through the LSC (which has the power, but not the obligation, to fund this work) or through student or employer fees. This 'non-prescribed higher education' includes a wide range of vocational and professional qualifications (see Section 2 and Annex D). Colleges are accountable to the relevant awarding bodies and the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) for the quality of this provision.

The volume of HE provision in colleges during the last decade is variously quoted as forming between 9 and 11 per cent of all higher education, based on HEFCE data (Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Individualised Learner Record (ILR)). Most general and specialist colleges provide higher education. In 2006-07, of the 387 further education colleges funded by the LSC (262 general/tertiary colleges, 23 specialist and 102 sixth form colleges), 286 were funded directly or indirectly by HEFCE. Under the proposals of 'Raising expectations: enabling the system to deliver' (DCSF and DIUS, 2008), sixth form colleges – few of which provide higher education – will become a distinct legal category.

The character of the provision is diverse: in volume (from FTEs of well under 100 to several thousand), in range of qualification type (higher nationals (HNs), Fds, first and in some cases postgraduate degrees) and in subject range (comprehensive, specialist or niche provision).

Expansion and targets

The 1997 National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, the Dearing Inquiry, argued for a significant expansion of higher education, with a central role for HE in further education – a 'special mission' for further education colleges for (directly funded) 'sub-degree' provision. A range of changes have flowed from this (see Parry and Thompson, 2002, 'Closer by degrees: the past, present and future of higher education in further education colleges', and Parry et al, 2006, 'Managing higher education in colleges'), but not a significant overall growth in numbers of HE in FE students.

The 2003 White Paper ('The future of higher education') reaffirmed a significant expansion of higher education and the 'widening participation' target of 50 per cent participation in HE by those aged 18-30, and looked to FE to play a role in meeting this target. The target remains – though amended to 'towards' 50 per cent. It has been supplemented by the long-term target (from the 2006 Leitch Review) that by 2020 at least 40 per cent of the working age population should have a qualification at level 4 or above, and that foundation degree enrolments should grow, with a target of 100,000 by 2010.

But with a demographic downturn leading to a decline in the number of young adults who may enter higher education in the future (i.e. the 18-30 year olds comprising the 50 per cent participation target), the focus has shifted to working adults who do not have level 4 or above qualifications. 'University is Not Just for Young People: Working Adults' Perceptions of and Orientation to Higher Education' (Pollard et al, 2008) provided evidence used by DIUS suggesting that 4 million people are considering or willing to consider participating in higher education.

HEFCE policy for HE in FECs

HEFCE has been developing a policy on higher education in further education colleges throughout its period of responsibility for higher education in England, and this has been consolidated since 2003.

HEFCE policy is premised on the assumption that HE in FECs is distinctive:

> HE in FECs is already a distinctive part of the HE system. While it is dangerous to over-generalise about a diverse system, HE students in FECs are more likely to be over 25, more likely to study part-time, and more likely to come from areas with low rates of participation in HE than students in HEIs. They are more likely to be studying foundation degrees and sub-degree programmes such as HNCs and HNDs.
> (Paragraph 32, HEFCE 2006/48)

And:

> Most HE continues to take place in HEIs, but a significant amount of HE is provided in FECs, and we expect learning in the workplace and at home to increase. Over 10 per cent of undergraduate entrants are taught in FECs, of which 65 per cent are 21 or over and 48 per cent study part time.
> [The data source was HESA 2006-07 and ILR FO4 2006-07.]
> (Paragraph 51, 'Strategic plan 2006-11, updated May 2008', HEFCE 2008/15)

See Section 1.3 for the new requirement for HE strategies.

1.2 Higher level skills policy

A developing theme in policy since 1997 has been work-related (and work-based) learning and employer engagement. This was highlighted in the 2006 Leitch Review, which promoted a demand-led skill strategy. A significant range of funding and organisational initiatives affecting the HE and FE sectors have reflected the review's recommendations.

In 2007, two education departments were created from the DfES: the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills. It is proposed that responsibility for funding of colleges should be split. Funding for 16-18 participation will transfer to local authorities to give them clear responsibility for all 14-19 provision, and the commissioning process will be supplemented by a Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). Adult (19+) funding will become the remit of a new Skills Funding Agency from 2010. (See DCSF and DIUS, 2008, 'Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver', and the 'Raising Expectations' consultation.

Consolidating its 2006 employer engagement strategy, HEFCE is developing a nine-strand programme of activities to meet the priority for employer engagement. Growth in provision that responds to employers' workforce development needs is no longer supported through full-funded ASNs, but is on a co-funded basis; employers contribute a proportion of the FTE grant of 25 to 50 per cent (in cash or in kind) in addition to any fees paid by the employee or employers.

The January 2008 HEFCE grant letter from DIUS followed the Comprehensive Spending Review and covers a three-year period. The letter set out the allocations

for 2008-09 and proposals for 2009-10 and 2010-11, and included a range of priorities. HEFCE's 'Strategic plan 2006-11' was updated in May 2008 (a new strategic plan will be published for 2009-14), and the Chief Executive commented that it was updated in a:

> … climate of considerable change. The Government's spending review has linked increased funding with new priorities. Growth in student numbers, employer links and widening participation remain as key challenges, reflecting national social and economic priorities; at the same time, population changes could mean fewer school leavers as undergraduates in the next decade, making both older and overseas students more important to the continued health of the sector.' (Introduction)

In March 2008, DIUS published the White Paper 'Innovation Nation', which signalled the importance of higher education to the nation's economic and social success and proposed accelerating the pace of development through the opening of new HE centres (a new 'University Challenge') and a new strategy for higher level skills. In its strategy, 'Higher Education at Work – High Skills: High Value' (2008), DIUS takes high or higher level skills to be a driver of economic and social development:

> High level skills – the skills associated with higher education – are good for the individuals who acquire them and good for the economy. (Foreword)

DIUS launched 'A new "University Challenge": Unlocking Britain's Talent' in March 2008. This set out proposals to open up opportunities for towns and cities to bid for new university campuses and higher education centres. The intention is to add another 20 new local higher education campuses by 2014 to the 17 which have been supported by capital funding and ASNs since 2003 (11 already operational and six agreed). The process will be subject to bidding and combined investment from Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), local authorities, education partners, employers and community groups. In July 2008, HEFCE launched the consultation on the proposals ('A new "University Challenge": consultation on proposals for new higher education centres'):

> For its part, HEFCE expects the new HE centres to offer a high-quality HE experience to all learners and contribute to the Council's strategic aims. Specifically it will look at the extent to which proposals for centres address the creation of a highly skilled workforce with relevant skills for the local business community, increase higher-level skills particularly for those with no previous experience of HE and support appropriate progression arrangements. Also, proposals will need to be supported by evidence of new, sustainable demand for studying. (Paragraph 6)

Partnerships form a central plank of policy for higher education and its expansion – both numerically and in widening participation by under-represented groups. They include partnerships between colleges and HEIs, with employers, and through regional groupings and networks. The policy was supported through the initial funding of Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs) and will be furthered through the new higher

education centres and Centres for Higher Education Excellence in FECs (see HEFCE 2006/48). The consultation on 'A new "University Challenge"' continues:

> Further education colleges (FECs) as well as higher education institutions (HEIs) have an important role in developing locally based HE, in providing and supporting progression routes to HE and in harnessing their expertise in working with local businesses to develop skills. As 'A new "University Challenge"' made clear, it is likely that most proposals for new HE centres will involve collaboration between HEIs, and between HEIs and FECs.
> (Paragraph 17)

1.3 Embedding HE in FECs: strategy and quality assurance arrangements

FECs' HE strategies

In November 2006, HEFCE issued a consultation on its policy for HE in FE ('Higher education in further education colleges: Consultation on HEFCE policy', HEFCE 2006/48). Following widespread support from higher education providers for the proposal that FECs providing higher education should have an HE strategy, a pilot of the production and appraisal of FECs' higher education strategies was conducted in 2008. The consultation, report and documents relating to the pilot can be read at www.hefce.ac.uk under Learning & teaching/Higher education in further education colleges.

HEFCE considers that colleges with a coherent strategic approach to their HE provision could become stronger and be able to maintain or grow their provision. Also, some colleges where provision has not been thought through strategically, and which does not fit well with HEFCE priorities, would be encouraged to develop a strategy for their HE.

A college's HE strategy should cover its directly and indirectly funded (prescribed) higher education and its non-prescribed higher education within the overall strategy for the college. The HE strategy should build on and support progression from the college's strengths in further education. It should demonstrate a clear rationale for the college's provision of higher education within a local, regional and national policy context, addressing identifiable needs and adding value.

This revision of the guide has taken into account the guidance offered for the FECs' higher education strategy pilot (see HEFCE web-site), which requires strategies to address partnerships, staff development and scholarly activity, management and resourcing, curriculum development and relationships with employers.

The process of producing and appraising FECs' HE strategies was piloted from January to July 2008 using 30 cases; 27 colleges and three partnerships were selected from a total of 141 submissions to represent a range of providers regarding form(s) of funding, partnership arrangements, volume and range of provision and geographical distribution. The process was externally evaluated (by Gareth Parry and Anne Thompson of the University of Sheffield) and a report made to HEFCE; this will be published on the HEFCE web-site in spring 2009.

Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review

QAA is responsible for assuring the quality of prescribed HE delivered in colleges. Previously, the method differed for directly funded colleges (through direct review) and those indirectly funded (review through the HEI). However, from 2008 the new Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review method is being implemented equally for all directly and indirectly funded colleges (see Section 10).

In 2008, QAA published a report based on its reviews of directly (and consortium) funded colleges between September 2002 and July 2007. The review indicates a level of confidence in HE in FE that was less established when the original guides were published:

> From 2002-07, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) conducted 310 Academic reviews in 232 colleges, which looked at programmes delivered within 20 different subjects, as defined by the HEFCE unit of review.
>
> … Each review resulted in judgements on academic standards. The reviewers had confidence in the standards of around 94 per cent of the provision. Five per cent of reviews resulted in a judgement of no confidence and 1 per cent of reviews in a judgement of limited confidence. The proportion of confidence judgements on standards remains broadly consistent across the cycle. Judgements were also made on the quality and effectiveness of learning opportunities. The quality of learning opportunities was found to be commendable or approved in 98.3 per cent of reviews and 1 per cent of reviews resulted in a failing judgement for all or part of the provision.

('Learning from Academic review of higher education in further education colleges in England 2002-07', p1)

1.4 Credit frameworks and higher education

Practice in using credit and credit frameworks in the UK's further and higher education sectors is long-standing and well established. Many colleges use the credit framework of the National Open College Network (NOCN), including for their Access to Higher Education courses. However, there has not previously been an agreed comprehensive framework for England for provision in either sector.

The QCA, with the regulators in Wales and Northern Ireland, developed proposals for a unit and credit-based qualifications system – the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF, see QCA web-site) – in the context of the UK Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme (VQRP). After a two-year programme of activity to test and trial the QCF, Ofqual published the 'Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework' in August 2008.

The QCF formalises a standard currency for learner achievement through a qualifications system based on units and credits. One credit represents 10 hours of learning at the nine levels (entry level to level 8), and there are three sizes of qualification: award, one to 12 credits; certificate, between 13 and 36 credits; and diploma, 37 credits and above. Vocational qualifications from the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and new vocational qualifications must be accredited to the QCF by 2010; these will comply with the regulatory framework. While the framework allows for a broad spectrum of qualifications, including those

with a general and a vocational focus, certain qualifications were 'out of scope' at the time of its publication (August 2008); these included GCSEs and GCEs. Higher level qualifications were included, including National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) – albeit that the title need not include the term. (See Section 2 – Higher level skills.)

In higher education, the Credit Issues Development Group (CIDG) was established following the 2006 recommendations of the Burgess Group. The CIDG wrote 'Higher education credit framework for England', published by QAA in August 2008. The framework sets out the purposes and benefits of credit and credit frameworks, pointing out their potential roles in supporting progression into and within higher education and transfer between programmes. It sets out credit values and credit-level descriptors, along with a proposed timetable for implementation by 2009-10. However, the framework is permissive, not prescriptive, and recognises the autonomy of HEIs in England.

Like the QCF, the HE framework is based on a credit value of one credit for 10 hours of learning at the relevant level, in this case levels 4 to 8. It includes a table setting out the minimum and maximum credit values typically associated with the design of programmes leading to the main HE qualifications in England as set out in the FHEQ (see Section 2). The table also includes the credit ranges for the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) from the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), two UK credits being equivalent to one ECTS credit. The framework includes, for reference, generic credit-level descriptors referring to levels 4 and above; these are comparable to, but not the same as, the (more detailed) descriptors of the QCF at levels 4 to 8.

2 Higher level skills

2.1 What are higher level skills?

The term 'higher level skills' is complex and is used with a range of meanings in a range of contexts. One common usage, within the context of curriculum design and quality assurance, is to indicate and define the cognitive and analytic skills that a student successfully completing a higher education programme should be able to demonstrate. This is sometimes described as 'higherness'. QAA expects programmes to address:

- intellectual skills
- practical skills
- transferable/key skills.

('Guidelines for preparing programme specifications', 2006)

Higher level skills are those which go beyond acquiring basic knowledge and understanding and being able to apply that understanding to straightforward situations. They include analysis and synthesis of a range of knowledge, which may be acquired by using research skills; critical reflection on different and potentially conflicting sources of knowledge; problem-solving by identifying a range of possible solutions, evaluating these and choosing the solution most appropriate to the situation; developing complex arguments, reaching sound judgements and communicating these effectively. The FHEQ describes the higher level skills that students should be able to achieve and demonstrate at each qualification level.

'Learning from Academic review of HE in FECs in England 2002-07', QAA, 2008, paragraph 57.

Alternatively, and increasingly within the policy focus on the skills agenda following the Leitch Review (see Section 1), the term references the higher or 'high' level skills seen as contributing to employability and the country's socio-economic development.

> High level skills – the skills associated with higher education – are good for the individuals who acquire them and good for the economy. They help individuals unlock their talent and aspire to change their life for the better. They help businesses and public services to innovate and prosper. They help towns and cities thrive by creating jobs, helping businesses become more competitive and driving economic regeneration. High level skills add value for all of us.
>
> Foreword, Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, 'Higher Education at Work – High Skills: High Value', DIUS, April 2008

HEFCE policy has identified FECs as having a particular contribution to make to the development of higher level skills in this second sense and in engagement with employers ('Higher education in further education colleges: Consultation on HEFCE policy', HEFCE 2006/48). These higher level skills may be developed through the prescribed higher education funded by HEFCE, but also through those higher level qualifications – largely professional and work related – described as non-prescribed higher education and funded in colleges by the LSC. See Section 2.2 for a description of higher levels.

Notwithstanding this emphasis on higher level skills in HEFCE policy and an expectation of a focus on flexible 'short cycle' provision (including foundation degrees and HNs), any higher level vocational provision should address the expectation that all HE students should benefit from a high-quality learning experience at the appropriate level. The elements of such a high-quality learning experience are set out in QAA's framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, described below.

2.2 The Academic Infrastructure

For an explanation of the QAA's Academic Infrastructure see Section 10.1.

FHEQ

The Academic Infrastructure has four components: the 'Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education'; the frameworks for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (EWNI) and in Scotland; subject benchmark statements; and programme specifications (see QAA web-site for details). In addition, there are progress files and country-specific guidelines for the accreditation of prior learning (APL). This section focuses on the FHEQ and programme specifications. Section 6 focuses on programme specifications and subject benchmarks in the context of curriculum development, and Section 10 addresses the code of practice. Section 6 includes progress files.

The FHEQ is designed to assist HE providers to maintain academic standards and comparability of awards nationally and internationally. It is the reference point for institutional audit, IQER and other forms of external review (see Section 10). The FHEQ contains qualification descriptors for qualifications at each of five 'levels'. However, it excludes those higher level skills awards which comprise NPHE (see Annex D).

The FHEQ qualification descriptors set out the generic outcomes and attributes expected for the award of individual qualifications at each level, to ensure that qualifications are designed and delivered at the appropriate level. These descriptors provide a framework within which the relevant higher level skills can be identified.

A national framework for higher education qualifications was proposed in the Dearing Report (1997) and was first published in 2001 with an implementation date of 2003-04. A revised edition of the FHEQ was published in August 2008. This can be read at www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/EWNI08/). The five levels in the FHEQ reflect five levels of intellectual achievements associated with the main higher education qualifications. These were originally designated as certificate, intermediate, honours, masters and doctoral. In the 2008 revision they have been changed to: 4 (certificate), 5 (intermediate), 6 (honours), 7 (masters) and 8 (doctoral).

The relationship between the FHEQ and other frameworks

The FHEQ and the definition of levels used by the QCA and by some FE/HE credit frameworks were initially distinct. In 2004, however, the FHEQ and NQF were aligned at the higher levels (Table 1). Edexcel BTEC Higher National Diplomas and Certificates (HNDs/HNCs) were included in the NQF and revised NQF, although they are prescribed higher education funded by HEFCE. Additionally, the NQF included higher level NPHE awards. Higher level awards previously identified as levels 4 and 5 were redefined or newly defined within the NQF – and now the QCF – to include levels 6, 7 and 8; Table 1 contains some examples of qualifications which were allocated to the new levels.

Subsequently, to meet the expectations of the Bologna Declaration, the FHEQ was aligned with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The labels used to distinguish the levels of the FQ-EHEA – short cycle (within or linked to first cycle qualifications), first cycle (degrees), second cycle (masters) and third cycle (doctoral) – have been incorporated into the FHEQ (2008). Foundation degrees and higher nationals are short cycle. A table setting out broad equivalencies of the main qualifications in each country of the UK ('Qualifications can cross boundaries') can be accessed from the FHEQ section on the QAA web-site.

Credit frameworks and higher education

The FHEQ is a qualifications framework (setting out qualifications descriptors for each level), not a credit framework. However, some other frameworks within the UK and Ireland have used credit level descriptors to determine the relative demand, complexity, depth of learning and learner autonomy associated with a particular level of learning and achievement, and many English HEIs use credit level descriptors for programmes. In August 2008, QAA published a credit framework for HE in England: 'Higher education credit framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England', drawn up by the CIDG. It offers national guidelines aligned with the FHEQ, but is not prescriptive (see Section 6 for guidance on using credit in curriculum development).

Table 1 **The relationship between qualifications frameworks**

NQF previous levels	NQF revised level (QCF)	Level	FHEQ (EWNI) (2008) typical qualifications within each level	FEHEA corresponding cycle	Previous FHEQ (EWNI) QAA level titles and typical qualifications
Level 5:	Specialist	**8**	Doctoral degrees	Third cycle qualifications	D (doctoral) – doctorates
NVQ 5[1] Level 5 diplomas	Examples: Edexcel level 7 BTEC Advanced Professional Award in Management Studies, Cambridge ESOL level 7 Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (DELTA)	**7**	Masters degrees, postgraduate diplomas, postgraduate certificates in education, postgraduate certificates	Second cycle qualifications	M (masters) – masters degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas
Level 4:	Examples: ILEX level 6 Higher Diploma in Law, Trinity Guildhall level 6 Licentiate Diploma in Teaching	**6**	Bachelors degrees with honours, bachelors degrees, professional graduate certificates in education, graduate diplomas, graduate certificates	First cycle qualifications	H (honours) – bachelors degrees, graduate certificates and diplomas
NVQ 4 Level 4 diplomas and certificates Higher nationals	Higher nationals[2] Other examples: ILM Diploma in Management, Edexcel level 5 Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector	**5**	Foundation degrees, diplomas of higher education, HNDs	Short cycle (within or linked to first cycle) qualifications	I (intermediate) – diplomas of higher education and further education, foundation degrees
	AAT level 4 Diploma for Accounting Technicians, CIM level 4 Professional Certificate in Marketing	**4**	HNCs, certificates of higher education		C (certificate) – certificates of higher education
	Level 3	**3**			
	Level 2	**2**			
	Level 1	**1**			
	Entry level	**Entry**			

1 Revised levels were not implemented for NVQ levels 4 and 5, and those currently in the NDAQ are listed at their original levels in the NQF. Qualifications that have been accredited in the NQF can be rewritten and submitted for accreditation into the QCF with or without the term 'NVQ' in their title, in line with the specific operating rules.

2 BTEC is revising the specification for HNs for delivery from 2010-11.

3 While all HNs will be level 5 in the QCF, only HND will be level 5 in the QAA framework. HNCs are positioned at level 4 and HNDs at level 5 in the FHEQ to reflect typical practice among higher education awarding bodies which award the HNC under licence from Edexcel.

The new QCF set out in 'Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework', August 2008, covers all levels from entry to 8. It incorporates the principles of units and credits and has agreed generic descriptors for each level (see the QCA and Ofqual web-sites, www.qca.org.uk and www.ofqual.org.uk). Unlike the QAA descriptors, the terminology of 'awards', 'certificates' and 'diplomas' within the QCF relates to the size rather than the level of the qualification. The titles of all awards in the QCF are in a standard format which identifies the level, size and a concise description of the contents of the qualification; thus all higher level vocational and professional qualifications will include a level between 4 and 8. The titles for certain occupational qualifications may or may not include (as a bracketed addition) the acronym NVQ (see Ofqual et al, 2008, 'Operating rules for using the term "NVQ" in a QCF qualification title').

Table 1 illustrates the 2008-09 broad alignment for higher level awards with previous and current QCA levels, aligned to current and previous QAA levels and nomenclature.

Higher level awards

Higher education institutions offering their own awards devise them within the Academic Infrastructure. Other higher level awards are offered by recognised awarding bodies.

The National Database of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ) contains all the qualifications that have been accredited by the regulators in England (Ofqual, created when the QCA was split into two in 2008), as well as in Wales (DCELLS) and Northern Ireland (CCEA). It can be searched for specific qualifications, by awarding body and by level. A search on levels 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 in October 2008 listed over 800 qualifications on the NQF and slightly over 100 higher level qualifications accredited to the QCF. These include NVQs, HND/Cs and other higher level awards; they are awards of general awarding bodies – most commonly Edexcel and City & Guilds – specialist awarding bodies, professional bodies and some universities. The number of these qualifications, most of which would be NPHE, indicates the complexity of higher level provision in England.

Edexcel is revising the structure of BTEC higher nationals for delivery in 2010-11. Flexibility will be increased in terms of the use of locally devised units and choice. The size of the mandatory element is likely to be reduced, with more choice available for centres to deliver specialist, employer-related or niche qualifications, and HNs will have an overall grade. They will be developed with reference to sector requirements, and where possible connections with professional body recognition and licence to practice qualifications will be built in at the design stage. International HNs will be aligned with the UK's QCF higher nationals.

Edexcel BTEC

HN revision

Titling

Technically, all BTEC HN qualifications will be QCF diplomas because they all exceed 36 credits: a QCF award is one to 12 credits; a QCF certificate is between 13 and 36 credits, and a QCF diploma is 37 credits and over. To conform with the QCF titling criteria, the following have been proposed:

Current title	Proposed title
BTEC Higher National Diploma	Edexcel level 5 BTEC HND Diploma
BTEC Higher National Certificate	Edexcel level 5 BTEC HNC Diploma
New qualification	Edexcel level 5 BTEC HNA Diploma

Units

The unit of measurement will be a 'credit' in addition to indicating guided learning hours (glh). Units will be multiples of 5 credits, normally up to a maximum of 15 credits (currently, 60glh units are normally 15 credits).

Level and size of qualifications:

- the HND, HNC and HNA will all be QCF level 5 qualifications
- the HND will be 240 credits
- the HNC will be 120 credits (reduced from 150 credits currently)
- a new HNA will be 60 credits
- up to 60 per cent of the qualification will be at H2 (level 5), an increase from the current 50 per cent
- HNDs are equivalent to 60 ECTS credits per year, or 120 ECTS credits for the complete HND.

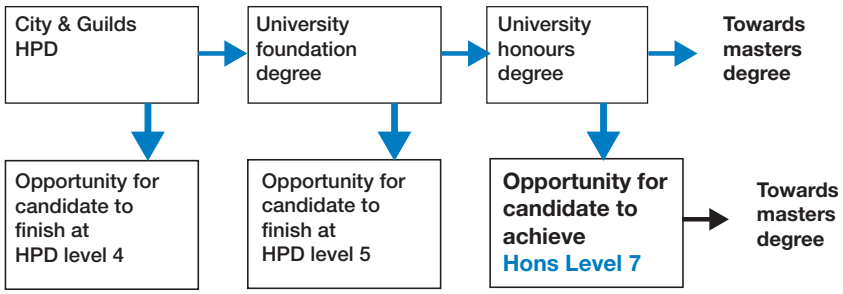
Although the HND and HNC and the HNA 'diplomas' will be level 5 qualifications on the QCF, only the HND will be level 5 on the FHEQ. Progression from HNC to HND will be funded by HEFCE (the ruling on ELQs has withdrawn funding for equivalent or lower level qualifications, with some exemptions – see Section 3 – but HNCs, while at the same level as HNDs on the NQF, are at a lower level in the FHEQ).

Since 1992, Edexcel has offered HEIs the facility to offer higher nationals under licence; these protocols were revised in October 2007, with the next major update planned for 2013-14. Under this scheme, HEIs are able to offer 'customised' or 'non-NQF' institutionally validated awards of BTEC higher nationals (and other BTEC qualifications), and these can be offered in partner colleges under approved validation arrangements. In 2007-08, 56 HEIs were licensed. See Edexcel's 'Guidance for Higher Education Institutions offering BTEC Customised non-National Qualification Framework qualifications' (2007).

City & Guilds describes its Higher Level Qualifications which have been accredited onto the NQF in 'A centre's guide to City & Guilds Higher Level Qualifications (HLQs)' (2007). Higher Professional Diplomas (HPDs) at level 4 are designed to equate to 120 credits and to make it possible to contribute credit towards a foundation degree. Master Professional Qualifications are at level 7 and can be credited with appropriate masters points. City & Guilds is forming progression partnerships with colleges and universities to support customised awards.

City & Guilds

Example of an HPD/Fd/hons degree pathway



120 CATS points + 120 CATS = 240 + 120 CATS = 360

Foundation degrees

Foundation degrees were placed at the intermediate level (now level 5) in the FHEQ. The descriptor for level 5 sets out the skills required for the award of a foundation degree. This descriptor can also be used as a reference point for higher nationals. Edexcel BTEC HN specifications include the higher level skills learners are expected to develop during the programme of study.

Table 2 is an extract from the FHEQ, 2008; it compares the higher level outcomes required for foundation degrees and honours degrees. Practitioners designing new foundation degrees (see Section 6) should ensure that the learning outcomes reflect these skills and address the need to progress to honours-degree level both generically and for specified linked honours programmes at the college or validating HEI. The benchmarks will form the basis of judgements during IQER (see Section 10). Full details of all levels are available in the FHEQ.

Subject benchmark statements

In this context, the term benchmark is not used (as it usually is in further education) to refer to the measurement of achievement, but to expectations of outcome. Working with the higher education sector, QAA has published subject benchmark statements for disciplines. These statements set out the academic characteristics and standards required at honours degree and, in a small number of cases, at masters level. Benchmark statements are available on QAA's web-site; they include a summary of the subject knowledge and understanding, and the subject-specific and generic skills required for the achievement of an award. Section 6 explores how they should be used in curriculum design.

Table 2 **Comparison of higher level skills for foundation and honours degrees. From the QAA FHEQ, 2008**

	Foundation degree	Bachelors degree with honours
Are awarded to students who have demonstrated:	• knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of their area(s) of study, and of the way in which those principles have developed • ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context • knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in their subject(s) relevant to the named award, and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study • an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.	• a systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline • an ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline • conceptual understanding that enables the student: – to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline – to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline • an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge • the ability to manage their own learning, and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:	• use a range of established techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis • effectively communicate information, arguments and analysis, in a variety of forms, to specialist and non-specialist audiences, and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively • undertake further training, develop existing skills and acquire new competences that will enable them to assume significant responsibility within organisations	• apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects • critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution – or identify a range of solutions – to a problem • communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.
And holders will have the:	• qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.	• qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring: – the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility – decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts – the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

A generic foundation degree qualification benchmark was published in October 2004. The FDQB specifies the outcomes for the intermediate level as set out in the FHEQ in 2001, now level 5 of the revised 2008 FHEQ.

Programme specifications

A programme specification is a concise description of the intended learning outcomes of an HE programme, and the means by which the outcomes are achieved and demonstrated. As well as knowledge and understanding of the subject, a programme specification should address the three categories of higher level skills: intellectual, practical and transferable/key skills. The guidance includes suggestions for appropriate ways of assessing each of these skills.

In its report on the five-year cycle of academic review of (directly and consortium funded) education in colleges, 'Learning from Academic review of HE in FECs in England 2002-07', QAA noted that aims covering the development of higher level skills were not often set out explicitly (paragraph 64). Some reviewers reported that 'the development of analytical thinking, research and critical evaluation skills continues to present a challenge to some staff and students' (paragraph 65).

Intellectual skills

These are the skills required to understand and engage with the theoretical framework that structures a field of knowledge: research, critical analysis and evaluation. They are the skills most closely identified with academic achievement in higher education.

Practical skills

Practical skills are increasingly discussed in terms of employability and problem-solving. They include the ability to apply theory in practice and evaluate theory in the light of practical experience. These skills enable learners to apply theory to action in a critical way and reflect on performance. An understanding of these skills also enables students to draw on experiential learning to inform their academic development.

Key/transferable skills

These are skills with which learners can most effectively access, interpret and communicate new and diverse forms of knowledge. They include communication, information technology (IT) and numeracy skills; the ability to communicate in written and oral form; and the ability to work with others. Colleges are likely to have well-established systems for developing these skills, reflecting their importance in level 3 provision and historically in higher nationals, but need to ensure that they reflect level 4 descriptors.

Debate is ongoing about the ways in which and the extent to which the three categories of skills are separable and/or transferable, and the significance of the context in which they are learned and practised. However, critical reflection and self-reflective practice can encourage students to develop skills across a range of contexts and promote generation and application of new knowledge.

2.3 Preparation for higher education courses

Some colleges and partnerships offer preparation for higher education courses, focusing on developing students' learning and study skills before the HE course

starts. Such preparation courses usually target applicants who have been out of education for some time and who may not have any formal qualifications at levels 3 or 2. These courses may be accredited at levels 3 or 4; if they are accredited at level 4, they may offer credit towards the level 4 award.

City & Guilds

Part of the City & Guilds suite of Higher Professional Diplomas is the HPD in Higher Level Study Skills (3 units). This provides academic study guidance and prepares learners progressing from purely vocationally based education to a foundation or honours degree.

In some cases, specially designed courses are provided for students with vocational qualifications to support transition to academically orientated studies. The following two examples illustrate collaborative developments.

Aimhigher Greater Manchester and the Greater Manchester Skills Alliance (GMSA)

The Step-In to HE project is an innovative new joint initiative from Aimhigher Greater Manchester and the GMSA. It is aimed at all Greater Manchester advanced apprentices who have completed or are about to complete the requirements of their apprenticeship. The project's main purpose is to build advanced apprentices' confidence in their ability to progress to HE, with the help of a new course called the Step-In Module. The Step-In Module aims to help:

- advanced apprentices to develop and demonstrate the transferable higher level skills needed for the successful completion of an HE qualification
- employers to 'grow their own' staff by encouraging more advanced apprentices to progress to HE and take vocationally relevant courses, including foundation degrees.

The Step-In Module focuses on developing higher level thinking skills, and gives practical experience of research, personal development planning (PDP) and writing techniques relevant to HE study.

Four Greater Manchester delivery centres – Bury College, Skills Solutions, Stockport College and Wigan and Leigh College – have worked in partnership to agree a shared scheme of work, shared assessments and common procedural documentation. All learners have access to information, advice and guidance (IAG) on possible HE and career progression. The module, which is delivered over seven weeks, is worth 10 credits at level 4 and is validated by the University of Bolton. It will sit within GMSA Advance, the Greater Manchester credit accumulation and transfer scheme (CATS).

Over 40 learners are enrolled on the first runs of the course, from a very wide range of occupational areas. As many as half are expected to go on to HE soon after completing the Step-In Module, with HNC/D cited as the most popular next step; interest has also been shown in progression to foundation degrees.

Wiltshire College

Wiltshire College piloted a preparation for HE course in May to June 2008, funded by the Western Vocational LLN. The course was designed to help those who had achieved a level 3 NVQ who wished to progress to a named degree or foundation degree, but felt unprepared and unconfident about higher academic study.

The course was delivered one morning per week over six weeks to a range of social work, computing and childhood studies candidates. Course content focused on study skills, learning styles, academic writing and referencing skills. The course material was made available through the college's virtual learning environment (VLE), which the students will use when they progress to their degree. An online discussion forum was set up to enable the students to keep in contact with each other and with the course tutor outside course hours.

The students were assessed through a mid-term and final assignment. The mid-term assignment did not count towards the final grade, allowing students to practise their skills in a 'safe' way. Next-day feedback enabled them to apply their learning immediately. The final assignment required students to describe a recent legal, policy or general development from their intended discipline area and discuss implications for practice. The assignment was produced incrementally; students wrote a first draft early in the course, then as their skills developed they shaped and refined the draft until final submission. Written tutor feedback was provided at each stage of the assignment preparation, focusing on skills and confidence building. Students recognised that the ideas they wished to communicate in the early first draft were sound, but that their assignment-writing skills were insufficiently developed. This acknowledgement of their sound intellectual capacity but under-developed written skills gave them a significant confidence boost.

The course ended with students presenting their assignment findings using PowerPoint. For most, this was their first experience of delivering a presentation and using PowerPoint, and was a huge success. All students successfully completed the programme and progressed onto degrees or foundation degrees at the college.

2.4 Developing higher level skills

In addition to pre-entry programmes, many colleges offer additional learning and study-skills support to those students who need it, particularly during induction and in their first year.

For FE course teams providing HE, a consensus on the characteristics of higher level skills, and approaches to teaching them, should be established at the stage of course design (see Section 6). Since not all staff teaching on the course will have been involved in its design, a written strategy setting out the college's approach to teaching higher level skills is useful; the higher level skills will differentiate the progressive and more challenging aspects of learning.

The balance between areas of skills development may vary across cognate areas and type of course. Foundation degrees and higher nationals will have a particular emphasis on practical skills; professional higher level qualifications will reflect the requirements of the professional bodies; and higher level NVQs will have a specific vocational emphasis.

Technology can support online and distance-learning skills modules.

University of Plymouth Colleges (UPC)

UPC has created an online Higher Education Studies Toolkit, which will be available to all UPC higher education students.

UPC recognised the importance of a tool that could support all its learners irrespective of location or subject. It allows learners to develop and enhance study skills throughout their programme as well as preparing them for the transition for their stage 3 (final year) at the university.

The toolkit has different academic levels: it will be presented via an animation of a toolbox, aiming to give a welcoming user interface. By clicking on sections of the toolbox image, users will access materials at differentiated levels to support their varying levels of experience, need and learning style.

The toolkit is designed to provide:

- easy navigation so that students can 'pick and mix' the materials they require and develop a personalised route through their learning
- support for a learner-centred pedagogy that encourages independent learning.

Provided by the HE Learning Partnerships Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (HELP CETL), University of Plymouth

Progression

Foundation degrees and higher nationals enable progression to an honours degree for substantial numbers of students, and should accommodate the differences in the FHEQ qualification descriptors set out in Table 2.

Higher nationals can give students access to the second or third year of an honours degree, but this varies across HEIs and subjects and courses. The revision of the specification will make the HND 240 credits – as with the foundation degree – equivalent to the number of credits available on the first and second years of credit-based or credit-rated honours degrees.

At the point of an HEI's validation of a foundation degree, the skills required to progress to the third year of the university course should be addressed. However, it may be that other HEIs will expect a bridging course to address skills at honours degree level.

The development of higher level skills in HE has generated considerable debate as to the most appropriate and effective models for delivery. Research into the impact of various models continues, and no conclusive evidence exists as to which approach works best. However, consensus is growing that students respond most effectively when skills development is incorporated within the range of assessed work making up the core part of the course. Separate skills support, possibly provided centrally, can also be helpful, but will need to recognise the separate funding streams for FE, NPHE and HEFCE-funded HE (see Section 3.2).

Effective mechanisms are needed for diagnosis and referral and for monitoring progress through personal development planning (PDP). Colleges are piloting the use of technology to support the compilation of personal development plans (see Section 2.6).

> Many students are accepted under colleges' widening access policies, some with non-traditional entry qualifications. Colleges place considerable emphasis on further developing and enhancing students' study skills to help them with the transition to higher-level study and provide the preparation for the increased demands of HE. Staff offer considerable developmental support outside timetabled teaching hours. Generally, small class sizes enable attention to be paid to each student's development and enable them to pursue relevant career aspirations…
>
> 'Learning from higher education in further education colleges in England 2003-05', QAA, 2006, p16

When course teams develop programme specifications (see Section 6), they need to consider the required skills and their levels. It can be helpful to develop a grid on which all skills are mapped and to see whether they are assessed.

Academic skills

When course teams are designing teaching and learning activities and assessments, it is worth making sure that a range of academic skills is included, particularly:

- critical analysis
- academic discourse
- research
- referencing
- awareness of plagiarism
- examination skills.

Critical analysis

Students need to be able to evaluate different types of evidence, based on an understanding of how the data have been collected, interpreted and presented. Critical analysis is one of the skills for which students need to provide evidence progressively through their learning.

Academic discourse

In those colleges where recruitment is largely from under-represented groups, students may well need focused support in academic presentation skills. Students need to understand how to use key terms and concepts connected with their subject, along with related vocabulary.

Research

Higher level skills for academic achievement and employability require students to engage directly in the generation of knowledge in their chosen subject area. Terms such as 'investigation' and 'enquiry' raise learners' awareness of the many ways in which they are already engaged in collecting and collating information. The status

and use of that knowledge provide a foundation for developing a more systematic set of practical research skills.

FE staff may not be exposed on a daily basis to institutional debates on research. However, requirements for initial teacher training (ITT) and continuous professional development (CPD) in the sector emphasise reflective practice, and some colleges encourage and support research (see Section 9). Partner HEIs may offer free-standing modules or workshops on research methods, or could be invited to present a workshop to introduce staff to current discourse on research approaches and methodology.

Referencing

The conventions of referencing are explicit at higher levels of study. It is a professional expectation that academic arguments are attributed appropriately; failure to do so, out of ignorance or a deliberate intention to conceal sources, is treated very seriously. Students need to be introduced to correct referencing from an early stage. While the Harvard method is widely used, the awarding body usually determines the protocols, which are applied by the external examiner.

Awareness of plagiarism

QAA's publication 'Learning from Academic review of higher education in further education colleges (2005-07)' noted concerns expressed in a number of reports regarding undetected plagiarism. A clear understanding of the processes and protocols described above is particularly important in helping students to understand definitions of plagiarism.

Misuse of the internet and copying and pasting extracts from others' work is a growing problem, but may seem acceptable to many students. Evidence suggests that less academically experienced students are most vulnerable to charges of plagiarism; they are less certain about how to handle new subject matter and less confident about expressing their views. These students may also have limited command of essay-writing skills and the conventions attached to quotation. International students are also at risk; academic conventions are to a certain extent culture bound, and expectations of how sources should be used and referenced should be clearly explained.

Clear guidelines on academic honesty are important and should be included in course handbooks. Legal judgements indicate that the provider of the award must make it clear what is expected to all students. Some colleges oblige students to sign a generic statement indicating their understanding of the requirements; others require a statement attached to each submission of coursework. Colleges may be required to operate the systems of validating or franchising HEIs.

Increasingly, higher education providers are using software to check for plagiarism. The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) offers an internet plagiarism advisory service providing generic advice and guidance to institutions, academics and students. It also provides access to the TurnitinUK detection software. Some staff encourage students to run their work through software detection systems as a demonstration of the process, and consider it formative. However, there is currently debate about whether this develops skills in 'beating the system'.

Examination skills

While many courses in further education colleges do not include examinations as part of the summative assessment, it is rare for this to be the case in HEIs. Examination skills are likely to be essential for students progressing to a third year.

The independent learner

A central characteristic of higher level skills is the confidence and ability to operate as an independent learner. Students are expected to develop independent learning skills during level 3 learning, but many HE in FE students have not – or have not recently – studied at level 3. These skills may need to be explicitly addressed in years one and two of higher education in order to support progression to study in an HEI. Equally, diplomates or graduates entering employment will need these skills for long-term effectiveness in updating and facing the challenges of new learning in the years ahead.

Students who move from further education colleges into HEIs are generally positive about the preparatory experience of studying HE in FE. However, some do not feel that they have been well prepared, and struggle with new and unanticipated expectations. HND and foundation degree students, for example, frequently report difficulties with the volume of reading required, and the expectation that all students will have well-developed essay-writing skills or be able to cope with a dissertation. Some HEIs run special workshops for students making the transition or (as indicated above) require a bridging course, but colleges may prefer to embed these skills in the first years of the course.

The Higher Education Academy commissioned a report on the experience of students on NQF BTEC higher nationals as part of its HE in FE enhancement programme supporting higher education in further education colleges. It includes case studies of good practice, such as a range of business programmes at Exeter College.

Colleges make use of technology to support independent learning, for instance through the development of portfolios.

Higher Education Academy

Exeter College – encouragement of independent learning

The college aims to foster this – right at the outset an assessment is made of the study requirements of the learners. The learners are focused on trying to achieve distinction grades – evidence of independent learning is included in the criteria for a distinction. There is a wide variety in the nature of assessments, partly aimed at assisting independent learning. Other examples include project planning and the research nature of the project, action plans, finding own clients for projects, use of the library, and the realistic nature of the assignments. Learners are successful in their progression to work and further studies.

Rodney Ranzetta, 2007, 'HE experience of NQF BTEC higher nationals in further education colleges', Higher Education Academy

North Devon College

An e-portfolio was introduced to the Computing Fd to combine the delivery of tutorials, PDP, work-related learning and study skills. Students undertook assignments that were designed to mirror the workplace and required learning of new concepts/tools. These assignments also introduced problem-based learning, action planning and reflective evaluation. Students initially experienced problems with reflective evaluation, but as they gained experience and confidence they came to value this aspect of the course. The e-portfolio changed students' perceptions of the course, leading to their taking a broader view of it and developing as reflective practitioners and independent learners.

2.5 A higher education experience

The development of higher level skills occurs within the context of the student's experience of higher education in a further education college. This embraces not just the teaching, learning and assessment activities, but also what commentators variously describe as a higher education ethos, culture or experience.

A review of information and literature for the Higher Education Academy identified four dimensions:

- the learning and teaching dimension of an HE ethos
- the symbolic aspects of an HE ethos
- the physical, infrastructural aspects of an HE ethos
- student engagement and the HE ethos.

Rob Jones, 'A Higher Education Ethos', June 2006

Symbolic aspects of an HE experience include markers such as marketing, enrolment procedures, signage, staff and departmental titles, student identity cards and graduation ceremonies. These can help to build a student and staff identity that is distinct and separate or, by their absence, integrated. However, the physical or infrastructural elements of separation such as separate classrooms, resource centres and other support systems, staffing and buildings are of course themselves symbolic markers.

The arrangements for managing and delivering HE in colleges vary greatly. For quality assurance and enhancement, QAA noted that: 'The greatest progress has been made in colleges where one member of staff has oversight of all HE provision within the college' ('Learning from higher education in further education colleges in England 2003-05', p22). However, this does not equate to unitary management of the HE provision at programme or departmental level, or to a separate quality monitoring system, or to a separate site for delivery of HE (see Sections 3 and 10). Some colleges manage prescribed and non-prescribed higher education together, while others do not. However, whatever the structural arrangements, the HEFCE guidance for production of an FE college's HE strategy is that it should address both forms.

Some colleges believe that it is desirable to provide a physically separate space in order to provide an appropriate HE environment; others maintain that all students should be integrated in the spirit of inclusivity and of a distinctively HE in FE experience. Some embed HE programmes within the FE provision to benefit from specialist staff and equipment, or because the low volume of provision does not warrant separation, or because capital funding is not available to support dedicated facilities. Some colleges may offer a mixture, particularly multi-site colleges where provision may be separate on one site but integrated on another. However, even when delivery is embedded there is likely to be a separate resource centre or social and study space, and possibly dedicated classrooms or practical rooms. As Section 3 indicates, even when delivery is within a dedicated centre, the staff may well work across FE and HE and be managed within a single organisational framework.

City of Bristol College

The college has over 1,500 HE students studying on a range of foundation degrees and other higher education courses. As the college works over eight main centres, it is not feasible for HE students to study on just one site. However, the college has developed a University Centre at one of its main centres, and this provides a separate study, resources and relaxation space for HE students. The facility has been received very well by students, and the college intends to build on this in the near future.

Some colleges will continue to embed their provision within subject-specialist areas or focus on niche provision. However, the emphasis on expanding higher education through locally based campuses in 'A new "University Challenge"' (DIUS, 2008) and HEFCE's intention to invest Centres for HE Excellence in colleges in the next few years (see HEFCE 2006/48) will be a driver for more larger providers to expand or develop HE centres, in a range of relationships with HEIs (see Section 1).

Kingston Maurward College

The college prides itself on its diverse programme of opportunities for those wishing to study predominantly land-based studies from foundation studies to higher education. Meeting the needs of this diverse student population has presented a challenge in terms of accommodation for learning resources. Higher education students, in particular, need a quiet work environment that is conducive to study but does not alienate them from the whole college experience.

As higher education developed within the college, it was agreed that there should be a separate area where HE students can study quietly, relax during lunch and break times and have easy access to the HE co-ordinator. With financial help from Bournemouth University, our HE partner, an annexe building was refurbished and established as the new HE centre. It is located centrally on campus and has a small IT suite, a comfortable seating area and a kitchenette, and houses the HE co-ordinator's office.

Students value the area highly, as it provides the opportunity to study quietly and gives them a sense of HE identity.

Student engagement and appropriate representation within course programmes and, where the college is directly funded, through student unions, and providing feedback through student surveys and to the IQER process are dealt with in Section 3 and 10.

2.6 Using learning resource centres to develop higher level skills

While funding should support college provision that is equivalent in standard to that in HEIs, smaller volumes of provision may mean a lower level of investment in learning resources; this can disadvantage colleges in terms of quality assurance. For example, it can be difficult to provide a wide selection of journals with the most current articles, abstracts and reviews. While QAA noted that over the period of its five-year cycle of review ('Learning from Academic review of higher education in further education colleges in England 2002-07'), learning resources in general had improved, 'areas for further development generally include limited book or journal stock and limited access to library facilities, computing and specialist equipment, particularly for part-time students' (p33).

Staff teaching on HE courses and learning centre/library staff need to work together in making available a broad and rich range of texts and resources, both traditional and electronic. Library staff from local HEIs will often help, and indirect funding arrangements should cover access to a partner HEI's learning resources. This may take the form of negotiating access to the university's learning resource centre (LRC), or through professional support in developing electronic access. Imaginative and creative use of new technology can give most colleges access to a wide range of resources. Practical and comprehensive induction of students and ongoing support from learning centre staff should back this up.

It makes a real difference if these members of staff are proactive in bringing students into the learning centre and teaching them to help themselves. Teaching staff in colleges support students extremely well, with substantial amounts of contact time, but this approach occasionally means that students become dependent on their teachers and do not develop the skills of independent learning: they need to spend time accessing external sources too.

Colleges occasionally underplay the value of journals or periodicals, which can offer important updating of the subject. A number of colleges have purchased Infotrac (an online collection of 3,000 journals in a range of subjects). However, some students need to be encouraged to read paper-based journals.

Kingston Maurward College

In September 2007, the college opened a new learning resources centre to meet the learning resource needs of the whole college. HE students were considered at every stage of the project and, again, Bournemouth University made a financial contribution.

The spacious modern library and IT facilities have been designed to promote an environment for study to encourage students to maximise use of the resources available. Flexible study spaces, new open-access computers and prominent enquiry points all contribute to the learning-focused ambience.

Previous laboratory facilities had been deemed inadequate for HE-level study, so the new flexible and fully equipped laboratories in the LRC have enabled a far wider range of activities to take place.

Elements of student support, learning support and IT support have also been accommodated in the new LRC, providing students with a single, centrally located and accessible building where a wide range of their support needs can be met.

Colleges usually provide library induction for all their students. Some differentiate activities for HE students by adding to their basic induction:

- information on copyright, plagiarism and collecting references
- presentation of appropriate reference materials, specialised collections and journals
- advice on planning research
- help with literature searching and information resources.

Some HEIs provide specialised guides for students based in partner colleges who use the HEI's learning resource centres.

2.7 Supporting higher level skills through technology

HEFCE's strategy for e-learning (HEFCE 2005/12) is supported by a collaboration between JISC and the Higher Education Academy. JISC now uses the term 'technology-assisted learning' rather than e-learning, and 'technology to support practice' rather than virtual learning environments.

Technology is increasingly used to support all aspects of the learning experience and communicating with students. The systems most commonly used in HEIs and FECs are Moodle and Blackboard.

All colleges and HEIs are connected through JISC to the Joint Academic Network (JANET), and regional centres provide support.

RSC Northern

The Regional Support Centres (RSCs) – nine in England, two in Scotland, one in Wales and one in Northern Ireland – exist to help hard-pressed curriculum and support staff in FE and other colleges to get the best out of e-learning. RSCs were originally created to ensure that the 400+ colleges had a local point of contact, initially for technical support. Curriculum support quickly developed once JANET connections were up and running, and over the last seven years that support has morphed into help with the systems and people aspects of e-learning.

A typical RSC has about 10 staff whose role primarily involves brokering training for client staff, promoting JISC services, providing advice on e-learning systems and technology, and operating social networks and forums. The latter are very important in promoting self-help across communities. The RSC is able to monitor, facilitate and disseminate projects.

JISC has funded a series of projects to implement, pilot and evaluate a range of technologies with learners in the HE in FE context; these started in March 2007 and finish in March 2009. The projects are all piloting existing technologies, with an emphasis on evaluating learners' experience of implementation. They can be accessed through the JISC web-site under www.jisc.ac.uk/heinfe

City of Sunderland College

The Comport project has been designed to compare and contrast different approaches to the use of mobile and other technologies for supporting HE programmes that include substantial work-based learning (WBL) elements.

This collaborative project of Tyne and Wear colleges includes a pilot project with students on a Service Management Fd at City of Sunderland College. Thirty-four second-year learners are producing an e-portfolio as part of the assessment for their PDP unit. This is an assessed part of the course, with the e-portfolio element worth 50 per cent of the unit total.

As part of the research, each learner has been loaned a personal digital assistant (PDA) to help collect evidence for their electronic portfolio. The PDA can be used to take digital photographs, video shots and sound files, and as a mobile storage and communication device. This is to help learners to gather and store personal development evidence in and out of their work environments. This evidence can then be uploaded onto their web-based e-portfolios.

The Government's British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) offers a wide range of supporting materials on information and communications technology (ICT) in education on its web-site (www.becta.org.uk), but its focus is on schools.

3 Management and planning

3.1 Managing higher education

This section is aimed particularly at recently appointed managers of higher education provision in further education colleges and their partners in HEIs. In response to requests from colleges, some of what follows is as much information as good practice guidance.

The arrangements which colleges make for managing their higher education provision vary considerably. Some see the HE programmes as part of seamless provision for the whole college; others see it as distinctive enough to have a separate HE centre (see Section 2.5).

Increasingly, colleges are appointing senior staff with a remit for managing or co-ordinating HE work. The quality and success of HE provision are enhanced if there is a manager with a clear overview of the issues affecting HE in FE at a time of much change, and who has the time and resources to co-ordinate the work effectively.

In colleges with a small amount of HE (fewer than 100 FTEs), it is useful to have a named person responsible for HE co-ordination.

The following example details how a college organises its HE.

City College Plymouth

Management structure and reporting lines for HE

City College Plymouth had offered HE provision for many years, but after student numbers had reached a critical mass of 850 FTEs in 2006 the college established a higher education office. The purpose of this office was to provide overall strategic direction for the development and delivery of higher education.

The HE department comprises three posts: a head of higher education, a higher education manager plus an administrator. The head of HE assumes overall responsibility for the strategic direction of higher education, while the HE manager leads specifically on employer engagement, marketing and progression. The

administrator acts as a co-ordinator between the college and the awarding bodies with which it works, primarily Edexcel and the University of Plymouth. Staff, students (current, past and prospective) and external organisations and agencies now have a dedicated, central locus for information about HE provision at the college.

The HE office integrates with the wider college in a number of ways. The head of HE is part of the college management team and sits on the Academic Board at the college as well as the Faculty Board at the university and the Joint Board of Studies. In addition, the head of HE chairs the HE Forum at the college and all first-stage approval/validation events for new foundation degree programmes. The HE manager sits on the college's Teaching and Learning Committee and Marketing Forum and works closely with programme managers. The HE administrator co-ordinates all the paperwork needed to support the awarding bodies' quality processes, and all the papers required for the Joint Board of Studies in support of annual programme monitoring. Higher education is represented at executive level by the deputy principal, to whom the head of HE reports, and through routine and systematic reports to the Corporation and its sub-committees.

Colleges also acknowledge the significance and position of HE provision through their committee structures, making clear in a formal sense how key elements are discussed. Colleges are no longer required to have academic boards. However, colleges with HE provision need to ensure that quality processes are transparent; if they abolish the academic board, they will need an alternative reporting structure.

Examples of two colleges' committee structures are set out below.

Hull College

Hull College's HE Information and Student Support Sub-committee holds regular meetings to discuss HE administrative and student support issues, drawing in all the college's service functions.

The group, which began meeting to assist in the development and support of an HE infrastructure within the college, is now part of the formal HE committee and reporting structure which advises the College Council and Academic Board. One key benefit of this group is that it enables a holistic approach to developing and improving services for HE students at the college.

Doncaster College

Committee structure

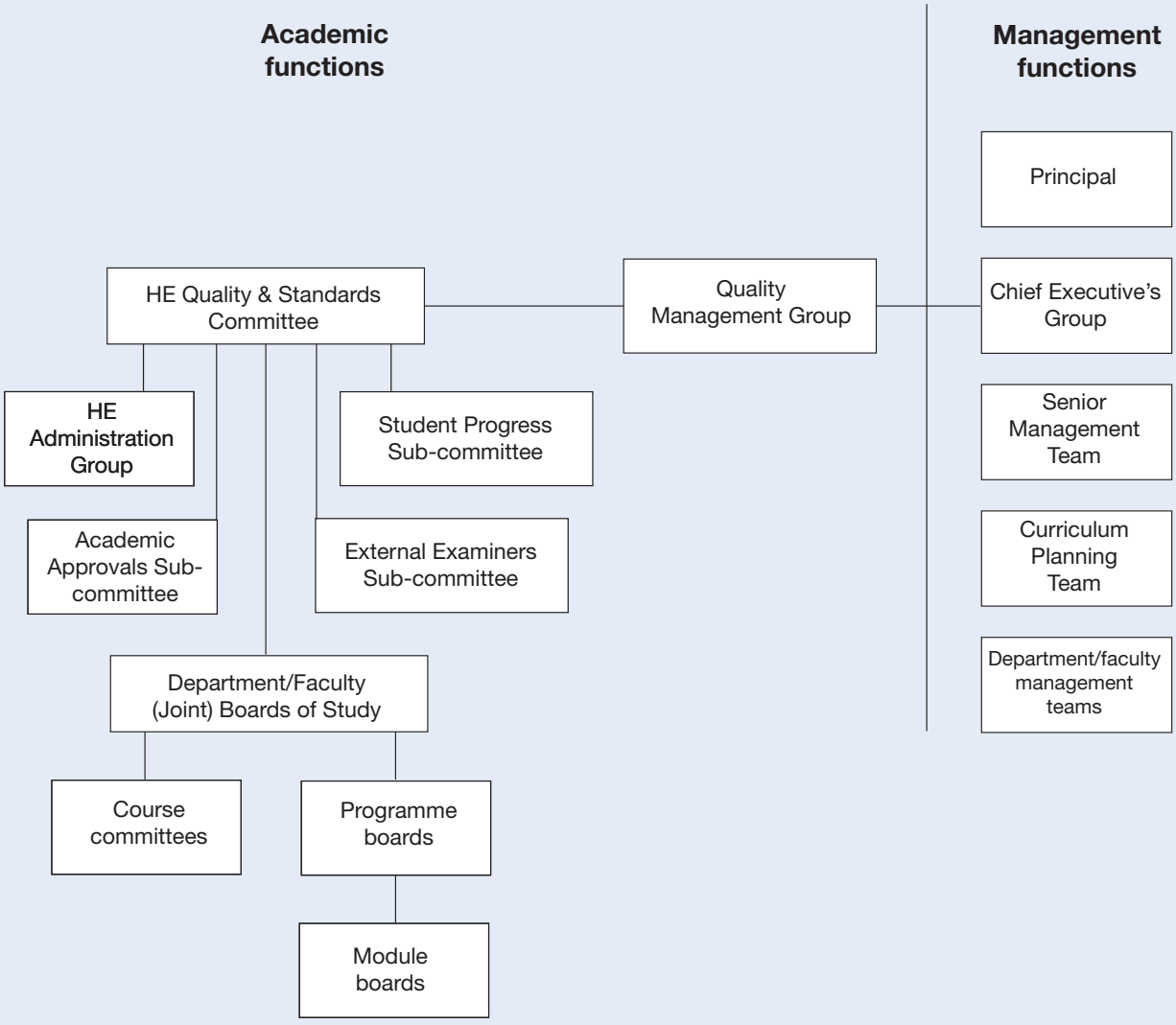
(extract from the 'Guide to the Management of Quality and Standards of Higher Education Programmes')

Ultimately it is the Corporation (Board of Governors) who are held responsible for the standards of all educational provision within the College, but the responsibility for implementation and management of the policies and procedures rests with staff at all levels of the College structure.

The key committee with responsibility for having an oversight of all higher education provision is the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee (HEQSC) ... Operational management issues are organised within a separate management structure. See Diagram 1, HE committee structure.

The HEQSC reports to the Quality Management Group (QMG) and then through the Executive to the Corporation.

Diagram 1 **HE committee structure**



3.2 Funding

(The content of this sub-section was provided by HEFCE officers.)

HEFCE provides funding for teaching to HEIs and FECs as a block grant which, within broad guidelines, institutions are free to spend on HE according to their own priorities. Formulae are used to determine how most of the money is allocated among institutions. These take account of certain factors for each institution, including the number and type of students and the subjects taught. The funding method is broad-brush and HEFCE does not expect institutions to model their internal allocations on it. HEFCE publishes annually its guide 'Funding higher education in England', which describes how it allocates its funds. The funding model enables institutions to vary their recruitment annually, provided they remain within certain limits. However, to expand significantly institutions need to apply for additional student numbers (see section below on growth).

HEFCE funds HE in FECs directly and indirectly, the latter normally through an HEI. Many colleges receive funding via both routes, and are sometimes in partnership with a number of HEIs.[4]

Direct funding

Direct funding is where the FEC has a direct contract with HEFCE, which the college manages itself. It can set its own fees but, except where a college has been granted powers to award foundation degrees, needs to have the curriculum validated by an awarding body, usually an HEI. The FEC has responsibility for the student numbers, the quality of the provision and the student experience, but the standards of the award are the responsibility of the awarding body. HEFCE is empowered to fund only certain types of full HE qualifications in directly funded FECs (refer to paragraph below).

Indirect funding

Indirect funding is where the student numbers belong to another lead institution, normally an HEI, and are sub-contracted to the FEC. The HEI retains responsibility for student numbers, the curriculum, the quality of the provision and the student experience. HEFCE expects indirectly funded institutions to have a minimum period of security over student numbers and funding, normally at least three years.

Funding powers

HEFCE's powers to fund FECs directly are determined by primary and secondary legislation. This means that it can fund only specific prescribed HE qualifications, and is unable to offer direct funding to colleges for individual HE modules. HEFCE's funding powers in relation to HEIs are wider. This means that where FECs receive funding indirectly through an HEI they can receive funds for HE modules, because the students are students of the HEI rather than the FEC. Further information on HEFCE's funding powers can be read at www.hefce.ac.uk under Learning & teaching/HE in FECs.

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[4] 'Higher education in further education colleges: HEFCE's funding powers' can be read at www.hefce.ac.uk under Publications/Circular letters/2008/22/2008.

Funding agreement

Each year, HEFCE draws up a funding agreement with each of the colleges it funds directly. This agreement is constructed in broad terms. It implies a weighted volume of activity which is funded against the resource being allocated. Institutions can vary their recruitments as long as the weighted volume of activity is maintained within certain limits. If recruitment results in the assumed resource of a college differing by more than 5 per cent from the standard resource for its provision, action is taken to draw the institution back within that tolerance band. This would be achieved by adjusting student numbers or funding in the current and/or subsequent years.

Foundation degree awarding powers

There is no direct connection between the award of validation powers and transferring of funding. A college with indirectly funded HE may receive funding directly only if the funding partner agrees to transfer the funding to the college.

Equivalent or lower qualifications

In September 2007, the Government decided that public funding should be phased out for students studying for a qualification that is equivalent to, or lower than, a qualification they have already been awarded. HEFCE has published details of how it is implementing this ELQ policy, including the exemptions that apply – see www.hefce.ac.uk under Learning & teaching/Funding/Equivalent or lower qualifications. Exemptions include students studying for a foundation degree and those in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA).

Funds for widening participation

Alongside the main funding for teaching, HEFCE allocates funds to recognise the additional costs of recruiting and supporting students from disadvantaged and non-traditional backgrounds, and students with disabilities. These allocations are made to institutions to reflect the additional costs they may face because of the broad mix of students they recruit. The allocation for widening participation comprises three different elements: widening access, improving retention and students with disabilities. Information on how these allocations are calculated is contained in HEFCE's annual guide 'Funding higher education in England'.

Review of funding

HEFCE has been reviewing how it allocates funding for teaching. It implemented changes in 2008-09 and will implement further changes in 2009-10. These include introducing targeted allocations to contribute towards the additional costs of foundation degrees, accelerated and intensive courses and part-time study. Details of the outcomes of HEFCE's review of the funding method can be found at www.hefce.ac.uk under Learning & teaching/Funding.

Capital funding

HEFCE's capital funding is formula driven. Each institution is provided with an allocation as an entitlement, so there is no bidding process. The allocations for indirectly and directly funded provision are calculated in the same way and are based on the institution's total standard teaching resource, which takes account of its HE student numbers. The allocations for indirectly funded provision in colleges

are made through the lead institution; they are published triennially, as part of HEFCE's Capital Investment Fund. For directly funded provision, allocations to colleges are published annually, in a separate circular letter. Conditions apply to colleges with fewer than 100 directly funded higher education FTEs. Allocations for directly funded provision for future years will be informed by the outcome of discussions with the LSC around alignment of the two councils' approaches to capital funding.

Growth

HEFCE's policy for supporting HE in colleges seeks a strategic commitment from FECs. It requires all colleges, whether directly or indirectly funded, to have a strategy for the development and delivery of their HE. Colleges' HE strategies will be a criterion in the consideration of any proposals for funded growth.

There are two ways to seek funding for additional student numbers (ASNs): through a successful proposal to HEFCE's Strategic Development Fund, and through indirectly funded partnerships (see below).

Strategic Development Fund

Colleges with more than 100 FTE directly funded higher education students are eligible to develop proposals for funded ASNs. Those with fewer than 100 directly funded FTEs and FECs that are indirectly funded should consider growth through HE partnerships, and especially through Lifelong Learning Networks. More generally, HEFCE seeks to support growth in FECs through proposals put forward by LLNs.

In allocating ASNs, HEFCE aims to meet a number of specific policy priorities; any proposals would need to address at least one of these. Information on the priorities and the process for making proposals can be found at www.hefce.ac.uk. In addition to fully funded ASNs, HEFCE allocates student numbers on the basis of co-funding by employers, with an expectation that the employer contribution makes up around half of the cost of delivery. These allocations are also made through the Strategic Development Fund route. More information about support for co-funded numbers is available at www.hefce.ac.uk under Economy & society/Employer engagement.

It is recommended that colleges considering growth in student numbers keep up to date with HEFCE's published information about higher education finances and ASNs. This is especially important in periods when funding may be restricted. Further guidance can be provided by HEFCE institutional teams.

Indirectly funded partnerships

A college can also negotiate ASNs through partnership with another HE provider that has sufficient available places to allocate some to an FEC. Growth through this route should still fit with the college's strategic development, and the strategic nature of the collaboration should be reflected in the indirect funding arrangement. Although the duration of collaborative arrangements depends on the particular circumstances, HEFCE expects them to be long-term associations between institutions. While these associations are in place, the funding arrangements between institutions should provide the college with security of funding and student numbers over an agreed period. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, HEFCE expects

the period of security to be at least three years, to support a mature, long-term commitment to HE. The agreement between institutions should be mapped against the HEFCE code of practice for indirectly funded partnerships. This can be read at www.hefce.ac.uk under Learning & teaching/HE in FECs/HE in FE publications.

The following college example is of an indirectly funded relationship, with one strategic HEI partner and four other FECs in the collaborative partnership.

Darlington College

The strategic partnership between Darlington College and the University of Teesside includes:

- mutually embedded strategic plans
- partnership steered by a strategic group and a joint academic planning and standards group
- creation of a higher education directorate within the college structure, bringing together the majority of staff delivering on HE programmes
- creation of a university centre within the college campus
- plans for a jointly operated new building
- secondment of a member of university staff to develop the college's HE profile
- shared staff development opportunities
- shared use of staff expertise and joint teaching on each other's programmes
- joint staff research
- annual HE in FE conference
- partnership approach to employer-facing provision.

Non-prescribed higher education

HEFCE does not have powers to fund NPHE provision directly in FE colleges. Responsibility for funding rests with the LSC. In practice, funding is increasingly provided by employers or individuals as full-cost programmes. Further information on HEFCE's funding powers can be read at www.hefce.ac.uk under Learning & teaching/HE in FECs.

Data reporting

The Higher Education in Further Education: Students Survey (HEIFES) is the annual survey of students on higher education courses, submitted to HEFCE annually in November. All students enrolled on directly funded courses are reported. The data provide an early indication of the number of students on recognised higher education courses at FECs. This enables HEFCE to monitor the achievement of funding agreement targets, and informs the allocation of teaching funds.

The Higher Education Students Early Statistics Survey (HESES) is the annual survey of students on recognised higher education courses for HEIs. It includes returns for students at colleges funded through the indirect route. HESES serves the same purposes as HEIFES but for HEIs, including provision in colleges funded indirectly.

FECs may have been allocated ASNs through local or national Lifelong Learning Networks. ASNs are allocated through one of two models. In model 1, ASNs are distributed into the mainstream grant of partner institutions; in model 2, they are held by the lead institution and allocated to partner institutions, often through a bidding process. For model 1 LLN students, FECs have been requested to flag these learners on their individualised learner record (ILR) return. In addition, for model 2 LLNs, all ASNs are flagged on the HESES return from the lead HEI of the LLN. Further information can be found at www.hefce.ac.uk under Widening participation/Lifelong Learning Networks/Additional student numbers.

Other sources of data are the Higher Education Statistics Agency individualised student record, which reports students taught in an FEC but registered at an HEI through an indirect agreement. The ILR collected by the FE data service on behalf of the LSC and other stakeholders reports students taught and registered in an FEC, directly funded.

At the end of each year, HEFCE compares institutions' HEIFES/HESES returns to the outturn position reported on their HESA student or ILR return. Where the differences between these returns exceed certain threshold criteria, institutions are asked to explain the reasons for the differences. Where HEFCE finds, either through reconciliations with ILR data or through any data audit, that erroneous data have resulted in institutions receiving incorrect funding allocations – including for widening participation and other targeted allocations – it will adjust their funding accordingly, subject to the appeals process and availability of funds.

To assist colleges in returning accurate data on the ILR, HEFCE provides a web facility that replicates the reconciliation they will perform on receipt of the ILR data. This facility is normally made available in summer each year.

Further information about data reporting and the reconciliation exercises can be read at www.hefce.ac.uk under Learning & teaching/Data collection.

Colleges are also required to return contact details for their students in order to allow them to participate in the National Student Survey and the Destinations of Leavers from HE (DLHE) survey.

Table 3 **HEFCE Funding calendar (timing may vary from year to year)**

Month	Action
November	Submit HEIFES data return
December	Letter informing the college of provisional holdback because contract has not been met
January	Deadline for submission of appeals for holdback
February	Letter informing the college of final holdback because contract has not been met
March	Letter giving provisional funding allocation for the following academic year
July	Letter giving final funding allocation
	HEFCE releases web facility to allow comparison of ILR and HEIFES returns
January	HEFCE reconciles HEIFES and ILR data

Fees and bursaries

Variable fees were introduced in 2006 under the Higher Education Act 2004. In 2008-09 this allows institutions offering higher education to charge an annual fee up to £3,145 for a full-time course. The maximum fee is subject to an annual inflationary rise announced by the Government.

The Act also created OFFA, the Office for Fair Access, to work with institutions to promote and safeguard fair access to higher education. This is achieved through the approval of institutions' access agreements, which set out the fees an institution has chosen to charge and the measures it is taking to reinforce fair access. An institution is required to have an access agreement when it wishes to charge a fee above the standard level, which for 2008-09 is £1,255. The institution is expected to invest a proportion of its additional income in bursary and/or other financial support for students and/or outreach work. This is to ensure that under-represented groups are not deterred by the increased fee and, if appropriate, to attract increased numbers of applications to HE from under-represented groups, in particular students from low-income groups. Provision for which there is indirect funding falls under the access agreement of the partner institution in receipt of the HEFCE funding.

OFFA recognises that colleges are traditionally strong in attracting students from under-represented groups. The levels of investment required can therefore be very small for colleges. The minimum requirement is that the least well-off students should receive a total package of support that at least equals the amount of their tuition fees. This means that if the fee is higher than the full level of the Government's maintenance grant for a student, the institution must make up the difference. For example: where an institution charges the maximum fee of £3,145, and a student receives the full maintenance grant of £2,835, the institution must provide at least a minimum bursary for the difference, which would be £310.

For colleges charging less than the level of the full maintenance grant, OFFA would not necessarily expect any access measures. However, any college charging more than the standard fee (£1,255 in 2008-09) needs to consider its position in the market and whether it wishes to use some of the additional fee income generated to support students on the lowest incomes, or other under-represented groups such as care leavers, or students from particularly disadvantaged areas or schools. It might also consider whether it would wish to fund additional outreach work. In coming to any decisions on the amount of investment it commits, a college should bear in mind that the policy intention is for the lion's share of the additional fee income to go to the institution to spend as it sees fit. This means that for a college charging the full fee, OFFA would not expect it to commit to more than the cost of the minimum bursary. Colleges charging less than the full fee might choose to invest less than that.

Many colleges in receipt of direct funding do not charge more than the standard level of fee, and therefore do not have access agreements. In March 2008, 53 colleges had access agreements out of a total of 128 with direct funding.

Part of the access agreement is a commitment to provide clear, accessible information to students and prospective students about fees, bursary schemes and student finances more generally.

OFFA staff are happy to have informal conversations about access agreements with colleges interested in charging fees above the standard rate. Further information, including contact details, is available at www.offa.org.uk

3.3 Categorising HE students

Distinction between full-time and part-time programmes

Colleges need to be aware of the interpretation of full-time and part-time programmes in higher education, which is not simply dependent on attendance or guided learning hours as required by the LSC for funding FE learners. Any reference to hours does not relate to formal class contact hours but to overall study time, which may include attendance in college, work-based learning hours, mentoring, supervision, tutoring, online learning and independent study. This, of course, has funding implications. (See Annex D for definitions.)

The distinction becomes particularly significant with work-based learning. Students taking an Fd in, for instance, Health as an employee in a hospital or in Early Years in a school, will have a large part of the programme embedded in their day-to-day job. Even if attendance at college is only for half a day a week, the programme can clearly be defined as full-time if it involves managed work-based learning with clearly defined learning outcomes that are assessed and integral to the study programme. Colleges need to make a judgement about work-based programmes and be prepared to explain how they work.

For details of funding issues affecting students, see Section 8.

International students

Some colleges integrate international students into award-bearing courses alongside home students; others have non-award-bearing courses on a full-cost basis. Some colleges also provide preparatory courses, including English support, or have English support as an add-on. A few colleges offer courses abroad; if these are award-bearing they are subject to the usual quality assurance arrangements, and any costs need to be built into a business plan. International students bring additional funding into a college as well as increased cultural diversity.

Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education

Grimsby Institute has developed a proactive and successful international strategy. The rationale for moving into the international market in the last four years was to:

- enhance the cultural diversity of the institute and the local area
- contribute to the capacity-building of developing countries through research and consultancy
- continue to diversify the institute's income so that it reduces the reliance on any one funding stream.

In the last four years the institute has recruited over 200 international students onto HE courses, resulting in additional income in excess of £1 million.

The strategy has been to secure prominent, long-standing relationships with educational institutions overseas and work with them and their learners in the year prior to arrival to support the acquisition of the skills and knowledge needed for the transition to the UK educational establishment.

Activities include:

- preparing overseas learners for the UK style of teaching delivery
- guest lectures by institute staff
- cultural preparation.

These value-added activities serve to strengthen the partnership and also to expose future learners to the expectations of the UK system. This strategy has proved highly successful and one which is being developed in several countries.

Home/European Union (EU) students

Students from the UK (home students) or those from the EU are entitled to apply for loans, grants and bursaries. This facility is not open to international students unless they have resided in the UK for three years.

For details of funding issues affecting students, see Section 8.8.

3.4 Roles and responsibilities

Further education colleges have a plethora of job titles that differ across institutions, and the same title might not carry the same responsibilities. Table 4 sets out a selection of roles and their responsibilities, to demonstrate the variety of tasks that

need to be carried out to ensure the effective co-ordination of HE provision in a college. This selection will not fit every FEC, but it should be possible to map the responsibilities to posts within a college's structure.

The number of people involved depends on the size of the HE provision. Since the provision of accurate data is so critical, colleges could usefully consider having more than one person in the management information systems (MIS) office who understands the data requirements for HEFCE. A college with a small number of HE students may distribute the responsibilities differently and combine several of the groupings listed.

Table 4 **Roles and responsibilities for HE provision in an FEC**

Role	Responsibilities	Works with
Group 1 Senior manager post: Vice-principal Assistant principal Director of curriculum	Strategic lead May oversee the QAA IQER process Disseminates HEFCE/QAA and other HE information Partnership links Funding, data returns to HEFCE Development of policy Partnership links (HEI, network) and local LLNs Submit access agreement and annual monitoring return to OFFA where required Reports to corporation Could be an aspect of general curriculum or cross-college areas May liaise with HEIs over indirectly funded partnerships, especially funding agreements Validation and annual reviews	Group 2: middle manager, who is normally responsible for co-ordination and management of subject disciplines Group 3: MIS Quality assurance
Group 2 Middle manager post: HE director HE manager HE co-ordinator Head of cluster of programmes	Overall co-ordination of HE and strategy May include some aspects of Group 1 Ensures that quality assurance systems are in place, implemented and monitored May oversee the QAA IQER processes Negotiates over curriculum development Staff development and training Chairs relevant committe/ forum and reports onwards	Group 1 (if appropriate) Group 3 Group 4 Staff teaching HE across the college Learning centre manager/librarian Staff development manager HE practitioners, who include group 5 Links with HEFCE, QAA. Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS)

Role	Responsibilities	Works with
		formerly Quality Improvement Agency (QIA)/Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL)
Group 3 Head of faculty Head of department Head of school Programme area manager/leader	Overall responsibility for curriculum planning, development and management across a cluster of programmes Liaises with HEI or other awarding bodies Deploys staff to teach HE Professional development for course teams Peer review of teaching Staff appraisal	Group 1 Group 2 Other members of group 3 Group 4 Group 5 Student support services Marketing MIS Finance department Quality assurance
Group 4 Curriculum manager Team leader	May have some of above responsibilities Focuses on course delivery and teams of staff Probably responsible for the operation of several programmes Liaises with external examiners and verifiers	Group 2 Group 3 Other members of group 4 May share responsibilities of group 5 HEI subject links Other subject staff External subject centres and agencies Students Quality assurance
Group 5 Course leader	Manages a particular course	Students Student representatives Group 3 Group 4 Other members of group 5 Admissions staff Marketing Subject staff in team, full-time and part-time

The structure of HEIs, though not uniform, is more consistent across the sector. Table 5 lists some of the posts in a typical HEI, with the nearest equivalent in an FEC.

Table 5 **Comparable posts in HE and FE**

Role in HEI	Nearest equivalent role in FEC
Vice-chancellor	Principal and/or chief executive
Pro vice-chancellor	Deputy or vice-principal; member of the executive senior management team
Dean or head of faculty	Head of faculty, head of school, programme area manager, senior curriculum manager, or a range of other titles
Head of department	Head of school or department
Programme leader	Curriculum area manager, team leader responsible for more than one course
Course leader	Course leader

Some colleges introduce roles to co-ordinate particular aspects of provision, which may cross FE/HE boundaries.

Newcastle-under-Lyme College

Course management – roles and responsibilities

With the development of foundation degrees and increased employer-related activities, the college's School of Art has created a management role to develop and implement a strategy to ensure clarity about what 'employer engagement' means at different programme levels across diverse HE/FE provision. In practice, this helps to ensure that activities are directed to the most appropriate programme, and that different levels are not competing for the same work.

3.5 Higher education planning cycle

Table 6 is based on one college's planning for its directly and indirectly funded HE; this cycle is distributed to relevant staff. It could be used as an aide-memoire or customised. Not all the activities will apply to all colleges. The column on the right indicates how responsibility for different activities relates to different levels in the college. For directly funded colleges, the college will make these arrangements; for indirectly funded provision they will be made in liaison with the HEI(s).

Table 6 **Example of planning cycle for HE in an FEC**

Date	Activities – internal	Whose responsibility?	Activities – external	Whose responsibility?
August	Clearing from third week if in UCAS Liaise with HEI partner if not	Admissions HE course leaders	Advertise spare places	Marketing
September	Enrolment Induction Diagnostic analysis	Course leaders Student support Learning support	Plan future growth and consider possible sources of fully funded or co-funded ASNs for 2009-10 and 2010-11 (see HEFCE web-site for current information)	HE manager
October	Course reviews submitted	Course leaders	Liaise with awarding bodies	HE manager
	Collect destinations information	Course leaders Administrators	Start preparing for NSS (introduced for directly funded FECs in 2008-09)	HE manager
	Open day to recruit for next year	Marketing Course leaders Student support		HE manager (or principal)
November			Update UCAS information	Admissions or marketing
	Curriculum development for next academic year	Course teams	Labour market intelligence (LMI)	HE manager Marketing
			HEIFES data return to HEFCE by directly funded colleges	HE manager with MIS Sign off by principal
December			Liaise with HEI for HESES return for indirectly funded students	HE manager
January	Review student numbers/ curriculum	HE manager Curriculum manager Course leader	Submit course details to Student Loans Company (SLC) for students to be eligible for student support, or liaise with HEI	HE manager

Date	Activities – internal	Whose responsibility?	Activities – external	Whose responsibility?
March	Set targets	HE manager Curriculum manager	Allocation of student numbers and financial contract from HEFCE to directly funded FECs and to HEIs for indirectly funded	Principal, senior manager
April	Begin preparing HE prospectus for courses starting in 18 months' time	HE manager Marketing	If indirectly funded, liaise with HEI	HE manager Marketing
May	Prepare information for new students Information on accommodation	Course leader Admissions, student support		
June	Examination boards	Course leader Curriculum manager	Liaise with awarding bodies and external examiners	Course leaders HE manager
	End-of-year student feedback	Course leader with quality manager	Monitoring report to validating HEIs	HE manager
	Exit interviews	Course leader		
	Graduation	Marketing		
			Evaluate fees policy if directly funded or liaise with HEI and confirm access agreement with OFFA if appropriate	HE manager and finance manager
July	Complete course review	Course leader		
	Prepare information for clearing	Course leader		
	Establish assessment instruments for coming academic year	Course leader		
	Evaluate HE provision against the college's HE strategy Report to college committees and governing body as appropriate	HE manager and senior management team		

IQER has a planning cycle which is individual to the college. The IQER handbook (available on the QAA web-site) gives details of how to plot it once initial dates are set.

Colleges can keep up to date with HEFCE information and press releases by signing up to one of its electronic mailing lists (see www.hefce.ac.uk under Publications/Electronic publications) and with QAA News on qaa-news@jiscmail.ac.uk

3.6 Course management: roles and responsibilities

The responsibilities of a course leader for HEFCE-funded provision are extensive and may differ from those for a course leader of NPHE and also, to some extent, between directly and indirectly funded provision. The burden can be reduced with good administrative support (although this is not always available) and a clearly defined contribution from admissions, guidance and marketing staff. Specific tasks are frequently shared between course leaders and curriculum managers, and so may not exactly match those set out in Table 7.

The stages listed in Table 7 follow the student experience. The amount of activity that falls to the course leader will depend on how much other support is available.

Table 7 **Checklist for course management roles and responsibilities**

Before the course starts	During the course – key aspects of management and administration	During the course – responsibilities concerning students	After the course – look backwards and forwards
1 Ensure that there are plans for niche marketing and publicity and good-quality information: - check information with HE partners - liaise with employers - contact level 3 students who may be progressing - ensure that correct details are with UCAS - ensure that full, accurate details are in the HE prospectus, course leaflets and student handbooks	4 Make arrangements for and support part-time staff	10 Ensure that each student has a personal tutor	17 Co-ordinate the monitoring and evaluation process
2 For recruitment: - plan open days, interview procedures and academic year dates - keep in touch with students once they are offered a place - prepare an induction programme	5 Convene course team meetings	11 Liaise with external agencies over work placements, exhibitions, educational visits, guest speakers	18 Discuss annual course review with team
3 Plan in advance to relieve pressure at other busier times: - set dates for the year, including the assessment schedule, internal moderation and examination boards - advise on appointment of student representatives - establish peer groups for study support	6 Liaise with and respond to requests from external examiners	12 Monitor the assessment plan with the course team	19 Write an evaluative course review with action plan, agreed by the course team
	7 Collect information regularly for annual course review	13 Write student references for progression onto further HE studies or employment	20 Review the demand for and relevance of the course (regional Labour Market Information) in light of the college's HE strategy
	8 Collect and prepare documentation for the assessment/examination board	14 Hold student exit tutorials	21 Planning for next academic year (course content, staffing, resources, timetabling, course handbook)
	9 Ensure that MIS data are accurate	15 Capture feedback from students and inform them of the outcomes	22 Keep in touch with completing students for destinations information
		16 Maintain records of former students' achievements and destinations	23 Send letters to all new students

3.7 Using management information

Colleges use management information for HE in FE to:

- monitor and evaluate the success of HE programmes within the context of the college's mission and the provision's overall aims
- make required reports (HEIFES) to HEFCE and to the ILR, or to an HEI
- analyse trends and review the outcomes of decisions/action taken
- collect data to demonstrate widening participation target groups
- plan new provision or changes in existing provision
- inform annual course review
- report on performance indicators
- provide information for IQER where appropriate
- support bids for special funding, such as for ASNs or co-funding.

QAA reviewers expect course teams to know and understand the data they use and be able to explain and clarify points arising from the data. Data should show absolute numbers as well as percentages.

Table 8 sets out the kind of data it is helpful for course teams to use to interrogate their provision and identify trends or changes. External agencies also expect these data to be provided for HE courses. There is no one way of providing the data, but it is important to be clear about where the responsibility lies and to avoid confusion or double-counting. Following the student life cycle (that is, from application to post-completion) gives the best range for collection.

Table 8 **Data requirements for directly funded HE provision in FECs**

Note: data for indirectly funded provision are collected by partner HEIs

Targets	For each programme and overall
Data for three years	For each programme
Applications	Overall numbers; ratio of applications to enrolments
Enrolment	Numbers on 1 November (for HEI returns, 1 December)
Entry qualifications	Highest qualification on entry. If the college wishes to demonstrate progression from FE to HE it may also wish to collect other data to support this. Qualification on entry is very important, as HEFCE no longer funds students if they are studying for an equal or lower qualification than they already hold. Foundation degrees are exempt from this ruling as are certain subjects, including undergraduate medicine, dentistry, social work, nursing, veterinary science, students in receipt of DSA and all levels of teacher training. This information is also relevant to widening participation and is likely to improve the overall weightings

Withdrawals	Collect reasons at the time (be clear about the census dates for withdrawals to count)
Transfers	Information about where and why
Deferrals	Collect reasons (and track student re-entry, progression and completion)
In-course progression	Include students who have been referred after their work is complete
Completion	Indicate if referred work is to be completed. Completion usually refers to the percentage of the original cohort who completed, not the percentage of those entering the next year. HEFCE has a specific definition of completion for funding purposes, which can be found in the HEIFES guidance. Colleges need to ensure that they collect data to support this
Achievement of the award on completion	As a percentage of the students who enrolled at the start of the course. Achievement usually applies to data on class of award, such as proportions of pass/merit/distinction profiles, or degree classifications
Added value to entry	Distance travelled between original qualifications and achievement of award
Progression to further study or employment	State nature of progression. Provide details of whether employment is subject related or not. From 2008-09 onwards these data will be collected in the DLHE survey and made available to colleges
Student profile	
Age Disability Ethnicity Gender	18-21; 21-30; over 30

Making use of the data

Quantitative data can be used effectively in a number of ways to analyse trends as well as to report on the current position. Its use is especially important in annual course review and the production of QAA self-evaluation documents for internal management purposes and external scrutiny. Data can also be used to monitor trends in progression, the representation of non-traditional students and other matters that inform planning.

A unique learner number (ULN), developed jointly by a number of partners (including HEFCE and the LSC), is being piloted through the Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP) group. If the pilot is successful, it will assist colleges in data collection.

Annual course reviews

Discussing quantitative data enables course teams to reflect on all the areas mentioned above, as well as determining actions to address any necessary improvements. Since the data provided by many college management information systems (MIS) are presented to meet the requirements of FE systems, course review data become more important.

QAA self-evaluation documents

The QAA self-evaluation reflects the key issues relating to quantitative data as well as providing the detail in the evidence base for Summative review. See Section 10 for IQER requirements.

4 Working in partnership

4.1 Models of collaboration

Types of partnership

There are many models of collaboration and partnership, some involving formal partnership agreements and others based on more informal linkages. The 2003 White Paper 'The future of higher education' placed particular emphasis on partnership, through increased collaboration and indirect funding relationships. Since 1999, the number of colleges with small directly funded numbers has reduced, and substantive and extensive collaborative FE/HE partnerships have emerged across the country. HEFCE's review of HE in FECs, explained in the consultation (HEFCE 2006/48), demonstrated HEFCE's support and promotion of effective partnerships between colleges and universities and a wider range of stakeholders.

HEFCE, as the funding body, and QAA, as the body responsible for the oversight of quality and standards in HE, have different definitions of partnership or collaborative arrangements (see boxes below). However, both are concerned to locate accountability: in the case of QAA, accountability for quality; in the case of HEFCE, accountability for public funds.

Whatever the funding model, there is a partnership dimension.

HEFCE definition

An indirectly funded franchise partnership is one in which the student is attributed to the HEI for funding purposes but the course is wholly or partly delivered in the FEC.

HEFCE's code of practice for indirectly funded partnerships is being updated in 2009 following the review of HE in FECs. The revised guidance will not differ substantially from that first offered in December 2000 (HEFCE 00/54: 'Higher education in further education colleges. Indirectly funded partnerships: codes of practice for franchise and consortia arrangements').

QAA definition

The term 'collaborative provision' is taken to mean 'education leading to an award, or to specific credit toward an award, of an awarding institution delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through an arrangement with a partner organisation'.

The 'precepts' by which HEIs are expected to manage quality and standards within partnerships are set out in QAA's 'Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 2, collaborative provision'. Although most of the precepts relate to the actions taken by the lead HEI, it is important for an FEC working in partnership to be aware of what is considered to be good practice.

From 2008, QAA is directly involved with all colleges providing HE in FE, regardless of whether the funding is received directly by the college or indirectly through a partner HEI. This review methodology is known as Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review and is explored more fully in Section 10.

The above two definitions introduce the terms 'franchise' and 'collaborative provision'. They are not, however, always used consistently, so it is important to be clear exactly what is meant by such terms when used in particular partnership models. (Annex D addresses the definitions of these and other terms.)

The simplest models of collaboration start from the funding arrangements: directly or indirectly funded. Table 9, prepared by HEFCE, identifies the numbers of HE students taught in FECs, through direct or indirect funding relationships.

Table 9 **Student headcounts by registering and teaching institution**

Category/year	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Students taught at an FEC in partnership with an HEI (indirectly funded)	43,025	46,548	47,472	50,017
Students taught at an FEC (directly funded)	53,410	56,015	56,912	55,270

Note: students at institutions changing sectors between the data year and 2006-07 are excluded. This table excludes distance learners, students not based in the UK and all NPHE

The language of collaborative provision and awarding bodies is not straightforward. These are complex relationships, and different institutions use terms in different ways in the context of validation arrangements. So it is important for colleges to check what their awarding body partners mean by these terms. The Council of Validating Universities (CVU), for example, has produced a set of collaborative provision categories which are concerned more with programmes and defining partnerships in terms of the arrangements made for their approval and/or their delivery, as set out below.

CVU

- validation: **process** by which awards of an organisation are judged by the awarding body to be of an appropriate quality and standards to lead to its awards
- franchising: **process** by which an awarding body authorises the delivery of one of its approved programmes by another organisation

- accreditation: **process** by which an awarding body delegates authority to an organisation for a wide range of quality assurance functions while remaining ultimately responsible for quality and academic standards
- articulation: **relationship** between two linked programmes, usually between two different institutions, e.g. progression for Fds
- joint provision and teaching: **arrangements** between universities and colleges which involve either shared or 'bought in' teaching of students on particular programmes

Since these terms can be used variably, the importance of understanding how they are being used is critical. For example, the Foundation Degree Forward (fdf) model for employer based training accreditation (EBTA) described in Section 4.4 uses a very different definition to that of the CVU.

Partnership structures

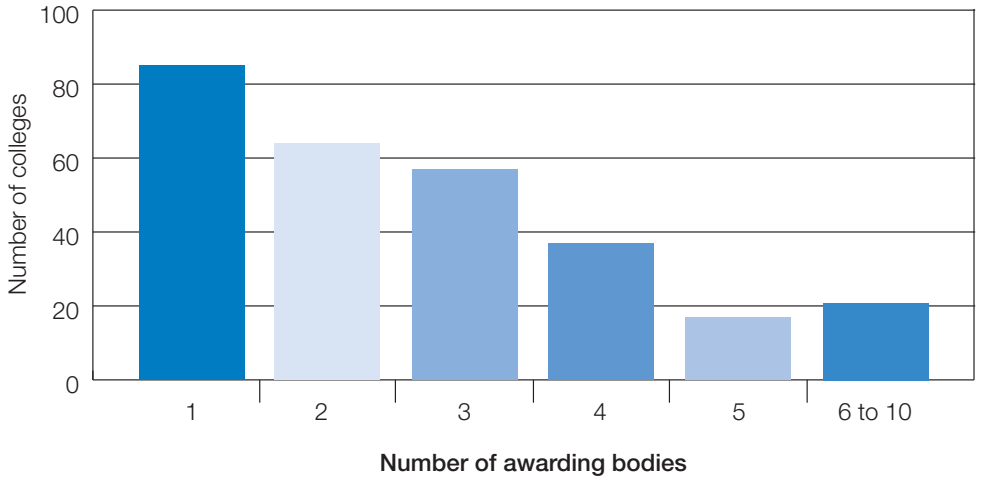
As well as looking at models of collaboration from the perspective of funding or programmes, it is possible to look to the structure of partnerships. These can range from loose networks to very tight, formal arrangements. Different models of collaboration reflect purpose and history. The characteristics and features of FE/HE relationships which drive the complexity and formality of partnership structures include:

- number of college partners involved; bilateral or multilateral partnership arrangements
- size and range of the provision; number of programmes, number of students, number of subject disciplines, number of programme levels
- funding flows (direct and/or indirect)
- the funding of partnership activity
- who is involved in the partnership from the college and the university, seniority of staff, frequency of contact, formality/informality of structures specifically developed to support the partnership
- range of involvement in each others' organisational structures, such as reciprocal committee membership, including the governing body
- extent of collaborative sharing of good practice and curriculum development between college partners as well as with the university partner
- strategic importance of the partnership to the college(s) and the university.

A college may choose to engage in a number of complex partnership models involving different HEIs and FECs and including Edexcel. At the other extreme, another college may have a single HEI partner and also be the only FEC partner of that HEI.

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of bilateral and multiple partnerships for all colleges with HE provision.

Figure 1 **Partnership arrangements**



Source: QAA, 2008. The figures relate to provision in 2006-07

Figure 1 shows that 85 colleges had one HE awarding body, while at the other end of the scale 22 had between six and 10.

The following case studies illustrate the diversity of features that different collaborative models embrace. The first example is a college which has both direct and indirect funding, with five HEI partners and Edexcel.

York College

Extract from higher education strategy

The College position, currently, in the establishment of HEI partnerships, can be described as 'best fit'. This 'best fit' is primarily based upon a [College] curriculum team's relationship and understanding of the partner HEI programme content and delivery and building a working relationship to deliver a quality product.

This range of partnerships will ensure [that] future planned growth will be developed where the subject/sector expertise is complementary with each partner's institutional portfolio, and where effective and strong academic/vocational staff links work well for the benefit of the students.

The second example is an indirectly funded college in a collaborative partnership with other colleges and one main HEI partner.

West Herts College and Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium

The college is a member of the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium, which comprises the four FECs in Hertfordshire and the university. The five institutions work very closely together to assure quality and maintain standards across all HE provision at the colleges.

Distinctive features include:

- collaborative curriculum development activities, guided by a handbook for programme developers and reviewers
- strategic planning and marketing of the consortium's provision, as evidenced by strategy away days and a recent marketing plan developed at consortium level and funded by all five partners
- strong leadership and management and effective buy-in that includes college principals, HE managers, senior administrators, admissions and other student and business support staff
- highly effective peer support across the four colleges at strategic and curriculum delivery level, including cross-college setting and moderation of assessments and development of innovative blended learning strategies.

Benefits include:

- access to all university resources – including learning resource centres and sports and social facilities – for HE learners at the FECs
- joint delivery on some programmes, including one day per week at one of the university campuses for some learners
- progression opportunities for all HE students at the colleges to achieve an honours degree at the university, generally with only one further year of study (e.g. after successful completion of a foundation degree)
- access to the university's excellent blended learning system
- highly effective staff development opportunities for FE staff in both scholarly activity and teaching and learning practice, including development of blended learning skills and expertise
- pooling of expertise and sharing of curriculum development and management responsibilities and tasks.

The University of Plymouth has one of the largest partnerships in the country.

University of Plymouth Colleges

The management hub, or nerve centre, of the University of Plymouth's relationship with its partner colleges is somewhat unusual, in that it is a full faculty of the university – the UPC Faculty. This enables the colleges to have focused points of contact for all aspects of the partnership, while still benefiting from strong academic links to the subject faculties. In essence, colleges' HE staff teams are full members of a university faculty, with all the benefits that status brings. It is also a faculty of strength, with 10,000 students (7,000 FTEs) from 21 partner institutions (15 FECs) and 296 'live' HE programmes running in 2007-08.

The UPC Faculty essentially manages the university's delivery across the whole south-west region, from Bristol to Penzance via the Channel Islands, and has enabled thousands of learners, often geographically isolated, to benefit from university-level education. One key partner, Cornwall College, states in its HE strategy that the partnership with the university extends beyond that of a validating HEI, as working together includes the Combined Universities in Cornwall initiative, the south-west LLN, the Aimhigher Peninsula Programme and the south-west RDA.

Key features of UPC include:

- registered university teacher status for staff, which allows full access to the university's intranet and a wide range of staff development/CPD activities
- subject forums, which are an academic focus for staff; they deliver subject-specific staff development activities/days and events, and act as a medium to spread good practice and encourage collaboration
- subject forum chairs, who act as academic links between the university and the staff team at the college, or ensure that such activity is in place via another faculty member
- strong links for students between the University Student Union and college student bodies, via UPC-funded student union officers
- the HE Learning Partnerships Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (HELP CETL).

HELP CETL

This CETL is a full part of UPC and is a five-year project funded through HEFCE to build on, promote and enhance good practice in teaching and learning across the UPC network. HELP has a number of development activities which partner college staff can feed into. An important one is the Award Holders Scheme, which funds and supports fellowships and CPD awards. These are given to help staff to develop projects and their own academic practice, based on development themes. The CETL works to encourage and support communities of practice and subject forums. The aim is to enable staff to participate in the network in order to enhance student experience and provide opportunities for personal and professional development.

4.2 Common features of successful partnerships

The following list summarises some of the features considered to contribute to effective partnerships.

Pre-requisites:

- clarity of purpose – a clear, shared understanding of why the partnership should exist and what it is seeking to achieve
- a commitment to collaborative working at all levels, including senior management and the board or corporation
- real benefits for all partners
- informed awareness of the costs of working in partnership, especially in terms of time
- clear roles and responsibilities
- clear communication structures
- clear financial and service agreements.

Ethos:

- collaborative arrangements that recognise the equality of all partners
- openness and transparency
- shared resources and responsibilities
- willingness to compromise
- partners who are alert to potential areas of conflict of interest and competition.

Structure:

- advantages of building on existing or prior networks
- some central co-ordination for partnerships in both the college and the HEI
- appropriate administrative support
- the involvement, in some capacity, of all categories of staff
- creation of sub-groups and working parties, bringing together FE and HE staff around topics of mutual interest to build effective relationships.

Process:

- it is helpful for partnerships to focus on a limited number of key issues
- initial concentration on practical issues should not result in the loss of a more strategic perspective
- flexibility to respond creatively to changing external circumstances is an important characteristic of successful partnerships
- an agreed mechanism for dealing with conflicts or disagreements is very helpful.

The following three examples illustrate variety and complexity in partnership models while sharing the key pre-requisite of clarity of understanding and purpose. The first is a large partnership across a substantial geographical area, focusing on a single curriculum.

Consortium for Post-Compulsory Education and Training (PCET)

PCET is a large, dispersed collaborative partnership that traces its origins to 1966. It now consists of an equal partnership of the University of Huddersfield and 30 FECs across the north of England, delivering in-service qualifications in professional development to over 2,000 teachers and trainers working in the post-compulsory sector of education and training. The awards made are those of the University of Huddersfield.

Several characteristics of the partnership have contributed to its endurance and success (such as in quality review), particularly the professional relationships of all those involved in delivering the programmes. All partners, including the university, are equal members of the consortium, and the university's staff all have extensive experience in the post-compulsory sector. These relationships have been cultivated and supported through various means, including:

- monthly, all-day meetings of leaders of the teaching team in each college; these can include a programme of outside speakers and presentations profiling each centre, training workshops, resource exchanges, research seminars and dissemination activities
- focused occasional workshops for staff in partner colleges who support the programmes (librarians, finance officers, HE/quality assurance managers)
- liaison tutors – university staff who are designated as the link person for the programmes in each college; their duties include attending centre-based committees, inducting/briefing students on parts of the programme, supporting the pathway manager in each location, and providing the first point of contact for queries
- collaborative curriculum development which, because of the programmes' specialist focus on teaching in post-16 education, genuinely values the expertise and experience of practitioners in the FECs
- an annual conference (with associated events) that brings together all tutors engaged on PCET programmes for reflection on practice, sharing of experience and updating on current developments and research
- the creation of a Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training, HUDCETT, of which the consortium is the largest constituent member.

The consortium has developed a VLE – ASSOCiate Online – to enhance collaboration by dispersed institutions through ICT; this acts as a supplement to existing mechanisms that entail face-to-face contact by partners, not as a substitute for them. ASSOCiate Online is now being further developed as part of HUDCETT and has a national reach far beyond the consortium.

Two other ways to work in partnership are illustrated below; the first represents a considerable geographical spread and a wide curriculum.

Regional University Network

The Regional University Network is an integral part of Leeds Metropolitan University's widening participation strategy. Founded in 2004, 20 colleges have now entered into partnership with Leeds Met as of June 2008, and more are requesting membership. The concept is successful partially because of its simplicity, but also because of the level and types of service the network provides; it is more than just a validation service.

The primary features are:

- a partnership of equals
- opportunities for staff and students across each of the institutions to learn and share from each other
- opportunities for collaborative development of curricula between partners
- provision of opportunities for staff and students to 'rub shoulders with champions' across education, business, sport and the wider arts environment
- a one-stop shop approach with a dedicated point of contact into the university
- a collegiate approach to staff development and other resources
- speedy response to requests for validation of employer-led developments.

The second is an example of a tightly defined sub-region with a wide curriculum.

Staffordshire University Regional Federation (SURF)

SURF is a HEFCE-recognised funding consortium established in 2000, primarily to increase higher education provision through FECs so that students can study where they live and/or work. SURF comprises all nine FECs in Staffordshire and two Shropshire colleges, with Staffordshire University as the lead institution.

Essentially, SURF is a mini 'funding council'. Student numbers can be moved between colleges, reflecting changes in the popularity of courses and colleges' plans for HE growth. The SURF funding model is simple and transparent. Colleges receive 85 per cent of the HEFCE grant and fee income for all Staffordshire University validated HE awards, including any residual direct Edexcel awards. The university retains 15 per cent.

The Management Board is chaired by the university vice-chancellor, with colleges represented by principals; it meets twice a year to develop and review consortium strategy. The Management Committee, chaired by a college principal, meets four times a year; it oversees key consortium issues, including student numbers and quality assurance. The following committees and working groups feed into the Management Committee: Quality Committee, Curriculum and Qualifications, Marketing, Student Support, Student Administration.

In 2003-04, 616 full-time and 1,039 part-time students studied Staffordshire University awards in SURF colleges. By 2007-08, these figures had risen to 735 and 2,280 respectively.

4.3 Reaching agreement about collaboration

What defines successful collaboration? Here is one set of indicators:

- all those directly involved see clear benefits, especially students and staff
- those benefits clearly outweigh the costs
- the financial stability of all partners is maintained or improved
- because of the partnership, individual institutions within it are better able to respond to market and policy drivers
- all institutional reputations are enhanced
- the partnership has authority and influence with key stakeholders outside the immediate geographical area.

A degree of formality is required to protect the interests of students being taught through partnership arrangements, and to provide proper accountability for public funds. Agreements should reflect best collaborative practice. This is explored in more detail in the sub-section below.

Any formal collaborative arrangement must have an agreement or memorandum of co-operation. HEFCE provides a single code of practice for indirectly funded collaborative partnerships. This guidance refers to those values that HEFCE regards as essential to good collaborative working: exclusivity, transparency, clarity and stability. It also pays particular attention to the 'indicative content of an agreement', articulating expectations that agreements governing indirect funding relationships will be clear. The following headings give a sense of what is covered, but colleges need to refer to the whole code for the detail when it becomes available in 2009.

Indicative content of an agreement:

- purpose of the agreement and strategic objectives of the partnership
- obligations and responsibilities of HEI and FEC partners
- management of the partnership, covering how the members will work together
- financial basis of the partnership
- emphasis on clarity and transparency
- allocation and removal of student numbers
- date and terms for review of the agreement.

Colchester Institute and the University of Essex

The partnership between the University of Essex and Colchester Institute is based on a mutual understanding of strategic direction and the need for complementarity. The university has a strong research profile and is looking to address the widening participation agenda through partnership activity; the college, which is dedicated to the vocational curriculum, provides programmes that are industry related, with considerable support for non-traditional students entering HE.

The partnership agreement is structured such that each party has equal representation on the Management Board; this is symptomatic of the nature of the relationship between the institute's HE management infrastructure and the academic partnerships team at the university. The partnership is based on an agreed high level of autonomy for the college, following a rigorous institutional audit, clear quality assurance frameworks and very open channels of communication between relevant stakeholders. Such communication includes access to the Colchester Institute HE Operations Portal by the academic partnerships manager.

Indirect funding and partnership

The following indicative example from the University of Teesside and its partner colleges, the Higher Education Business Partnership, illustrates an indirectly funded partnership's efforts to make the responsibilities of each party clear and transparent. The list is not exhaustive.

University of Teesside and the Higher Education Business Partnership

The university undertakes to:

- liaise with HEFCE, including the handling of all financial matters, and completion of all financial and other statistical returns relating to the provision being offered, bidding for additional student numbers and leading on bids to secure any other additional initiative funds to further the work of the college partner(s) and, wherever possible, mitigate against the financial implications of over- or under-recruitment in the college
- take a lead role in QAA activity directed to the university and a support role in QAA activity directed to the college
- carry out approval and validation processes on behalf of programmes to be delivered in the college
- offer effective programme management through the appointment of a programme co-ordinator (or equivalent) to liaise with the college on operational matters related to the delivery, assessment and moderation of the programmes
- make at least one quality monitoring visit per year and provide a report of the outcomes
- appoint external examiners and ensure that copies of all reports are received by the college
- make arrangements for and chair module, progression and award boards (including all associated administration)
- maintain student records, issue transcripts and certificates and arrange award ceremonies

The college undertakes to:

- engage in annual processes of academic planning and target setting
- market programmes effectively (in liaison with the university's Corporate Communications Unit) and make every endeavour to recruit to target
- recruit and admit students to programmes in line with agreed entry requirements and university procedures
- supply the university with accurate and timely information on enrolled and withdrawn students
- identify a development team for any new programme proposal and allocate sufficient resources to support the development
- appoint a programme leader to liaise with the university on matters of programme management, including recruitment, staffing, delivery, assessment, review and evaluation, and student progress
- provide an appropriately qualified and experienced team of staff to deliver the programmes as set out in the programme approval documentation, and consult the university promptly on all staffing changes
- support staff in development (to include knowledge of the university's quality and regulatory requirements) and scholarly activity

The university undertakes to:

- make existing library and learning resources available to all students undertaking University of Teesside awards within the college, both online and within the campus LRC
- make guidance, counselling and advice services available to all students undertaking University of Teesside awards both at the campus and, where possible, online
- give access to services and facilities such as accommodation and sport and recreation on campus and provide mechanisms for students to apply for additional funding from the Access to Learning Fund
- include all college-based programmes in marketing materials and recruitment activities
- provide a comprehensive range of staff development opportunities, both free and with fee subsidy (where applicable)
- provide access to Blackboard for college staff delivering University of Teesside programmes and students studying on them
- provide clear and up-to-date information related to academic regulations and quality procedures
- oversee the approval of all admissions decisions and registration of applicants as students of the university
- administer procedures relating to academic regulations, including academic complaints (assessment review), mitigating circumstances and plagiarism and other complaints which may affect standards and/or the quality of learning experience
- give students access to students' union facilities and services.

The college undertakes to:

- take a lead role in QAA activity directed to the college and a support role in QAA activity directed to the university
- prepare annual review and monitoring reports at module, programme and institutional level
- ensure attendance of staff at agreed meetings for the purpose of conducting standardised assessment and moderation practices
- provide suitable teaching accommodation and appropriate library and associated study spaces for the delivery of collaborative programmes
- facilitate the access of university staff and external examiners to staff teams and students, in line with agreed quality monitoring practices
- provide first-line advice, guidance and counselling so that students understand the academic regulations and appeals procedures within which the programmes covered by this agreement are operated
- operate disciplinary and complaints (not academic-related) procedures.

4.4 Working with employers

The importance of employer engagement and workforce development in higher education has become more significant since 2006 and the Leitch Review. Its importance as a critical government policy initiative should not be underestimated. Colleges and HEIs are increasingly developing ways of working with employers, although it should be said that most non-prescribed higher education has always involved employers and professional bodies. (See Section 6 for curricula that emphasise work-based learning.)

The Training Quality Standard is a framework and an assessment and certification process which 'recognises and celebrates the best organisations delivering training and development solutions to employers'. At the time of writing, 29 FECs and 12 training providers had achieved the standard. For more detail, see www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk

Close involvement with employers is one of the strengths of colleges and a key attraction for students. HEFCE sees the role of colleges in this agenda as extremely important, and its consultation for the HE in FECs policy review made this explicit:

> …we believe [HE in FECs] should focus on the development of higher level skills and on engaging employers closely and directly.
> (HEFCE 2006/48, paragraph 38)

Building on the Leitch Review's targets, HEFCE has introduced co-funding as a model to ensure that all employer-led demand can be met, and that employers are making a reasonable financial or in-kind contribution to developing their workforce's skills alongside development funding to improve an HEI's capacity to respond. Many RDAs are making similar funds available regionally, and within three regions (the North West, South West and North East) Higher Level Skills Pathfinders have been piloting collaborative approaches to engaging employers in higher skills development. Existing organisations and structures have been aligned with this strategic priority; fdf now has a broader remit for employer engagement beyond the development of foundation degrees, and LLNs (regardless of their original scope) have become involved in working with employers. This is potentially fruitful territory for HE in FE.

Worcester College of Technology was one of the first further education colleges to receive support from HEFCE for workforce development.

Worcester College of Technology and the Institute of Payroll Professionals (IPP) – a co-funded partnership

The college has worked with the IPP for the past 15 years as sole provider of the IPP's range of further education level 3 and 4 BTEC qualifications for over 900 part-time students. The students are located around the country and work in a payroll capacity for the private and public sectors.

The IPP is now seeking chartered status, and considers that fundamental change in its qualification base will be a cornerstone of its strategy to achieve this. The IPP undertook an employer and professional member survey regarding future industry

requirements, and held discussions on a new qualification strategy. It asked Worcester College of Technology to work with it to develop, in the first instance, a foundation degree in Payroll Management. This is to be followed, at a later date, with an honours degree top-up to enable progression; the top-up will be provided by the validating university.

The strong partnership between the IPP and the college was a significant factor in the fairly rapid development of the foundation degree. A small team drawn from both organisations developed the units in collaboration with the University of Worcester, which was approached to validate the course and subsequently provide, in its own right, a top-up degree to the Fd.

Worcester College of Technology applied to the Herefordshire and Worcestershire LLN to support the development of this Fd and two others with delivery by distance learning. The LLN provided financial support of £10,000 and the college invested its resources to develop the Fd for validation in December 2007. The scheme was piloted in 2008.

HEFCE provided ASNs and support to the college under its workforce development initiative (April 2008). The college aims to deliver provision for 3,200 learners over the period 2008 to 2010. The provision is co-funded through HEFCE income and fees.

Vocational courses form much of the provision of HE in FE, and strong and long-lasting links have been built up over a considerable period. These links are being enhanced where there is effective collaboration with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and their overarching body, the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils (see Section 6.5), which has a clear remit to engage with HE and FE and ensure employer involvement in new courses. Colleges should be fully informed about skills shortages and skills sector changes and developments, both locally and regionally. Alongside the SSCs, the work of the RDAs and LSC can provide such information. Brokerage systems have become increasingly important in the employer engagement landscape, and bodies such as Business Link hold a great deal of information on local employer demand, some of it through Train to Gain.

Useful advice is available from fdf in publications such as 'Developing higher skills in the UK workforce: A guide to collaboration between higher education and employers' and two companion documents 'Higher education working with employers: Directory of relevant organisations' and 'Higher Education and Skills for Business: Collaborative working between higher education providers and Sector Skills Councils' (all 2007), along with the toolkit 'fdf Employer and Provider Partnerships'. These are all available to download from the fdf web-site.

Developing, maintaining and enhancing links with employers is extremely time-consuming. It takes skill, effective deployment of resources and imagination to build and maintain the connections. Table 10 describes some of the ways in which colleges link with employers.

Table 10 **Links and partnerships between colleges and employers**

Employer link	Comment and examples
Workplace learning/workforce development	Hundreds of students improve their qualifications in this way, attending a local college on day-release or during the evening, or learning exclusively in the workplace. Increasingly, assignments are directly work based and related to the job. It helps if employers have regular contact with the college, receiving briefings about what is expected of them and regular progress reports
Employer involvement through the workplace	• Providing work placements and feeding back on their effectiveness • Offering students group problem-solving assignments that benefit the business • Acting as a mentor • Offering shorter periods of work experience – a visit or work shadowing (to college staff as well as students) • Encouraging employees to take further training as part of workforce development • Health & safety • Setting of learning outcomes, particularly in vocational skills • Offering guest lectures • Advising students on career choice and portfolio development • Mock interviews • Setting an assignment or brief • Commissioning a live brief • Reporting back to staff and students on the outcomes • Taking part in assessment (usually after some training)
Employer involvement in curriculum design	• Consultation with SSCs • Identifying the gaps and demands • Active engagement with the design of the course • Setting of learning outcomes, particularly in vocational skills • Continuity of involvement and follow-up
Employers and co-funding	Work with employers and HEFCE regional team to devise innovative and flexible ways of jointly funding provision
Employer advisory board, panel or forum	Many colleges hold regular formal meetings with employers to inform them of trends and developments, consult on curriculum design and ask for subject-related advice. Such meetings may be subject specific or more general. Strategies to overcome the problem of time pressures have included: • fax surveys on curriculum design • breakfast meetings • a meeting tied into other college events, e.g. art and design shows, special awards ceremonies
Employer involvement at college events	Careers/futures fairs where employers offer advice to students
Wider involvement with employers	Fdf leads a number of national employer consortia (e.g. for energy, ICT and retail) which colleges may be able to draw on if they have an interest in these sectors

Section 4.1 mentioned accreditation in the discussion about models of collaboration. At the time of writing, accreditation is emerging as an important method of engaging employers in higher level skills development – especially when working with large employers, who frequently have substantial higher level development programmes of their own. The EBTA scheme set up by fdf, though at an early stage of its development, is an example of this approach. The following box explains how it works, but further discussions need to take place with colleges since FECs cannot accredit employer training.

Fdf – Employer based accreditation and training

The EBTA project led by fdf has demonstrated the value of this work as an innovative way for HE providers to engage with employers and to develop and recognise higher level skills in the workforce. FECs cannot yet accredit training, but can be involved in the early work of aligning training at levels 4 and above. Initial successes were at regional level with a number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); EBTA is now extending its reach through engagement with a number of major national companies.

An example of regional SME engagement is that of Quill, a Manchester-based firm which provides legal cashiers on an agency basis. The cashiers are recruited and trained in-house by the company over a six-month period, and this training is now accredited for an award by the University of Chester. As a result of this accreditation, Quill is planning to expand its business and work with the university on the further progression of its staff. At national level, pilot training provided by Flybe is being accredited through EBTA by the Open University.

EBTA is also demonstrating how HEIs can work collaboratively with FEC partners on this work, especially by using the colleges' strong employer links and their expertise in assessing work-based learning to complement the formal accreditation role of the HEI. In the north-west, for example, Sunderland City College initiated discussions with the LEA to get training on young people and behavioural issues accredited by its main university partner.

Interest in EBTA has grown considerably, and the number of approaches from employers increases every month. More and more HE providers are getting involved – currently over 20 HEIs and an expanding number of FECs and LLNs. An EBTA document has been prepared to provide guidelines on quality assurance and costing issues, and to show how HEIs, FECs and LLNs can collaborate to extend HE learning opportunities to those in work by adding value, through accreditation, to training that is already taking place.

The following example illustrates how effective and innovative some LLNs have been in addressing employer engagement collaboratively.

Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance

GMSA Advance – give employees the credit they deserve

GMSA Advance is piloting from September 2008 ahead of a full launch in 2009. The scheme will provide full-time employees with a catalogue of CPD courses from higher education providers throughout Greater Manchester. Leadership and management and regeneration will be the first subject areas to benefit.

Companies will be able to choose degree-level modules from the catalogue, or collaborate with HEIs to develop tailor-made, work-based, staff development short courses that will have a direct impact on their immediate circumstances.

Every module will be a free-standing, university-level qualification and will carry credits. These credits can be banked and, over time, accumulated towards a larger award such as an honours degree, foundation degree or masters degree. Uniquely for the HE sector, modules from different universities and colleges can be combined within a single qualification. Existing in-house training could also be assessed, supported and accredited with a university qualification and credits.

The new approach should allow organisations to train their staff to graduate level and beyond, without having to afford them time out of work. They will be supported by a range of alternative delivery methods, including online, distance or work-based learning.

Although colleges are not eligible to apply for HEFCE employer engagement funding on their own, some are forming partnerships with an HEI to make a joint bid.

Staffordshire University and Stoke on Trent College

Title of project	Transforming the HE landscape: developing a business centre in the Stoke on Trent University Quarter
Institution	Staffordshire University (lead) in partnership with Stoke on Trent College
Summary	• The project will develop a single access point for employers in North Staffordshire and the wider region to reach the educational expertise of the two providers. • The service will support a continuum of skills development (a skills escalator) from basic to higher level skills for employers, focused on achieving a positive impact on business performance. • The service will be strategically placed within the University Quarter, a multi-million pound concept that will spur business growth, regenerate the local economy and create

an enterprise culture. Over the three years of the project it will position the university and college as key providers of skills at all levels for employers within the city of Stoke on Trent and North Staffordshire.

- A key aspect of the project will be the co-location of the new team funded by a Strategic Development Fund (SDF) bid and the existing workforce development teams of the university and college within a 'one-stop shop' based at the Stoke campus of the university.
- Key sectors: creative and cultural industries, distribution and logistics, manufacturing and engineering, and health and social care. In addition to sector-specific needs, a number of cross-cutting thematic areas have been identified: leadership and management development, IT/technology/telecommunications, and enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Useful web-sites for further information:

- labour market information, www.statistics.gov.uk, then select Economy, Labour market
- RDAs, www.berr.gov.uk, then select Regional Economic Development – regional economic strategies
- UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), www.ukces.org.uk
- Sector Skills Councils – links to each individual SSC site through the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils, www.sscalliance.org.uk
- Learning and Skills Councils – links to each regional site through www.lsc.gov.uk.

4.5 Working with networks

Lifelong Learning Networks

Lifelong Learning Networks are one national example of many different kinds of networks. The first LLNs were established in 2005; by 2007, they had almost national coverage and involved 120 higher education institutions and more than 300 further education colleges. LLNs started at different times, but always had finite funding which will not be renewed. Some are seeking to make themselves sustainable by embedding the LLN in the sub-regional HE provision.

The original remit of LLNs was to create new, secure opportunities for vocational learners, by means of improved information, advice and guidance as well as 'progression agreements' which would constitute a 'guarantee' of progression into and through higher education. As noted earlier, engagement with employers has become increasingly important in the work of the LLNs, as one of the ways HE in FE provision is enhanced in a region or sub-region. The collaborative way of working that LLNs have fostered has enabled colleges and HEIs to work to their strengths.

As a model of collaboration, LLNs have been most successful where they have been able to build on existing good partnership relationships, allowing them to make more progress more quickly. The GMSA example above illustrates this point, as do the two following case studies.

Sussex Learning Network

Northbrook College was involved in establishing one of the first LLNs, which became the Sussex Learning Network (SLN). The college – uniquely for an FE college in Sussex – became the lead partner, responsible for the work undertaken in the area of creative arts and new media and through the Sussex Vocational Progression Accord management group.

This work was led by a management post funded by the SLN until July 2008, and managed by Northbrook College. It has focused on establishing a range of subject-specialist consultants developing progression agreements with Sussex FE and HE partners. A range of progression accords have been developed between the college and partners (e.g. for students on Fd provision progressing onto Northbrook College one-year honours top-up programmes), and this process is continuing.

Work with the SLN has enabled engagement at institutional level and with teaching and support staff regarding developments within colleges and universities across Sussex, working on widening access, IAG, progression opportunities and curriculum developments.

The college has also been involved with the Sussex HE in FE group established by the SLN. This meets quarterly to provide a forum for discussion and collaboration, debating issues related to the delivery of HE in FECs.

West London Lifelong Learning Network

The West London LLN was formed in 2006 to help increase the number of vocational learners progressing to and through HE in the sub-region. Network partners recognised that a sub-group would assist in supporting the development of HE in the area's further education colleges. All the colleges had identified HE as a priority within their own strategic plans. The sub-group, known as the HE in FE Working Group, was established in January 2007; senior management representatives attended from each constituent college.

A joint research project was completed in autumn 2007 to identify areas of commonality and difference, and make recommendations to further the development of HE. These included:

- sharing good practice on developing an HE ethos
- joint marketing of HE in FE opportunities in West London
- staff development and CPD provision to be jointly developed and offered
- supporting scholarly activities to enhance HE in FE teaching and learning
- developing e-learning and virtual learning environments

- collaborative working around quality assurance processes and frameworks, in particular with regard to IQER
- developing progression agreements in West London.

The HE in FE research report is available from: www.westlondonlln.org

The six colleges and the LLN then worked together to submit a joint strategy for the HEFCE pilot of further education colleges' HE strategies.

Further information on LLNs, including an interim evaluation study completed in January 2008 by the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information of the Open University, is available from the HEFCE web-site (www.hefce.ac.uk) under Publications/Research and evaluation reports/2008/Interim evaluation of LLNs.

Aimhigher

Colleges and universities have worked collaboratively within Aimhigher and its predecessor, Partnerships for Progression, since 2001. Within these structures the focus is on widening participation in HE, and the pre-entry activities which can raise aspirations and achievements. Extensive literature is available on the Action on Access web-site (www.actiononaccess.org). The HEFCE web-site (www.hefce.ac.uk) has background information about Aimhigher and links to the important Aimhigher web-sites.(see Section 8.2).

5 Marketing, recruitment and admissions

5.1 What does marketing for HE mean?

Marketing for HE aims to promote a college and its HE offer in a competitive environment. It entails market research to support the development of new courses, attendance at special events, contact with former students and, most frequently, publicity. This section is mainly about marketing in the sense of promotion, but it includes some information on market research. Depending on a college's strategy, different approaches may be needed for marketing HE programmes, especially to employers.

In the past, many colleges will not have had separate strategies for marketing their HE provision. However, as all colleges are now required to have an HE strategy (see Section 1), managers may wish to consider how marketing their HE courses differs from their FE courses. A number of questions need to be asked and linked to the HE strategy:

- Is there a distinct HE 'brand'?
- Should there be a structured recruitment plan for HE students, different from that for FE students?
- What is the long-term strategy for marketing for HE students?
- What types of HE course will be marketed and how will the publicity differ from FE marketing materials?
- What sorts of relationships need to be built to encourage students to apply, and employers to send employees to study HE at the college?
- What sorts of relationships need to be built with HEIs?

The following example demonstrates how one college integrated its marketing within strategic planning, prior to the requirement for a separate HE strategy.

St Helens College

The college's strategic planning is holistic in nature and aims to ensure that the college delivers against its mission 'It's all about you' in the most efficient and effective manner.

The planning process for the college's five-year corporate plan starts in January of each year with a review of the mission statement and agreement of the college's corporate objectives for the year ahead.

How these objectives will be achieved is contained within the college's strategic model, which comprises its learner engagement strategy as well as implementation plans for the college's key audiences (including HE). In addition, there are implementation plans around the areas of staff engagement, finance, facilities, and innovation and development (within which is its marketing activity). All of these implementation plans aim to add value to the learner engagement strategy and achievement of the college's objectives.

Having marketing activity within the innovation and development implementation plan enables the college to achieve synergies across market research, curriculum development and marketing communications.

What is marketed?

Marketing managers may not be familiar with the detail of the funding of higher education (see Section 3.2), but it is essential to recognise that this may impact on how HE may be marketed and to whom the college is accountable for the content.

Where courses are directly funded by HEFCE, or are non-prescribed higher education which may be funded by the LSC, the college has control of marketing and publicity. However, where courses are indirectly funded through an HEI, the HEI should approve any college marketing material, while being mindful of the college's 'brand' and client group. The college should work with the HEI to include college courses in the HEI's prospectuses and UCAS entry where relevant (see Section 5.5).

QAA's new quality assurance process, IQER (see Section 10), applies to all colleges providing prescribed higher education, however funded. The third core theme of IQER is that of public information: that is, all information about the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities – the other two core themes – which is in the public domain (see 'The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review', QAA, 2008, p4). Some of this information will be published by awarding bodies, some by organisations such as Unistats and UCAS (see Section 5.5) and some by the college. The IQER process will include consideration of whether the college has effective procedures in place for ensuring that the information it publishes is accurate and complete. Guidance and an indicative list of this information can be found in Annex D of the IQER handbook on QAA's web-site: www.qaa.ac.uk.

Where a directly funded college charges more than the standard fee, this falls within the remit of the Office for Fair Access. The college is required under legislation to have approved and to publish an access agreement in a manner accessible to students, and

to ensure that the fees to be charged are clearly set out and publicly accessible. Students should be told the cost of their tuition for the whole duration of their course, including any element for inflation, before they accept a place (see Section 5.4).

In the past, colleges have sometimes separated the marketing of HE programmes according to funding streams. However, the proposal that all FECs should have an HE strategy that addresses both directly and indirectly HEFCE-funded HE as well as NPHE suggests that a single approach should be taken.

5.2 Targeted marketing

Colleges have a significant role to play in widening participation in HE. Marketing should therefore address HEFCE policy and guidance on widening participation, and should work through local and regional partnerships and Aimhigher (see Section 8.2).

York College

The market for HE in FE is significantly different from that of a traditional university, and recognition of this very much informs the marketing strategy the college has adopted.

Well-researched local market intelligence is critical to determine local demand, which in turn informs the subject matter of the programme on offer. Specific leaflets, user-friendly open events, readily available material in city centre locations and radio ads all contribute to raising awareness of what is available. Success stories in the local press from people who have achieved and been successful create an 'I could do that attitude' vital for returning adults to any level of education. Someone who can provide well-structured advice and guidance, devoid of jargon, in person or over the phone will do much to encourage participation. And finally, a well-publicised, accessible and active support structure will allay any fears people have about their capacity to study at this level.

Some colleges market niche or specialist provision nationally, but the majority address a local or regional market. HEFCE policy (see Section 1) stresses a distinctive role for HE in FE in making provision for local students and work-related higher education. Many colleges focus on the distinctiveness of their HE in FE offer and the benefits to students of attending a further education college.

Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College

Extract from HE prospectus

There are many reasons to enter higher education with us. Here are just five.

1. Small class sizes and your own **P**ersonal tutor.
2. Excellent opportunities for **P**rogression, with nine out of ten higher education students entering employment or their third year of study at a partner university.
3. Strong links with **P**artner universities.
4. A lower **P**rice than all other London universities, with a fixed fee of £1,255 for Home/EU students.
5. Above all, we make you a **P**riority.

Marketing to prospective students

It is advisable to research the market carefully (see Section 5.3), and to differentiate within the HE student market in order to produce materials that are appealing to their target audience. The message can be tested with each audience targeted.

City College Plymouth

We want to make sure that our HE prospectus is appealing to the target audience – an audience that is very diverse and can include full-time 18+ learners, adults returning to learn, part-time employed learners and employers. The prospectus needs to be differentiated to meet the different markets for full-time and part-time HE. Before putting together a design brief we undertake consultation in the form of focus groups and questionnaires. We consult with full-time learners, part-time learners and employers – finding out what they like and don't like about a prospectus, and what information they expect to see. This feeds into the design brief and three concepts are developed; these again are researched and a final concept is chosen. The end product is a prospectus that meets the needs of the target audience.

City of Bristol College

Two distinct market segments for HE at City of Bristol College are emerging. The first is young people who wish to study full-time in their home city, and the second is part-time mature students who wish to study in areas related directly to their employment. The college's extensive school liaison work reaches those young people who may not have thought that HE study was possible. They are supported through an HE bursary scheme and there is a progression programme for existing students. Part-time adult learners in employment are reached through the college's employer engagement activities, which are very successful as the college engages with over 1,800 employers. There is a growing demand for 'bite-size' courses which are modular and very flexible.

Focusing attention on marketing to schools is important, and many colleges use their marketing department to develop such relationships. It is worth forming relationships with those providers that have traditionally been 'competitors' for colleges, for example sixth form colleges and local school sixth forms.

Parents are a key influencer for young people going on to HE and should be considered when looking at any communications strategy. It may be worth considering having a section of the prospectus and web-site targeting parents.

Some adults will be looking to enhance their employment prospects or switch careers, and any support that can be offered them should be highlighted in publicity. A DIUS Research Report, 'University is Not Just for Young People: Working Adults' Perceptions of and Orientation to Higher Education' (Pollard et al, 2008), provides statistical information and guidance on targeting this market.

Some colleges offer specialist courses that attract students nationally, and their publicity will reflect this in highlighting the attractions of both the provision and the area. Others address an international client group. Here, an international office is

probably necessary to market internationally and provide appropriate support pre- and post-enrolment (see Section 5.5).

Marketing to employers

The increased emphasis on developing higher level skills within the workforce (see Sections 1 and 2), the development of foundation degrees and a focus on work-based learning makes it important for colleges to ensure that their marketing strategy reaches out to employers and that HE programmes are developed with employers, to support current and future employees (see Section 6). As for student marketing materials, it is also important to target employers; a college may offer foundation degrees, higher nationals or a range of NPHE courses, which may have different employer audiences.

Colleges often have to promote their HE programmes to businesses that may not prioritise the benefits of higher skills in general and often do not understand the complexity of the qualifications currently available (see Section 2.2). Colleges should focus on the positive impact the investment in HE-level qualifications will have on the bottom line. They should aim to demonstrate a track record of working with similar businesses (e.g. sector/size). Some colleges have developed a business-orientated 'brand'; for instance, the School of Business at Guildford College has a professional course guide which publicises its (non-prescribed) professional higher education, and targets employers through the web-site's 'employer zone'.

Guildford College of Further and Higher Education

Extract from professional course guide

We offer training solutions to meet the development needs of your workforce.

We can:

- design and deliver courses specifically tailored to your industry or individual requirements
- train your staff at a time and place to suit you: at your workplace or at the College
- provide certificated courses on a distance learning basis (including NVQs) and e-learning
- deliver intensive, short courses or less intensive courses over a longer period of time, as well as longer courses leading to qualifications.

Our flexible approach removes many of the barriers that can stand in the way of workforce development particularly for smaller businesses. More and more businesses are recognising the benefits of this approach and the feedback from students has been very positive. For more information and details on our short courses which can be customised to your own requirements call our Employer Hotline Tel: 01483 44 85 30, visit www.guildford.ac.uk and click on Employers, or E-mail: employerenquiries@guildford.ac.uk.

Aside from the obvious benefits to your business of any new skills that your employees learn, enabling people to study for qualifications can also increase their sense of commitment to your business, and this can have knock-on benefits in terms of improved productivity.

Guildford College has also promoted its achievement of Action for Business College Accreditation.

Guildford College of Further and Higher Education

Press release

Guildford College successfully achieved Action for Business College Accreditation in January 2007. We were the first college in Surrey to be recognised for its commitment to local businesses. The award, by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the South-East England Development Agency (SEEDA), recognises the College's dedication to providing an exemplary service to employers and responding to their business needs.

Foundation degrees

Foundation degrees are a particular focus for most colleges. Fdf's 'Good Practice in the Marketing of Foundation Degrees' offers guidance.

Key themes in the marketing of foundation degrees:

- What is the best way to decide on possible areas for Fds?
- What kind of market intelligence is already available?
- How can we do our own market research?
- How do we develop links with employers? How do we go about making contact with organisations?
- Are there any issues that we should be aware of when it comes to involving employers?
- What kind of person would be interested in doing an Fd? Who can we promote Fds to?
- What are the most effective promotional messages for young full-time students?
- What are the most effective promotional messages for part-time students?
- What are the most effective promotional messages for employers?
- How can we market Fds to potential young (under 21) full-time students?
- How can we market Fds to potential part-time students?
- How can we market Fds to employers? What about advertising campaigns?
- What's the best way to evaluate the success of our marketing activity?
- How can we raise the profile of Fds within our institution?
- When we talk to potential students, they are wary that employers will not recognise their qualification. What can we do to reassure them?
- Employers just don't know what Fds are. What can we do to raise the profile of Fds in our area?

'Good Practice in the Marketing of Foundation Degrees: A research-based guide for practitioners', HEIST, 2005, for fdf

Fdf has IAG training materials on its web-site for staff who provide advice to prospective Fd students. These materials are in the form of a pack that can be customised for a wide range of settings and meeting local needs.

Fdf also maintains a searchable database of all foundation degree courses available or in development. It is used by employers, prospective students and careers advisers and is a resource for institutions, SSCs and professional bodies seeking providers with particular subject expertise or when planning provision. In order to ensure that the database is complete, providers must maintain its accuracy. Annual requests for details of foundation degrees are sent to all institutions; however, providers are invited to advise fdf of changes at any time (www.fdf.ac.uk/courses).

5.3 Researching the market

Market research should focus on how the college's offer fits into the local and regional HE landscape as well as looking at how the college is perceived by influencers, users and prospective users. The research findings will also help to inform the setting of objectives for marketing communications. Colleges need to undertake analysis of competitors – especially given that the falling demographic for 18 year-olds in the next 10 years is likely to make the market for HE even more competitive.

For most HE courses, the validation submission document will require details of the anticipated student market. Colleges can be proactive by systematically and routinely gathering evidence through contacts with employers, professional organisations, schools, community organisations and existing students.

The new requirement for colleges to have an HE strategy includes an expectation that they will demonstrate how the provision will meet identifiable local need and add value. So a college's marketing or research function should monitor regional reports, checking the focus of Regional Skills Partnerships and RDAs for the skills needs of the region. Organisations such as Business Link or the Sector Skills Councils, whose role is to gather and collate labour market intelligence on a regular basis, can also provide useful information. The SSCs (25 in 2008) are independent, employer-led organisations which cover specific sectors of employment; they are managed through the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, which superseded the Sector Skills Development Agency and the National Employment Panel. The Alliance of Sector Skills Councils is the collective voice of the SSC. Section 6 addresses this market research function in support of new course proposals.

5.4 Information required

Colleges may or may not have a separate HE prospectus and/or HE section on their web-site. Where this is not the case, it is essential to address differences in eligibility, entry requirements, application and enrolment processes and student support (see also Section 8).

Marketing materials should take account of statutory requirements for information to HE students. This should include information on eligibility for being funded to study on an HE programme, which may differ from eligibility to be funded by the LSC for an FE programme. Home and EU students are eligible for funding, as are those with refugee status, but asylum seekers may be charged at overseas rates. Information is available at: www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/index.htm

There are also categories of HE provision that are fundable; these need to be checked, along with the ruling on the withdrawal of funding for equivalent or lower level qualifications – see Section 3 and HEFCE 2008/13.

Information about the fees and bursaries (see below) should be included. It is also advisable to provide information on other support services available to HE students, such as:

- accommodation
- crèche and childcare
- additional learning support and resources, e.g. for dyslexic students
- disability support
- student union
- student welfare.

Access agreements

All institutions which offer HEFCE directly funded HE programmes and are intending to charge fees above the standard level have to submit an access agreement. This must state the fees charged, the support for students from low-income groups (e.g. bursaries) and how the institution will ensure fair access. The Office for Fair Access was established to make sure that institutions were explicit in their proposals to encourage widening participation. In June 2008, 55 FECs had access agreements on OFFA's web-site. Guidance is provided ('Producing Access Agreements', OFFA 2004/01). Monitoring returns must be submitted annually.

For indirectly funded HE programmes, the franchising HEI is responsible for setting fees and for the access agreement. Some HEIs stipulate that the fee is the same for all partners; others allow partners to choose. There may be bursaries specifically for students at partner colleges, or partner colleges may use a share of their income to offer a bursary (see also Section 8). The HEI will address the position at partner colleges in its access agreement, and college information should reflect this.

Since many colleges have a mix of direct and indirect funding and many have multiple partnerships, marketing material and course information need to be clear about the fees for each course if these vary.

OFFA provides useful advice on good practice in providing online financial information (www.offa.org.uk/about/research-good-practice/improving-information/). Its recommendations include the following:

- have as short a route as possible from the homepage to the financial information
- use commonly understood language such as 'student finance' and 'prospective students' rather than 'costs' or 'undergraduates'
- be clear and concise – use succinct headings, sub-headings and key information in bold
- provide advice on budgeting with examples of average/standard costs.

Where a college has a UCAS entry, this information should be made available in its entry (see next section).

5.5 Forms of publicity

Format

The range of formats for publicity has been expanding with new technology, and prospective students increasingly use the internet and search engines to find courses. However, some colleges' web-sites do not address HE-specific issues. If the web-site does not have a dedicated section on higher education, colleges should ensure that a search on the term produces results. The web-site should incorporate a range of links to further sources of information, including student support and employment opportunities. West Thames College won the College Marketing Network's (www.m-network.org) FE First Award in the Higher Education Prospectus category in 2007, and New College Nottingham was runner up.

Social networking sites are also an increasingly significant factor, with students informally circulating information about their experiences. Some institutions are setting up their own networking spaces; again, these are more likely to appeal to younger students and those living away from home.

Leeds College of Art and Design

From the web-site, on social networking

For many of us, the internet is our playground. But we're also using the web and associated technologies in increasingly intelligent and complex ways! For example, it's ideal for meeting people who are interested in the same art and design ideas, and for sharing ideas with them.

We've set up official College social network groups which allow you to more easily form social links with other students. It's great for new students to get up to speed more quickly, and it's good for staying up-to-date with college and course news and events.

And it's a brilliant way to start up your own discussion topics, chat, discuss, ask for help, share your passions and promote your own events!

Why not visit our creative networks and connect with current Leeds College of Art & Design students through your favourite social networking sites?

Colleges targeting a national audience for specialist courses, or an international client group, find the internet a particularly useful tool. They are likely to focus more on the social attractions of the college and environs and on college-provided accommodation or accommodation services.

UCAS

Inclusion in UCAS Course Search will reach a national audience (www.ucas.com). The minimum requirement for membership of UCAS is for an institution to offer at least one full-time HE course (including foundation degrees and HNDs), although there are also other requirements. In terms of cost, in 2008 there was a £3,000 administrative fee on joining, and thereafter either a fee of £17 per applicant successfully placed or a fee of £1,000, whichever was the greater. Over 100 colleges have entries in UCAS; these are mostly directly funded colleges.

The entry must include all the college's (prescribed) HE courses, including any indirectly funded provision, and should indicate the validating and awarding body. Programmes may only be listed once in UCAS Course Search. For many indirectly funded colleges, they are listed under the entry for their partner or franchising HEI. The presentation and wording vary, and it is advisable for colleges to agree this with their partner institutions.

The three examples below from UCAS Course Search show how HEIs' college partners can be presented.

UCAS Course Search

- The University of Plymouth's courses are also available at [list of colleges]. The University of Plymouth validates programmes of study within the remit of the UCAS scheme to [list of colleges].
- The University of Hertfordshire [UCAS code] together with [list of colleges] form the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium which promotes higher education in Hertfordshire.
- Staffordshire University Regional Federation (SURF) has a separate entry in UCAS noting that:

  SURF is a regional consortium of the nine Staffordshire further education (FE) colleges, the two Shropshire FE colleges and Staffordshire University. It was established in May 2000 for the delivery of higher education courses through FE colleges in the Staffordshire/Shropshire region.

UCAS offers the opportunity to write an Entry Profile for all courses offered by colleges. These profiles cover information on:

- entry routes
- selection criteria
- skills and qualifications required for entry
- course outcomes
- course descriptions
- information about the institution.

Entry Profiles offer considerable space to describe course provision and target specific groups. To help students, UCAS provides guidance on how to use Entry Profiles (www.ucas.co.uk/students/beforeyouapply/whattostudy/entryprofiles).

The UCAS web-site has a section for mature students; this alerts them to HE courses at FE colleges and the attraction of local provision. It also suggests that, as standard entry requirements may not apply to mature students, it is a good idea to make direct contact with the admissions tutor for the course before making a formal application.

UCAS is able to provide support to colleges to market their provision. The UCAS data also give early indications of trends, which can be helpful to inform strategic planning.

UCAS

UCAS offers a range of data and statistical reports for its member institutions. Reports range from the weekly Situation Report, which gives a broad overview across all institutions of the total numbers of applicants and their status in the process, to a bimonthly analysis of the number of applications for each individual course at an institution, by the choice stated.

Annual datasets also show retrospective data for the past five years, covering a range of themes including age, subject, domicile, ethnicity and social class. These can be manipulated for deeper analysis.

The UCAS Data Insight team offers training and support in using and analysing data on a chargeable basis. Data Insight also offers a web-based service called Applicant Tracker, which allows UCAS member institutions to track total applications on a weekly basis, immediately identify trends, and compare their institution to their competitor market.

The timescale from proposing an HE programme through to getting it validated by an HEI means that the entry in UCAS may be two years in advance of the programme starting, so it may need to be listed as subject to validation or approval.

NSS and the Unistats web-site

The annual National Student Survey is commissioned by HEFCE and conducted by Ipsos MORI. The results are published on the Unistats web-site (www.unistats.com) and are used by potential students or their parents when choosing courses. For students' views on a particular college and/or course or subject to be published, at least 50 per cent of eligible students must respond, with a minimum of 23 responses. This has implications for FECs, where courses are more likely not to reach this threshold. The results are provided in greater depth on the Ipsos MORI NSS dissemination web-site (www.ipsos-mori.com/nss), for internal use by institutions and student unions. From 2008, directly and indirectly funded students' responses are being combined on the Unistats site. The UCAS web-site has a link to Unistats, via Students/News (see also Section 10).

Promotion

Carefully targeted publicity in local (or national) newspapers and journals may attract wide attention. The Association of Colleges (AoC) marketing network and press office can supply journalists with news features and case studies, and arranges student and staff interviews; information and support are available at www.aoc.co.uk/en/newsroom/case_studies.cfm.

Where funds are limited, colleges may work in partnership with other local institutions to market the range of HE programmes available in a comprehensive brochure, or on a regional web-site such as www.aimhigher.ac.uk/uni4me/home. Lifelong Learning Networks also provide opportunities for marketing HE courses.

National events such as Adult Learners Week (in May each year) can be used to promote a college's HE courses. The National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE, www.niace.org.uk) can provide further information and contact details of regional co-ordinators.

Careers services, e.g. the Adult Advancement and Careers Service, should be kept fully informed of developments at the college, and invited on a regular basis to visit the provision.

Students themselves are an important marketing tool and can be used at open days and visits to schools. When on work placements, they are key to impressing employers of the value of the course.

A graduation event for HE students is very popular with students and their families, and an ideal marketing opportunity. Some colleges hold their own graduation event; others are included in the ceremonies of validating universities.

Colleges with large numbers of HE students may wish to develop alumni associations. These can enable colleges to use student success to market HE provision effectively. Information on the destination of graduates is required for HEFCE-funded courses, and can also be a valuable source from which to develop an association linking former students and keeping track of their progress. FECs rarely have alumni associations, but an example from a former FEC on the web is University College Birmingham (formerly Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies).

Partnerships

Provision offered at partner colleges may be listed in an HEI's prospectus; this is likely to be advantageous for a college. The college's publicity material needs to identify the validating university – the college may need to check the agreement with its partner(s) (which may be in the formal memorandum of agreement) as to the rules governing its use of HEI logos and the wording of marketing material (see Section 4).

Colleges in partnership may refer to courses offered in partner colleges in their publicity, and some partnerships have collective marketing activities.

West Herts College

West Herts College is a member of the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium (HHEC), which includes the four FECs in Hertfordshire plus the university. The HHEC has a formal committee structure, including the Consortium Management Committee (CMC).

A CMC sub-committee takes responsibility for marketing the consortium's provision in a holistic and collaborative way. This sub-committee comprises marketing managers from all four FECs, plus marketing executives based in the university faculties where consortium provision is validated. All five institutions commit an annual budget to cover marketing activities in the consortium.

The university's marketing communications manager has been tasked with putting together a marketing plan for the consortium, in conjunction with senior managers at all five institutions and based on the HE strategy discussions that took place last summer. This has resulted in a successful bid by a local marketing company to develop a campaign (including updating the prospectus, poster campaigns etc) to raise the profile of the consortium's provision and develop a 'brand'. It also involves raising the profile of consortium provision internally within the university.

The benefits of this approach are pooled resources, a strong alliance between the five institutions that will be reflected in the promotional materials produced, and increased awareness and understanding of the distinctiveness of the HE in FE offering – as opposed to its being a 'second chance' or, worse still, a 'backstop' for those who do not make the grade for a full honours degree at the university.

HEI guidance services should be kept informed about the partners' provision; a significant amount of referral across institutions takes place at this level, even in a competitive environment. Admissions and student services should work closely together to ensure that guidance staff understand the procedures for local applications and, where appropriate, for UCAS application.

5.6 Admissions

Guidance covering admissions is included in QAA's 'Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 10: Admissions to higher education'.

QAA reviews of HE in FECs have noted that the admissions process is commonly seen as a considerable strength.

The most effective practice involves extensive preparation before the formal admission of students to their programmes. This may include staff visits to schools and colleges, open days or evenings, taster sessions and the opportunity to sit in on classes, and the wide distribution of user-friendly documentation ranging from recruitment pamphlets to college prospectuses and, if appropriate, close cooperation with employers. Colleges frequently use interviews designed to encourage the motivation of potential students, but also to give potential students a realistic idea of the level of commitment demanded by the programmes. The interviews are also used, along with diagnostic tests, to target support for learning needs.

'Learning from Academic review of higher education in further education colleges in England 2005-07' QAA, 2008, paragraph 49

Admissions processes should be transparent and fair, and it may become a requirement that they be published. While the HEFCE web-site (in January 2009) notes that admissions are the 'sole responsibility' of institutions, 'who set their own criteria and select their own students', it continues: 'The broader widening participation agenda looks to ensure that all those with the potential to success have fair access to the opportunities and benefits that higher education can bring' (www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/access/).

OFFA aims to promote and safeguard fair access to higher education for under-represented groups in light of the introduction of variable tuition fees in 2006-07. Following on from the Schwartz Review's recommendation ('Fair admissions to higher education: recommendations for good practice', 2006) for a central source of expertise and advice on admissions, the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) programme was established in 2006. SPA is a UK-wide programme, funded by all the UK higher education funding councils, to develop and share good practice in HE admissions. SPA can offer support to colleges.

Supporting Professionalism in Admissions

SPA is an independent, objective voice on UK higher education admissions. It leads on the development of fair admissions, providing an evidence base and guidelines for good practice, and in helping universities and colleges to maintain and enhance excellence and professionalism in admissions, student recruitment and widening participation across the HE sector. SPA works closely with HEIs, schools, colleges and other stakeholders. It takes account of equal opportunities legislation, the drive to widen participation and QAA's 'Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education' (2006).

SPA is based at UCAS and values the synergy of working closely with UCAS staff, but is independent of UCAS. SPA comprises a small team, currently three but set to expand to five plus a secretary for the three years 2008-2011. The team members have over 50 years of experience between them in admissions and student recruitment, and have visited over 100 institutions to discuss and support them in developing further good practice and professionalism. SPA has covered issues such as staff training, interviews, feedback, developing admissions policies, admissions tests, issues around criminal convictions, factors relating to holistic assessment, Entry Profiles and more.

Contact SPA via its web-site for more information: www.spa.ac.uk

Sometimes colleges start to process direct applications and support (full-time) students in completing a UCAS application concurrently, or when they have been offered a place at the college (see Section 5.5).

Pre-course information

Choosing the right course is a major factor influencing success. Before enrolment takes place, colleges should make available information and guidance on all options. This may be provided by trained advisers or by course teams (see also Section 8).

It is important to emphasise that applying to higher education in an FE college is different to applying for an FE course. Students applying should have access to clear advice on the application and admissions processes, including writing personal statements, and the sort of reference required. Sources of advice on full-time courses include UCAS course profiles, which map interests, attributes and experience against listed courses and give details of the admissions process.

Clear advertising of open days for HE courses, interviews, portfolio requirements, tests and so forth is essential, as well as details of fees and support.

Colleges need to emphasise that application through UCAS is only for full-time courses, and that applicants for part-time and non-prescribed HE courses should apply directly to the college.

Entry requirements

If HE marketing is not separate, the HE programmes need to be clearly identified, as their entry requirements will be distinct and often specified by the validating HEI.

There are several options:

- stating the qualifications required on entry, with grades (there may be particular requirements, for instance for teacher training)
- stating the number of UCAS points required
- recruiting on the basis of interview and/or a piece or portfolio of work.

Enrolment

Colleges need to make sure that the distinct enrolment processes for their HE programmes are clear. Enrolment forms for HE courses need to address the data requirements of the Higher Education Statistics Agency, which differ from the requirements of the LSC and can affect funding. For details of requirements, check the HESA web-site (www.hesa.ac.uk). Additionally, student eligibility for funding and fees differs (see Section 8).

For indirectly funded provision, students are formally enrolled – and pay the fee to – the franchising HEI. However, this is not always the case in practice; students may enrol with the college, which collects the fee, and their details are then passed to the HEI. In some cases, colleges ask students to complete two enrolment forms: one a university form to register with the partner and the other a college form, where this is necessary to trigger an entry to the college's student record system and access to ID cards and facilities.

Admissions processes may be undertaken fully within the college or, in the case of collaborative provision, by the admissions office of the HEI partner where admissions are the HEI's responsibility. In the latter case, information needs to be passed to the college in a timely fashion to support college planning. Equally, where students are registered with the HEI, clear systems need to be in place to ensure that data are processed and monitored efficiently and effectively throughout the student's programme, from registration to graduation (see Section 3).

Colleges with large amounts of higher education provision are likely to have separate systems in place for HE admission.

Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education

For higher education applicants, enrolment takes place as a separate and distinct event. Essentially, this centralised process permits greater standardisation, accuracy, timeliness and governance of all admission processes within HE.

The institute's HE Administration and Admissions Department operates a central IT system that tracks initial enquiries through to enrolment. This live system permits the department to enter and monitor all matters relating to HE admissions, including individuals' application status, administration of letters, interview data, administration and receipt of application and information packs, UCAS applications and screening processes/outcomes.

The admissions processes continue until after induction is completed. During this time, the institute begins to implement and enhance its processes for student support and retention strategies.

The institute has a code of practice for HE applicants, covering concerns about admissions, complaints and appeals.

Clearing

The clearing process led by UCAS begins in July, but most activity takes place immediately after the results of GCE A-levels are published in mid-August. Courses with remaining places are advertised, and students who have not been offered a higher education place may look for a suitable course through UCAS clearing.

From early July, students who are not already in the UCAS system can be directly accepted by a college; the college enters applicant details into the UCAS system using the Record of Prior Acceptance (RPA), a process which is available to all UCAS members. In such cases, students must be made aware that this means they do not have the option to make an application to any other institution through UCAS. Although the process is only available from July, colleges sometimes use it as the 'normal' route for their applicants (for instance, for progression from a foundation degree or HND to a third year at the college), and a version of the process is available all year for applicants from outside the EU. There is no application fee for the student, but UCAS charges the capitation fee to the college.

For those applying through clearing or directly to the college at the start of term, there are always risks that the pressure on students to find a place, and the pressure on staff to fill places, mean that inappropriate offers are made (with high levels of subsequent drop-out). Whenever possible, applicants should be encouraged to make use of the college guidance service to help them to reflect on their options.

Many colleges recruit significant numbers of students during clearing, so HE tutors must be available to talk about their courses to prospective students who telephone the college, and to ascertain their suitability. A friendly welcome, clear information and efficient referral processes can make all the difference to students, who may be ringing several institutions. It is also advisable to have in place procedures for decisions to be made and communicated rapidly to potential students.

5.7 Progression

Progression onto HE courses – raising the profile within the institution

One area of publicity and marketing which is sometimes overlooked is that of internal marketing within the organisation. It is important to ensure that all staff in the college know about the HE offer and opportunities for internal progression.

Colleges often have their HE organised within a higher education school or department, rather than within a subject department, and managed by a dedicated HE manager or director. If the college only has a small amount of HE work, or primarily delivers non-prescribed LSC-funded courses, this provision is commonly located within a subject department. The head of department or other subject manager will then be the link person for cross-college management, but a member of staff should have cross-college responsibilities to co-ordinate the HE work (see Section 3).

Internal progression

Students on level 3 programmes within a college are sometimes overlooked as a client group for HE provision. Many colleges formally map their progression routes – academic, vocational and from access courses – and promote them in their publicity for level 3 (and lower) courses; this may include guaranteed progression where entry requirements are met. Some ensure that their widening participation initiatives undertaken under the auspices of Aimhigher are inward as well as outward-looking.

Newcastle College

Successful internal progression from level 3 to higher education programmes of study is integral to Newcastle College's strategy to develop provision at level 4 and beyond. The process is supported through a number of interventions. For instance, within the college's sixth form, a team of full-time personal tutors is responsible for the pastoral care of every student. These tutors provide advice and guidance to students regarding their progression and to ensure that they are making well-informed decisions. Tutors actively promote the range of foundation degrees available to students at the college during classroom tutorial lessons, focusing on HE options and making successful applications. Aimhigher funding is used to develop a programme of events and activities to engage and raise the aspirations of level 3 students, who are currently under-represented in higher education. For instance, there are visits to industry linked to current courses, visiting speakers and curriculum projects.

Progression from an HE course

Many HE in FE courses provide a progression route through to more advanced or higher level study. This is particularly so in the case of HNDs/HNCs and foundation degrees, where many students wish to progress to the final year of an honours degree. In the case of Fds, it is a requirement that progression routes be available to students, and there must be articulation with honours degrees or other progression routes. The planned progression route may be within the institution or to a partner university, but other options are available. Marketing materials need to identify:

- possible progression routes
- any additional programme that HN/Fd graduates may need to take in order to progress (e.g. bridging courses) and the time involved.

5.8 The message

The message for HE in FE marketing is:

- be confident and positive about the HE provision. FE has much to offer in terms of flexibility, levels of support and an innovative approach to course development. Successful marketing is likely to be confident in tone and clear about the value of studying at HE level within an FE college
- ensure that student support staff as well as course leaders see the draft materials, to be certain that the marketing conveys an accurate message about the experience that students will have and the support they can receive
- tell potential students how they can find up-to-date information on the financial implications of studying at HE level – fees, bursaries, crèche provision, disability support and travel subsidies
- make clear the progression routes open to students when they complete a course in the college, and their employment prospects.

6 Developing the curriculum

6.1 Developing higher education programmes

The volume and range of the curriculum offer of HE in FE has significant diversity. One college may offer largely or only off-the-shelf higher nationals, while another might have a limited number of discrete HE courses developed in relative isolation from each other. One college might have a set of specialist programmes from level 4 to postgraduate, while another may have a comprehensive range of programmes operating within a common set of arrangements, perhaps a credit framework.

In terms of curriculum development, there is a spectrum reflecting the degree of college control – from taking and delivering a ready-made programme (from an HEI or another awarding body for prescribed or non-prescribed higher education) to developing a completely new programme in conjunction with an awarding body. In the past, colleges have not been able to approve their own awards, but now they are able to apply, through an exacting process, for foundation degree awarding powers. The Further Education and Training Act 2007 empowered the Privy Council to specify institutions within the further education sector in England as competent to grant foundation degrees. Some colleges started the process of application in 2008, following guidance developed by QAA (see Section 10.7).

Whatever the starting point in curriculum development, a number of key questions need to be answered in the early stages of reviewing existing programmes or deciding on new curricula, the first being: is there demand for the programme? Previously, colleges have often provided higher education programmes for historical or opportunistic reasons, perhaps based on an approach from an HEI wishing to grow provision, or a drive by an enthusiastic member of staff wishing to develop the next stage in a subject area, or a general wish to increase the HE provision. However, the requirement by HEFCE for colleges to produce an HE strategy means that all current provision and future development should be carefully evaluated.

Any strategy to develop new programmes should derive from demonstrable demand. Although some specialist colleges have a national catchment, the majority provide for local or regional clients (e.g. to address skills shortages, provide progression from 14-19 diplomas, offer progression in areas not served by an HEI), for niche

provision, in response to national initiatives (such as HEFCE's employer co-funding strategy or in the context of developing new HE centres), or in partnership with employers, LLNs, HEIs or other FECs. In particular, colleges need to aim to provide distinctive programmes which are delivered flexibly, to attract groups of students who may not otherwise consider higher education.

Grantham College

The need for the foundation degree in Families, Parenting and Communities was identified as a result of collaborative work by Grantham College, De Montfort University and Leicester Sure Start.

It was recognised that there was a shortage of highly qualified staff in the childcare sector, and a lack of opportunities for local people to become more qualified. Market research indicated support for the Fd from local employers and students currently studying for level 3 qualifications in childcare. There was a clear need for access to higher education delivered locally in a flexible way, and an appreciation that the traditional college model of training would not be suitable for the target group.

The partners recognised that the learners would live, work and learn in communities that are socially mixed to some degree. As a major stakeholder, Leicester Sure Start identified many cultural issues that would need to be addressed. Within the curriculum area, an Early Years Steering Group consists of employers, with whom there was close consultation over the content of the foundation degree.

Evidence of demand is necessary but not sufficient in itself; colleges also need to ensure that funded student numbers are available, or that students or their employers will provide full funding through fees.

6.2 Stages in developing a new programme

New provision should be developed in stages, taking account of the guidance in QAA's 'Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review'.

Questions to ask (and which may be included in a programme approval process) should address a range of factors, as set out in Table 11.

Table 11 **Issues to consider during programme development**

Demand	• Has there been any market testing to determine demand? See Sections 5.2 and 5.3. • If the programme is vocational, does it meet regional skills priorities and have the support of the relevant Sector Skills Council? • Is there local or regional demand from employers?
Meeting priorities	• Does the programme meet identified regional priorities (of HEFCE, RDAs and LLNs, or successor bodies)?

Progression	• Is the programme likely to provide a progression route for level 3 learners in the college, or from provision in other colleges and schools nearby? • Is there potential for accrediting prior learning (APL)? Many students taking HE programmes in colleges are mature students, so curriculum teams need a policy on how to acknowledge APL that would give entry to, exemption or advanced standing on a higher education programme. This may be through accreditation of prior certificated learning (APCL) recognising qualifications or parts of qualifications. Alternatively, a student's work or life experience may lead to the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) or learning and achievement (APL&A). A college working in partnership with an HEI will use the HEI's systems, but this is a complex area deserving of early consideration. QAA issued APL guidelines in 2004 (www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/apl/apl.pdf). • Is there potential for articulated progression routes from the programme?
Funding	• If there is demand and the programme is developed, will any HEFCE student places be available through: – direct funding to the college – a local HEI with spare numbers – an LLN? LLNs have been able to provide a source of ASNs, through the lead HEI or directly. At an early stage, refer to current HEFCE publications (including circular letters) explaining the basis of and process for the allocation of funds for ASNs, as the criteria are subject to change.
Resources	• Is the staff team qualified to deliver a higher education programme? • Are accommodation and learning resources sufficient to support the programme? • Are there suitable partners to work with?
Timescale	• Is there a sufficiently long lead-in time? The amount of planning time needed should not be underestimated, especially where other partners are involved. FECs are used to being responsive to rapid change; the more complex procedures of an HEI may slow the process down, although some HEIs have developed more rapid systems. In any case, time is needed to understand partners' culture, structure and processes; early dialogue will strengthen the basis for the development and provide the opportunity for the HEI to contribute to the process.

Market research and labour market intelligence

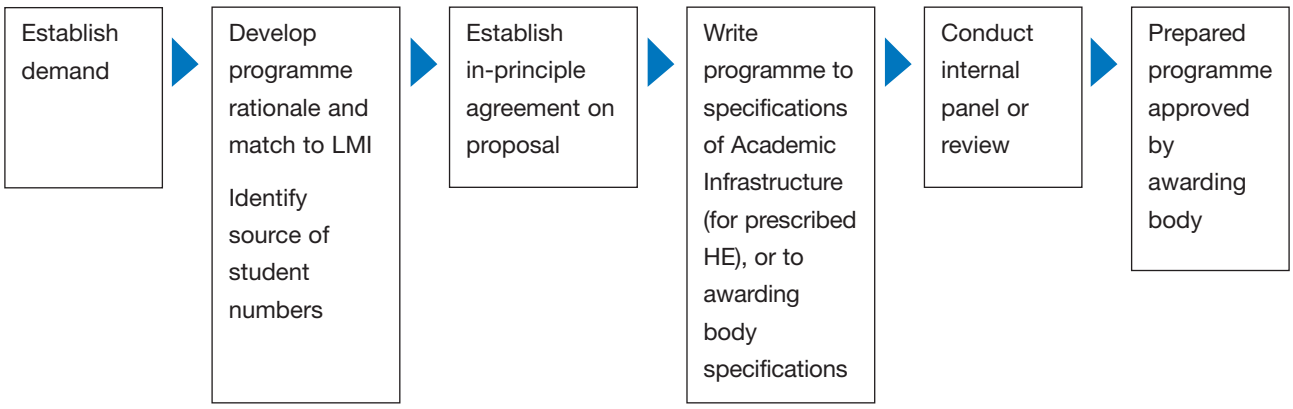
The following web-sites give useful LMl information:

- www.guidance-research.org/future-trends
- www.statistics.gov.uk, Labour market
- RDAs, www.berr.gov.uk/regional/regional-dev-agencies/index.html
- Sector Skills Agreements (SSAs), which can be found on the web-sites of the SSCs that have produced them, highlight sector needs in terms of education and training at appropriate levels.

Programme approval process

The method may differ according to whether the new programme will be directly or indirectly funded, but in all cases (unless, in the future, a college achieves FDAP) courses are subject to the programme approval process of the awarding body (see Section 6.4). Programmes using credit will need to use the credit values of the awarding body. A small number of colleges with accredited status from a partner HEI have relative autonomy, enabling them in effect to validate their own provision within the HEI's systems; for the majority working with HEIs, however, the process will be external. Where approval is sought from a validating HEI, this is likely to be a two-stage process of in-principle approval followed by full programme approval. It is good practice to run an internal pre-approval panel at the college to prepare for the external process. Figure 2 summarises the staged process.

Figure 2 **Stages in programme development**



6.3 Writing a programme

A new programme will need to address the issues outlined in Section 6.1 as well as the requirements of the awarding body and, for prescribed higher education, QAA's Academic Infrastructure. Table 12 summarises the development of a programme proposal and programme content.

Table 12 **Development of a new programme**

Develop proposal	Write programme
The initial proposal could contain the following: • title • rationale for the programme – why it should be introduced and the evidence base • how it fits in with the college's HE and overall strategy • labour market information suggesting that this course is needed locally, regionally and perhaps nationally • evidence of support from employers and SSCs (through their Sector Skills Agreements) or other relevant bodies • evidence of student demand – this needs careful planning, and should not only be from students progressing internally • recognition of the wider range of abilities that students might demonstrate • a competitor analysis showing whether this subject area is already available in the locality. It can be helpful to look on the web for similar programmes further away, to determine a benchmark; the fdf web-site has a listing of all foundation degrees and Edexcel will give information about colleges offering higher nationals • information about partners involved in the development • an indication that the awarding body will, in principle, validate the programme at the planned level • resource implications, i.e. staff – including staff qualifications – accommodation and equipment • a simple business plan showing how the HEFCE grant allocation (direct or indirect, as agreed with partner) and/or tuition fees/employer contribution would meet the resources necessary for the programme.	The development should then address: • the programme's overall educational aims and intended learning outcomes • curriculum design (units/modules and level of the programme), making sure this takes account of the level descriptors in QAA's FHEQ (see Section 2.2) and, where appropriate, credit values • reference to QAA subject benchmark statements, where appropriate • the teaching and learning strategy • the assessment strategy • student support • the development of learning materials (which can be shared in a collaborative development, thus ensuring that students on the same programme use the same materials) • resources: – staff (availability, experience, specialisms and qualifications, with a CV or teaching profile) – accommodation – equipment (including IT) – other learning resources, especially library book stock and periodicals • programme specification • progression arrangements • the timescale for receiving accreditation or validation and revalidation • the marketing strategy (marketing can start before validation, as long as the publicity materials say 'subject to validation'); see Section 5.

QAA Academic Infrastructure

The Academic Infrastructure has four components: the 'Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education'; the frameworks for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and in Scotland; subject benchmark statements; and programme specifications. In addition, there are progress files and country-specific guidelines for APL. Section 2 addressed the FHEQ; this section focuses on programme specifications and subject benchmarks in the context of curriculum development. Section 10 addresses the code of practice.

In its report on the five-year cycle of academic review of provision in (directly or consortium funded) colleges ('Learning from Academic review of higher education in further education colleges in England 2002-07'), QAA noted that while it had taken some time for the Academic Infrastructure to be embedded – particularly for programme specifications – the majority of reports from 2005-07 indicated that appropriate account was being taken of all elements. This is particularly important in IQER, which is predicated on the way colleges reflect the Academic Infrastructure (see Section 10).

Programme specifications

Programme specifications are required for each prescribed HE programme. They describe its components, such as learning outcomes, structure, assessment, teaching and learning strategy and admissions requirements; see QAA's 'Guidelines for preparing programme specifications', which includes 'Working with programme specifications: a leaflet for further education colleges'. The guidelines are comprehensive and include examples illustrating how learning outcomes might be worded to address demonstration of the required skills – knowledge and understanding (of a subject), intellectual skills, practical skills and key skills.

In a programme specification, the teaching team needs to set out clearly and concisely the:

- programme's intended learning outcomes
- teaching and learning strategies that will enable learners to achieve these outcomes and the assessment strategies that will be used to enable them to demonstrate their achievement
- relationship of the programme and its study elements to the qualifications framework.

It is important that course teams show clearly how they will develop the knowledge, understanding, cognitive and other skills and attributes for the level of the qualification (see Section 2).

The main purpose of programme specifications is to provide information to students, providers and other stakeholders:

- for students and potential students on
  - what they will learn, the teaching they will receive, and how they will be assessed
  - how the programme meets national expectations for HE awards
  - possible career paths and any links to professional qualifications

- for HE providers and their staff to
  - promote discussion when programmes are being developed or revised
  - support quality assurance processes
- for reviewers and examiners to
  - understand the aims and intended learning outcomes of programmes
- for employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies on
  - the general and specific skills and abilities that will be developed by following the course
  - how the course is linked to entry to a profession or other regulated occupation
- as a basis for feedback
  - from students or recent graduates.

It is, however, difficult to draft a programme specification that meets the needs of all the identified audiences. Some HEIs and colleges have done this by developing web pages that facilitate different levels of access to more detailed information through links to other documents. Others have drafted layers of detail which are introduced gradually to students.

Where colleges are developing Edexcel awards (under an HEI's licence), care must be taken to incorporate the Edexcel requirements into locally devised programme specifications.

Subject benchmark statements

The development of programme specifications should be informed by the QAA subject benchmark statements, which have been developed to assist those involved in programme design, delivery and review. They provide a helpful starting point when designing a new programme or reviewing an existing one.

Subject benchmark statements set out expectations about threshold standards of degrees in a range of subject areas. They describe what gives a discipline its coherence and identity, and define what can be expected of a graduate in terms of the abilities and skills needed to develop understanding or competence in the subject. Some benchmark statements combine or make reference to professional standards required by external professional or regulatory bodies in the discipline.

Although subject benchmark statements are provided for honours degree and masters level, they can inform curriculum content for higher nationals and foundation degrees as well as providing information on what is needed if a student is to progress to honours-level study.

The Higher Education Academy's subject centres are also a useful resource when developing curricula and learning resources. Some, such as the Engineering Subject Centre, have a particular focus on HE in FECs (see www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/institutions/heinfe/scwork).

Qualification benchmarks

For colleges developing foundation degrees, QAA's foundation degree qualification benchmark offers helpful advice on the defining characteristics of the foundation degree (see Section 6.7).

Progress files

Progress files were introduced alongside the elements of the Academic Infrastructure to provide both a transcript for recording student achievement and a means for students to develop and plan for their personal educational and career development – PDP. The progress file reflects the learner's work towards achieving the learning outcomes set out in the programme specifications, and the transcript records the achievement.

Credit frameworks

Many HEIs in England make use of credit and have credit accumulation and transfer systems. However, while there have been several national and regional frameworks in the UK for some time, there was no national system in England. Following on from the recommendations of the Burgess Group ('Proposals for national arrangements for the use of academic credit in higher education in England', 2006), the Credit Issues Development Group was set up. The CIDG has written a 'Higher education credit framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England', published by QAA in August 2008. This can be accessed on QAA's web-site, along with a statement regarding the complementary relationship between the FHEQ and the credit framework (http://qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/FHEQCreditStatement.asp).

The CIDG guidelines set out the purposes and benefits of credit and credit framework. They point out their potential roles in supporting progression into and within HE, and in transfer between programmes by indicating the volume and intellectual demand of learning. The framework includes a table of credit values relating to the main HE qualifications in England, and generic credit level descriptors. However, while: 'all institutions are encouraged to implement the credit arrangements as indicated by the guidance in table 1 [Credit values typically associated with the design of programmes leading to main HE qualifications in England] by the start of academic year 2009-10, and to include the credits associated with their programmes in the descriptions of each of the programmes which they offer' (paragraph 41), it is noted that 'institutions' decision-making processes regarding academic standards and quality should, and will, remain properly and entirely the responsibility of each autonomous institution', and 'The application of these national guidelines on credit will remain a matter for individual institutions to decide on at their discretion' (Executive summary).

Colleges, therefore, need to work with their awarding body's position on the use of credit.

Flexibility in delivery

Curriculum teams increasingly need to ensure that delivery models for programmes are sufficiently flexible to enable study by learners who are work based or studying part-time. Timetabling needs to accommodate part-time work and/or caring responsibilities, and may need to offer opportunities to work online from home or work, as demonstrated by the following example.

Newcastle College

The foundation degree Administration in the NHS (blended learning) was originally developed as a traditional taught programme designed for administrative and clerical staff working in public or private health and care environments. It is of particular importance for administrators with significant levels of responsibility who wish to progress beyond a level 3 administration qualification.

In response to employer need, Newcastle College – working in partnership with the NHS Core Learning Unit – developed a blended learning version of the Fd Administration in the NHS for 2007-08. This has enabled potential learners in all corners of England to access the programme. Course material has been converted so that it is blended-learning friendly and accessible online. In addition to completing formal assessments, learners progress through modules section by section; tutors maintain telephone and e-mail contact when appropriate. Learners are also brought together physically on occasions during the programme to receive face-to-face delivery. Online communities of practice help to support learners through the programme.

As a result of this development, new partners are now engaged around the country, such as Staffordshire and Shropshire Trusts.

6.4 Programme approval

Higher education developed in colleges has required a university partner for approval, whether it be a foundation or honours degree or, in some cases, an Edexcel BTEC higher national under licence. The exceptions are non-prescribed HE programmes on the NQF (and now QCF), which may be funded by the LSC, and Edexcel BTEC NQF higher nationals; in these cases, centres need to be approved for delivery. The awarding body determines the approval process and may require completion of a standard template.

In the future, some colleges will be able to award foundation degrees if they achieve awarding powers under FDAP (see Section 10).

Higher nationals

As outlined in Section 2, Edexcel BTEC NQF higher nationals are being revised for 2010-11, and their size and level equated to foundation degrees. Centres delivering BTEC higher nationals need to work within Edexcel's arrangements for centre and programme approval and external examination. Guidance is available on the Edexcel web-site.

NPHE

Edexcel also offers non-prescribed higher level qualifications within the NQF at level 4 and above, as does City & Guilds and many other specialist awarding bodies and professional bodies (see Section 2). These arrangements are similarly controlled by the awarding body.

Approval by an HEI

The degree of control a college holds over the development and content of the curriculum for a higher level qualification awarded by an HEI varies across partnerships.

In some cases, a college may develop a programme within its partnership arrangements, take it to the HEI for approval and be the unique provider of that (HEI) award. Exceptionally, a small number of colleges have 'accredited' or 'associate' college status from an HEI. This gives them relative autonomy regarding the development, validation and quality assurance arrangements for a higher level programme (although the ultimate responsibility remains with the HEI, and the award is in its name).

At the other end of the spectrum of control and autonomy, a college may deliver one, or part, of an HEI's programmes under 'franchise' and to the HEI's guidelines. (It should be noted that this use of the term 'franchise' differs from that used in terms of indirect funding arrangements, and has no necessary relationship with the funding stream – see Annex D.)

In between these two ends of the spectrum can be found a range of models, with colleges developing programmes in partnership with departments of an HEI and/or with other colleges. Where multi-lateral partnerships exist between several partners and an HEI, courses may be jointly developed and delivered across a partnership in standard form, or a single college may develop the course and other members be given, or have automatic, permission to deliver it.

The franchise or partnership relationships described above can sometimes lead to competition, particularly when colleges in the same region duplicate each other's provision or that of an HEI in a time of falling demand. The same is true of colleges and a partner HEI, particularly where colleges provide the third year of a degree and/or HEIs wish to expand into the foundation degree market. These issues can be addressed within formal partnership arrangements (see Section 4). The HEFCE consultation on HE in FE (HEFCE 2006/48) addressed issues of security of funding for indirectly funded colleges, and the guidance for producing college HE strategies requires the strategy to address how the higher education provision relates to other local and regional provision.

Colleges often ask for guidance on the costs of approval. These are variable and difficult to quantify, as they may relate to the one-off approval event and/or be tied to provision of a programme and/or awards to students. For directly funded institutions they will be programme or award specific, but for indirectly funded colleges the approval and award service may be included in the generic 'top-slice' arrangements (see Section 10).

Open University Validation Service (OUVS)

Another possible route for validation is to use the OUVS. The OUVS operates through processes that rely on peer networks and judgements within the overall Academic Infrastructure determined by QAA. The emphasis is on the development of ownership for quality assurance by the providing institution. So an organisation must first achieve accreditation by demonstrating that it can provide an appropriate and supportive infrastructure for the delivery of HE programmes. Details are available at: www.open.ac.uk/validate/

6.5 Work-based learning and employer engagement

With the increased emphasis on higher level skills for the workplace (see Sections 1 and 2) and the Leitch Review's focus on improving the UK's place in the world economy, work-based learning has taken a higher profile in HE programmes. The Leitch Review highlighted the fact that higher education expansion has been concerned with young people at the expense of engaging with employers and increasing workforce development. It recommended an increase in employer investment in level 3 and 4 qualifications in the workplace, and argued that future expansion in HE should be based on programmes offering specific job-related skills, such as foundation degrees (see Section 6.7). HEFCE has prioritised co-funding for allocation of new student numbers.

Work-based learning

An essential part of many HE programmes is the inclusion of work-related learning elements. These may be 'work placement' or 'work experience', usually associated with full-time modes (and historically with HNDs), or 'work-based' (sometimes described as 'work-located'), which is a defining characteristic of foundation degrees (see Section 6.7). FECs are in an excellent position to provide work-based learning through their contacts with local communities and employers in their further education work. Non-prescribed HE work creates opportunities to engage with employers on professional courses. Colleges need to confront, clearly and systematically, the significant challenges raised by placement or work-based learning.

QAA's 'Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 9' advises that it is difficult to make hard and fast definitions, but 'that each institution should decide what it understands by and how it uses the terms' (paragraph 14). Work-based and placement learning is not restricted to undertaking work experience or going on a placement. It is primarily concerned with identifying relevant and appropriately assessed learning, expressed in the form of learning outcomes that can be linked to that work or placement. QAA proffers the following guidance.

> … work-based learning is regarded as learning that is integral to a higher education programme and is usually achieved and demonstrated through engagement with a workplace environment, the assessment of reflective practice and the designation of appropriate learning outcomes. Work-based learning is often accredited, ranging from a single module within a programme to an entire programme that includes, at its core, activities and learning outcomes designed around the individual's occupation, whether paid or unpaid.
>
> Placement learning is regarded as the learning achieved during an agreed and negotiated period of learning that takes place outside the institution at which the full or part-time student is enrolled or engaged in learning. As with work-based learning, the learning outcomes are intended as integral parts of a programme of study. It is important that each student is supported by the institution throughout his/her placement experience, to ensure that specific learning related to the programme can be achieved.
>
> QAA, 'Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 9', paragraphs 15 and 16

It is important to have clear guidance for students and employers regarding work-based learning and assessment, as both need to have a good understanding of what is expected of them.

The QAA guidance indicates that work-based and placement learning 'typically' take place off campus in a workplace. This suggests that various forms of 'work-related' learning, frequently classroom based, do not really meet the challenges of developing work-based learning. If a college wants to be recognised for its good practice, it needs to put into place an institution-wide:

- policy and strategy to support the development and management of partnerships with employers
- staff development policy to generate common understandings of work-based learning and its practice.

At course team level, a shared purpose should be developed regarding the integration of work-based learning into the programme of study.

Employer engagement

HEFCE published an employer engagement strategy in 2006, and in 2008 took forward a workforce development programme to create a platform for achieving the higher skills ambition set out in the Leitch Review. Growth in employer-led provision is available for the future under co-funding arrangements (see Section 4.4).

In the context of curriculum development, employer engagement refers to work-based learning and activities where employers are engaged through working directly with course teams in developing courses. Employers should be consulted on the development of foundation degrees, and courses may be devised for specific employers involving them in delivery, assessment and reviewing the programme.

Employers are engaged in some or all of the following:

- discussions about skills, qualifications and training requirements in their industry
- involvement in curriculum working groups
- designing course modules
- delivering degree units
- offering students work-based learning opportunities, projects, placements and work experience
- mentoring in the workplace
- assessing students' work
- acting as representatives on employer panels.

The following examples demonstrate employer involvement in programme design and delivery, including assessment.

City and Islington College

Over the past three years, City and Islington College has been working with the Metropolitan Police to develop a unique employer-led curriculum for the foundation degree in Forensic and Crime Scene Investigation. This enables students to develop over two years the skills required for a career as a crime scene investigator.

Together, the curriculum team at the college, its partner HEI Queen Mary, University of London and the Metropolitan Police outlined a framework for the course, taking in components of the Met's existing training structure to cover the practical aspects.

The course is now in its third year and the partnership between the Metropolitan Police and City and Islington College has gone from strength to strength. In November 2007, 80 per cent of applicants from the course applied for jobs with the Metropolitan Police; many have secured a position.

The Metropolitan Police and the college are 'thrilled' with the way in which the partnership and the course have developed, and are keen to see how they can develop further.

South Tyneside College

The emphasis on employer engagement is clearly stated in the college's strategic objectives and permeates all aspects of curriculum delivery, not just HE. Considerable efforts are made to maintain and develop close, fruitful working relationships with employers, and there is a clear 'employer focus' throughout, with a strong strategic direction from management.

Staff actively engage employers in developing programme structures, module content and assessment and in ongoing dialogue about the delivery of programmes. Many staff have extensive industrial experience, which ensures that they appreciate and understand employers' perspectives on their staff training needs. In the marine provision, marine employers and the Merchant Navy Training Board have clear influence on the design of the programmes, and employers are weekly college visitors. Study is a mix of work-based learning at sea and college attendance.

The SSC and marine employers are willing to contribute to the preparation of framework documents that stipulate and regulate course content to meet their needs. The programmes devised often require the college to adapt previous programmes, through unique centre-devised units or industry-accredited syllabuses, to meet their current and anticipated training needs.

Training programmes are reviewed every five years. This ensures the currency of the curricula, but imposes a high workload on employers, the SSC and curriculum developers and delivery staff.

Wiltshire College

Employer involvement in Wiltshire College's foundation degree in Animal Science is significant, and often results in students gaining employment with an employer with whom they have built up a relationship through the course. Employers were heavily involved in the initial design of the course and continue to comment on the relevance of the curriculum through an Industrial Liaison Committee.

The college has an animal centre stocked with species to represent those kept by local employers, and employers work with the college to determine care and management procedures in the centre. In their first year, students develop appropriate care and management skills to employer standards through working in the animal centre. In between years one and two, students undertake a 10-week placement with an employer; the course team matches students and employers carefully in terms of skills developed and needed. Students are able to undertake managerial, supervisory and training roles in these placements because of the skills they have developed in the animal centre, and start their second-year research project with a live brief commissioned by the employer.

The employer provides feedback to the college on the student's performance on the placement. The personal development journal which is used to assess the work-based learning incorporates these comments, and therefore affects the student's assessment. Students continue their relationship with the employer through the research project, but many often also gain part-time jobs and/or the promise of full-time employment on completion of the programme.

6.6 The role of SSCs and professional bodies in programme development

There is often a close link between the work of professional bodies and SSCs: both are concerned with career progression within their profession or sector, and both make use of National Occupational Standards (NOS), making specific links to qualifications. The key difference is that whereas SSCs can provide information on skills required in any particular geographical or sector area, and can advise on the integration of NOS into the design of programmes, professional bodies link the standards to professional body membership or licence to practice.

Sector Skills Councils

In 2009, there are 25 SSCs. Each is an employer-led, independent organisation covering a specific sector across the UK. Their role is to improve the sector's productivity and performance. The four key goals that SSCs address are:

- reducing skills gaps and shortages
- improving productivity, business and public service performance
- increasing opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce
- improving learning supply, including apprenticeships, higher education and NOS.

It is advisable to contact the relevant SSC when embarking on employment-related programme development, to support the case for the programme. However, as yet not all SSCs have developed their higher skills strategies or sector skills agreements. A number of SSCs have published Fd frameworks, which are available through the fdf web-site (www.fdf.ac.uk).

The Sector Skills Development Agency was replaced on 1 April 2008 by the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils, which will act as the SSCs' collective voice; its web-site has the details of all the SSCs (www.sscalliance.org). Also launched on 1 April 2008 in response to the Leitch Review recommendations was the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, a strategic body aiming to raise UK prosperity and opportunity by improving employment and skills.

The fdf publication, 'Higher Education and Skills for Business: Collaborative working between higher education providers and Sector Skills Councils' (www.fdf.ac.uk/home/information_for_universities_and_colleges/fdf_publications/) provides guidance and practical examples of collaboration between SSCs and higher education providers. It lists the benefits for providers of collaborating with SSCs as:

- access to sector labour market information and skills intelligence
- more access to sector employers
- opportunity to contribute to and influence the skills agenda
- informed employer contribution to vocational programme development, helping to 'future-proof' provision
- development of programmes such as foundation degrees that better meet employers' needs
- curriculum innovation – integration of academic and work-based learning
- enhanced graduate employability
- growth – tapping into the market for higher workforce development, thereby increasing enrolment and income
- helping to meet widening participation targets
- authoritative careers information, advice and guidance.

Professional bodies

Professional bodies seek to establish their members' credibility through adherence to a set of standards or code of conduct, and represent the interests of professional practitioners. Some are also awarding bodies. It should be recognised, however, that professional bodies vary in their organisation and are not in most cases set up to work closely with individual institutions.

Involving professional bodies in occupationally specific qualifications such as foundation degrees can secure professional recognition of the qualification to support the employability and career progression of graduates and, where appropriate, exemption from professional qualifications. Some foundation degrees include an embedded professional qualification, as in the following examples.

East Lancs Institute of Higher Education

East Lancs Institute of Higher Education is currently running a foundation degree in Financial Services and Law, which has been validated by Lancaster University. It was developed to meet the demands of local employers. The college has worked with a cohort of six employers, led by Acorn Financial Management, to assess the training needs of the local financial services sector and identify the key skills shortages within it. These employers have been actively engaged in the design and development of the course.

The Fd incorporates the key knowledge outcomes for the financial services industry, including contemporary development of financial services, information management, research methods, ethics, risk management, legal aspects and regulations, and e-finance. The industry CII qualifications (CII is a worldwide professional organisation for insurance and financial services) are embedded into the entire programme. At the end of the course, students are awarded a foundation degree Financial Services and Law, and also have the opportunity to take their CII exams.

New College Durham

The foundation degree in Housing at New College Durham is accredited by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), the professional body for the housing sector. On completion of this three-year qualification, students not only attain a foundation degree in Housing, but also full corporate membership of the CIH. Currently, over 70 students are registered on the programme.

Some of the benefits of CIH accreditation:

- CIH and housing employers were fully involved in developing the qualification, ensuring that it is current, relevant and meets professional standards as well as equipping students with the skills and knowledge required by housing businesses.
- A number of learners who may not want to progress onto a full degree are now able to become corporate members, and can therefore access the full range of services provided by CIH, which can help to progress their careers.
- Throughout the period of study, learners are student members of CIH, entitling them to a number of benefits, including publications, information alerts, access to research and free entry to regional seminars.

Where students gain additional professional accreditation and/or qualifications in the course of studying for an Fd, institutions include the requirements of professional and vocational bodies as part of the validation process.

The Business Link web-site provides a list of professional bodies: www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/findcontactbrowse?topicId=1074537120

6.7 Developing foundation degrees

Development of a foundation degree follows much of the process outlined in Section 6.2, but the distinctiveness of the Fd requires a particular approach. This

distinctiveness lies in the integration of the following characteristics as set out in QAA's foundation degree qualification benchmark:

- accessibility
- articulation and progression
- employer involvement
- flexibility
- partnership.

In its report, 'Learning from Academic review of higher education in further education colleges 2002-07', QAA notes that the FDQB has 'helped colleges to successfully design and implement these qualifications'.

Summary: work-based learning and employer engagement

Work-based learning and employer engagement has substantially increased through the review period. The introduction of Foundation Degrees has made a significant contribution to the development of work-based learning in higher education programmes in colleges. The Foundation Degree qualification benchmark has also helped colleges to successfully design and implement these qualifications. Many colleges have established effective partnerships with local employers who may be involved in curriculum design and content and may provide work-based or placement opportunities for both learning and assessment. Key strengths of college higher education provision include the use of students' employment and/or other work experience to enrich the learning process and to encourage students to exchange ideas and knowledge gained from their insights into work. There remains a challenge for colleges to sustain employer involvement in the programmes.

'Learning from Academic review of HE in FECs in England 2002-07', QAA, 2008, p21

Central to an Fd is its integration of academic and work-based learning through close collaboration between employers and providers.

Fdf

The following principles should be applied to work-based learning at higher education levels:

- formal partnership agreement between institution and employer(s)
- recognition of prior experiential learning
- learning plans that are designed to be three-way between employer, tutors and individuals
- learning outcomes driven more by workplace development informed by academic subject knowledge (trans-disciplinary)
- learning projects that encompass the development and integration of knowledge, understanding and skill
- clearly defined level of outcomes required to be achieved through work-based learning.

Table 13 sets out QAA's defining characteristics of the foundation degree, with some commentary and/or examples of how they work. These characteristics will also be found in other HE programmes; the distinctiveness of the foundation degree depends on all of these aspects being present in the award.

Table 13 **The defining characteristics of the foundation degree**

Defining characteristic	Comment and example
Accessibility	The emphasis on widening participation and access make colleges able to put into practice more flexible entry qualifications which will attract employees and students who can 'earn and learn'.
Articulation and progression	Although increasingly foundation degrees are developed to meet specific workforce development needs of employers and are valued as a qualification in their own right, there nevertheless remains a requirement that progression routes from the foundation degree are established at the point of validation. Colleges have sometimes found it difficult to identify an honours degree that articulates well with both the content and delivery method of the foundation degree, leading some providers to develop a generic third-year honours degree. **City College Norwich** BA (Hons) Professional Studies This is an innovative articulated progression route for an Fd graduate. Conceived and developed by City College Norwich (CCN), the proposal was presented to the University of East Anglia (UEA) which, in the spirit of innovation and forward thinking, embraced the initiative. The programme was developed by a team of academic staff from CCN working in partnership with the School of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning and was validated and launched in 2006. The course runs in the evening from September to August and explores the managerial and organisational challenges facing Fd graduates as their careers develop. The course director and all the teaching staff are from CCN, with dissertation/major project supervisors from CCN, practising professionals (with suitable academic credentials and experience) or from UEA. The course is designed to develop the philosophies and approaches of the foundation degree and has a strong workplace ethic. The second cohort of nearly 30 students completed in 2008. Of the first group of 20 who started in September 2006, 19 have graduated (the others will graduate in 2008), two with first class honours. In 2007-08 we had 28 students all on course to complete in one year (24) or two years (four).
Employer involvement	Employer involvement in design of programmes ensures that the content of the award meets the needs of the industry and that there is an appropriate balance between work-related specialist skills and academic learning. It is good practice to involve employers in the annual or periodic reviews of programmes to ensure their relevance to their business.

Experience and research from a range of sectors indicates that employers are most likely to fund or support employees through an Fd where they have been involved from the outset. Highlighting the clear business benefits of Fds helps to engage employers and ensure their continued commitment. Employers appreciate concise information about the Fd and their responsibilities. Some colleges recognise the three-way relationship between employer, employee/student and institution by producing handbooks that make clear what is expected of each of the partners.

Newcastle College

The Applied Science Department has worked closely with industry partners to establish innovative units and provision to meet employer needs:

- A Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) unit was created for the FdSc Laboratory Technician course after consultation with employers. This unit was delivered in part at the premises of Quantum Specials Laboratory, Wickam. This enabled current students and employers to gain certification while at the same time observing the unit content in practice on the production floor.
- Several units of the FdSc in Biotechnology have been written in partnership with Avecia in Billingham. This has allowed the students/employees access to state-of-the art equipment and expertise used for protein characterisation and project management.
- Training and employment needs of Proctor & Gamble have been addressed by setting up an internship programme for students. The students study on a college FdSc in Laboratory Technician and Manufacturing Process on day release, while being trained by Proctor & Gamble at its world-renowned technical site in Newcastle. We were able to tailor optional units and the delivery rationale of the course to make this happen, and the next step is the up-skilling of existing staff.

Flexibility

Flexible delivery modes are crucial to the appeal of Fds to both students and employers. Colleges should consider the work patterns of the sector or profession, including seasonal working, in order to develop and sustain marketability.

Modes of delivery which may be considered include:

- part-time study
- evening/weekend only
- distance or off-site learning with tutor/mentor support
- workplace learning
- e-learning
- day/block release
- full-time study
- blended learning (i.e. a mix of the above).

Castle College, Nottingham

The college delivers the Fd Policing to probationary police officers serving with the Nottinghamshire Constabulary.

The programme is tailored to the professional needs of officers and is delivered by a team comprising college lecturers and police trainers. The programme incorporates the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme representing occupational standards for a working police officer, and aims to enable the officers to understand more fully the context of their future role in society and apply their knowledge of theoretical perspectives to practical situations.

The Fd is delivered over 90 weeks and incorporates block release and work-based elements. A maximum of six separate cohorts start throughout the year.

Partnership

City College Norwich

In the East of England, an FdSc Health Studies was developed regionally. The development was led by City College Norwich and validated by their then HEI partner Anglia Ruskin University. The local NHS Acute Trust (Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital Trust), two local Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and three other colleges came together to develop the programme in response to the NHS training needs analysis and the skills escalator, which had identified significant gaps between NVQ3 and honours degree. NHS employees were invited to become an integral part of the delivery team and academic staff were welcomed (as qualified practitioners in their own right) into the hospital setting for observation and assessment.

Work-based learning within foundation degrees

This extract from the FDQB indicates what may be considered as good practice in work-based learning within foundation degrees.

> Authentic and innovative work-based learning is an integral part of Foundation Degrees and their design. It enables learners to take on appropriate role(s) within the workplace, giving them opportunity to learn and apply the skills and knowledge they have acquired as an integrated element of the programme. It involves the development of higher-level learning within both the institution and the workplace. It should be a two-way process, where the learning in one environment is applied in the other.
>
> QAA, FDQB, paragraph 23

Short placements that are arranged by students themselves and largely unsupported by college tutors while the students are off campus, are unlikely to meet the requirements of a foundation degree. Also, approaches based on superficial 'partnerships' with employers through which students gain a 'bit of work experience' do not constitute good practice.

Where possible, employers should be invited to play an active part in delivery. This may include participating in the delivery of work-based modules, providing student placements or visits, acting as guest speakers, the allocation of work-based mentors/supervisors, involvement in the design of assignments or projects related to the workplace, and the assessment of students within that environment.

The fdf web-site is an important source of information and guidance for providers and of resources to assist recruitment and employer engagement. It has downloadable copies of key fdf publications. These include:

- 'What is a Foundation degree?' (two publications, one aimed at employers and one at students)
- 'Where's your workforce heading?' (publications that can support employer engagement, outlining the business benefits of Fds for employers; there are two versions, one aimed at public sector employers and the other for private sector employers)
- 'Achieving effective practice in the establishment, planning and delivery of full-time Foundation degrees: A guide for universities and colleges'
- 'Developing higher skills in the UK workforce: a guide to collaboration between higher education and employers'
- 'Employer and provider partnerships' (provides a framework that institutions can draw from and adapt according to their particular needs and circumstances, for each stage in the process of partnership development)
- 'The impact of Foundation degrees on the workplace and students: a summary of research projects commissioned by fdf'.

Innovative delivery

Fds have the potential to drive innovation in delivery methods. Successful programmes use a variety of means appropriate to the intended learning outcomes and the needs of students, including work-based learning.

Worcester College of Technology was one of the first further education colleges to receive support from HEFCE for workforce development. In partnership, it has developed a foundation degree using blended learning, which will be delivered nationally.

Worcester College of Technology and the Institute of Payroll Professionals – a co-funded partnership

The college has worked in partnership with the IPP for over 15 years, providing further education levels 3 and 4 BTEC technician courses for the large number of employees in the private and public sector involved in the payroll profession. The IPP wished to develop a foundation degree and the college wished to expand its HE provision in response to the higher level skills agenda and to increase its HEFCE income.

During development of the foundation degree, the IPP undertook a major industry-wide consultation. Some 3,000 responses were received from the industry, and from these was drawn up a comprehensive payroll management competence framework setting out the range of skills and knowledge required at all levels of the profession. This was used as the reference tool in designing the Fd.

The foundation degree has been designed to cater for APEL and is 70 per cent delivered through work-based situations. The delivery model is non-standard in that the majority of provision is delivered at a time and venue to suit employers. The Fd

has a credit value of 240 units and conforms to the credit framework of the University of Worcester and the Herefordshire and Worcestershire LLN.

The course is part-time and is delivered through blended learning, combining electronic distribution, tutorials, revision days and formal workshops at regular intervals. With the application of APEL it can be completed in 24 months, otherwise over three years.

The Fd has been piloted from January 2008 and will expand rapidly as it replaces FE qualifications.

Programme developers at Worcester are aware that their students are likely to come from a variety of educational backgrounds. So the early stages of programme delivery place emphasis on tutor support and the development of study skills appropriate for HE.

Most Fd core modules include personal development planning and professional practice. Students do not always fully recognise the value of PDP to their studies and their lives, and colleges have to be innovative in finding ways of making it fit coherently and effectively, as in the following examples.

North Devon College

On the foundation degree in Computing at North Devon College the 'non-academic' modules (work-based learning, study skills and the tutorial) are placed firmly at the centre of the course and are delivered concurrently. Stage 1 students design and construct their own personalised ePortfolio in the form of a web-site, and are encouraged to form a community of practice.

The ePortfolio contains, at a minimum, summative assessment for the study-skills module in the form of evidence selected from examples of work completed during the academic modules and the work-based learning module. The sections of the ePortfolio include selected examples of note-taking, academic writing, presentations and collaboration. Students are encouraged to show evidence of the development of reflection: each section of the ePortfolio, and the ePortfolio itself, contains a reflective evaluation.

PDP is encouraged during the completion of assignments for the academic modules: students are expected to complete an action plan and a reflective evaluation for each assignment. Lecturer feedback on the reflective evaluation of these modules includes guidance on how to develop the skills of reflective rather than descriptive writing.

To create this ePortfolio, students are encouraged to use a software package and to develop independently skills to 'mirror' the workplace. There, as employees, they could be asked to work in project teams where they would be expected to understand new concepts and develop new skills.

Park Lane College

Land-based programmes

At level 1, all land-based students are required to undertake a skills audit and plan their personal development needs. Students then undertake various activities identified in their plan and reflect on them. In the past, this module has not been popular with students, who often struggle to see the point of personal and professional development (PPD).

A new approach was tried in 2008. To help students to plan and achieve their development needs, two PPD weeks were run across the department, when scheduled teaching stopped and PPD activities took place. Students were given a booklet containing different activities offered by the department (for example, dry-stone walling, bird identification, first aid, mammal identification, marine mammal rescue, study refreshers) from which they could choose. The Fd Plant Use and Design students designed and constructed a garden for the Harrogate spring flower show as part of their PPD, achieving a Silver Gilt in the process.

Fd in Business Management

The PPD3 module focuses on employment application procedures, working with HAYS Recruitment (CVs, application forms, interviewing skills) and using employment application documentation (job adverts, person specifications, job descriptions). In groups, students design job adverts, apply for the jobs advertised, and interview others. They are required to produce a portfolio based on the group recruitment exercise, reflect on their portfolios and produce action plans for their own development in terms of employment application procedures.

Students agree that they gain valuable insight into the recruitment process. The sessions run by HAYS are also very well received, as students benefit from professional advice which they can then put into practice as part of the recruitment exercise.

Regional and sectoral approaches to developing foundation degrees

Many Fd developments are the product of extensive collaboration, involving a group or consortium of employers or a number of FECs and HEIs working together to develop provision to meet the workforce development needs of a particular sector or industry.

City College Norwich

Development of an FdA in Public Sector Management included a wide range of public sector employers, including the NHS (Acute and Mental Health) Trusts, PCT, Norfolk constabulary, fire service, LEA and CCN (as an employer). The development team, supported by MOVE (East of England LLN) funding, was led and co-ordinated by an employer. The whole development was conceived and planned by a group of employer representatives, with the college providing the academic template and frameworks and acting in a largely consultative role. The programme recruited in January 2008, with a full intake expected in September.

The following examples are provided by fdf.

Fdf

In the north-west, the Fd Media and Creative Business was designed collaboratively with the support of Skillset and North West Vision and Media to build the business skills of the sector, and validated by several HEIs. In some regions, LLNs have been instrumental in bringing providers together. One such example is the East of England LLN's initiatives to address regional sector priorities such as health and social care and the built environment. In the East Midlands, a number of universities and colleges have formed a group to develop a repository of construction curricula that will be available to all contributing partner colleges to access to create bespoke foundation degree programmes.

Fdf has been taking the lead on establishing partnership initiatives to encourage employers to collaborate in developing foundation degrees for their sectors. A consortium consisting of fdf, Tesco, Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of the Arts London, Skillsmart Retail and the Retail Academy has developed a technology-assisted foundation degree for the retail sector which, following piloting by Tesco, will become more widely available. A national development in travel, led by TUI UK with fdf, has resulted in simultaneous validation of an Fd by eight HEIs.

In partnership with SSCs and RDAs, fdf is developing employer-led consortia across a number of other sectors, aiming to similarly develop sector-specific foundation degrees.

Fdf considers that such collaborative developments are a more efficient way of addressing employers' needs and maximising time and effort.

7 Assessment

7.1 QAA guidance on assessment

QAA's 'Code of practice for assuring quality and standards in higher education' has 10 sections, and FECs should be able to show how they have considered the precepts of sections of the code as part of Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review. In terms of assessment, they include in particular 'Section 6: Assessment of students', and 'Section 4: External examining'. This is not a question of compliance: the precepts provide guidance for what is seen as good practice in these areas.

QAA overview reports and such reports as 'Learning from Academic review of higher education in further education colleges in England 2002-07' have identified that assessment is one of the priorities for improvement in colleges and in many HEIs alike. QAA, in discussion with HEFCE, has therefore chosen assessment as the theme for the first developmental engagements in IQER for all colleges with higher education provision. Developmental engagement is the first of two main stages in IQER, the other being summative review (see Section 10). Much will be learned about good practice as examples are gathered during the developmental engagement process.

Student assessment remains an area in need of further enhancement in most colleges. The assessment of student work based on a strategy that ensures a close link between intended learning outcomes and assessment methods is noted as good practice. However, a number of reports note that feedback on student work was variable in terms of quality and quantity across different modules and/or programmes. A common problem in many colleges is the lack of clear information, for staff and/or students, on assessment criteria and marking schemes which leads to inconsistency of practice across programmes. The further development of clear assessment policies and procedures to ensure reliability and integrity of the assessment process would assist colleges in maintaining and enhancing the standards and quality of their higher education provision.

In general, there is an effective use of formative assessment across all subjects. Small higher education student groups help to facilitate the timely return of marked and graded work, and the comprehensive feedback provided to students on

assessments makes a substantial contribution to learning. The provision of oral feedback to supplement written feedback is a feature of good practice in most colleges. Reports note that the most successful programmes ensure an effective link between theory and practice at all levels. A small number of reports note that colleges could adopt a more consistent approach in providing feedback to students. In a few cases, written feedback is focused on practical skills at the expense of more analytical and cognitive development.

'Learning from academic review in further education colleges 2002-07', QAA, 2008

The QAA has published 'Findings from IQER pilot reviews: Assessment'. This publication provides an overview of the outcomes of the IQER pilot reviews, emerging good practice and recommendations about how the college might improve the management of its student assessment. It is part of the 'Higher education in further education colleges in England Information Bulletin' series, which can be read at www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/IQER/InfoBulletin08.

IQER scrutiny of assessment

What evidence might institutions need to provide for the external scrutiny of IQER? Information will need to be provided on:

- the assessment policy
- the assessment strategy
  - assessment process
  - assessment criteria
  - guidance to markers
  - internal moderation systems
  - external examiners'/verifiers' reports
  - procedures for monitoring and recording achievement
  - examination board minutes
- samples of students' work with marks and feedback
- assessment questions/briefs
- guidance on providing feedback to students for lecturers and employers.

Good practice in assessment relates to any programme of learning, but HE in FE must meet the requirements of higher education levels as set out in the FHEQ (see Section 2).

Assessment is determined to some extent by the requirements of the awarding body. One college (see Matthew Boulton College illustration below) prepared a grid of the college's and the HEI partners' requirements for its IQER developmental engagement on assessment.

Matthew Boulton College (MBC)

College and university responsibilities for quality assurance of assessment

Activity	Edexcel	Aston University	De Montfort University (DMU)	Staffordshire University (SU)	University of Wolverhampton (UoWolv)
Setting of assignments	MBC	MBC, except year two Fd Pharmacy modules delivered by Aston staff	DMU	SU	UoWolv
Verification of assessment briefs	MBC plus external examiner	Aston plus external examiner on Fd HE/FE – MBC plus Aston exam boards on Fd Health and Social Care – MBC except year two Fd Pharmacy module	DMU plus MBC/consortium colleges and external examiner	SU with external examiner	UoWolv with external examiner
Verification of assessment decisions	MBC plus external examiner	Aston for sample plus external examiner	MBC plus consortium colleges with external examiner	SU plus external examiner	UoWolv and external examiner. Formally ratified by subject assessment boards
Double marking	N/A	N/A on Fd HE/FE – MBC plus sample at HEI for Fd Health and Social Care – MBC staff on Fd Pharmacy	MBC plus consortium colleges	MBC plus SU	MBC plus UoWolv
Standardisation of results	Paired team members on HND Business	Aston Unit Exam Board on Fd HE/FE – Aston co-ordinator for Social Care – exam board at year end with external examiner on Fd Pharmacy	DMU subject assessment board	SU	UoWolv subject assessment boards
Appeals	MBC	Aston	DMU	SU	UoWolv
Assessment boards	MBC with ext examiner	MBC	MBC	MBC	MBC
Convening of exam boards	N/A	Aston	DMU	SU	UoWolv

Key features of assessment

The assessment strategy should incorporate the key features outlined in the rest of this section, demonstrating why assessment is carried out in a particular way.

A policy on assessment will include a statement on systematic internal moderation/verification and external standard setting and/or scrutiny, including second marking and anonymous marking.

Four elements need to be aligned:

- level descriptors
- grade descriptors
- assessment criteria
- the assignment brief or assessment task.

Assessments should be appropriate to the learning, and should be evaluated and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are clear and allow evidence to be generated to meet the standard.

All assessment instruments – including tests, projects and examinations – should be presented clearly, with assessment criteria, in direct relation to clearly specified learning outcomes. It is good practice for assessments to be internally moderated/verified, a process which offers an effective form of staff development. Staff new to HE work will also benefit from other forms of staff development on assessment.

7.2 General principles

It is good practice for colleges to have an assessment policy which sets out for staff and students what is expected of them. Assessment includes the need to:

- assure academic standards
- improve learning
- motivate learning
- provide feedback (for students and staff) to lead to an improvement in performance
- identify and celebrate strengths
- correct errors and lack of understanding
- consolidate learning
- provide information for progression – to employers and HEI admission tutors.

The Higher Education Academy web-site (www.heacademy.ac.uk) has a wide range of materials on assessment that will be useful to colleges. Specific materials can be found at: www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/learning/assessment

The Academy has also produced a DVD which specifically looks at assessment in the context of HE in FE. The DVD contains two short films exploring staff and students' perceptions of assessment and is available on request from the Academy.

Since many disciplines have their own pedagogy of assessment (for example, art and design and computing), it is also worth contacting specific Higher Education Academy subject centres for further information or viewing their web pages on the Academy web-site (follow the links from www.heacademy.ac.uk).

Many colleges will have a teaching, learning and assessment strategy, and need to consider whether they should have one that differentiates for HE and addresses specific elements of the QAA 'Code of practice: for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education Section 6 Assessment of students'.

Assessment strategy

An assessment strategy needs to be clear and transparent and address the following points:

- why, in the context of the programme's aims and outcomes, that range of assessment methods was selected
- how the pattern of assessment supports the development of students and their learning
- how the strategy addresses the balance between the demands made of students in terms of their workload and independent learning at different levels
- the relationship to the intended learning outcomes, but also to the teaching and learning strategies used
- how the teaching and learning strategy prepares students to cope with assessment; for example, if presentations are used as a form of assessment, students need to develop the skills to produce and make them.

An assessment schedule should be discussed by all staff teaching on the programme, and made available to students so they can plan their workload in a manageable way across the whole programme and avoid 'bunching' (see below).

Informal and formal assessment methods range from initial diagnostic tests, through internally set formative assessments to summative assessment externally moderated on a periodic sampling basis. The assessments used should cover a sufficient range of instruments and methods to suit a variety of learning styles, to offer all students the opportunity to achieve (see Section 7.7). Students with disabilities must not be disadvantaged, so the subject team may need to explore alternative methods of assessment (see Section 8.7).

The specific roles of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment need to be clear.

The purpose and requirements of assessment should be clearly communicated to students at various stages of their experience at college, beginning with pre-course advice and induction and continuing through course and module handbooks. Students and staff (especially those involved in an assessment they have not designed themselves) should understand what students need to do to achieve a particular grading. Consideration should also be given to whether marks rather than grades are appropriate.

Northbrook College

Assessment policy

Assessment is at the heart of the learning experience of students. Assessment motivates students and drives their learning. It determines their progression through their programmes and validates their success or failure in meeting programme objectives. It is assessment that provides the main basis of public recognition of achievement and gives it its value and marketability.

Assessment is usually construed as being diagnostic, formative or summative.

Diagnostic assessment aims to identify attributes or skills in the learner that suggest appropriate pathways of study, or learning difficulties that require support and resolution.

Formative assessment is designed to enable the learner to obtain feedback on his/her progress in meeting stated objectives and reviewing goals.

Summative assessment provides the means whereby a clear statement of achievement or failure can be made in respect of a student's performance in relation to stated objectives.

Any assessment method can, and often does, involve more than one of these elements. So, for example, much coursework is formative in that it provides an opportunity for students to be given feedback on their level of attainment, but also often counts towards the credit being accumulated for a summative statement of achievement. An end-of-module or end-of-programme written examination is designed primarily to result in a summative judgement on the level of attainment the student has reached; but the result, and discussion around it, can be formative. Both formative and summative assessment can have a diagnostic function. Assessment primarily aimed at diagnosis is intrinsically formative, though it would rarely contribute towards a summative judgement.

St Helen's College

Code of assessment practice

Assessment should enable students to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the learning outcomes and achieved the aims of a unit/module/course of study and achieved the standard required for their award/course.

The design of the assessment should make effective use of student and staff time, and should take into consideration the specific needs of students and nature of the subject.

The purpose and objectives of assessment should be clearly identified and related to the stated learning outcomes of units/modules/courses. These should be effectively communicated to all students.

Relevant assessment criteria should be identified and communicated to all those being assessed and to those conducting the assessment. If the explanation is verbal, arrangements must be made to update anyone absent from the session.

Assessment criteria should be clearly indicated in module handbooks and assessment briefs. They should also be included in written feedback sheets with a clear indication of how marks are allocated against these criteria.

Assessment methods should be appropriate to the unit/module/course objectives and capable of testing the learning outcomes. Where possible, a range of assessment methods should be employed to meet the differing needs of students and the subject and to further motivate students.

The practice of assessment should be objective, impartial, consistent and free of bias. This practice should be transparent to students, external examiners and reviewers and subject to appropriate internal monitoring.

Assessment outcomes should be communicated to students with appropriate feedback and indications as to how future performance can be improved to support the learning process.

All higher education courses should produce a student handbook which contains, inter alia, assessment regulations. More detailed assessment regulations and guidelines for specific elements of assessment should be contained in module/unit handbooks and assessment briefs.

Any penalties related to assignment deadlines must be described clearly in the student handbook and enforced consistently. These should be explained to students at the start of the course or module.

Course teams can benefit from maximising opportunities for feedback on students' experience of assessment (through surveys, unit/module evaluations, group discussion and tutorials) to inform annual course reviews and associated action plans. The analysis of a cohort's marks can show up all kinds of issues.

Mechanisms need to be in place to deal with breaches of assessment regulations and appeals against assessment decisions (see Sections 7.3 and 7.4).

The assessment schedule

The assessment schedule should show:

- how many assessments are in each unit/module
- weightings of separate assessments
- a published timetable with dates for submission and return of assessments
- whether there is any under-assessment or over-assessment
- the range of instruments of assessment
- the range of methods of assessment
- that the needs of students with disabilities have been accommodated
- that there is a manageable workload for students without 'bunching'.

The whole course team needs to make time to discuss and agree the assessment schedule, because any members of staff could unwittingly affect it by setting their own conditions for an assessment.

7.3 Assessment regulations

Students have the right to know what the assessment regulations are and their responsibility to abide by them. Any regulations should be clearly described in the course handbook and programme specification (see Section 6.3). The regulations may differ between BTEC HND/HNC programmes, Fds, degrees and NPHE, so the course team must be clear what needs to be covered. For degree courses, most colleges use the assessment/academic regulations of the validating institution.

Many colleges have developed their own assessment regulations, which might differ according to the kind of HE provision.

Castle College Nottingham

The college has developed a comprehensive 'HE Quality Manual', including assessment regulations. The manual brings together and, where possible, standardises regulations and mechanisms across a range of programmes validated by different HEIs.

The impact of the manual has been to clarify for staff minimum standards and procedures which ensure that academic standards and quality meet all partner requirements.

The weighting of assessments is used for a range of reasons – for example, to allocate more marks developmentally and progressively or for different kinds of learning. Any weightings should be made clear in the unit/module guide.

Academic honesty

Colleges need to ensure that they have a policy on academic honesty or plagiarism (see also Section 2) which is clearly stated in the course handbook and includes cheating in exams and 'collusion'. A self-declaration on work to be submitted can be helpful. It is very important for students to understand what is meant by plagiarism, because the consequences are serious if they transgress. All HEIs, as awarding bodies, will have their own policy and processes for all aspects of academic honesty. Colleges, especially those with multiple partners, need to align their practice as it has an impact on standards. Some colleges insist that any assessments with definite answers, for example in mathematics, should be done in class.

In recent years, a great deal of work has been undertaken in the area of academic conduct. Support materials can now be found to help staff and students to understand the issues involved and take practical steps to deal with the problems of plagiarism.

Organisations such as JISC and the Higher Education Academy work individually and collaboratively to support institutions. Examples of the type of support available can be found on both organisations' web-sites: www.jiscpas.ac.uk and www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/learning/assessment/plagiarism

A new collaboration between the Academy and JISC, called the Academy JISC Academic Integrity Service, was set up in 2008 to help organisations to tackle this burgeoning issue at a strategic/managerial level; see www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/learning/academic_integrity

7.4 Academic appeals

There should be a formal procedure for students to appeal against assessment decisions, although this does not include appealing against any grade awarded. The procedure may involve the partner HEI, Edexcel and external examiners. It is essential that assessment regulations set out clearly the roles and responsibilities of the college and of validating and funding HEI partners as well as student access to formal representation regarding appeals.

Some HEIs allow colleges to use their own systems wherever they can. The following example gives details of the appeals procedure at Northbrook College, whose degrees are validated by the University of Brighton.

Northbrook College

Academic appeals against a decision of the Examination Board for HE programmes validated by the University of Brighton

The Course Examination Board has the authority to approve results and to exclude students on academic grounds (such as irredeemable failure). There is no right of appeal against decisions of the Examination Board which are matters of academic judgement. A candidate may request a review of the Examination Board decision only on the following grounds:

- that mitigating circumstances had been submitted but had not been considered by the Examination Board
- that his or her performance in the examination was adversely affected by illness or other factors which he or she was unable, or for valid reasons unwilling, to divulge before the Examination Board reached its decision. The candidate's request must be supported by medical certificates or other documentary evidence acceptable to the Examination Board
- that the examination procedures were not followed in accordance with the regulations, resulting in an error of assessment
- that some other material irregularity led to a breach of the procedures or regulations resulting in a decision detrimental to the student.

Disagreement with the academic judgement of the Examination Board in assessing the merits of an individual piece of work or in reaching any assessment decision based on the marks, grades and other information relating to a candidate's performance cannot in itself constitute grounds for a request for reconsideration by a candidate.

A candidate who wishes to appeal should within 15 days of the publication of a pass list:

- give written notice of an intention to appeal to the secretary to the Academic Board of the University of Brighton
- discuss the matter with the chair of the Examination Board in order to establish the facts surrounding the decision and resolve any misunderstandings in relation to Examination Board procedures or regulations.

If the secretary to the Academic Board considers there are grounds for appeal the matter will be referred to the university's Academic Appeal Committee. Students will be invited to attend an appeal hearing and if the appeal is upheld the Examination Board will be asked to reconsider its decision.

'Mitigating circumstances' relate to any illness, bereavement or other serious event that has prevented the student from following normal processes.

7.5 Internal moderation/verification

Colleges and HEIs use a number of terms to describe the process by which course teams ensure that their assessments are fair, consistent, comparable with teaching teams in their own and other institutions, and meet national standards. Although these terms have slightly different meanings, institutions variously describe this process as moderation, standardisation or verification, and it is a useful way of sharing practice.

Colleges with Edexcel programmes are required to use internal verification systems to ensure the appropriateness and security of assessment and that assessment meets national standards. Some colleges have refined or adapted their FE procedures to fit higher education programmes. Edexcel requires some work from each assessor to be internally verified and checked by the external examiner. Professional bodies which offer higher level awards have their own arrangements.

Internal standardisation usually occurs in two steps:

- moderation of the assignment or examination paper to ensure that the learning outcomes are met, the assessment criteria are clear, written guidance to the assessment is clear to students and the task is appropriate, and that students will understand what they have to do to achieve
- moderation of assessed student work – either all the student work or a sample is double marked to ensure consistency of standards within a team or across similar student groups. Double marking needs to include the best, medium and all fail grades in order to ensure consistency. Second marking takes place in some instances, where any comments made by the second marker are written on the feedback sheets and made available to students. This process is also called cross-marking.

Anonymous marking, occasionally called blind marking, is another way of assuring standards, because pre-knowledge of students cannot influence the assessment. This can be difficult in colleges where groups are small and staff know their students very well.

Good practice includes using a number of assessment methods and several ways of marking – including self, peer or team assessment – to ensure the broadest possible moderation of standards.

Bridgwater College

Bridgwater College organises a verification day for each course team, including part-time staff. They look at assessments, have samples available, and expect clear mark schemes and model answers for essay assessments.

University of Plymouth Colleges (UPC) with the Higher Education Learning Partnership CETL

The University of Plymouth has a specific faculty (UPC) for its 20 partner colleges. Within this faculty, a number of subject forum chairs and academic liaison staff have organised cross-moderation events between the colleges. These events enable module leaders to meet and moderate each other's assessments. Issues addressed have included the sharing of grading criteria and assessment approaches. In addition, trials of cross-institutional moderation of marked student work have taken place online within critical and contextual studies through KEN, the Knowledge Exchange Network established by the HELP CETL.

7.6 Assessing work-based learning

Fdf offers the following advice.

Course teams need to have a clear purpose in developing work-based learning at higher education levels. This is not just a matter of students being encouraged to develop job-specific skills. An essential starting point is provided by the QAA framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ, revised 2008) and its definition of level outcomes within which the foundation degree provides the benchmark qualification at level 5 (formerly designated the intermediate level). For foundation degrees this is supported by 'Foundation Degree qualification benchmark' (QAA, 2004) within which paragraph 42 defines the specific knowledge, understanding and skills that holders of the qualification should demonstrate.

It is important that the foundation degree is located within the QAA's Academic Infrastructure, including the FHEQ. Course teams should note that the descriptors for levels 4 and 5 (formerly certificate and intermediate levels) in the revised FHEQ are not identical to levels 4 and 5 of the QCA framework (QCF).

The QAA descriptors should provide the over-arching framework for defining the learning outcomes that inform the work-based learning. These should be negotiated between tutors, employers and students, and need to be assessed against clearly defined criteria that are understood and shared between all three parties.

Level 4 exemplar learning outcome

Evaluate the company's systems for delivering customer care and satisfaction

This will involve the student in critically assessing the extent to which there is shared understanding within the company about the systems it uses; and evaluation of resources available. It will involve the student in project management and could be assessed through portfolio and a final report to the company that includes recommendations for enhancement.

Level 5 exemplar learning outcome

Critically assess the quality assurance procedures used by your company and locate these within sector practice

This will involve the student in research and analysis to deliver business improvement.

Good practice in work-based learning requires that the learning outcomes and assessment criteria drive the assessment strategy and define the volume and value of the credits associated with work-based learning within the whole programme. It is also important that there is integration of learning outcomes between modules so that they are mutually supportive and build the students' cognitive and skills competences in a balanced way.

There must be robust challenges and rigorous assessment applied to work-based learning so that the credits are regarded as equivalent to 'academic' credits. The learning involved is derived from constructing the workplace as a learning environment so that there is not a perception that it is just a matter of completing routine tasks associated with 'workplace training' activities.

Warwickshire College

Assessment of work-based learning (WBL)

Work-based learning varies considerably from course to course. On a typical foundation degree, WBL will be used to:

a) put academic knowledge into context through observation and practice

b) develop specific skills

c) develop general 'transferable' skills.

Assessment of (a) can be fairly straightforward, as assessment tasks can mirror those set for assessment of other academic learning, with the requirement that students use their workplace as a resource and consider it critically. The critique is valuable as students' workplaces usually differ and it is important that students have an awareness and understanding of both the opportunities and limitations provided by their surroundings. This type of task would satisfy the level 5 exemplar learning outcome given above.

When skills are assessed it is useful to involve both employers and students in the assessment process. Many providers are reluctant to use employers as assessors because of issues surrounding training, standardisation and unforeseeable difficulties that may result in the 'trained' employers being unavailable. However, employers can be usefully engaged in providing feedback on how well students carry out tasks or demonstrate skills in the workplace. Students can also be asked to reflect on their own performances and provide a reflective response to employer feedback. Such a combination of information usually provides sufficient evidence for college staff to assess this aspect of WBL. This approach is also ideal for assessment of transferable skills.

A typical employer feedback form for WBL may include one set of questions relating to timekeeping, initiative, confidence, etc. This can be a college-standard pro forma and can be used for all programmes with WBL. A second set of questions, tailored by the course team, can solicit feedback on a specific skill and may include questions around the ability to perform a task, effectiveness, customer satisfaction, meeting deadlines, etc.

7.7 Assessment design and methods

Course teams need to think about the language they use to write assessments, so that students will understand what they have to do. An assessment couched in the language of academic discourse might be appropriate to a final-year degree student, but can be very intimidating to one starting a higher education course. A planned approach to introducing the language of the discipline progressively gives students a better chance of achieving the learning outcomes.

Learning support staff are often called upon to deconstruct or interpret assignment briefs because they are not written in language that students can easily understand. This can also happen when the brief is overly long.

Some of the time spent on agreeing an assignment would be usefully spent in reviewing the language as well as the assessment design. A clear, concise style will make students feel comfortable with what is being asked. Straightforward language can still require sophisticated activities.

Setting the level of an assessment is also important and needs to be discussed. Course teams may find it useful to consult the level descriptors of the FHEQ to ensure that the assessment is at the appropriate level and sufficiently challenging (see Section 2.2).

Assessment methods

The list below gives the range of assessment methods identified in QAA subject benchmark statements and by practitioners. It provides a potentially rich, cross-discipline resource from which to identify alternative methods for assessing learning outcomes. With the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) in 2005, all colleges were required to write and publish a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) by December 2006 (see Section 8.7) to set out how they would ensure that people with disabilities are treated equally (for examples of college statements, see Disability Equality Duty web-sites).

In terms of assessing student work, staff should make sure when designing assessments that all students will be able to tackle them. The following list of assessment methods, added to colleges' own lists, should enable fair and equal assessment:

Analytical exercises

Briefings

Case studies

Computer-based assessment and exercises

Continuous assessment

Coursework with discussion elements

Critical diaries, learning logs and journals

Critiques

Data interpretation exercises

Laboratory practical reports

Laboratory examinations and practical tests

Learning journals

Multiple choice testing

Observation

Online assessments

Optical mark reader assessments

Oral examinations

Placement or exchange reports

Design tasks	Peer and self-evaluation
Dissertation	Personal research projects
Documentation	Portfolios and sketchbooks
Electronic presentations (CD, web pages etc)	Practical reports
Essay assignments	Presentations
Examinations (open book)	Problem-based learning
Examinations (seen)	Projects, independent or group
Examinations (take away)	Role play
Exhibition and poster displays	Simulation exercises
Extended investigations (e.g. statistical)	Student-led seminars, presentations
Fieldwork reports	Synoptic examinations
Finding primary source material	Video formats
Geological mapping	Viva voce examinations
Group work	Work-based learning assignments
In-class and module tests	Workbooks
Internship diaries	Work experience reports

Assessment methods should be appropriate to the learning outcomes, HE level and assessment criteria. Many institutions still require lengthy essays as a matter of course, but these are not always the most effective method of assessing learning. When constructing the programme specification, assessment strategies (along with teaching and learning strategies) should be clearly linked to the learning outcomes (see Section 6). Learning outcomes are not always easy to interpret, and exemplars may be provided to ensure that students 'get the point' of what is involved.

Peer assessment

Although the concept of peer assessment has led to some debate, this type of assessment has gradually been introduced in colleges. It is generally agreed that it is good practice to get students to assess their own and others' work, by devising criteria and making judgements. On the other hand, it can lead to some tensions, especially if the assessment is the result of group work.

Innovative assessment

Colleges frequently use innovative forms of assessment, as the following examples testify; one involves students working in Europe.

Park Lane College

Students re-enact the past at historic houses

Foundation degree Theatre Studies students from Park Lane College (Leeds) entertain visitors at Temple Newsam, Lotherton Hall and Castle Howard by performing historical re-enactments as part of their Fd course.

Drama students researched the histories of the estates to create inventive dramatic re-enactments of the lives of the Meynell Ingram family at Temple Newsam, the Gascoigne family at Lotherton Hall, and the Howard family at Castle Howard.

Each performance inside the houses brings the characters to life, using scripts written by the students and performed in full historic costume. Students studying production arts at the college have provided the hair and make-up designs for the performers. All stages of this activity contribute to the assessment.

Working in Mallorca

The college has worked in Mallorca with Marina Hotels for over 12 years via Leonardo da Vinci funding. This work with FE students has now been developed with the Marina Management team for the college's foundation degree students.

FE students receive training sessions on animation and bar/restaurant work with Marina in Leeds and then a further two weeks' training and assessment in Mallorca during March/April each year, when students are selected to return for the summer season.

To start the new FdA work placements, a foundation degree student attended the training in Mallorca to familiarise himself with the hotel and work involved, then returned with the FE students for the summer season. Working closely with a range of managers, his role was to supervise the students across 10 hotels on the island, ensuring that they were visited each week, checking logbooks and discussing performance with the bar and restaurant managers or animation chiefs. In addition to this role, the student worked with the customer services managers in the hotels.

South Birmingham College

Press release

HND/C Business and Management students have been challenged to come up with business proposals to help the Digbeth-based Indoor, Outdoor and Rag Markets meet the changing needs of the consumer.

The students will present their proposals to a Dragon's Den-style panel made up of top bosses from the college, Birmingham City Council and Retail Birmingham.

The winning proposal will be implemented as part of the markets' business and development plan – giving the winning student an invaluable opportunity to make their mark on both Birmingham City Centre retail and the exciting regeneration of the Digbeth area.

The bespoke six-week project has been integrated into the students' curriculum and has involved a tour of the markets, a talk from the Markets Retail Manager, Mark

Chamberlain, and essays on marketing the future of the markets and the strategic options.

Article in the Birmingham Mail

Business whizzkids presented their ideas for Birmingham's historic Bull Ring markets to a Dragon's Den-style judging panel. The 40 business and management students at South Birmingham College were then grilled by the 'dragons', which included two veterans with 85 years of trading between them … Some of their suggestions were to introduce uniforms, Sunday trading and hold street festivals. Robin said, 'The markets need to attract the next generation. But we're converts to the markets now.'

Bob Glover, deputy director of business at the college, said this was the first in a series of collaborations between the city council and the college's business and IT departments. He said, 'it gives students employable skills and in return the city can get fresh ideas from young people.'

Computer-aided assessment

The term e-assessment has emerged in the last few years to encompass the use of computers to help in adding value to diagnostic, formative and summative testing procedures. Most institutions use randomised banks of multiple-choice questions to test diagnostically or formatively. This is a very efficient method for checking competence and progress.

More recent research points to a deeper and more creative use of computers to improve and enhance the learning experience by using computer-aided assessments in a more imaginative manner. The need for creative assessments has been driven partly by the recorded increase in plagiarism cases, so academic staff are looking for ways to design out the possibilities for plagiarism of assessments. The second driver is the move towards a more student-centred pedagogy whereby students are encouraged to peer assess, work in teams, collaborate and reflect on their learning in an experiential process. The final push comes from the arrival of software that encourages reflection, sharing and collaboration (Web 2.0).

For further information, see:

www.jisc.ac.uk/assessment.html

www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/publications/pub_eassesspracticeguide.aspx

www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/InfoKits/effective-use-of-VLEs/resources/roadmap-for-eassessment

www.jisc.ac.uk/aboutus/partnerships/he_academy/assessment.aspx

Progression requirements

Students need to know what is required for them to progress from an HND or foundation degree to the second or third year of a degree. They also need to be clear about possible exemptions from professional bodies' awards.

Progression agreements are a key objective for Lifelong Learning Networks. Each LLN approaches the development of progression agreements in its own way, but students are at the heart of all models. The widening participation section of the HEFCE web-site contains a good deal of material on progression agreements (www.hefce.ac.uk).

8 Supporting HE students in further education colleges

8.1 HE students in FECs

Policy initiatives (see Section 1) promote colleges as providers of locally accessible (geographically and culturally), work-related and niche HE aimed to encourage participation by students who might not otherwise access higher education.

In 2006, HEFCE, in the consultation on its proposals for the strategic development of HE in FECs ('Higher education in further education colleges', HEFCE 2006/48) explained that:

> Our particular interests are in how the HE that is delivered in FECs now, and in the future, can contribute to the changing landscape of HE; and what it does, and might do, to enhance progression, enabling more people to access HE.
> (paragraph 8)

The consultation noted that HE in FECs is a distinctive part of the HE system, with students more likely to be over 25, to study part-time and to come from areas with low rates of participation in HE (paragraph 32). Additionally, FECs focus on short-cycle higher education within a context of lifelong learning (paragraph 33).

The pattern of full-time and part-time mode has been somewhat different for foundation degrees. In 2005-06, a majority of foundation degree entrants registered and taught at an HEI were part-time, while a majority of those taught in an FEC were full-time ('Foundation degrees: Key statistics 2001-02 to 2007-08', HEFCE 2008/16, paragraph 53). However, the HEFCE definition of full-time is based on study time, not attendance (see Annex D), and 'full-time' foundation degree students may well be working in full-time or substantive employment and following a flexible work-based route.

HEFCE now requires colleges to formalise a strategy for their higher education provision, including non-prescribed HE. HEFCE funds higher education programmes validated and awarded by HEIs; this provision will include some professional programmes such as management or teacher training. However, many colleges provide equivalent qualifications awarded by other awarding bodies, including professional bodies, which may be funded by the LSC; these programmes are predominantly part-time (where full-time is defined as 450+ hours of guided learning). This guide addresses both forms of HE provision and the variation in funding stream.

8.2 Providing opportunities to participate in HE

Widening participation policy and the FE contribution

Widening participation has been a policy focus for well over a decade, and the widening participation indicators for higher education are improving (as reported on 5 June 2008 on the HEFCE web-site under News, based on the tenth set of UK HE performance indicators published by HESA). However, there are real concerns that the social class gap in terms of HE participation has not narrowed significantly. (The performance indicators published by HESA on behalf of HEFCE are for HEIs only.)

HEFCE policy for supporting higher education in FECs is premised on colleges' capacity to deliver HEFCE's strategic aims, particularly to:

- promote and provide the opportunity for successful participation in HE to everyone who can benefit from it
- ensure that all HE students benefit from a high quality learning experience fully meeting their needs and the needs of the economy and society.

(HEFCE 2006/48, paragraph 30).

Most colleges view widening participation as central to their mission. Research conducted for the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA), 'Difference, diversity and distinctiveness: Higher education in the learning and skills sector' (Parry et al, 2004), identified aspects of distinctiveness in the provision of HE in FE as reported by HE co-ordinators:

- smaller classes and greater intimacy in teaching and learning groups
- more student-centred delivery
- individual support and tutorial – in-class and learning support
- an 'FE ethos' which derived from the smaller classes, contained space, pedagogy and support.

The co-ordinators described the students as 'widening participation' students: mature, from backgrounds with no tradition of HE, with lower entry qualifications and needing a high level of input on skills for learning, and 'local'. For the student respondents, 'local' did not necessarily equate to distance from an HEI, but often to a sense of accessibility – of staff, timetabling and the ethos.

A statistical analysis conducted for the LSC supported this view. The report, entitled 'Further Education and the Delivery of Higher-level Qualifications. Understanding

the contribution of further education to the delivery of Level 4 (higher) and professional qualifications' (LSC, 2008), concluded that:

> FECs make a highly significant contribution to higher-level provision, especially for learners who might otherwise find HE difficult to access because of lack of prior academic attainment, inadequate funding, geographical location, or lack of confidence.
>
> (paragraph 29)

Funding widening participation

HEFCE supports widening participation activities through allocations to Aimhigher partnerships and directly to HEIs and (directly funded) FECs. While the performance indicators only report on HEIs, all directly funded colleges receive a widening participation allocation; indirectly funded provision is included in the HEI partner's allocation.

HEFCE has provided guidance on targeting disadvantaged learners ('Higher education outreach: targeting disadvantaged learners', HEFCE 2007/12) and updated guidance for the 2008-2011 programme for Aimhigher partnerships, whose continued funding was announced in 2008.

HEFCE funding to providers in 2009-10 covers widening access, the allocation for students with disabilities and teaching enhancement and student success.

The widening access funding for students from disadvantaged backgrounds is intended to meet some of the additional costs that institutions incur in outreach activity to raise aspirations and attainment among potential students from under-represented groups. It provides a weighting to undergraduate new entrants according to the young HE participation rate (students under 21) or the average educational achievement by ward (mature students).

The allocation for students with disabilities is based on the number of students at each institution in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowances. This allocation provides institutions with additional funds on a recurrent basis. It recognises that additional costs are incurred in recruiting and supporting students with disabilities. Individual support is provided via the DSA, for which the student must make a claim.

Funding allocated for widening access in 2009-10 is £143 million. As it is allocated on the basis of individual students (as with all HEFCE funding methodology based on the previous year's data), the student profile of an indirectly funded FEC will be included within the funding stream to the (franchising) HEI(s). Partnership arrangements should address these funding streams. Widening access allocations might be used for joint widening participation activity, or distributed.

Receipt of these funding streams is dependent on accurate returns being made on the individual student record, be it HESA or the ILR (see Section 3).

From 2009-10, HEFCE will increase the funding available for widening access by transferring £30 million from the funding available for improving retention. This follows a consultation on a number of changes to the teaching funding method (see HEFCE 2008/28). This consultation focused on future support for widening participation, teaching enhancement and student success. As well as increasing the

funding for widening access, HEFCE will create a new targeted allocation to support teaching enhancement and student success (TESS). In 2009-10 this will be £269 million. This brings together funding previously allocated for institutional learning, teaching and assessment strategies and for teaching informed and enriched by research, with funding for improving retention (previously allocated to the widening participation allocation). It is designed to demonstrate a more strategic approach, recognising that improving retention is fundamentally a part of overall learning and teaching enhancement, and that work in these areas contributes to the success of all students.

Good practice

The Aimhigher practitioner web-site hosts a range of good practice examples of partnership working to raise aspirations and support HE entry (www.aimhigher.ac.uk/sites/practitioner/aimhigher_activities/index.cfm).
Action on Access is the national co-ordination team for widening participation in higher education. The team works with institutions and partnerships, including Aimhigher, and provides advice, information and support for their widening participation activities, strategies and plans (www.actiononaccess.org).

As a consequence of the establishment of the Office for Fair Access directly funded colleges, which charge more than the standard fee, are required to submit an access agreement, but colleges which do not charge above the standard fee and those which are indirectly funded are not required to set out such statements. Nonetheless, a clear and transparent policy on widening participation through recruitment, admission and on-programme support is good practice. In 2007, Action on Access launched a programme – 'Mainstreaming and sustaining widening participation in institutions' – which has been running through 2008. Also, HEFCE jointly with OFFA have requested that FECs with more than 100 full-time equivalent directly funded HE students and HEIs provide a widening participation strategic assessment. 'Request for widening participation strategic assessments' (HEFCE 2009/01) outlines the framework for a flexible form of reporting that recognises the diversity of the HE sector and provides guidance that sets out the expectations of HEFCE and OFFA. This publication is on the HEFCE web-site www.hefce.ac.uk under Publications.

8.3 Supporting student choice and application

Section 10 of the QAA code of practice relates to admissions to higher education. It is intended to 'help institutions to assure themselves and others that the policies and procedures they use to attract, recruit, select, admit and enrol students are clear, fair, explicit and consistently applied'. (See Section 5 of this guide for good practice in marketing, recruitment and admissions.)

In its summative report on learning from review of (directly and consortium funded) FECs over the five-year period 2002-07, QAA noted the strength of colleges' contribution to widening participation through effective recruitment procedures.

Summary: widening participation

Widening participation in higher education has increasingly featured as a strength of college provision over the review period. The reviewers identify many examples of effective recruitment procedures which target specific groups, such as mature students, those from the local area and/or black or minority ethnic groups. The importance of providing higher education opportunities to the local population remains a key aim for colleges throughout the five-year period of reviews.

'Learning from Academic review of higher education in further education colleges in England 2002-07', QAA, 2008

Pre-entry guidance

Guidance staff and course tutors (at the college or a partner university) may be involved in advising and guiding prospective HE students. Where programmes are to be delivered mainly in the workplace, supervisors and Unionlearn representatives (whose role is to help trade unions to spread the lifelong learning message, see www.unionlearn.org.uk) may also be involved. Close liaison with employers and their employees is necessary where foundation degrees and programmes incorporating professional qualifications or level 4/5 NVQs have been developed for and with employers (see Section 6.5).

College staff need to understand the differences between the LSC system for additional student support and that of HEFCE-funded higher education. In particular:

- the different way in which support for disabled students is accessed in HE, i.e. through DSA, for which the student – not the college – needs to apply as early as possible to ensure that support identified is in place for the start of study (see Section 8.7).
- that asylum seekers are not eligible for statutory student financial support, whereas those with refugee status and three-year residency may be (see Section 8.8).

Pre-entry guidance should take into account the aspirations, needs and personal preferences of potential students. In relation to HE, of particular importance are:

- previous educational qualifications and experience (bearing in mind the new ELQ ruling)
- any prerequisites (e.g. those specific to teacher training)
- articulation with other courses
- employment possibilities
- how study can be combined with work
- the nature of the applications process
- the financial implications of HE study
- eligibility for financial support
- support available (e.g. crèche facilities).

8.4 Induction

A college's approach to induction will be influenced by how its HE provision is organised, whether embedded in departments or faculties, in a dedicated higher education centre or work based. Whatever the model, induction activities for HE students should be carefully integrated as part of an overall strategy for student support. In addition to covering topics that would be included in an induction to the college and course for FE students, induction needs to address HE-specific support issues and any relationship with a partner HEI as well as financial support, including any bursaries available under access agreements.

The traditional model of induction consists of designated days at the start of the academic year, and includes a programme of activities and information-sharing in preparation for the year ahead. However, to be fully effective, induction processes should be embedded within the whole of the first term's activities. For example, if the student handbook is distributed during induction, it could well be useful to return to it after a few weeks to remind students of its content and answer any queries. The embedding of induction and involvement of workplace mentors or supervisors are essential where learning takes place mainly at work.

The development of learning skills for higher level study should be explicitly addressed in programme design and delivery and highlighted in induction (see Section 2).

Induction also provides an opportunity to learn a great deal about how students experience the process, and how it might be improved over time. Such lessons can be captured through student feedback and systematic review when the initial stages of the induction process are complete. It is essential that systems are equivalent for part-time and work-based students and those attending college full-time.

All staff who teach and support students should be involved in the planning, design and delivery of induction. This includes student support and careers staff, learning support staff, workplace mentors, library and IT staff and, where provision is in partnership, staff from the HEI.

HE students need the following core information in induction:

- an understanding of higher education as distinct from other levels of study
- students' union – what the FEC can offer, or what access students have to the union in a partner HEI
- academic support, including in the workplace
- skills development support
- access to information on HE issues – student handbook, web-sites
- for students on validated and indirectly funded provision, an understanding of the relationship with the host HEI and the award
- course organisation, including assessment regulations, and implications for study planning; the amount of study time and self-directed study expected
- processes of student feedback and representation
- financial support; availability of loans, bursaries

- access to library and IT facilities at the college and at partner HEIs
- student support and welfare specific to HE students
- careers education, information and guidance
- accommodation
- progression (particularly articulated 'top ups') and employment opportunities.

In the case of indirectly funded provision, staff from the HEI should be involved as appropriate and a visit to the HEI should take place if students are able to access its facilities. This may be a useful opportunity to develop closer links across different parts of the two institutions, and to clarify the range and level of facilities open to college students at the HEI. Respective institutional roles and responsibilities should be clear to staff and students and addressed in the student handbook.

Redcar and Cleveland College

Extract from higher education prospectus

As a University student studying at a partnership college you will have the same right of access to services as those studying on the main campus. Student Services is situated at the heart of the main University of Teesside campus and offers a combination of services that provide advice, information and guidance to help you take actions to manage your life and achieve your goals.

Attention may be given to the social networking elements of induction, particularly where students are full-time and where they are living away from home. Some colleges have freshers' weeks.

8.5 On-course support

Students need clear information about the support available, its location and the processes for accessing it. However, before providing access to individual learning or personal support, it is important to bear in mind whether a student is LSC funded, HEFCE funded (directly or indirectly) or funded through fee income.

The HEFCE funding methodology does not support individual additional learning support in the same way as that of the LSC. Consequently, individual learning support (other than that funded through DSA) needs to be included within tutorial support or covered by HE income used to support college facilities designed to provide individualised support and counselling.

Key features of an effective system of on-course support include:

- a strategic approach, providing equal access for full-time and part-time students
- support for work-based learners where appropriate
- practices which sustain motivation and encourage retention
- career education, information and guidance (CEIG)
- student feedback processes.

Strategic approach

If colleges are to play a key role in providing an opportunity for successful participation in HE for everyone who can benefit from it (see Section 8.2), their support systems must address the needs of students who might not otherwise be accessing higher level studies.

Many students' access to the college will be limited by caring commitments or employment, but they should have an equal entitlement to support.

The Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education

The Grimsby Institute is a widening participation college which serves a catchment rated as the 52nd most deprived area in the country (out of 342) and the 34th most deprived in respect of economic activity. The area has low pre-16 educational attainment and a low proportion of the working population qualified to level 4: 12.7 per cent compared with the national average of 23 per cent.

Recruitment and retention of students is a key strategic drive at the institute, and the following strategies have been put in place to support learners and reduce early drop-out.

Prior to enrolment, all learners are interviewed:

- identification of learners at risk, based on factors such as poor previous educational experience, first in family to undertake a degree; these students will receive a buddy and will be closely monitored for signs of concern (e.g. reducing attendance)
- the institute employs 'buddies' who are graduates of the college; they understand the factors that might cause a student to want to drop out and can be proactive in addressing these factors in conjunction with the learner
- early screening of all learners to identify additional learning support needs so that these are planned and implemented at the start of the course; the institute's records show that a high proportion of non-standard applicants have additional needs.

On-course support:

- additional early support surgeries on key aspects of assessment (e.g. presentation skills, referencing, how to structure an essay); these sessions are outside of any formal hours and are available for learners to drop in and gain the experience and guidance they require
- short self-assessment activities with all first-year undergraduates 3-4 weeks into the programme to assess 'at risk' students who may not have been identified prior to and at enrolment
- early formative assessment to provide feedback opportunities and help to build and improve confidence at an early stage
- contact with all early leavers to discuss the reasons for leaving and whether they may be retained, for example by offering a different mode of attendance. Retention at the institute has improved by over 10 per cent at a time when nationally the rate has been less than 2 per cent.

In FEC/HEI partnerships it is important to have clarity about the arrangements for students and also for staff delivering the programme. Student support staff and staff from partner HEIs should work closely together to familiarise themselves with their respective student support structures, and develop lines of communication and referral.

Where students are not progressing locally, they should be made aware of the ways in which students at HEIs in general access support.

Supporting students in the workplace

Section 9 of the QAA code of practice addresses work-based and placement learning; precept 5 suggests that awarding institutions should 'provide students with appropriate and timely information, support and guidance prior to, throughout and following their work-based and placement learning'.

Work-based mentors or supervisors may fulfil a support role in the workplace, and good support increases the chance of a successful learning experience for the student (see Section 6.5). Written guidance needs to be provided for students and their mentors. If students are part-time, the guidance should address the differences in financial support (see Section 8.8). It is important to note, however, that the definition of part-time is not equivalent to that of the LSC, which is based on guided learning hours. Many work-based learning programmes are 'full-time', even though attendance at an HE provider may be only for a small number of hours per week (see Annex D).

The arrangements made by colleges for providing workplace support to students may differ across sectors and individual employers. In some workplaces, students may be supported by a number of individuals who have responsibility for different aspects of the support; in others, support may be provided by a single individual. Where mentors or supervisors have an agreed support role, the support they provide can include:

- acting as the main point of contact between the student and the college
- playing a key role in providing academic and pastoral support
- taking responsibility for some formative assessment processes to facilitate the link between work-based learning and the application of academic knowledge and understanding.

As mentors/supervisors are expected to work alongside the tutor in supporting the student in the workplace, it is important that programme providers consider the development and training needs of this role in order to underpin quality and consistency of provision. (See Section 7.6 on work-based assessment.)

Supporting retention and sustaining motivation

Funding for supporting retention is now available (see Section 8.2). Colleges are advised to put resource into supporting retention of HE students over the first year of study; drop-out in the second or subsequent years tends to be less of an issue. Section 2 covers the higher level learning skills that need to be addressed in an HE programme.

Students, especially those who are less confident, need early feedback on their progress in order to affirm their potential success and identify areas of weakness for which further support can be accessed.

Grantham College

In planning the programme, great care was taken to ensure that learners would receive high levels of individual support so that they felt motivated and supported. Another key consideration was to provide recognition of learners' commitment and early success by awarding a Certificate in Continuing Education on completion of the first four modules, if learners did not wish to progress further. This equated to 45 credits of study and was particularly welcomed by learners who had been out of education for some time, or were wary of learning having left school with few qualifications.

Some colleges have found that providing bursaries can support and motivate HE students, particularly where they are disbursed termly with a minimum attendance requirement.

Waltham Forest College

Bursary 2007-08

You can get a bursary of £500 (subject to conditions of attendance and work completion) for each year of your course if you study a Higher National Diploma with us.

This is **not** a loan, it's yours to spend how you want.

How and when will I get it?

You will have to pay all of your fees by 30th November 2007, or have proof that the Student Loan Company will be paying your fees to College.

For each year of your studies you will get **£300** at the end of February 2008 if you are still enrolled and studying on a full-time basis. If your attendance is good (at least 80 per cent and you are up to date with your work you will get an extra **£50** at this time.

For each year of your studies at the end of June 2008 you can get either:

£50 if your attendance in terms 2 and 3 is 80-84.9 per cent and you have no outstanding work

£100 if your attendance in terms 2 and 3 is 85-89.9 per cent and you have no outstanding work

£150 if your attendance in terms 2 and 3 is 90 per cent+ and you have no outstanding work.

Career education, information and guidance

Section 8 of the QAA code of practice addresses career education, information and guidance. Higher education students should be clear about their entitlement to CEIG, which should be impartial, client-focused, confidential, collaborative, accessible and in accordance with equal opportunities.

Where a college's HE provision is indirectly funded through a partner HEI, the HEI and FEC should consider where career education, advice and guidance sit for HE in FE students. In particular, consideration should be given to ensuring that information and advice are:

- available at the same standard for HE in FE students as they are for HE and FE students in both institutions

- effectively signposted in all pre-entry, induction and ongoing course literature (see Section 5)
- consistent – providers across the institutions need to be trained in appropriate areas to give the same advice and guidance; personal tutors and career advisers should not offer conflicting advice.

Student feedback

Due attention needs to be given to the 'learner voice'. From 2008-09, directly funded colleges are participating in the NSS, and student feedback features formally in IQER (see Section 10). Directly funded HE students may have their own students' union or a formal mechanism for reporting to college committees; indirectly funded HE students should have access to an HEI's systems (see Section 7.4 for academic appeals).

Students' attendance, confidence, satisfaction and performance should be regularly monitored at course level to provide feedback for improvement of delivery during the course and in preparation for end-of-year review and for IQER (see Section 10).

Park Lane College

In October 2007, an HE officer was elected as part of the Students' Union executive elections. The role of HE officer is to establish an HE committee which will discuss issues affecting students while studying at the college, organise HE forums for students to have the opportunity to discuss issues relevant to them, establish links with local universities and liaise with the other executive officers to organise events relevant to students. The HE officer sits on the executive committee and feeds into it any issues that students have raised, so that the Students' Union can act on them.

8.6 Tutorial and academic guidance

Further education colleges generally provide more contact time for students following their higher education programmes than do HEIs. FE staff commonly have far greater contact time required by their contracts (see Section 9), which allows time for crucial academic and pastoral tutorials. QAA commented positively on this in its review of HE in FECs, as illustrated below.

> The academic tutorial system is a major strength and is reported as a significant factor in creating a supportive and empowering learning environment. Reports frequently emphasise that students are appreciative of staff, who they describe as accessible and friendly. Staff have an open-door policy which is supplemented by telephone and e-mail contact and part-time students especially appreciate the opportunity for telephone and e-mail support. This informality is structured within a formal system of carefully documented review tutorials, typically once a term or semester, when each student receives an individual report on his/her progress and has the opportunity to discuss his/her plans with a tutor. This is often in the form of a personal development plan or framework which both students and staff value ...
>
> In many colleges, group tutorials take place throughout the year and may be supplemented by additional tutorials based upon student need. A typical example of good practice is an additional mathematics class that has been introduced to help those students who need this support. The close working relationship of staff and students in the colleges reviewed ensures that student progression problems are identified and addressed. The following quotation summarises the situation in most of the colleges reviewed: 'Tutorial support on all programmes is readily available and helpfully delivered, often on a one-to-one basis, with clear explanations and precise guidance. Students commented on the enthusiasm of staff and their willingness to operate an open-door policy'.
>
> 'Learning from Academic review of higher education in further education colleges in England 2002-07', QAA, 2008, paragraphs 52 and 53

The Higher Education Academy provides support for personal tutoring: www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/learning/personaltutoring

8.7 Support for students with disabilities

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 requires public bodies to promote disability equality. HEIs, FECs and other organisations are expected to produce a Disability Equality Scheme, which needs to be reviewed every three years. Organisations must also publish an annual report on progress. The Special Education Needs and Disability Act amended part 4 of the DDA and covers all public educational providers. The Equality and Human Rights Commission's web-site has useful information for advisers on relevant legislation and how to operate within it: www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/foradvisers/pages/default.aspx

QAA is revising Section 3 of the code of practice, 'Students with disabilities', in autumn 2008 to provide up-to-date guidance on meeting the needs of disabled students.

A key difference between further and higher education is that in HE it is the student's responsibility to apply for support through DSA (see the Directgov web-site: www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/EducationAndTraining/HigherEducation/DG_10034898). This should be done as early as possible to ensure that support identified is in place for the start of study. Information provided and admissions procedures should highlight the kinds of funding and assistance that may be

available (see following example). Students following non-prescribed LSC-funded higher level programmes fall within LSC arrangements.

Redcar and Cleveland College and the University of Teesside

The advisers in the Disability Services Unit offer advice and information on entitlements, facilities, specialist equipment, access and exam provision and can negotiate arrangements with other agencies or parts of the university or college. You may be eligible for external funding through the Disabled Students' Allowances to meet the cost of support such as specialist equipment, dyslexia tuition, note taking or mobility support. In the first instance you should make contact with an adviser to begin the process prior to starting your course. Support can take several months to arrange so early contact is advisable.

The Assessment Centre on Teesside (ACT) is available to disabled students and disabled people who have applied to study in further and higher education. We currently provide services to people who are visually impaired, hearing impaired, wheelchair users or people with mobility difficulties, medical conditions, autistic spectrum disorders, mental health service users and people with specific learning difficulties (for example, dyslexia). Experienced staff within ACT are trained to assess your additional support needs. This will help you to access funding you may be entitled to, such as Disabled Students' Allowances.

Colleges delivering HE are able to draw down funding from HEFCE for supporting access (through direct funding or via an HEI) based on the number of students receiving DSA, so it is important to ensure that robust processes are in place to record student receipt of DSA.

It is essential to ensure that disabled students are aware of the support services they can turn to for help and advice in relation to counselling, finance, guidance and welfare. A useful web-site for students is that of Skill, the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities (www.skill.org.uk). Staff may find the disability section of the Action on Access web-site useful (www.actiononaccess.org). It acts as a gateway to disability-related information and provides a helpdesk facility for staff working with disability issues in HE. The helpdesk has particular expertise in issues relating to disabled learners.

8.8 Financial support

Prospective students should be encouraged to apply for finance at the earliest opportunity, and colleges should provide advice and guidance to their students who are progressing, whether externally or internally.

Colchester Institute

In the early part of each year, Colchester Institute offers a series of information sessions to all its students intending to progress to higher education. These sessions are held formally in the classroom as part of the course timetable and informally in small groups within the student services centre. These information sessions lead on to targeted help with the application process for students and their families.

Mature students who have more specific family requirements are advised on a one-to-one basis to enable them to feel at ease with the student funding package, particularly when they are moving from state benefits to student grants and student loans.

To address concerns about the costs of HE, many colleges' course publicity includes details of the student finance package provided by the Government. Information about student finance, including detail on arrangements for part-time students, is held on the Directgov web-site (www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/index.htm).

In September 2008, a new student finance service was launched: Student Finance England. This new service will cover all student finance applications for the academic year 2009-10 onwards. It aims to help prospective students to work out the financial support they will get, apply for finance and keep track of their payments. Full-time students will be able to apply online for student finance at the same time as they make their UCAS application. The service will include an online calculator to help them to work out how much they can get.

Refugees and asylum seekers

Care needs to be taken regarding applicants who are refugees or asylum seekers, as the regulations covering their eligibility for HE provision are complex. Section 5 covers the pre-course information that needs to be available.

For specialist advice on entitlement, students may be advised to contact the Student Support Helpline, which provides information on financial help, including student loans, grants and bursaries. There is also the Higher Education Refugees and Asylum Seekers Network (HERAN) (www.heran.org.uk/index.htm). The Refugee Council provides guides for advisers and service providers (www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/practice/asylum/).

Part-time higher education

For funding purposes, HEFCE defines a full-time student as someone who attends the institution, or elsewhere, for at least 24 weeks per year while undertaking a period of study amounting to an average of 21 hours per week. Part-time students are those who do not meet this criterion (or are not sandwich students) and are returned as FTEs pro rata (see Annex D for more detail on the definitions of full-time and part-time). This refers to total studying time rather than contact time (or guided learning hours in the LSC funding methodology).

Part-time students on a lower income may be able to get financial support to help with tuition fees and costs related to the course (such as books and travel). The main sources of help for part-time students are:

- a fee grant (to help with tuition fees) – paid directly to the college
- a course grant (to help with study costs, such as books, materials and travel) – paid directly to the student. What is available depends on personal circumstances and the course being studied.

Courses that do not start in September can create difficulties for students wishing to apply for a student loan, since the annual timescale is geared to the traditional academic year.

Career development loan

A career development loan can help to cover up to two years' vocational training or education. Further information is available on the Directgov web-site.

8.9 Moving on

Students who are progressing to an HEI on a 2+1, 2+2 or foundation degree or HND to honours degree basis need support and guidance as they prepare for the transition. By the end of their foundation degree or higher national programme, they will be looking forward to the challenge of further study. However, unless they know what to expect, some may find the move difficult.

The close contact with staff teaching on HE programmes in an FEC is a great support to students, but it can be a disadvantage if they have not also learned to be independent learners (see Section 2). Students should be prepared for the transition to larger teaching groups, which may well comprise younger students, as well as for lectures, fewer contact hours, and examinations. In addition, there may well be less access to teaching staff at the HEI.

There are many good examples of positive transition arrangements under progression agreements, including those developed through LLNs.

> The web-site for the East of England LLN (MOVE) has a range of examples and templates:
> www.move.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=63&Itemid=66

The QAA five-year review comments favourably on the increase in internal progression opportunities and progression into and within employment.

Summary: Student progression to further study or employment

Student progression to further study has improved over the review period. There are increasing opportunities for progression within colleges, including progression from Foundation Degrees to the final year of a designated honours degree, delivered either at the college or at a partner or other nearby higher education institution. Comments on progression to employment are more prevalent in later reports. Colleges' close links and good liaison with employers are seen as key to helping students obtain subject-related employment. The extent to which students are prepared for future work through their programme of study is also frequently endorsed by employers, who comment favourably on students' academic abilities as well as their vocational or practical skills.

'Learning from Academic review of higher education in further education colleges in England 2002-07', QAA, 2008

9 Staffing and staff development

9.1 Agreeing a staff development policy

Agreeing a staff development policy for all staff involved in the provision of higher education is an effective way of creating ownership of the strategic objectives for HE. In addition to subject teams and their managers, staff from the registry, admissions, guidance, MIS, finance, learning centres, learning support and the whole range of student services should understand the distinctiveness of the HE provision, including its regulatory and mandatory aspects, and be able to contribute towards the strategy that informs HE in FE.

Staff development is crucial to all of this. HEIs (but not FECs) are required by HEFCE to produce learning and teaching strategies. HEFCE now requires colleges to produce an overall strategy for their HE; this strategy is expected to address staffing, including continuous professional development (see Section 1). Asking a local HEI for a copy of its learning and teaching strategy can be a useful starting point for discussion about where HE in FE is similar to or differs from that provided in HEIs. Of particular relevance to colleges with indirectly funded provision are the questions: how are the benefits from HEI strategies impacting on FE? And how can partner colleges influence the strategy for their lead HEIs?

As staff needs are determined, they can become part of the appraisal or annual review process and form individual objectives.

9.2 Staffing issues

Staff teaching HE in FECs have their hours calculated in many different ways, but they are all likely to have different conditions of service from their counterparts in HEIs. The differences include contact hours, the amount of administrative support available, and the allocation of time to research and scholarly activity. For example, staff in colleges may have more contact hours overall, but so do their programmes. They are also likely to have smaller numbers in teaching groups.

Mid-Kent College (MKC)

Remission of hours for staff teaching on HE programmes

Standard contact hours for teaching staff at MKC are 864 hours per annum. Three years ago we recognised that remission had been allocated on a fairly ad hoc basis and varied significantly, so we established a policy. The policy covers various categories of remitted hours; allocation is fair but flexible and includes remission for teaching on HE programmes. This is to acknowledge the necessity for scholarly activity inherent within higher level programmes. It takes into account research undertaken and the need for currency within the subject, plus ongoing personal development.

We have extended this policy to staff teaching on non-prescribed higher education programmes, to ensure equity. These are usually personnel and management programmes at level 4 and above. The awarding bodies for the programmes stress the need for staff to be up to date in their teaching.

The maximum amount of remission allowed is 108 hours per annum from the standard number of hours. Hours are remitted according to what percentage of a lecturer's timetable is devoted to teaching at a higher level. Thus the head of school will calculate the number of hours a lecturer should be teaching, based on various factors. If 50 per cent is at a higher level, then 54 hours are remitted from the timetable. About half of our staff who teach at a higher level receive the whole 108 hours' remission as they only teach at this level.

Staff qualifications

Although there are few explicit policies, it is generally agreed that members of staff who devote a substantial amount of time to higher education programmes should be qualified to the level above that which they are teaching.

The main exception is tutors who have a considerable amount of relevant and recent industrial experience. Indeed, part-time staff are frequently recruited specifically because they are current or recent practitioners in industry or business.

Institute for Learning

The Institute for Learning (IfL) (www.ifl.ac.uk) is the professional body for teachers, trainers, tutors and student teachers in the learning and skills sector. It aims to raise the status of teaching practitioners across the sector. The 2007 regulations under the 'Success For All' (DfES, 2002) targets mean that teachers, trainers, tutors and student teachers in the learning and skills sector need to register with the IfL (see IfL web-site for the regulations and registration). The reforms have two strands, defined through two separate but complementary sets of regulations:

1 revised teaching qualifications for new teachers, including the introduction of licensed practitioner status and differentiating between full and associate teaching roles.

2 remaining in good standing as a teaching professional, including a mandatory requirement for all teachers of 30 hours of CPD per year (see IfL web-site).

The IfL web-site states that: 'teachers delivering HE in FE are exempt from any requirements under these regulations provided that they teach solely on HE programmes'. However, HE managers in colleges should seek to ensure that HE-related professional development counts towards the 30 hours' requirement for CPD for staff in FECs. Where staff teach exclusively in higher education, other professional standards apply – see Section 9.4.

Recruitment and retention of staff

Recruitment and retention can be an issue for colleges. In a competitive environment, colleges find it increasingly difficult to recruit appropriately qualified or experienced staff to teach HE courses – especially if there are other colleges or HEIs in the locality. This can be a particularly acute problem in scarce areas, such as computing. HEIs offer better salaries and conditions, and hourly paid staff are paid at a higher rate than in most colleges. Some colleges address this problem by paying differential and higher hourly rates to part-time staff in shortage areas, in order to be able to compete with HEIs. It is also easy to become over-dependent on individuals in small teams of staff – indeed, a course may have first developed from one person's interest and commitment. Small teams are vulnerable to staff absences and staff changes so, to protect students, strategies should be in place to recognise and deal with this issue.

Colleges can take a number of actions, including:

- ensuring that the staff development strategy includes a clear analysis and understanding of what is required for higher education
- contacting employers with whom they have good links; employers may be able to offer guest lecturers or release practitioners for a number of hours
- building up a pool or network of available staff – do not wait for a crisis
- contacting other colleges or HEIs to see whether they have part-time or recently retired staff who would like more hours
- targeting advertising for new part-time staff in local newspapers or trade magazines
- paying a higher hourly rate in areas where it is particularly difficult to recruit
- being sensitive to the needs of new and part-time staff through induction, mentoring and staff development; staff can be linked to support networks such as the Higher Education Academy HE in FE group and subject centres, and the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) HE in FE network (see www.jiscmail.ac.uk and type in SEDA-HE-IN-FE under Find Lists/ by list name).

9.3 Strategies for staff development

It is a tribute to their commitment and enthusiasm that colleges are extremely inventive in offering a wide range of opportunities for staff involved in HE in FE, despite the considerable difficulties in releasing teaching staff from their heavy workloads and ensuring cover for their classes. All staff involved in HE work should undertake HE-specific staff development: librarians, learning resource and learning support staff, admissions and guidance staff, and student support services as well as teaching staff.

When the HEFCE Development Fund for Learning and Teaching was introduced for directly funded colleges, it made a significant difference to the amount of staff development available, not least by funding the time required. This funding was used to support activity for subject and support staff, including studying for higher degrees, industrial secondments, developing links with HEIs, personal development and specific training, especially in ICT. Although the funding did not continue to come into colleges separately and has been embedded in the mainstream grant, it is the same funding.

Strategies for staff development used by colleges include:

- enhancing qualifications
- subject updating
- enhancing learning and teaching
- HE staff meetings
- support for part-time staff
- encouraging staff to be involved in HE issues
- professional updating
- scholarly activity
- being an external examiner
- being an IQER reviewer.

It is good practice for HEIs to invite partners to their staff development events. If this does not happen, colleges should ask about it. Many indirectly funded partnerships offer extensive opportunities to college staff. Some FE staff have taken the initiative in contacting departments in a partner HEI to explore the possibilities of involvement in research activities. Many HEIs, particularly those with indirectly funded partnerships or validation agreements, have identified advisers or link tutors who can be a valuable resource.

The University of Plymouth has a large partnership and also has a CETL in HE in FE. It has set up an award holder scheme for HE staff in partner colleges.

Higher Education Learning Partnership CETL, University of Plymouth

A partner college's deputy director of HE recently commented, when asked about the award holder scheme, that: 'The award holder scheme has proved to be an excellent complement to the college's own support for scholarly activity and CPD for our HE staff. A number of staff have benefited from the scheme since 2005, and the benefits are ongoing within the relevant faculties and departments. In one particular instance a member of staff received a teaching fellowship, supported the following year by a continuity award, and has gone on to present at in-house seminars and national conferences. Other staff have benefited from CPD awards that have enabled them to undertake some really exciting work, linking personal academic interest with their own development in a way the college can find it difficult to fully support in a competitive funding environment.'

Enhancing qualifications

Full-time and part-time teaching staff may be offered support in terms of a contribution to fees or some time allowance to take teaching qualifications, masters degrees, doctorates, professional qualifications or other forms of CPD.

Orpington College

Orpington College is committed to CPD, and its HE strategy plays a significant part in the development of its members of staff. The college does not have members of staff who only deliver the 10 HE programmes. It encourages and sponsors FE staff to gain increased knowledge and understanding, qualifications and/or experience that will enable them to teach on HE courses. This is done by financing masters degrees or associate HE tutor qualifications, funding external training or giving time to undertake staff development offered by the partner HEIs.

The college ensures that all 21 members of staff teaching on HE programmes have a qualification at least one HE level above that particular programme. They are encouraged to join relevant professional bodies and engage with relevant academic communities, and use a significant part of their compulsory CPD to maintain their licence to teach by engaging in scholarly activity. The college supports members of staff who deliver HE by providing terms and conditions that are appropriate and relative to the proportion of HE delivery.

When colleges are in a partnership with an HEI, reduced or waived fees for higher degrees at the HEI are often provided under the terms of the partnership.

Subject updating

Since sabbaticals are rare in FE, some colleges make available personal development time for reading, and support industrial secondments and work shadowing in industry or HEIs. Working with HEI colleagues in the subject area is a fruitful way of ensuring currency and sharing learning and teaching strategies. Good links at course level make this easier. The Higher Education Academy subject centres also provide support for HE in FE (see Section 9.4).

Enhancing learning and teaching

The enhancement of learning and teaching entails sharing good practice in a proactive way by having opportunities for dissemination of what works well and identifying and using in-house expertise.

For HE subject staff, activities might include peer review of teaching, team teaching, business seminars, employers setting live briefs, and attendance at conferences and events to share good practice.

Cleveland College of Art and Design

All the academic staff are members of the IfL, and the college has allocated a day to each member of staff to undertake personal development, for example in the form of subject updating, teaching and learning activities and improving IT skills.

All HE teaching staff have the opportunity to attend and/or give a paper at the University of Teesside's teaching and learning conferences.

All staff are encouraged to engage with their peers in the HE sector, attending national subject associations, national conferences such as CHEAD (Colleges of Higher Education in Art and Design) and other events. This ensures that individuals, programmes and the college are fully aware of issues and activities pertinent to HE within the specialist subject area.

Some colleges organise their own conferences.

Warwickshire College

Warwickshire College holds an HE conference three times a year. This day event includes plenaries and a range of workshops. The conference is open to all staff in the college who teach or support HE courses. The plenary sessions usually provide updates on key policies and developments, both nationally (such as IQER or the NSS) and at college level (including PDP, marketing and quality issues).

Delegates usually have the chance to participate in two to three participative workshops focusing on specific topics such as foundation degrees, plagiarism, virtual learning environments and annual course monitoring. The workshops are delivered by a range of internal staff and also draw on external expertise from, for example, JISC, Fdf and HEA national teaching fellows. Some of the most popular sessions are those delivered by the college's HE teaching staff sharing good practice.

The conferences are scheduled in September, December and July, on college-wide training days where possible. The events are funded using part of the college's HEFCE TQEF.

HE staff meetings

One of the most valued ways in which HE staff (teaching and support staff) share good practice, discuss quality systems and agree policies and strategy is to have the opportunity to meet, sometimes in 'virtual' teams. Many colleges have established HE committees or HE development groups. In colleges with dispersed provision, this activity is particularly valued.

There may be occasional events, including away days, residential events and themed sessions on, for example, assessment or quality assurance. These events may include external speakers and staff from other colleges and HEIs.

Course teams developing new provision or collaborating with HEIs need to work together at the design and planning stage. This, as with most staff development activities, demands a substantial time commitment but provides invaluable experience of learning by doing.

Manchester College of Arts and Technology (now part of The Manchester College)

HE staff development and training

We have worked to improve the support we give individual staff and departments with HE provision at Mancat; part of this has been staff training and development:

- two formal staff training sessions for heads of department and divisional leaders
- two formal staff training sessions for HE delivery staff
- individual meetings with staff
- meetings with departmental staff.

In all these sessions we have gradually built up the work around the Academic Infrastructure and the QAA code of practice. It was felt that to deliver it all at once would be overwhelming, and we really wanted staff to be fully engaged with what we were doing:

- presentation by HE manager to outline the QAA and the Academic Infrastructure, and in particular how this is related to what we deliver at Mancat
- working in groups on Section 2 of the code of practice (initially, then later sections 1-10 complete)
- individual meetings with HE support.

Staff have had a very positive attitude towards the delivery of the presentations and one-to-one sessions. Attendance has been much improved, and staff have been sharing their practices.

Comments from staff:

- all staff agreed that they had learnt something new that was of use to them
- they felt it was a very inclusive delivery which gave them an opportunity to ask questions
- the sessions provided an opportunity to confirm and understand the QAA process for HE
- they felt they were being kept in touch with changes and developments in HE
- they were more able to disseminate this information to departmental meetings in a more informed way.

Bradford College

An example of effective peer collaboration is the college's foundation degree network. This has proved incredibly valuable and is now well established. The network is hosted by one of the college's teaching and learning facilitators, of whom two advanced practitioners have a specific HE brief. Through the network, peers can share ideas and discuss new developments, advising each other on such matters as pedagogical approaches successful with Fd learners or support in designing a new programme. The key feature of this network is its status as a peer-led group giving opportunity for academic debate.

Support for part-time staff

It is important for part-time staff to be integrated into subject teams and to have targeted staff development, especially about assessment. Some colleges pay part-time staff to attend events; some pay a training allowance. Other support activities include twinning with a full-time colleague in the same subject area, mentoring and offering access to training and updating events. Part-time staff may often be professionals in another field, or employers, and may need additional support on teaching.

Encouraging staff involvement in HE issues

Staff can become more involved in HE by training as QAA reviewers for IQER, keeping abreast of Higher Education Academy events, publications, monthly briefings and subject centres, and also the work of SEDA, reading the Times Higher Education (THE), and contributing to conferences and events.

QAA is always keen to recruit more reviewers from FECs because there will be so much IQER activity in colleges. The application form is on QAA's web-site, at www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/appointments/. Colleges should keep an eye on the web-site for calls for nominations.

It can also be very useful experience to act as an external examiner. Many HEIs wish to encourage recruitment of appropriately experienced FEC staff to examine on foundation degrees, and Edexcel similarly wishes to recruit staff to work on higher nationals. For further information, see 'Enhancing Support for External Examining: Working Paper 9 – Interests, concerns and issues for Colleges of Further Education', 2005 (www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/id564_enhancing_support_for_external_examining_paper9).

Fdf hosts a register of people interested in being external examiners for foundation degrees. Although it does not vet such entries, fdf will offer the names to institutions looking for expertise in certain sectors or subject areas. For further details, see www.fdf.ac.uk.

External events

Staff teaching HE in FECs attend policy conferences, quality assurance training organised by QAA, AoC or others, and meetings of subject association members. It is a good idea to have a system for agreeing who goes to which event. It may be possible to pair up with another institution so that both colleges benefit from the information but save some time.

It is worth considering how to disseminate information gained from attending sessions outside the college. Different practices include:

- an oral or written report to an HE staff meeting
- inclusion in a college (or regional network) newsletter
- a brief report stressing the implications for the institution
- a standard meeting/conference pro forma which is quick to complete and easy to distribute or post on a bulletin board or the intranet.

9.4 The Higher Education Academy

The Higher Education Academy (www.heacademy.ac.uk) is a UK-wide organisation whose mission is to help institutions, discipline groups and all staff to provide the best possible learning experience for their students. The Academy operates from its headquarters in York and through a network of 24 subject centres based around the UK. It provides support for the entire higher education sector, including specific support for HE in FE. The wide variety of staff at York and in the various subject centres are happy to provide advice or put people in touch with other organisations that may be able to help them with a specific issue. The following two examples illustrate close working with the Academy.

Solihull College

HE in FE enhancement – working with the Higher Education Academy

Through a one day per week secondment arrangement, Solihull College's HE curriculum development manager works with the senior adviser for HE in FE at the HEA and manages the teaching, learning and enhancement strand. This role supports a wide range of activities, including:

- individual sessions with colleges' HE in FE staff
- putting HE in FE staff in contact with their subject centre networks
- supporting a new subject network for hair, beauty and spa lecturers
- being a resource or signpost for HE in FE staff.

Much of the work's focus has been around assessment, including workshops and materials development, and over 500 copies of the related DVD have been distributed.

A series of workshops entitled 'Innovations in learning and teaching in FE/HE' have been delivered, some specifically tailored to subject areas such as engineering or sport, and some more general. This series culminated in a conference entitled 'Unlocking the learning experience: playing with learning', held in June 2008 at the University of Warwick and attracting 75 delegates from all over the UK.

There have been clear benefits for Solihull College, not least because all the college's HE in FE staff now have greater awareness of and access to the workshops, newsletters, project information and subject centre networks of the Academy, which has led to enhanced professional development of the staff.

Somerset College of Arts and Technology

Somerset College working with ESCalate

ESCalate is the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Education (http://escalate.ac.uk). An ESCalate grant provided a valuable means of securing development time and opportunity to ensure that Somerset College is now well placed to meet local employers' needs through effective and relevant ways of delivering work-based HE programmes. Having established a productive Research and Development Unit within the college, it is hoped that further projects involving new and innovative ways of delivering increasingly demand-led programmes will be developed to support teaching colleagues and HE students. Good things are now coming out of what was formerly the college's 'Room 101'.

The member of staff who won the grant for the college has presented the project outcomes at an ESCalate Regional Technologies for Learning conference.

Over recent years, there has been an impetus to develop supportive frameworks and professional standards for teaching and learning in education. The HE sector has developed 'The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education'. Information on this can be found on the Higher Education Academy web-site at: www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/policy/framework

In addition, Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) has developed a set of standards for the lifelong learning sector: 'New overarching standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector'. These can be found on the LLUK web-site at: www.lluk.org

For professionals engaged in significant amounts of HE in FE, there are potential issues regarding which of these two frameworks they might align themselves with in order to access appropriate professional recognition and development. At the time of writing, work was underway by key stakeholders in these sectors in an attempt to synthesise the two approaches to professional recognition and development and develop an appropriate way forward.

Specific HE in FE support

The Higher Education Academy engages in a wide range of activities designed to support those working in HE in FE. Full details can be found at: www.heacademy.ac.uk/heinfe

HE in FE e-briefing

The Academy's monthly e-briefing aims to provide readers with a summary of some of the current key issues affecting HE in FE as well as a comprehensive listing of key events, conferences and staff development opportunities. It is freely available to anyone who subscribes by visiting www.heacademy.ac.uk/heinfe where you can also find past editions of the briefing.

Directory of HE in FE in England

This useful publication provides a brief explanation of the role of HE in FE as well as contact details for the many organisations involved in the support of HE in FE.

In addition to national details, it provides regional contacts to help in finding local sources of support. The directory also gives contact details for all colleges offering HE in FE, together with their named contact. Hard copies are available on request from the Academy, or an online version is available at: www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/york/documents/ourwork/institutions/HEinFEDirectoryJan2008.pdf

Subject centres

The Academy's 24 subject centres can supply a rich source of subject-related support materials and information about subject-based conferences and staff development opportunities. The centres also run a wide range of activities, including teaching award schemes, and support small-scale projects. A number of subject centres have staff with specific responsibility for providing support for HE in FE, details of which can be found at: www.heacademy.ac.uk/heinfe/scwork

Additional support

The Academy runs a wide range of events and activities in the areas of teaching and learning, and management, leadership and quality enhancement. There is also a three-day annual conference in July. Details of these events can be found in the e-briefing or by visiting www.heacademy.ac.uk/heinfe

Professional development and recognition

The Academy aims to lead, support and inform the professional development and recognition of staff in higher education. It does this in a number of ways:

- **Individual professional recognition**
  The Academy confers associate, fellow and senior fellow status on individuals in recognition of their commitment to enhancing the student learning experience. Details of the application process and benefits of the scheme can be found at: www.heacademy.ac.uk/professional/recognition
- **National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS)**
  The Academy administers the NTFS. The scheme has two strands, one of which offers awards to individuals and one to projects. Details of the scheme, including the application procedure for eligible colleges, can be found at: www.heacademy.ac.uk/professional/ntfs. It is extremely unusual for a member of a college to be awarded a fellowship, but there is a campaign to get the teaching of HE in FE recognised. Colleges might like to consider nominating staff for the award.

Research observatory

At the time of writing, the Higher Education Academy is in the process of setting up a research observatory to hold and distribute research into various aspects of higher education. Details will appear on the web-site as the facility is finalised.

9.5 Scholarly activity

Colleges offering HE generally have a broader definition of what constitutes scholarly activity than HEIs. In FECs, scholarly activity is taken to cover any or all of the following:

- keeping up to date with the subject

- curriculum development, particularly foundation degrees, often with HEIs
- curriculum development that involves research
- updating ICT skills
- taking higher qualifications – masters, doctorates and teaching qualifications
- consultancy to industry and other agencies
- industrial secondments or work shadowing
- involvement with SSCs
- research and publications
- practitioner/applied research
- personal development – action research and reading
- attending staff development events within the college
- attending conferences and workshops externally.

Any college considering an application for FDAP will need to pay attention to criterion C1 of 'Applications for the grant of Foundation Degree-awarding powers: Guidance for applicant further education institutions in England' (DIUS, 2008). This lists the evidence required for all teaching staff engaged in the delivery of HE programmes:

- academic and/or professional expertise
- engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline
- knowledge and understanding of current scholarly developments in their discipline area at a level appropriate to a foundation degree and that directly informs and enhances their teaching
- staff development and appraisal opportunities aimed at enabling them to develop and enhance their professional competence and scholarship.

While there are no generally agreed definitions, there appears to be a consensus about the distinction between scholarly activity as a broad collection of activities and the more narrow focus of research as described in higher education institutions.

Stockport College

Opportunities for developing scholarly activity

Stockport College uses a small budget to support its 45 staff in HE in FE. This enables course teams to 'buy out' staff time or provide other support for scholarly activity or research. Early in the academic year, teams decide how the support will be used and the outcomes they expect from the scholarly activity. Two outcomes are prescribed:

1 The work must be designed to have an impact on the learning experience.

2 Teams or individuals present a paper to the annual Stockport College research conference.

The 2007 conference produced joint papers on a variety of themes, including curriculum development, supporting vulnerable students and incorporating research into undergraduate programmes. The conference is always well attended, partly because it is held on a college staff development day, thus ensuring that staff are available. Guest speakers enliven the proceedings and add importance to the occasion, and in the past have included speakers from partner HEIs, publishers and other groups such as the University of the Third Age.

The conference sits alongside other initiatives to encourage and support scholarly activity, particularly in partnership with the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN). The college delivers a UCLAN postgraduate module in qualitative research offered to all staff and to students on the PGCE. It is also active in supporting the UCLAN publication 'Through the Looking Glass – Reflective Research in Post Compulsory Education'. Several PGCE students and staff have been published in this journal over the past three years.

9.6 Developing a research culture

Many colleges see the development of a research culture as one of their strategic objectives, but most FE staff who conduct research activity do so in a very different climate from staff in HEIs. However, many colleges have sufficiently productive relationships with their HEIs to enable them to become involved in joint research projects, and there is potential for more such development.

In addition to pedagogical or subject-based research, there is a real opportunity for groups of interested staff in colleges to research a number of areas relating to HE in FE. In collaborative research projects with HE colleagues, FE staff can contribute much, especially if work is practitioner based.

York College

Debbie Thornton Scholarships

The Debbie Thornton Scholarships are one of four initiatives intended to support and improve research and development activity in the college. The scholarships specifically aim to support teaching staff to engage in scholarly activity related to their own professional interests.

Recipients of scholarships are encouraged and supported to share their findings with colleagues in the college, and with a wider audience if appropriate. This includes contributing articles to the college journal and other publications through the college's Innovation and Dissemination Group.

The scholarships, which last for a year, provide a package of support, including:

- funding for research costs, travel, materials, subscriptions etc (up to £1,000 per scholarship)
- mentorship, training and advice from the Learning Development Unit
- access to research equipment (e.g. digital recorders and transcription machines)

- opportunities for dissemination and discussion through the Innovation and Dissemination Group
- support from the senior management team and line managers
- opportunities for and assistance in disseminating findings
- recognition for achievements.

The other three Thornton initiatives include a collection of resources for innovation, a bi-annual college research journal and an annual memorial lecture, all of which help to support scholarship recipients in undertaking and sharing their work.

Warwickshire College Research Group

Warwickshire College has set up a Research Group, and a proportion of the college's HEFCE TQEF is earmarked to support research projects. Staff are invited to bid for funds for small-scale research projects. This bidding process is not onerous, but it helps to focus staff on what they hope to achieve and proposes realistic timescales. A requirement of securing funds is dissemination through the college's seminar programme.

Examples of projects/activities supported by the Research Group include:

- investigating the effect of diet on horse performance
- study into the re-housing of rescued chickens
- travel costs to display artwork at a national exhibition.

The Research Group meets approximately once a term, and its main aim is to develop a research culture within the college. Our remit of 'research' is deliberately broad and would not necessarily map directly onto the definitions used by the Research Assessment Exercise panels, for example.

A small number of colleges have a research infrastructure, which might include a research centre and/or research journal.

The Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education

The Grimsby Institute has actively embraced the notion of scholarly activity and research and has created an infrastructure to develop the practice and embed the policy. The infrastructure consists of four elements:

i) The Research Policy Group, which aims to develop and drive the institute's strategy. A principal aim is to focus action research around our areas of excellence, previously the Centres of Vocational Excellence and now the National Skills Academies.

ii) The Research Interest Group, which consists of colleagues from different disciplines who come together to share their research via seminars and papers. The seminars are open to students and staff; a programme of seminars is run every semester.

iii) Research journal – every year a journal is produced showcasing the work of the staff at the institute. This journal is widely distributed to key stakeholders to illustrate the quality of the work undertaken.

iv) Performance appraisal – all HE tutors are set targets at their annual performance review to undertake negotiated and agreed scholarly activity.

Learning and Skills Research Network (LSRN)

The LSRN is based in the regions of England and Northern Ireland, with links to partners in Scotland and Wales. The network brings together people involved in producing and making use of research in the learning and skills sector and HE, and provides a welcoming atmosphere for those new to research. LSRN organises an annual research conference in partnership with NIACE and other organisations, and also regional conferences. For further details, see www.theresearchcentre.co.uk/LSRNW/index.htm

10 Quality assurance and enhancement

10.1 Quality assurance and enhancement

HE in FE is subject to external scrutiny by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, acting on behalf of HEFCE. The expectation is that each college offering prescribed higher education – regardless of whether it is directly, indirectly or, previously, consortium funded – will be able to demonstrate that:

- it manages the academic standards and quality of its provision appropriately
- there is accountability for public funding
- it is concerned to improve and enhance its provision.

Non-prescribed higher education is inspected by Ofsted at the same time as other FE provision, and therefore the QAA Academic Infrastructure (see below) does not apply. However, colleges might want to take on the QAA principles and precepts to provide consistency for all provision at level 4 and above.

While QAA quality assures (prescribed) HE programmes provided in FE, the robustness of colleges' management, governance and financial arrangements are the responsibility of the LSC. The LSC has developed a Framework for Excellence to take forward the 2006 White Paper, 'Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances' (DfES), with the aim of raising the standard of provision across the FE system and ensuring that it is responsive to customer needs. The 'Framework for Excellence: Memorandum of Collaboration – HEFCE and the LSC' was published in June 2008 as part of development of the partnership between the LSC and HEFCE. The framework recognises that FECs provide HE in FE, and HEIs provide FE in HE.

Given the separation of the quality regimes, the Joint Project Plan detailed in the memorandum of collaboration focuses on how the Framework for Excellence will be applied to FE in HE. However, it also sets out the expectation that the LSC will advise HEFCE, on an exceptional basis, of any colleges with significant HEFCE income 'that "fail" the responsiveness test', and that HEFCE's 'own financial interest in FE colleges is protected by the Framework for Excellence finance dimension' (memorandum of collaboration, paragraphs 15 and 19).

Tension has occasionally been created by the fact that FECs with higher education provision are subject to two completely different systems of external scrutiny:

- the QAA peer review process, which focuses on all HEFCE-funded provision
- the Ofsted inspection regime, which inspects HE provision leading to ITT qualifications, level 4 NVQ and above, and professional courses that make up non-prescribed higher education, which may be funded by the LSC.

Colleges need to ensure that their quality systems for higher education are not only fit for purpose in assuring and enhancing provision, but can also respond to the demands placed upon them to meet external requirements. The outcomes of the Better Regulation Review Group, 'Higher Education: Easing the burden' (2003) have led to more working with existing documentation, to reduce bureaucracy, than for requirements for a great deal of new effort. Furthermore, QAA and Ofsted agreed a memorandum of understanding in January 2008, to reduce duplication between reviews and inspections. Ofsted and QAA have agreed to co-ordinate their activities through the joint planning and development group, which will share information and discuss the forward programme for inspections and reviews.

Between 1997 and 2006, colleges met the challenge of a number of QAA review methods (subject review, academic review and foundation degree review). At that time, these methods related only to directly and consortium-funded provision; indirectly funded provision was included in QAA's audits of an awarding HEI's collaborative provision and the review of foundation degrees in 2004-05 (subsequently incorporated into academic review).

All HE in the UK is expected to use the components of the Academic Infrastructure as reference to help to assure the standard of quality of awards. Section 2 of QAA's code of practice says that HEIs cannot delegate responsibility for standards, but can devolve some responsibility for quality – so long as they retain the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that students are able to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Many colleges felt a sense of unfairness or, at least, unevenness in the method of review of standards and the quality of learning opportunities, which were reviewed according to the source of funding rather than the experience itself.

Recognising this, and taking the opportunity to revise policy and process brought about by the end of academic review, QAA developed a new method specifically for colleges. Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review was piloted in 15 colleges during 2006-07 and went live for all colleges with prescribed HE provision over a period of five years, starting in January 2008. The new method draws on the Prime Minister's Office of Public Services Reform, which focuses on the customer perspective, outcomes, the place of self-assessment and evidence-based judgement, value for money, continuous learning from practice, and co-operation and joint reporting with other inspectorates.

IQER addresses many of the issues mentioned above by proposing a review method predicated on quality enhancement and assurance that deals with all HEFCE-funded higher education, whether directly or indirectly funded, and with no increase of burden for HEIs. In response to requests from colleges, IQER retains peer review, parity of processes for FECs and HEIs, similarity of reporting outcomes and a risk-based approach to deciding the level of scrutiny in a college according to track record.

IQER focuses on the college's management of HE and the delivery of standards and the quality of the learning opportunities, rather than review at the subject or course level. Full details of the method and how it works are to be found in 'The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review' (available in hard copy or on the QAA web-site). At the time of writing, colleges are not awarding bodies for HE awards; they should have partnership agreements with partner HEIs, and equivalent contractual arrangements when offering Edexcel-validated programmes. As a result of this, and recognising that the range of provision is heterogeneous, each IQER review works within the context of the college's partnership agreement with each awarding body and the college's discharge of these responsibilities.

The Academic Infrastructure

Since 1998, a central change in the move towards a standards-based review methodology has been the stated requirement for institutions to engage with external reference points in their practice and in their self-evaluation. To support those institutions and awarding bodies that design, validate and/or deliver higher education, QAA has worked with the HE sector to publish a range of external reference documents to ensure comparability of awards across the UK: the Academic Infrastructure.

The Academic Infrastructure consists of four components; three are mainly concerned with setting standards, and one (the code of practice) is concerned with the management of quality. Most of the components of the Academic Infrastructure are discussed in greater detail in Sections 2 and 6. What follows is a summary overview.

FHEQ

The frameworks for higher education qualifications in EWNI and in Scotland set out expectations about the level that UK higher education awards represent in terms of the knowledge, understanding and abilities that graduates should possess. The FHEQ was revised in 2008.

Subject benchmark statements

Subject benchmark statements are written by subject specialists, and set out what they consider to be important aspects of HE study in their subject areas (disciplines).

Award benchmark statement

The foundation degree qualification benchmark describes the distinctive features of an individual qualification at a particular level with the FHEQ. It describes the qualification in terms of its particular purpose, general characteristics and generic outcomes.

Programme specifications

Programme specifications should be provided for each higher education programme and describe its components: for example, learning outcomes, structure, assessment, teaching and learning strategy, admissions requirements. For more information on Edexcel awards and their programme specifications, see Section 10.4 and Section 6.3.

Code of practice

For more on the 'Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education', see below. Parts of the code are also addressed in other sections of this guide.

Managing HE quality and standards in the college

Many college quality systems are appropriate to all programmes whatever their level and can be used or adjusted effectively for HE provision. However, some areas will benefit from some differentiation if the quality assurance is to be robust enough to meet the requirements of awarding bodies and QAA. Those colleges that make a member of staff specifically responsible for HE quality matters – for part or all of his/her duties depending on the scale of the HE provision, and working closely with the college quality manager – probably get the results that are most fit for purpose. This section concentrates on those elements of quality assurance that may need special attention, with a view to adding value by enhancement.

Whether a college is directly, indirectly or, previously, consortium funded, it makes a real difference if the people involved with initiating or monitoring aspects of quality assurance know who they are and what they have to do. In the best indirectly funded partnership agreements, roles and responsibilities are clearly laid out and the differing roles of the HEI and college are effectively demarcated (see Section 3.4). This is particularly important when the HE provision is small (fewer than 100 FTEs) and thus the staffing and other resources are limited, because it is possible for important aspects to slip through the net.

Selby College

Selby College is a small tertiary college in North Yorkshire, with a history of running a small number of programmes indirectly funded by HEIs. The college was seeking to broaden this provision to meet the needs of the local community, by providing foundation degrees for those unable or unwilling to attend HEIs in the region. However, the college faced the dilemma of reconciling the need to maintain quality assurance systems to achieve HE standards and having to develop its underpinning support systems against its existing resource base.

To resolve this dilemma, agreement was reached with another partner in the University of Hull Federation of Colleges – The Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education – to share delivery and support in order to build capacity. The Grimsby Institute is a very significant provider of higher education on the south bank of the Humber, with very well-developed HE systems.

The University of Hull, as the validating partner, was supportive and very significantly involved in these arrangements, which are seen as a possible pathfinder for future federation developments.

A tripartite agreement was reached, which clearly specifies the responsibilities of the participants, who are monitored by a steering group comprising representatives from each institution.

The collaboration is reaching the end of its first year of operation, but already Selby College has enjoyed the security for its students of having external guidance and support, and capacity is building for staff through experience and shared staff development.

Management responsibilities

Section 3 gives more detail on management responsibilities. The specific responsibilities in relation to quality assurance include:

- the Academic Infrastructure
- intended learning outcomes
- APEL and credit transfer
- assessment – internal and external examination boards and external examiners
- support for students
- PDP
- opportunities for student feedback and evaluation
- annual monitoring reports/self-assessment
- periodic review of programmes
- approval and validation of new programmes.

These responsibilities need to be addressed by a structured and rigorous approach.

The Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education

Pre-validation

Every year, the institute develops between 16 and 25 HE programmes (new and replacements) to meet local and regional needs.

All faculties have undertaken training on:

a) the Academic Infrastructure

b) the validation paperwork and processes for each of the validating universities.

In order to ensure that the number of validation conditions and recommendations are kept to a minimum, the institute operates a 'pre-validation' system. This involves an internal panel meeting with the writing team to mirror the formal process and review the content and structure of the document.

The internal panel consists of:

- vice principal – higher education
- director of quality and standards (HE)
- quality manager
- employer (wherever possible)
- student(s) from the subject area (wherever possible)
- HE co-ordinator (from another faculty to share good practice and develop deeper understanding of the process)
- chief librarian.

The internal panel receives the document one week in advance and checks the following:

- general accuracy of presentation and spelling
- accuracy of use of award and subject benchmarks
- taxonomy of learning outcomes
- mapping of programme and module outcomes
- structure of delivery models for full-time and part-time routes
- range, appropriateness, number (and weighting) and tariff of assessments
- inclusion of formative assessment opportunities
- range of indicative reading – core and additional texts, journals, other documentation (e.g. government papers).

The panel has a short pre-validation meeting to formulate the questions and then conducts the validation meeting. Pre-validation conditions are defined (where needed), programme teams receive further developmental time and resubmit the amended documentation. The institute's quality department then verifies that all pre-validation conditions are met before sending the documentation on to the partner HEI.

Staffordshire University Regional Federation (SURF)

Flexible Learning Approvals Panel (FLAP)

Staffordshire University has recognised the need to move swiftly in response to market demand for shorter and commercial courses. The process of approval, however, is no less rigorous.

Where the proposal is for a programme of 60 credits or under, it will be submitted to the Flexible Learning Approvals Panel, a sub-group of the Quality Development Committee (QDC).

Proposals are submitted on a standard application and must be supported by a specified set of documentation, including a programme specification, a student handbook, module descriptors, a resource statement and draft agreements with the partner. FLAP has meetings scheduled once each month to consider such proposals, and reports to the QDC.

A service-level agreement is required for partnerships outside Staffordshire University's Regional Federation. The agreement outlines the respective roles and responsibilities of the university and the partner in relation to: validation, marketing and recruitment of the award; ongoing award and module development; teaching; programme management; quality enhancement; and student support.

The QAA 'Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education' has 10 sections. Each covers a different topic and includes a series of precepts based on good practice. Using the code of practice is helpful for colleges

in that it enables them to benchmark the quality of their provision against the standards set for other HE provision. Some of the sections of the code (marked * in the list below) are particularly important for IQER.

The 10 sections are:

1 Postgraduate research programmes

2* Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)

3 Students with disabilities

4* External examining

5 Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters

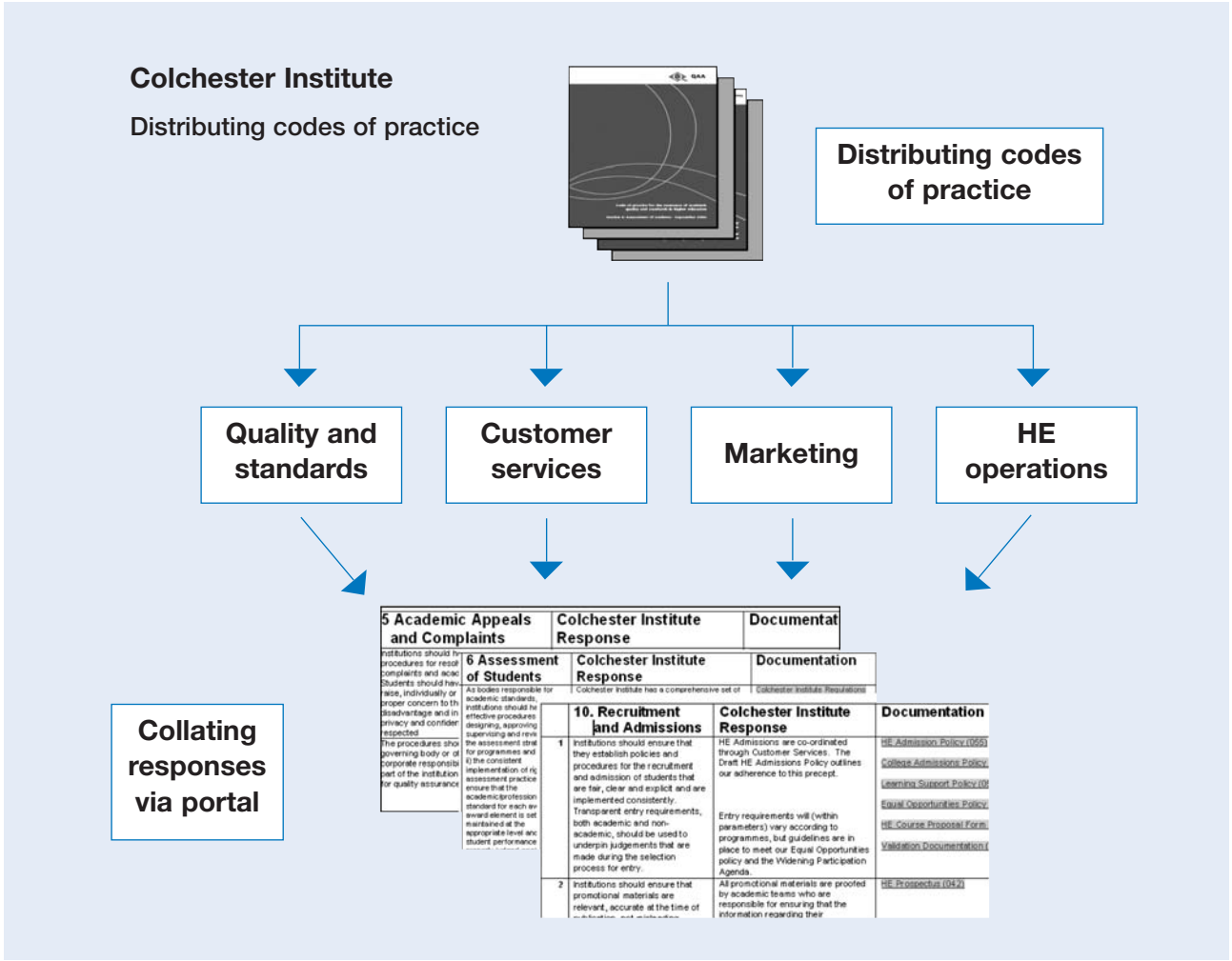
6* Assessment of students

7* Programme design, approval, monitoring and review

8 Career education, information and guidance

9* Work-based and placement learning

10 Admissions to higher education.



10.2 QAA commentary on quality management and enhancement in HE in FE

A number of QAA overview reports, available on the QAA web-site, have gathered together features of good practice and areas for improvement in the maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality in HE in FE. These reports make useful reading for colleges, as part of staff development or to signpost staff involved in HE towards enhancing their practice. The following points, taken from the executive summary of the most recent report, 'Learning from Academic review of higher education in further education colleges in England, 2002-07' (QAA, 2008), give the flavour of what is covered:

- demonstrable improvement of the engagement with, and use of, the Academic Infrastructure to inform the development and delivery of higher education
- good preparation of students for future employment
- student assessment remains an area in need of further enhancement in most colleges with generally effective use of formative assessment across all subjects
- considerable emphasis on developing and enhancing students' study skills to help them with the transition to higher-level study
- the small size of many classes enables staff to pay attention to students' individual development
- improvement in the proportion of students progressing to further study
- colleges are making an important contribution to widening participation in higher education, which has increasingly featured as a strength of college provision
- staff development and training for those who have no formal teaching qualification or experience
- clear evidence of development in the provision of learning resources over the review period
- generally strong and effective quality assurance and enhancement systems
- scope for more systematic and evaluative annual review of programmes and more effective monitoring and recording of action planned and taken.

Colleges develop their own processes for assuring quality, as in the following example.

Doncaster College

Teaching, learning and assessment review

In order to provide a holistic view of the delivery of modules rather than a snapshot 'lesson observation', Doncaster College has developed a process which involves reviewing all activities that contribute to the learning within a module; this is known as teaching, learning and assessment review (TLA).

This developmental process enables the college to gather data on the level of staff understanding of the context in which HE operates, including the QAA Academic

Infrastructure, and provides a recording device for the quality enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment.

The reviewers are staff in management positions at departmental or programme level. TLA is therefore not essentially a peer review system, but can serve a similar function.

TLA comprises six core questions related to 'out of classroom' aspects, in which the background and design of the module are considered together with standards benchmarking and assessment strategies, and six core questions related to 'in classroom aspects', which refer directly to the student learning experience as the reviewer(s) observes it. The overall unit of analysis is an integration of the module under review and the contribution of the teacher to that module.

Each aspect is graded on a 1-4 system, from areas in need of rectification through to innovative and exemplary practice. Each grade carries explicit criteria which are directly related to the contribution of each aspect to the attainment of the intended learning outcomes.

Staff who have been reviewed report that TLA has given excellent support for their work in areas in need of development, while giving them due recognition for success. Managers regard it as a highly robust system which is sensitive to all areas of learning and teaching and is extremely effective in quality assurance and enhancement processes. It has been particularly useful recently in the assessment of e-learning development.

10.3 Quality assurance differentiation for higher education

Some FECs use the same systems for assuring quality for higher education provision as for further education. This avoids confusion for staff who teach on both levels of course and ensures consistency. However, there are occasions where higher education provision requires something different, and some FECs have quite different quality systems for HE work.

Colleges which work with a number of partners will almost certainly have to follow slightly different quality assurance systems with each partner. For example, the quality assurance systems of a pre-1992 university may differ from those of a post-1992 institution, and both will differ from Edexcel's systems. QAA considers it good practice to share the detail of quality assurance only with other programmes of the same awarding body, and not across programmes of a range of awarding bodies.

In considering whether a college can use FE quality assurance systems or needs to develop some differentiated ways of dealing with quality assurance for HE, the headings in Table 14 might prove useful as the start of an indicative checklist.

Table 14 **Elements of quality assurance for FE and for HE**

Quality assurance element	FE programmes	HE programmes
Curriculum	Regular course team meetings Staff development – CPD for 30 hours	Regular course team meetings Encourage scholarly activity at subject and pedagogic levels
Teaching, learning and assessment	Teaching observations – managerial system Internal verification External verifiers	Peer review system Needs to be appropriate at subject level External examiners, plus response to their reports
Quality assurance and enhancement	More courses off the shelf Shorter course review and self-assessment	Programme approval with Edexcel or HEI partners Annual course review
Formal college committees reporting to academic board	Reporting through the college committee structure	Formal college committees related to HE, reporting to an academic board or standards committee
Student representative meetings	Student representative meetings (at course teams?)	HE student representative meetings
External scrutiny	Ofsted	QAA IQER
QAA Academic Infrastructure		• FHEQ • programme specifications • subject benchmark statements • foundation degree qualification benchmark • code of practice for assuring quality and standards in higher education

10.4 Key features of IQER

What is new about the IQER method is its co-ordinated approach and focus on a college's management of its HEFCE-funded HE. All colleges will have their summative reviews normally no earlier than 12 months after the developmental

engagement in a five-year cycle, led by the same QAA IQER co-ordinator and with some continuity of the four reviewers. The developmental engagement comes first and for all colleges is on the theme of student assessment. This is intended to be a genuinely developmental and enhancing experience. The summative review is more formal and includes all aspects of the management of quality and standards of the HE provision in the college; it is likely to have the same IQER co-ordinator and some continuity of the four reviewers.

Self-evaluation and negotiation are at the core of IQER, and the approach sets out to build capacity through enhancement. Students are involved during visits and are invited to write their own submission. The college usually has two nominees from among its staff who will be members of the developmental engagement team. One becomes an institutional facilitator for the summative review.

The first, and often the only, developmental engagement in each college has the same theme: assessment. This is partly because all institutions, FE and HE, find assessment challenging and the genuinely developmental nature of this stage of IQER should make a real difference to provision (see Section 7.1 for QAA comments on assessment). If a second developmental engagement is necessary, the college has a free choice of theme. Colleges with small amounts of HE may not need to have a developmental engagement, but can also opt in – evidence of the flexibility of IQER.

Colleges are asked to identify three lines of enquiry, to focus the developmental engagement on areas they would like to explore for enhancement. The point of these lines of enquiry is to introduce choice for colleges and to enable each college to look at all quality assurance and enhancement processes through routes which are most beneficial to the college. It is not a question of one size fits all; different colleges have different elements of assessment they would like to focus on through the lines of enquiry. These are linked to three core themes:

- academic standards
- quality of learning opportunities
- public information.

IQER has been designed with the intention that, in addition to assuring quality, enhancement is central. This is because of the college's direct involvement in the planning and implementation of the review and the continuity created by key members of the review. For full details, see the 'Handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review' on the QAA web-site. It can be helpful to think of the two stages in the process as similar to student assessment, which is usually a combination of formative and summative.

Table 15 **Stages of IQER**

Note: The IQER stages are listed on the left; the middle column sets out what can be expected of each stage; the right-hand column contains comments from different perspectives – IQER pilot colleges, QAA co-ordinators and the National Union of Students (NUS).

Activity	What it is	Comment
Briefing	QAA holds a briefing meeting for you, your awarding bodies and other colleges where your representatives can gain advice to help you to prepare for reviews and meet the co-ordinator.	You will get most from this if you have considered the IQER handbook beforehand. Selecting your nominees is a crucial job; people with direct responsibility for the content of the self-evaluation may have greater difficulties on the review. (QAA co-ordinator 1) Ensure that all managers and awarding body staff are clear about their role from the outset. (City College Manchester)
Contact with the co-ordinator	Your co-ordinator will work with you from now on, offering support and advice and making arrangements.	Your co-ordinator will be your guide; establish a good working relationship at an early stage. (Colchester Institute)
Deciding the lines of enquiry	You decide on three areas you would like to explore, and can discuss them with the co-ordinator before finalising them. This process will have begun at the briefing meeting and gives the college choice about the focus of the developmental engagement. One line of enquiry can link to more than one core theme.	It is important that the lines of enquiry cover the three core themes and that these are agreed with your co-ordinator at an early stage, not least because the self-evaluation needs to address the lines of enquiry. (QAA co-ordinator 4) Look for areas of inconsistency, i.e. good practice in one area that may be lacking elsewhere

		in the HE provision. This forms a perfect vehicle for demonstrating awareness of self-evaluation. (City College Manchester) Reference to the QAA 'Code of practice: Section 6' may be helpful. (Colchester Institute) Matthew Boulton College developed the following as the lines of enquiry for its developmental engagement: 1 Quality of student feedback 2 Implementation of internal quality mechanisms for monitoring assessment 3 Use of learning resources to prepare for assessment.
Preparing the written agreement with each awarding body	This key part of the process is a written agreement which must be submitted soon after the briefing event to set out what involvement, if any, each awarding body will have in the review. It is a way of clarifying this for all parties, including the coordinator.	
Writing the self-evaluation	Involve as many staff in the college as possible and follow the guidance in the IQER handbook. The self-evaluation should ideally be composed largely of existing documents.	In all parts of IQER do not forget that this is about the 'management of education' – to some extent this is about the oversight and planning of HE through committees and management structures.

	The review is set in the context of the college's agreements and responsibilities it discharges on behalf of awarding bodies. This is all about the college taking responsibility for its role in the partnership and assuring the quality of the provision.	Do not forget core theme 3 (public information! It is increasingly important). (QAA co-ordinator 1)
Supporting the students' written submission		The college needs to consider how well resourced its students' union is and its capability to produce the submission. Physical, financial and technical resources should be provided to ensure that a comprehensive submission can be made. However, it is imperative that the student written submission remains impartial and independent from the institution. So while support must be given to the process, the college must not interfere or unduly influence the content or outcomes of the document. (NUS HE in FE policy officer)
Collecting evidence	Collect evidence from existing documents to support what you say. Include the most relevant evidence as part of the self-evaluation portfolio and have any other essential material available for the visit.	Organise this evidence carefully – it must be easily accessible. Nominees and the summative review facilitator need to know this source very well. (Colchester Institute)

Preparing staff	Staff at different levels of the college need to become familiar with IQER and the self-evaluation so they can contribute to the review	Encourage as many as possible to come to the preparatory visit briefing, and encourage college staff to meet to discuss topics covered by the lines of enquiry. (QAA co-ordinator 2) Be prepared! Ask about what you do not understand. Be proactive and offer suggestions (compatible with the handbook) for the organisation of the visit. Help the team with electronic provision of evidence. (QAA co-ordinator 1)
Preparing students	The college needs to brief students about their role: the optional student written submission (with QAA brochure to advise them) and their part in the preparatory meeting and the visit.	
Preparatory meeting	An opportunity for your staff and those from partner awarding bodies (if appropriate) to meet the co-ordinator, who will clarify the process and make the arrangements for the developmental engagement visit.	
Nominees write commentaries/evaluations	Before the visit, the reviewers (including nominees) scrutinise the self-evaluation and write about the lines of enquiry and core themes to inform the visit.	Try and write your evaluations in a form which can be easily adapted/added to during the visit, so that you end up with a good draft report, despite the lack of time. (QAA co-ordinator 2)

		Nominees should ensure that they put time aside for this activity. (Colchester Institute)
Developmental engagement	A two-day visit, usually about assessment. Scrutiny of evidence and student work and meetings with staff and students form the main part of the visit. Oral report at the end with evaluations, good practice and recommendations, but no judgements and report not published.	If there is only one developmental engagement it is always about assessment. If there is a second developmental engagement, its focus will be chosen by the college. (QAA co-ordinator 3) There may also be a meeting with employers or their representatives if the lines of enquiry relate to this. (QAA co-ordinator 4)
Receiving the report	The college and the awarding bodies receive the draft report after four weeks and have an opportunity to comment on factual accuracy.	Ensure that all key staff have opportunity to comment. (City College Manchester)
Writing the action plan	The college writes the action plan to a format supplied by QAA and this forms part of the final report. The developmental engagement report is not published.	Start action planning immediately after the oral report. (QAA co-ordinator 1) Write an action plan using SMART [specific, measurable, appropriate, realistic, time-bound] targets and plan review dates through your committee infrastructure. (Colchester Institute)
Implementing the action plan	The summative review refers to progress on implementing the action plan and the impact of the action taken on students' education.	

Contact with the co-ordinator	Probably an informal meeting to re-engage with the college before formal stages of the summative review.	
Preparing for summative review	The college writes a self-evaluation of the overall management of the standards and quality of HEFCE-funded HE provision in the college, however funded. There is a facilitator who is not a member of the review team.	The institutional facilitator should ideally be one of the original nominees, who should have been working with the college to ensure that the action plan has been implemented. (QAA co-ordinator 3) This is likely to be a very different document from the self-evaluation for the developmental engagement since it will be written at least one year on and relates to the total HE provision. (QAA co-ordinator 4) Do not forget to reference the Academic Infrastructure throughout. The code of practice provides an excellent quality framework with which the college will be expected to engage. (Colchester Institute)
Contact with the co-ordinator	The co-ordinator remains the same and there is continuing contact. The role of facilitator is clearly different to the nominee's role at developmental engagement.	Where possible, one QAA reviewer remains the same too. (QAA co-ordinator 4)

Writing the self-evaluation	Again, those involved at different levels should be part of the writing of content. The summative review self-evaluation will be a more comprehensive document.	This is likely to be a very different document from the self evaluation for the developmental engagement since it will be written one year on and relates to the total HE provision. (QAA co-ordinator 4)
Supporting writing of the student written submission	It may be easier to obtain a submission following the developmental engagement experience.	
Collecting evidence	As for developmental engagement.	
Preparing staff and students	Staff at different levels of the college need to become familiar with IQER and the self-evaluation so they can contribute to the review.	In the selection of staff to be fully involved it should be recognised that this is about the management of education and less about the operation of individual modules – the difference from academic review is considerable. (QAA co-ordinator 1)
Preparatory meeting	As for developmental engagement.	
Summative review	A two-day visit, with some continuity of reviewers, involving scrutiny of evidence and student work and meetings with staff and students. Implementation of the developmental engagement action plan provides important evidence.	NB: there will usually be two 'new' reviewers who will only have knowledge of the developmental engagement from the report. This should be kept in mind when writing the self-evaluation and during review. (QAA co-ordinator 3) The summative review facilitator has a very important role and should be very familiar with the evidence and its organisation. (Colchester Institute)

Off-site provisional judgement meeting	Summative review teams meet around one week after the visit to agree summaries of evidence, to make provisional judgements and identify provisional good practice and recommendations.	
Receiving the report	The college and the awarding bodies receive the draft report, including the provisional judgements, after four weeks and have an opportunity to comment on factual accuracy and provide additional evidence which was available at the time of the visit, if necessary. The team considers the college's response and either: a) finalises the reports, confirms judgements of confidence for core themes 1 and 2 and reliance on the completeness and accuracy of core theme 3; asks the college to complete the action plan form so that the final version of the report and action plan can be published or b) if the provisional judgements are limited or no confidence, or if the college has not advanced sufficient evidence to enable the team to make secure judgements, the team returns within 10 weeks to complete the review in a further two-day visit. This concludes with finalisation of judgements, an oral report and report drafting and publication.	

Working with Edexcel

Since the IQER pilot started, Edexcel has worked closely with QAA, and QAA has also done a great deal to try to ensure that reviewers are up to speed on higher nationals.

There is some difference in terminology. For example, in further education, benchmarks are national achievement rates; for QAA they are statements about subjects that represent the threshold for undergraduate programmes. There are no specific QAA subject benchmark statements for higher national programmes, although QAA expects reference to be made to subject benchmarks.

NQF-accredited BTEC higher nationals are expected to be transparent to any end-user. To achieve this, the QCA requires that qualifications meet the published design principles.

Edexcel

Edexcel has, since 2003, ensured that its HN provision in colleges is reviewed via an external examiner process which articulates with QAA code of practice expectations.

The external examiner reporting protocols expect externals to remind course team members about the code of practice and other elements of the Academic Infrastructure. Since the introduction of IQER in 2006-07, Edexcel external examiners are required to be mindful of the review process and its need for clear evidence. They are encouraged to ensure that their reports provide robust and detailed feedback to course teams, that action points are derived from evidence, and that any quality issues are clearly identified.

Edexcel offers useful advice to colleges about preparing for IQER self-evaluation. It has produced 'Top Ten Tips' for centres on enhancing HE quality, in addition to a series of specialist papers of guidance for external examiners (see www.edexcel.org.uk/sfc/feschools/qa/spec-papers/).

For guidance on the two distinct forms of Edexcel higher provision in colleges – HNDs and HNCs approved directly by Edexcel, and higher nationals offered under licence to HEIs that validate their own versions – see the QAA 'Handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review', p11.

10.5 Preparing the IQER self-evaluation

A self-evaluation and portfolio of evidence form the basis of both developmental and summative review, and determine the kind of visit and the documents to be made available. Section 6 of the IQER handbook sets out guidelines for producing the self-evaluations. For the developmental engagement self-evaluation, the structure should be based on the lines of enquiry and how they relate to the core themes. The handbook states that:

> In order to limit the burden of the IQER exercise, colleges should as far as possible discuss their responsibilities, processes and procedures in a portfolio of documents which form the self-evaluation. Any new material should be limited to that which is required to signpost and/or contextualise the material in the portfolio and other existing material for the team. New material should not normally exceed four pages of A4.
>
> (paragraph 108)

The four pages should focus on how the college engages in self-critical review and how this informs its strategy, planning and development of HE. Colleges may also find it useful to have it explained that whereas Ofsted uses student statistics, compares them with national benchmarks and uses this comparison to develop questions for inspection, this is not the QAA approach. The framework that QAA uses is the Academic Infrastructure, as outlined earlier. It is not a question of compliance, but about equivalence of effect. It is surprising that, despite this guidance, some colleges produce much longer self-evaluations.

An effective self-evaluation demonstrates:

- evaluation and analysis
- teamwork
- a self-critical account of strengths and weaknesses
- evidence for claims
- what is being done to rectify weaknesses and promote strengths
- evidence for claims
- how the college sees the developmental nature of the lines of enquiry
- a focus on the management of the higher education provision
- reflection on internal review and evaluation processes, not just description
- what the college wants reviewers to know
- that the Academic Infrastructure is being considered and implemented
- data on enrolment, retention, withdrawal, achievement and destinations (for summative review).

As a working document for the review team, the self-evaluation and its associated evidence needs:

- good layout
- clear headings
- paragraph and page numbers
- clear references to evidence cited
- to keep to the word length.

Bear in mind also that reviewers external to the college need to be able to understand and find the evidence they need easily.

Student written submission

In keeping with other trends, IQER invites students to produce a written submission of their views on assessment, in the case of developmental engagement, or on higher education issues in general, for summative review. QAA recognises that colleges do not all have consistent systems in place (students' unions, for example), but encourages students to participate in the process and provides guidance for them in 'Integrated quality and enhancement review: a guide for students', available on the QAA web-site.

10.6 Student and staff feedback

Significant change has taken place in students' involvement in expressing their views about their higher education. In colleges, the main emphasis is on increasing student representation, the student/learner voice and the appointment of learner voice co-ordinators. While initiatives on the learner voice and individual learner agreements are directed at the learning and skills sector, some colleges are applying them to HE too. Essentially, student evaluation should be taken as read, through students'

perceptions of courses (SPOC) and employers' perceptions of courses (EPOC) and other surveys.

Institutions gather students' views of their experience in a number of ways, consider them, take action where appropriate or possible, and inform students of the outcomes. However, asking the questions is not enough: there needs to be clear evidence of the complete process and closing of the loop, to demonstrate that feedback contributes to effective quality assurance and enhancement.

The Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education

Student reviews

The institute is bringing together a small group of student 'reviewers' to engage in an investigative enquiry across a range of first-year undergraduate programmes to examine the experiences of other students regarding assessment feedback processes. The student reviewers will be provided with a base room and supported by two members of staff to ensure appropriate methodological approaches.

The Grimsby Institute recognises that in all instances institutions should ensure that appropriate feedback is provided to students on assessed work in a way that promotes learning and facilitates improvement

The rationale for the initiative is to strengthen the 'learner's voice' and provide opportunities for students to communicate their collective views on the quality of their learning experience and their involvement in the quality assurance and enhancement processes.

The reviewers will consider:

- the timeliness of feedback and return of assessed work
- the nature (formative and summative) and extent of feedback that students can expect
- the effective use of comments on returned work to help students to identify areas for improvement as well as commending them for evident achievement
- the role of oral feedback, to either a group or an individual, as a means of supplementing written feedback.

The institute believes that learners can play a significant role in the process of enhancement and will use this feedback from the student body to:

- disseminate good practice
- encourage discursive activity between students and staff in instances where areas for improvement are identified
- develop a good practice guide for feedback on students' assessments, to enhance teaching and learning strategies.

Bradford College

The college has processes that aim to capture student feedback from a range of different perspectives.

Student representatives are supported by the programme area and by the college students' union. Course committees, comprising staff and student representatives (including a representative from the college library services):

- act as a means of communication between staff and students
- meet regularly during the academic year
- actively encourage and support student participation
- receive reports on module feedback processes and the college-wide survey on student perceptions of courses.

Module feedback is conducted within the programme areas and by course teams using a variety of methods, including:

- feedback questionnaires
- module questionnaires
- formally minuted meetings between staff and students of the course team.

Central SPOC questionnaires are conducted at three stages through the duration of a course programme:

- post-induction
- mid-course
- end of course.

A student parliament has been established to:

- receive feedback on all aspects of student life
- ensure parity of representation from the student community
- provide an opportunity for two-way exchange between students and staff.

The Quality Improvement Unit compiles a report from the data produced. Programme areas receive a copy of this report, and the information is cascaded down to course team level. A summary of the report is fed back to the students taking part in the survey, via student notice-boards and course committee meetings. Action plans are compiled at each stage and monitored by managers, the academic board and the corporation.

National Student Survey

As part of a new framework for assuring the quality and standards of education provided by higher education institutions, it was agreed by HEFCE, the HE sector, the Government and student representatives that regular, detailed information about teaching quality should be published. The response was the development of a national survey of students: the National Student Survey. The primary purpose of

the NSS is to inform prospective students and their advisers in choosing what and where to study. The first full-scale NSS took place in 2005.

The survey consists of six 'areas' covering: teaching; assessment and feedback; academic support; organisation and management; learning resources; and personal development. An 'overall satisfaction' question also asks how satisfied respondents are with the quality of their course. Overall satisfaction has remained relatively high for the past three surveys. The overall satisfaction score was 80 per cent in 2005 and 2006, increasing to 81 per cent in the 2007 survey.

The survey begins in January and is usually completed by Easter. The survey results are published on the Unistats web-site during the summer each year.

From 2008, the survey is being extended to include students studying HE courses in all directly funded further education colleges in England.

The NUS has an HE in FE policy officer, who had the following to say about the NSS.

NUS

- The National Student Survey has now been rolled out to include HE students studying in FE colleges. Both FECs and HEIs have a duty to ensure that students are informed about the survey and are given the opportunity to respond. This should inform wider strategies around collecting feedback.
- FECs should consider the role of the students' union in their college as an appropriate mechanism to collect feedback about the learner experience, and involve learners in institutional decision-making. Representatives from HE cohorts in FECs should be invited to partake in forums and meetings where decisions affecting those students are made.
- Learner involvement strategies should make clear reference to HE in FE students, and FECs should consider the most practical and effective ways to engage those learners.
- A partnership approach should be taken between the students' union in the HEI and FEC and the institutions themselves to ensure clear lines of responsibility for student representation and delivery of students' union services (e.g. advice, volunteering opportunities). It is important to view the students' unions involved in partnership arrangements as key stakeholders in these relationships that should be included in all cross-institutional discussions.

NUS HE in FE policy officer

Colleges with HE provision are now required to provide teaching quality information (TQI), a system which started for HEIs in 2004. This makes available a range of information about the provision to prospective students, their parents and other interested parties. TQI is available on the Unistats web-site.

Staff feedback

Staff views are made known in a number of ways, either among themselves or by ensuring that senior managers are aware of what staff think. Good practice includes:

- staff surveys, such as on levels of stress or opinions about structures or the operation of groups and committees
- staff appraisal or review, which offers individuals the opportunity to comment on their work, conditions and development needs
- committees and meetings, which give staff an opportunity to raise issues and express opinions – especially course team meetings; staff should also receive feedback on the outcomes of issues raised
- a higher education forum where staff teaching on HE courses can discuss strategies, share good practice and affect policy
- surgeries held at specific times when managers are available to meet with staff on an informal basis
- newsletters and briefing notes offering staff the opportunity to express their views.

10.7 Key features of foundation degree awarding powers

In November 2007, the proposed FE Bill signalled that some further education colleges would be able to award their own foundation degrees. The ensuing discussion and debate resulted in the development of FDAP guidance and criteria, closely and deliberately modelled on the existing criteria for taught degree awarding powers (TDAP). Applications will be tested using a process as robust and rigorous as that adopted for TDAP. FDAP applications could be made to the Privy Council from 1 May 2008. DIUS will seek advice on the financial standing of an applicant from the Learning and Skills Council before determining whether to seek advice from QAA, which will assess whether an application satisfies the criteria to be met. At the time of writing, there is little information about the number of colleges likely to apply.

However, in an interview for the Times Higher Education (15 May 2008) with Bill Rammell, Minister for Further and Higher Education, it was reported that:

> Only 'very high quality' colleges would gain the powers, and there would be no threat to the reputation of foundation degrees, he insisted. 'I think it will provide a degree of competition – and I don't see that as a bad thing – but I also think there is plenty of business to go round.'

Detailed criteria for FDAP are available at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/dap/FDAPGuidanceCriteria.asp

Given the newness of the development, this section does not focus on the formal process and guidance, but on advice from QAA given at three roadshows in early 2008 to brief institutions about FDAP. (QAA will carry out its scrutiny on behalf of the Privy Council.) The points below capture information which may not be found in the formal guidance. However, since this is a new process at the time of writing, with no powers awarded as yet, the following advice may well change.

Points emerging from discussion at QAA roadshows:

- When applications are submitted, scrutiny will ascertain whether colleges have the strength and depth to ensure that standards are established and maintained. Any application should be the result of a strategic decision and not reliant on one or two individuals. It is expected that there will be a critical mass of HE provision in the college.
- QAA recommends that colleges wanting to apply for FDAP would benefit from the experience of a successful IQER summative review before applying. To date, there have been 15 IQER pilot reviews.
- It will be important to look at the way foundation degrees are developed and recognised by employers.
- A year of rigorous activity around FDAP will include:
  - a critical self-analysis from the college
  - a series of planned engagements over the course of the year (preparation and documentation in advance)
  - visits by assessors to meet governors, the principal, senior management team, students, employers etc and to observe internal meetings and other events such as validation/review activity, plus much other contact
  - involvement of all sites if the college is multi-campus.
- FDAP is a process of assessment rather than review, so QAA will be reluctant to ask assessors to start the scrutiny if the college is in a state of flux (e.g. during or just after a restructure or merger). The focus is not on the foundation degree as such, but on governance and academic management; the academic quality and standards framework; the systems in place to ensure that staff are competent to teach at Fd level and have the necessary expertise to develop and deliver foundation degrees; and the nature of the learning environment provided for students. Stability and having systems in place and working effectively are critical in engendering confidence in an institution's capacity to discharge the corporate responsibilities associated with the grant of FDAP.
- Where colleges make and embed changes to their procedures to address FDAP, these should be subjected to institutional evaluation. Documentation of the process should be provided to enable the assessors to gauge the effectiveness of the internal structures, systems and procedures and how they have been developed.
- The FDAP activity will cost £45,000, and institutions will need to consider other costs that might be incurred to enable them to demonstrate that the criteria are met.
- The funding position as far as the provision is concerned would not be affected by a college gaining FDAP. There would be no automatic additional student numbers, but securing co-funding numbers might be possible.

- Collaborative preparation could be helpful. It would be a great pity if progression opportunities or existing partnerships with HEIs were threatened by this process.
- If FECs get FDAP, they must be able to demonstrate that they can run with the powers immediately.

New College Durham

The opportunity given in the Further Education and Training Act 2007 for colleges to apply for the right to award their own foundation degrees confirms the growing role played by some colleges in offering flexible, employer-relevant higher level provision. For those colleges choosing to go down this route, the reward after the rigorous process of application and assessment will be a new freedom to innovate, responding directly to employers and students. It will particularly help those currently under-represented in higher education.

Colleges will be able to develop programmes without the need to go through the validation processes of a partner HEI. With that freedom will come a great deal of additional responsibility, as colleges will become higher level awarding bodies in the same way as universities as far as foundation degrees are concerned. Only those colleges with the commitment, resource and infrastructure to sustain this in the long term are likely to succeed. Initially, awarding powers are likely to be taken up by only a small number of colleges, including those with an established track record of higher level provision and those which serve communities or business sectors where current provision (or providers) fails to fully meet present and future expectations.

Annex A

Membership of project team and acknowledgements

HEFCE commissioned this revision of its good practice guides through Professor Gareth Parry at the University of Sheffield School of Education.

The work was started by members of the Higher Education Academy's HE in FE reference group and taken forward by a project team supported by readers and by contributors from colleges and HE in FE partnerships.

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Annex B

Institutions and organisations contributing to the project

Further education colleges

Bradford College

Bridgwater College

Castle College, Nottingham

City and Islington College

City of Bristol College

City College Manchester

City College Norwich

City College Plymouth

City of Sunderland College

Cleveland College of Art & Design

Colchester Institute

Darlington College

Doncaster College

Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College

East Lancs Institute of Higher Education

Grantham College

The Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education

Guildford College of Further and Higher Education

Hull College

Kingston Maurward College

Leeds College of Art & Design

Leeds College of Technology

Matthew Boulton College

New College Durham

Newcastle College

Newcastle under Lyme College

North Devon College

Northbrook College

Manchester College of Arts and Technology

Mid-Kent College

Orpington College

Park Lane College

Redcar and Cleveland College

Selby College

Solihull College

Somerset College of Arts and Technology

South Birmingham College

South Tyneside College

St Helen's College

Stockport College

Stoke on Trent College

York College

Waltham Forest College

Warwickshire College

West Herts College

Wiltshire College

Worcester College of Technology

Partnerships

(Note: for indirect funding partnerships the lead HEI is indicated)

The Consortium for Post-compulsory Education and Training (PCET) (University of Huddersfield)

Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance

Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium (HHEC) (University of Hertfordshire)

Higher Education Learning Partnership Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (HELP CETL)

Regional University Network (Leeds Metropolitan University)

Staffordshire University Regional Federation (SURF) (Staffordshire University)

University of Plymouth Colleges (UPC) (University of Plymouth)

Sussex Learning Network

West London Lifelong Learning Network

Organisations

City & Guilds

Edexcel

ESCalate (Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Education)

Foundation Degree Forward (fdf)

HEFCE

Higher Education Academy

Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) and Regional Support Centres (RSC)

National Union of Students

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA)

UCAS

Annex C

List of abbreviations

The abbreviations and acronyms used in the text are spelled out below. They include those acting as shorthand for activities, concepts or the titles of organisations and networks; they do not include the titles of particular colleges, HEIs or partnerships.

Annex D provides definitions of several important terms used in the text of the guide. Annex E provides details of many of the organisations in the list below.

Useful explanations of terms as used in particular contexts can be found in key documents, for instance: terms relating to credit in HE in 'Higher education credit framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England' (QAA web-site) and a broader list relating to FE in 'Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework' (Ofqual web-site).

ACP	Association for Collaborative Provision of HE in FE in England
AoC	Association of Colleges
APL, APEL, APCL, APL&A	Accreditation of prior learning, Accreditation of prior experiential learning, Accreditation of prior certificated learning, Accreditation of prior learning and achievement
ASNs	Additional student numbers
BECTA	British Educational Communications and Technology Agency
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CATS	Credit accumulation and transfer system
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
CEIG	Career education, information and guidance
CEL	Centre for Excellence in Leadership
CETL	Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
CIDG	Credit Issues Development Group
CoVE	Centre of Vocational Excellence
CPD	Continuing professional development
CVU	Council of Validating Universities
DCELLS	Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills of the Welsh Assembly
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DE	Developmental engagement
DES	Disability Equality Scheme
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
DLHE	Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey

DSA	Disabled Students' Allowances
EBTA	Employer based training accreditation
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ELQ	Equivalent or lower qualifications
EPOC	Employers' perception of courses
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
EU	European Union
EWNI	England, Wales and Northern Ireland
Fd, FdA, FdSc	Foundation degree, Foundation degree Arts, Foundation degree Science
FDAP	Foundation degree awarding powers
fdf	Foundation Degree Forward
FDQB	Foundation degree qualification benchmark
FE	Further education
FEC	Further education college
FHEQ	Framework for higher education qualifications (QAA)
FQ-EHEA	Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GLH	Guided learning hours
HE	Higher education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher education institution
HEIFES	Higher Education in Further Education: Student Survey
HERO	Higher Education and Research Opportunities in the UK
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HESES	Higher Education Students Early Statistics Survey
HLQ	Higher Level Qualification
HLSP	Higher Level Skills Pathfinders
HNs	Higher nationals (BTEC)
HNA	Higher National Award
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
HPD	Higher Professional Diploma

IAG	Information, advice and guidance
ICT	Information and communications technology
IfL	Institute for Learning
ILR	Individualised Learner Record
IQER	Integrated Quality Enhancement and Review
IT	Information technology
ITT	Initial teacher training
JANET	Joint Academic Network
JFHL	Joint Forum for Higher Levels
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
LEA	Local education authority
LLN	Lifelong Learning Network
LLUK	Lifelong Learning UK
LoE	Lines of enquiry
LRC	Learning resource centre
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSDA	Learning and Skills Development Agency
LSIS	Learning and Skills Improvement Service
LSN	Learning and Skills Network
LSRN	Learning and Skills Research Network
MEG	Mixed Economy Group
MIAP	Managing Information Across Partners
MIS	Management information systems
NDAQ	National Database of Accredited Qualifications
NHS	National Health Service
NIACE	National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education
NOCN	National Open College Network
NOS	National Occupational Standards
NPHE	Non-prescribed higher education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSS	National Student Survey
NTFS	National Teaching Fellowship Scheme
NUS	National Union of Students
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification

OFFA	Office for Fair Access
Ofqual	Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
OUVS	Open University Validation Service
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PDP	Personal development planning
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework
QIA	Quality Improvement Agency
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RPA	Record of prior acceptance
RSC	Regional Support Centre (JISC)
SDF	Strategic Development Fund
SE	Self evaluation
SEDA	Staff and Educational Development Association
SFA	Skills Funding Agency
SLC	Student Loans Company
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SPA	Supporting Professionalism in Admissions
SPOC	Students' perception of courses
SR	Summative review
SRHE	Society for Research into Higher Education
SSA	Sector skills agreement
SSC	Sector Skills Council
SSDA	Sector Skills Development Agency
TDAP	Taught degree awarding powers
TLA	Teaching, learning and assessment
TQEF	Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund
TQI	Teaching quality information
UCU	University and College Union
UK	United Kingdom
UKCES	UK Commission for Employment and Skills
ULN	Unique Learner Number

UUK	Universities UK
UVAC	Universities Vocational Award Council
VLE	Virtual learning environment
VQRP	Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme
WBL	Work-based learning
YPLA	Young People's Learning Agency

Annex D

Definitions

In the text of the guide we note that some terms have different meanings and are used in different ways in a range of contexts. Some of these differences are explored in the relevant sections – for instance, high and higher level skills in Section 2 and collaborative arrangements and franchise in Section 4. However, as some terms are used throughout the guide, with caveats as to their meaning(s), we explore their definitions in this Annex.

Higher education (HE) sector

The publicly funded HE sector (in England) comprises the higher education institutions (HEIs) funded by HEFCE (set up under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, which combined the remit of the Universities Funding Council (UFC) and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC)). HEIs include those institutions granted university title ('universities') and those specialist and general colleges designated as higher education colleges (some of which may include the term 'university college' in their title). Most HEIs have taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) – and it is possible to move into the higher education sector and subsequently apply for TDAP – but not all of those with TDAP have research degree awarding powers. Awarding powers and university title are granted by the Privy Council, and the number of universities and colleges in the sector has changed year on year as some further education colleges (FECs) have moved into the higher education sector (see below).

Further education (FE) sector

The Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 set up the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and identified courses fundable in the FE sector in schedule 2. Under the 1992 Act, further education colleges are able to transfer to the HE sector if their full-time equivalents (FTEs) for HE are 55 per cent or more of their total enrolment.

The Learning and Skills Act of 2000 replaced the FEFC with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and broadened the sector to include other providers and a planning as well as a funding remit.

English further education colleges can provide 'prescribed' higher education (see below) with funding from HEFCE. This HE provided in the further education sector has become identified, in shorthand, as 'HE in FECs' or 'HE in FE'. The colleges remain responsible for their infrastructure and operations to the LSC, but accountable for their use of funding and quality of provision (via an HEI as appropriate) to HEFCE and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) (see Sections 3 and 10). 'Non-prescribed higher education' (see below) may be funded by the LSC, and colleges are accountable for the quality of this provision to the awarding bodies and to Ofsted. The requirement for colleges – whether directly or indirectly funded – to have an HE strategy (see Section 1) covers all forms of higher education. (Many HEIs also provide further education qualifications and receive funding from the LSC; this may be described as 'FE in HEIs' or 'FE in HE'.)

The Further Education and Training Act of 2007 introduced the potential for foundation degree awarding powers (FDAP) for colleges, which can be awarded by the Privy Council.

The Government is proposing to separate funding streams for the sector. Local authorities will assume responsibility for commissioning and funding education and training for all 14-19 year olds, and a Skills Funding Agency (SFA) will be created for post-19 provision in 2010, when the LSC will cease to exist. The SFA will focus on funding, not planning. Under the proposals, sixth form colleges will become a distinct legal category for the first time. This is premised on the assumption that they predominantly cater for students aged 16-19. The Secretary of State will determine which colleges are deemed to be sixth form colleges; thus some which have diversified into provision for adults might not be so categorised, and others which have become very strongly focused on 16-19 year olds could be.

Prescribed higher education

'Prescribed' higher education is that provision defined under the relevant education acts and statutory instruments. This and the default term 'non-prescribed' higher education determine what is within the remit of HEFCE or of the LSC.

HEFCE circular letter 22/2008 of August 2008 clarifies HEFCE's funding powers for higher education in further education colleges.

The 1988 Education Reform Act removed the 'duty' to secure provision for higher education in their area from the remit of local education authorities and set up the PCFC (alongside the UFC). LEAs, however, retained the 'power' to secure provision (with regard for facilities provided by HEIs).

Schedule 6 of the Act listed the 'courses of higher education' that constituted HE provision. It included courses for the further training of teachers and youth and community workers, postgraduate courses, first degrees, Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE), Higher National Diplomas or Higher National Certificates (HND/HNC) of BTEC, Diploma in Management Studies, Certificate of Education, courses in preparation for a professional examination at a higher level, and courses providing education at a higher level. 'Higher level' was defined as above advanced GCE or BTEC National.

However, the 1989 Education (Prescribed Courses of Higher Education) Regulations excluded some of this provision. Excluded from postgraduate courses were those preparing solely for a professional examination at a higher level, and only full-time and sandwich DipHEs and HNDs were included. Full-time and sandwich courses of more than a year's duration providing education at a higher level not defined as postgraduate or first degree were, however, included if they prepared for an award of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA).

In 1993, the schedule of prescribed courses was broadened for Wales with The Education (Prescribed Courses of Higher Education) (Wales) Regulations 1993, and in 1998 this definition was applied to England. BTEC HNCs were added to the schedule, along with part-time courses of at least two years' duration leading to awards from institutions granted awarding powers by the Privy Council.

Non-prescribed higher education (NPHE)

Non-prescribed higher education comprises those qualifications not included in the regulations as prescribed. These qualifications remained within the remit of LEAs and subsequently the FEFC and LSC.

After the recommendations of the Dearing Report in 1997, some NPHE was defined as prescribed (see above), and funding responsibility for all prescribed HE – that residually funded by FEFC and the newly defined prescribed HE, largely HNCs – was transferred to HEFCE.

Nonetheless, a significant amount of NPHE provision funded by the LSC (or by fees) remains in colleges. Under the Learning and Skills Act 2000, the LSC had the power to fund courses falling within Schedule 6 of the 1988 Act, paragraphs (g) and (h). This related generically to courses at higher levels preparing for professional examinations and other higher level provision – that is, provision not included as prescribed in the subsequent regulations. While the LSC categorised much NPHE as 'other' (i.e. provision which did not lead to a qualification as approved by the Secretary of State and included in Sections 96 and 97 of the 2000 Act), it was fundable. NPHE courses are among those approved on the National Qualifications Framework – and from 2008 the Qualifications and Credit Framework – at its higher levels (see Section 2 of this guide).

Franchise and consortium

The terms 'franchise' and 'consortium' are used in two ways within HE in FE: one regarding 'indirect' funding arrangements as defined by HEFCE (see in particular Sections 3 and 4), and the second concerning arrangements for delivering validated programmes (see in particular Sections 4, 6 and 10).

'Direct' funding is funding provided by HEFCE directly to a provider of higher education. All HEIs are directly funded and approximately half of college providers receive direct funding. 'Indirect' funding is channelled via another institution by a 'franchise'. Colleges commonly receive more than one form of funding. For indirectly funded partnerships there is a code of practice, HEFCE 00/54, which is being updated in 2009.

Franchise

In relation to funding, 'franchise' applies to virtually all collaborative funding arrangements – including many that HEIs and their college partners may refer to as consortia, such as for the delivery of foundation degrees. Where a student is registered at one institution but taught at another, this is described as a franchise. The funding flows from HEFCE to the franchising institution, and the proportion passed on is at the discretion of the franchising institution. Commonly, HEIs franchise out to colleges, although a small amount of franchising takes place from one college to another.

In terms of collaboration over curriculum development and delivery, 'franchise' is commonly used to describe an arrangement whereby an HEI 'franchises' a college to deliver a programme owned by the HEI, under agreed terms and within the HEI's quality assurance regime. The franchising institution normally retains overall control of the programme's content, delivery, assessment and quality assurance arrangements. This arrangement may be directly or indirectly funded.

Consortium

In relation to funding, this term applied only to 'HEFCE-recognised funding consortia', and was a mechanism for distributing grant to a group of institutions

through a single lead institution. Here, the funding from HEFCE passed to the lead institution, but the students were registered at the partner delivering the programme. This arrangement is being phased out from 2009-10.

In terms of collaborative arrangements for curriculum development and delivery, a partnership of higher and further education institutions may describe itself as a 'consortium' without being a HEFCE-recognised funding consortium. Such arrangements are common for subject-based collaborations, including foundation degrees.

Collaborative provision/collaborative arrangements

Again, this term is commonly used in two contexts: funding and curriculum.

In relation to funding, HEFCE used the term to describe both forms of indirect funding: that is, franchise and consortium (see above). A HEFCE code of practice (HEFCE 00/54) related to both forms.

For curriculum provision, QAA uses the term to describe provision leading to an award by an awarding HEI which is delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through an arrangement with a partner organisation. This is covered by a QAA code of practice.

Mode of study

The way in which students are classified as full-time or part-time (and the fractions thereof) is different under the HEFCE and LSC funding and data collection regimes.

The LSC funds on the basis of the learning aims that students are working towards, and considers a programme of study to be full-time if it has 450 or more 'guided learning hours' (glh). Students may be working towards one or more learning aims which equate to significantly more than 450glh, so this method does not properly translate into FTEs.

The concept of FTEs is, however, used in the HEFCE funding system. For providers completing the HESES and HEIFES returns, HEFCE gives guidance on classifying students into 'mode': full-time, part-time or sandwich. See Annex A of HESES08 (HEFCE 2008/37, paragraph 13) and HEIFES08 (HEFCE 2008/36, paragraph 14).

Under the HEFCE system, full-time students are those on a course involving at least 24 weeks and 21 hours a week for the year (of instance – see below). Part-time students are, by default, those who are not full-time or sandwich students.

The definition of full-time is provided in Annex I to both publications:

> A year of instance is counted as full-time if it meets the following criteria:
>
> The student is normally required to attend the institution, or elsewhere, for periods amounting to at least 24 weeks within the year of instance; and during that time they are normally expected to undertake periods of study, tuition, learning in the workplace or work experience which amount to an average of at least 21 hours per week. Full-time fees are chargeable for the course for the year.
>
> (Paragraph 1)

And:

> Guided learning hours should not be used in isolation to determine how many hours each week a student spends studying. All guided learning hours count toward this total, but it is expected that HE students will spend a significant amount of time each week in self-led individual learning and an estimate of this time should also be included.
>
> (Paragraph 2)

Part-time students are funded on the basis of full-time equivalent. The FTE is calculated by comparing either the duration of the course or the credit points studied with an equivalent or similar full-time course; the total FTE for the part-time course equals the total for the full-time.

HNC students who are expected to complete in one year, but whose course is not subject to regulated fees (see above), are counted as part-time (paragraph 5, Annex I).

Annex E

Sources of information

Organisation	Summary	Publications	Accessing the organisation
Action on Access	The national co-ordination team for widening participation and Aimhigher. Provides support to those working to widen participation through its support for regional partnerships and institutions.	A range of publications, conferences and events	www.actiononaccess.org
Aimhigher	The national programme supporting widening participation in higher education.	Delivered by a network of 44 partnerships	www.direct.gov.uk/uni
Alliance of Sector Skills Councils	The collective voice of the 25 SSCs. Replaced the Sector Skills Development Agency in 2008.		www.sscalliance.org
Association of Colleges (AoC)	The representative organisation for further education. Has an HE in FE group which discusses policy and practice, and an annual HE in FE conference.	A range of publications; monthly Curriculum and Quality Briefings	www.aoc.co.uk
Association for Collaborative Provision (ACP)	Promotes collaborative working by FE and HE institutions in England for the delivery of HE in FE, through a forum that encourages debate, sharing of good practice, mutual support and impartial advice.		www.acp.ac.uk
Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL)	Fosters and supports leadership improvement in the FE sector.	Offers programmes, events, support services and bespoke consultancy	www.centreforexcellence.org.uk
Council of Validating Universities	An organisation with HE and FE membership, to promote and share good practice in collaborative provision. Has an annual conference.	A range of publications, including a handbook on quality assurance	www.cvu.ac.uk

Organisation	Summary	Publications	Accessing the organisation
Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS)	DIUS is one of two departments that replaced the DfES in 2007. It has responsibility for all post-19 learning in further and higher education. A separate department, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), leads on children and young people.	'The future of higher education', White Paper, 2003 'Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances', FE White Paper, 2006 'World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England', 2007 'Higher Education at Work', 2008 Consultation: the government response to 'The Leitch Review of Skills', 2006 'Innovation Nation', White Paper, 2008 With DCSF: 'Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver', Consultation, 2008 Guidance to colleges seeking Foundation degree awarding powers	www.dius.gov.uk www.dcsf.gov.uk The portal www.direct.gov.uk includes information and advice on higher education, including on student finance www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/dap/FDAP GuidanceCriteria.asp
Edexcel	Incorporates BTEC, the awarding body for higher national qualifications. Colleges can offer programmes off the shelf; HEIs can develop programmes under licence.	A range of publications, including regular policy briefings. Handbooks for centres and external examiners of HNs.	www.edexcel.org.uk

Organisation	Summary	Publications	Accessing the organisation
The Europe Unit	A sector-wide body working in the interests of UK higher education and addressing European issues.	Has a detailed explanation of the relationship between national arrangements for credit in HE in England and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System.	www.europeunit.ac.uk
Foundation Degree Forward (fdf)	Announced in the 2003 White Paper, set up in 2004 with a contract subsequently extended until 2011. Remit to promote employer engagement in higher education and support the target of 100,000 foundation degree students by 2010.	A range of publications to support employer/provider partnerships and other aspects of work-based learning. Quarterly journal: 'Forward'.	www.fdf.ac.uk Join the JISC e-mail forum: www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/FOUNDATION-DEGREE-FORUM.html
GuildHE	The representative organisation of colleges of higher education.		www.guildhe.ac.uk
Higher Education and Research Opportunities in the UK (HERO)	HERO is a web-site: the official gateway to UK universities, colleges and research organisations. It aims to be the primary internet portal for academic research and higher education in the UK.		www.hero.ac.uk
Higher Education Academy (HEA)	The Academy's purpose is to support and enhance teaching and learning in higher education. It has 24 subject centres and a senior adviser for HE in FE who leads on activities and events. Holds an annual conference in July.	The Academy has developed the Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Student Learning in Higher Education, and provides a register of practitioners and an accreditation service for HEIs' training programmes.	www.heacademy.ac.uk

Organisation	Summary	Publications	Accessing the organisation
		Publications on HE in FE on its web-site, and a research observatory centres on work-based learning. Directory of HE in FE in England.	
Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)	HEFCE is responsible for all public funding of prescribed higher education wherever it takes place. It is not formally a planning body, but some of its initiatives affect planning. Predecessor funding bodies were the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council.	All publications and circular letters can be accessed on the HEFCE web-site. Historical documents relating to HE in FE: 'Review of indirect funding agreements and arrangements between higher education institutions and further education colleges' (HEFCE 2003/57), 2003 LLNs: several circular letters and progress reports, from 2004 Teaching funding review Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (see HEFCE 2005/17). One CETL at the University of Plymouth (HELP) is specifically for HE in FE.	www.hefce.ac.uk can be used to access all funding guidance.
Institute for Learning (IfL)	The professional body for teachers and tutors in further education. FE teachers need to register with the IfL and follow continuous professional development for a minimum of 30 hours per year.		www.ifl.ac.uk

Organisation	Summary	Publications	Accessing the organisation
Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)	JISC supports further and higher education by providing strategic guidance, advice and opportunities to use ICT to support teaching, learning, research and administration. JISC is funded by all the UK post-16 and higher education funding councils.	A range of publications, including good practice guides, see www.jisc.ac.uk/collections	www.jisc.ac.uk
Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE)	The organisation provides support and advice on leadership, governance and management of HE.	Reports and reviews	www.lfhe.ac.uk
Learning and Skills Council (LSC)	The funding body for the learning and skills sector, which includes FE and non-prescribed HE. The LSC has a planning function. It is government policy to replace the LSC in 2010. The Skills Funding Agency will take on funding responsibility for post-19 education and training, but will not have a planning function. (The Young People's Learning Agency will manage the performance of local authority funded provision for 16-18 year olds in colleges.)	A range of publications for guidance and information	www.lsc.gov.uk

Organisation	Summary	Publications	Accessing the organisation
Learning and Skills Network (LSN)	Formerly within the Learning and Skills Development Agency. From 1 April 2006, the LSN continued LSDA's research, training and consultancy work. HE in FE research publications were inherited from the predecessor organisation.	Parry G and Thompson A, 2002, 'Closer by degrees: the past, present and future of higher education in further education colleges' Parry G, Davies P and Williams J, 2003, 'Dimensions of difference: higher education in the learning and skills sector' Parry G, Davies P and Williams J, 2004, 'Difference, diversity and distinctiveness: higher education in the learning and skills sector'.	www.lsneducation.org.uk
Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS)	The Learning and Skills Improvement Service is the new sector owned body, formed from Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) and Quality Improvement Agency for Lifelong Learning (QIA) to develop excellent and sustainable FE provision across the sector.	Offers programmes, events, support services and bespoke consultancy.	www.lsis.org.uk
Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK)	The SSC for education and training. Replaced FENTO (the national training organisation for FE).	The standards for teacher training qualifications for FE in England. These have been replaced by a framework covering teachers, tutors and trainers and leading to qualified status and a licence to practise, implemented in 2007.	www.lluk.org

Organisation	Summary	Publications	Accessing the organisation
Lifelong Learning Networks National Forum	The LLN National Forum brings together the 30 LLNs operating across England to share and disseminate good practice.		www.lifelonglearningnetworks.org.uk
Learning and Skills Research Network	A grouping of people and organisations involved in research.	Quarterly meetings, a newsletter and a national conference	www.theresearchcentre.co.uk/LSRNW/index.htm
Mixed Economy Group (MEG) of colleges	MEG represents those further education colleges which have a significant, established, strategic and developmental role in the provision of higher education. Members have at least 500 FTEs of HE.		Chair: John Widdowson, Principal of New College Durham, e-mail John.Widdowson@newdur.ac.uk
National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE)	NIACE's remit covers adult and continuing education, with a particular emphasis on widening participation.	A range of publications that impact on HE in FE	www.niace.org.uk
Netskills	The quality internet training service (partly funded by JISC).	Netskills has designed a Professional Development Certificate in e-learning. It is accredited by BTEC at level 4 of the NQF.	www.netskills.ac.uk/accreditation
Office for Fair Access (OFFA)	OFFA is an independent, non-departmental public body which aims to promote and safeguard fair access to higher education for under-represented groups in light of the introduction of variable tuition fees in 2006-07.		www.offa.org.uk
Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual)	The regulator of qualifications, examinations and tests in England. Set up in 2008 separate from the QCA.	'Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework', 2008	www.ofqual.gov.uk

Organisation	Summary	Publications	Accessing the organisation
Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)	The inspectorate whose responsibility includes inspection of FECs, normally covering provision up to level 3 and in some cases non-prescribed higher education. Its remit includes the inspection of schools and children's services. It brought together, in April 2007, four formerly separate inspectorates.	Reports on colleges on its web-site – frequently referred to in QAA reviews	www.ofsted.gov.uk
Open University Validation Service (OUVS)	Offers an institutional approval and programme validation service for providers of higher education.		www.open.ac.uk/validate/
Quality Improvement Agency for Lifelong Learning (QIA)	Formerly within the Learning and Skills Development Agency. It transferred, along with CEL (see above), to the new Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) in 2008.		www.qia.org.uk
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)	QAA is responsible for assuring the quality and standards of higher education. The new method of review for FECs, Integrated Quality Enhancement and Review (IQER) started a five-year cycle in 2008.	Academic Infrastructure (four components) 'The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review', 2008 'Higher education credit framework for England', 2008 'Learning from reviews of foundation degrees carried out in 2004-05', 2006 'Learning from higher education in further education 2002-07', 2008	www.qaa.ac.uk

Organisation	Summary	Publications	Accessing the organisation
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)	The QCA was responsible for agreeing the programmes included in the NQF. The regulatory function for the QCF is now the responsibility of Ofqual.	Guidance on the range and development of qualifications Detail on all approved qualifications can be obtained through the national database of accredited qualifications (NDAQ, previously openquals): www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/index.aspx	www.qca.org.uk
Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE)	An independent organisation which aims to improve the quality of higher education through encouraging debate and publication on issues of policy, the management of HEIs, the curriculum and teaching and learning methods.		www.srhe.ac.uk
Unistats	Brings together key sources of official information about the quality of HE in UK universities and colleges. Replaces TQI.		www.unistats.com
Universities UK (UUK)	Formerly the Council for Vice Chancellors and Principals, UUK is the representative body for universities.		www.universitiesuk.ac.uk
Universities Vocational Awards Council (UVAC)	A not-for-profit organisation with FE and HE membership. Has a particular interest in workplace learning. Organises an annual conference.	Undertakes research, has a range of publications on vocational education.	www.uvac.ac.uk

Annex F

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This list does not include HEFCE or QAA publications or codes of practice and guidance accessible from the web-sites listed in Annex E.

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