

Progression from HNC/Ds to Honours Degrees: diversity, complexity and change

**A report by the Learning and Skills
Development Agency in association with the
University of Sheffield School of Education**

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Executive Summary

This research was designed to identify and investigate factors that enable smooth progression from Higher National Diplomas and Higher National Certificates (HNDs/HNCs) to Honours Degrees, and in particular to look at how lessons learnt might inform progression from Foundation Degrees (FDs).

The research was carried out during 2001-02. This was a considerable period of change, with some higher education institutions (HEIs) dropping HNC/D provision, others developing FDs, some transferring HNC/D to further education colleges (FECs), and others staying with the HNC/D qualification in certain areas of the labour market. The research therefore represents a snapshot of a particular period.

The research identified four main types of progression arrangements:

- The HNC/D as an end qualification in itself where no progression is anticipated. In this model there is typically no progression at all and no link to a degree programme. The qualification is recognised by employers and professional bodies, linked to recognised job routes.
- The open exit model where progression from the HNC/D qualification is not formally anticipated but with informal links to a number of progression opportunities. In this model the HNC/D was designed primarily as an end qualification in itself but since institutions recognise that some students may wish to progress to a degree. Informal links develop, particularly based on personal links between tutors or knowledge of specific courses. There is an individual decision by students to opt into progression.
- The structurally linked model where the HNC/D qualification has a more formal structural link to a specific individual or group of degree programmes. In this model there is a formal link between the HNC/D and a named or linked degree, usually in the HEI that validated the course, or, in the case of consortia, another HEI. The HNC/D is a valid route into a degree programme and progression is anticipated in this model. However, there is an opt-out arrangement so that students leave with a valid qualification.
- The fully integrated model where the HNC/D qualification is part of a fully integrated suite of programmes with clearly defined and anticipated progression routes. Here the HNC/D are designed concurrently with the degree and usually designed, validated and delivered by an HEI (unless there are franchise arrangements). Progression is the prime objective and often the HNC/D and degree are taught a common or shared curriculum. Progression to the degree is smooth.

The most common, and preferred progression model in HEIs was to a named or linked degree in the same institution, although where a large number of HNC/Ds are on offer there is more variety in the arrangements, especially where provision is franchised. Amongst FECs there is more variety on progression arrangements, including collaborative and franchise arrangements with local HEIs. Often there are hybrids of the models and the picture is one of considerable variety and complexity in the arrangements for progression.

Where the HEI offered both an HNC/D and a degree in the same or similar subject area it was most often the case that students with lower A-level scores and non-traditional entry qualifications were offered the HNC/D route. Where there was provision in an HEI and in a franchised FEC these categories of students were generally located in the FEC. However, there is no evidence to suggest that this had a consistent impact on later progression rates. In fact, few institutions compared the results of students progressing from HNC/D with those of direct degree entrants. Recruitment of part-time day and evening students was quite different; employers generally support part-time day students, while evening students were looking for promotion or change of career.

In the majority of cases full-time HND students progressed into year 2 of a full-time degree (or its equivalent) with progression to year 3 being the next most common. However, this was less clear when progressing from an FEC and often there was case-by-case negotiation. For full-time students they see the availability of a progression route as extremely important.

Part-time day and evening HNC students were more likely to aim for the HNC as the end qualification, with optional top-up to HND.

In almost all cases the level of performance of the students on the HNC/D programme, and not just the fact of achieving the award, was an important factor in progression. There was a significant number of institutions which required students to gain merits or distinctions to progress directly into a third year, and those with lower grades had to progress into the second year. It was noted that there were also a number who had removed these requirements recently.

Progression can be described as fast/slow or smooth. Fast/slow refers to the time spent by the student in achieving the degree via an HNC/D. Smooth progression relates to the curriculum arrangements that ensure progression routes for students are designed to remove barriers, ensure timeliness of bridging programmes, and reduce duplication and addition of modules for the degree programme.

The smoothest progression is where there are fully integrated or highly structurally linked programmes. Where articulation between HNC/D and degree programmes is good there is a range of benefits to the student. These would appear to be greatest where there is in-house provision of both HNC/D and degrees, both at FECs and HEIs.

Local provision is important especially for part-time HNC students. Support of employers, including their willingness to pay fees and allow time off work is essential. Progression opportunities are most likely to be influenced by the employer in these cases.

HNC/D provision is an important element of widening participation since it provides opportunities for students who may not otherwise be able to study at HE level. There may often be a tension between the widening participation agenda and the institution/system imperative for efficient progression patterns.

Not all students want, or are able, to take advantage of the fastest, smoothest model and if the widening participation agenda and objectives are not to be undermined then a diversity of models will be required.

Whereas the HNC/D qualification is designed as an end qualification which can enable progression to Honours Degrees, the Foundation Degree has a dual purpose in both being an end qualification and clearly enabling progression to an Honours Degree. This tension is reflected in the transferability of the HNC/D models to the Foundation Degree.

1. Context

The research reported here is a result of an invitation to tender from the HEFCE for an analysis of the progression opportunities from Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) to Honours Degrees. The research was designed to help those developing and delivering Foundation Degree programmes to ensure a smooth articulation with Honours Degrees. A team from the Learning and Skills Development Agency and the University of Sheffield School of Education carried out the research during 2001/2002.

2. Aims

The main aim of the research was: “ To identify and investigate the factors that enable smooth progression from HNCs/HNDs to Honours Degrees” (HEFCE Invitation to tender)

In addition the research sought to identify issues related to:

- Length of time for progression, with particular reference to credit accumulation and the relationship with an Honours Degree in terms of subject match.
- Portability of HNC/Ds between higher education institutions (HEIs) and transferability from further education colleges (FECs) to HEIs.
- Differences emerging between HNCs/HNDs and the developing FDs (FDs) and how these might affect progression routes and opportunities.
- Practical support to Fd consortia relating to progression to Honours Degrees.

3. Background

Traditionally, FECs have delivered a wide range of HNCs and HNDs, many originally funded through the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and transferred to the HEFCE in 1999. In 2001-02 there were around 52,000 HNC or HND students at 195 FECs, with an additional 61 universities and colleges of higher education offering some 38,000 HNDs. All of these HNC and HND courses are funded by the HEFCE.

The Foundation Degree initiative was launched in October 2000 and 21 prototype consortia were approved for commencement in September 2001¹. These consortia were offering 40 FD programmes. In addition, there were 13 funded through additional student numbers consortia offering FDs for September 2001.

FDs have been designed with the dual purpose of a specialist end qualification in itself, and as a progression route to an Honours Degree. The Foundation Degree prospectus² states

“Foundation Degrees will be valued HE qualifications in their own right, equipping people with skills for tomorrow’s jobs”

and

“They will also be a valuable contribution to the ladder of lifelong learning, attracting people from different starting points for progression to Honours Degrees and further professional qualifications”

Specifically on progression the Prospectus makes clear that:

“There should be guaranteed arrangements for articulation and progression to Honours Degree programmes within individual consortia. The progression should normally be designed to take a Foundation Degree graduate a maximum of 1.3 FTE years to complete an Honours Degree.”

There are inevitably tensions in developing and delivering a degree programme with the dual end points of employment and progression to the Honours Degree and this tension is explored in the research.

The FD consultation paper (DfEE 2000) reported that in 1997 some 55% of full-time HND completers went on to achieve an Honours Degree. They also reported that of those students who chose to progress to an Honours Degree after completing a 2-year diploma, 29% started the degree course in year 2 and 50% started in year 1. Further investigation by the HEFCE showed that, though the estimate of the proportion going on to degrees was broadly correct,

¹ *Foundation Degrees: a consultation document* DfEE, 15 February 2000

² *Foundation Degree Prospectus* HEFCE July 00/27

there is a lower percentage of students progressing from an HND qualification to the first year of a degree, since the actual figure is closer to 25% (figure for all HND qualifiers). The HEFCE analysis also showed that behind this average figure there were wide variations between and even within institutions.

In the light of this HEFCE analysis it was clear that there was a need to understand the way that the HNC/HND programmes articulated with and enabled progression onto Honours Degree programmes at universities and colleges.

Research carried out in 1999 by the Open University (the "QCA Higher Levels Project") revealed there was variability in the length of programmes, the coverage of content areas by qualifications with the same title, the level of achievement and the volume of credit awarded. This caused questions to be raised about consistency and currency on a national basis. This report also raised the problematic issue of progression; they reported that flexibility through licence agreements gave HEIs the power to design their own higher level vocational awards on a modular basis to fit in with their own degrees. The report said that... "Without some degree of national consistency in a higher level vocational qualification, national agreement on progression routes to, and exemptions from, professional qualifications and other occupational competence qualifications is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. In addition, mobility is compromised and students are disadvantaged because they may find their academic progression options limited to the institution in which they started their first qualification".

The Foundation Degree support team Summary of Baseline Information Returns (BIR, August 2001) reported a lack of clear differentiation between Foundation Degrees and HNDs and a perception that FD programmes would compete more with HNC/Ds than with Honours Degrees. The Support Team also highlighted this issue following initial discussions with consortia in April 2001 since the distinction between the FD and an HND was not clear in some prototypes. This was therefore one of the issues this research project sought to explore.

The research sought to identify what lessons can be learnt from the findings on progression from HND to Honours Degree for the Foundation Degree.

4. Research methods

The research was divided into 4 phases:

Preliminary Phase: desk research and scoping exercise

The preliminary phase consisted of a mapping exercise in order to establish the scope of the project. The team worked with Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and the FEFC Individualised Student Record (ISR) data provided by the HEFCE to obtain information on:

- Providers.
- Delivery arrangements (mode and location).
- Subject areas.
- Numbers of students.

In addition, the team used institutional websites to obtain up to date information on contacts and programmes.

The data derived from this stage formed the basis of the work in the next phases and the selection of samples.

Phase 1: telephone survey

(See Section 6 for a more detailed account)

After extensive analysis, 40 institutions were selected including old and new universities, institutes of higher education, and further education colleges.

2 surveys were carried out: one at institutional/management level and one at course level.

Phase 2: fieldwork visits

(See Section 7 for a more detailed account)

20 institutions were selected from the original 40 providers sampled in the telephone survey. A preliminary review suggested that around 20 visits would be both feasible within budgetary limits and would provide a reasonable range of case examples and subject spread.

Each visit consisted of:

- Interviews with key members of staff on the HNC/D course and the degree progression route.
- A focus group with students covering issues around their needs, expectations and aspirations.
- A brief interview (face-to-face or telephone) with a linked employer -if possible and where appropriate.

Phase 3: analysis of results and report writing

This phase of the work included a link to the Foundation Degree Support Team and results from the Foundation Degree workshops where progression issues were reported.

5. Background to the telephone survey

Preliminary work on the project proposal and knowledge of the field among the team suggested that there were 5 possible models of the way in which HNC/HNDs are organised, validated and delivered:

- HEIs delivering HNC/D programmes that have direct access to Honours Degree programmes within the same institution; these are validated by the HEI.
- HEIs delivering HNC/D programmes that have access to Honours Degree programmes at another HE institution; these are validated by the HEI.
- HEIs franchising the delivery of their HNC/D to FECs, with established progression links back to the parent university; these are validated by the HEI.
- FECs delivering HNC/Ds and have articulation arrangements with a specific HEI for progression; the HEI or Edexcel may validate these HNC/Ds.
- FECs delivering their own HNC/Ds validated through Edexcel; progression may be within the FEC to a degree under licence with an HEI, or not articulated with any one specific HEI but may be multi-exit.

As well as institutional relationships, subject areas are significant since a number have traditionally been associated with the development of the HNC/D qualifications: those in Engineering, Art and Design and Business have a long record of success and have credibility within the occupational sectors. More recently HNC/Ds have developed, as a result of the GNVQ programmes, in vocational areas such as leisure and tourism where there were no obvious progression routes. Some HNC/Ds are in specialist subject areas designed for a niche occupational area, such as agriculture or media. In addition, professional bodies have traditionally exercised an influence on patterns of progression, especially in engineering³. A further issue was identified by the Foundation Degree Support Team (2001) who reported a concern about a lack of differentiation between FDs and HNDs and possible competition between them. Thus an important part of the work of the first phase of the project was the selection of an appropriate subject range in order to explore the extent of overlap and/or competition between HNC/D provision and FD developments. A preliminary review of these issues suggested: construction, engineering, health and social care, ICT, creative arts and media, hospitality, leisure and tourism, and business/public administration might be appropriate areas.

The telephone survey was designed to begin to explore these issues and identify case study institutions for further in-depth investigation.

³ Parry, G, 1990 ed, *Engineering Futures: New Audiences and Arrangements for Engineering Higher Education*, London: Engineering Council

6. Phase 1 - the telephone survey

The purposes of this phase were:

- To explore the validity of the 5 organisational models.
- To identify 40 institutions for telephone survey.
- To identify 20 case study institutions representing the range of models and patterns of progression for fieldwork visits.
- To identify patterns of progression in a range of subject areas.
- To identify a range of factors that might begin to explain the patterns of progression and which could be explored more fully in the case study visits in phase 2.
- To begin to explore the relationship between HNC/D provision and FD developments.

This phase of the work was undertaken in 2 stages:

Stage 1:

- Analysis of data provided by the HEFCE to identify national and institutional patterns of progression.
- Identification of 40 institutions representing the range of models, subject areas and patterns of progression for the telephone survey.

Stage 2:

- Telephone survey of 40 institutions and 3 or 4 courses in each institution.

6.1 Stage 1 – identification of institutions for telephone survey

To assist in the identification of case studies, the HEFCE provided data on students who were registered for an HNC or HND in FE or HE in 1998 **and** were also registered on a degree programme in 1999 (i.e. only those who had progressed into a degree were included). For the sake of simplicity we have called these 'progressors' from 1998 into 1999. For those registered with an HEI for the HNC/D, the data was drawn from HESA and for those registered with an FEC the 1998 data was drawn from the ISR and matched to the HESA record for 1999. Since the fields in the ISR and HESA records are not identical (e.g. subject areas are differently defined), the two categories of student are sometimes shown separately in the tables produced here (Annex 1).

In general the following criteria were used to identify potential institutions for the telephone survey:

- Range of institutional models as set out in proposal (and above).
- Range of types of provider: HEIs, post-1992 universities, pre-1992 universities, FECs
- Geographical spread.
- Minimum of 20 students per subject area enrolled on HNC/D in 1998 and present in 1999 data.
- HNC and HND and FT and PT to be covered.
- Range of subject areas.
- Range of different progression patterns.
- Institutions where there were particularly high rates of progression (the data included a marker of 60% or more progression).

It should be noted that the data in some fields was not robust at that point in time and therefore the matching, particularly between the ISR and the HESA datasets, was somewhat problematic. Later data is now available and more robust; however at the time of the work (early 2002), 1998-9 to 1999-2000 was the most recent on which the matching exercise had been carried out by the HEFCE. The data analysis was therefore intended to be indicative rather than definitive. It was to be used to identify case studies and to suggest patterns of progression that could be explored in the interviews rather than to represent accurately the national picture.

With these caveats in mind, some analysis was carried out and the key tables are included in Annex 1. The analysis suggested that:

Very few pre-1992 universities offered HNC/Ds.

- Most progressors entered an HE programme via an HND rather than an HNC: 83% of the progressors were from HNDs.

- Most HND progressors (87%) had been registered with an HEI rather than an FEC for the HND programme in 1998.
- HNC progressors came equally from HEIs or FECs: 50% had been registered with an HEI and 50% with an FEC (table 1, Annex 1).
- The largest subject areas among HNC/D students registered with FECs in 1998, who progressed to a degree course in 1999, were Business Studies, Engineering, Construction and Arts/Crafts (table 2, Annex 1); the largest subject areas among students registered with HEIs in 1998, who progressed were Business studies, Computing, and Engineering (table 3, Annex 1).
- Table 4 (Annex 1) shows that there is a shift to full-time study for those who progress from a part-time HNC/D: 50% of FEC registered part-time HNC/D students who progress, went on to a full-time degree. Only around 2 to 4 per cent of full-time HNC/D students who progressed studied on a part-time basis at degree level.

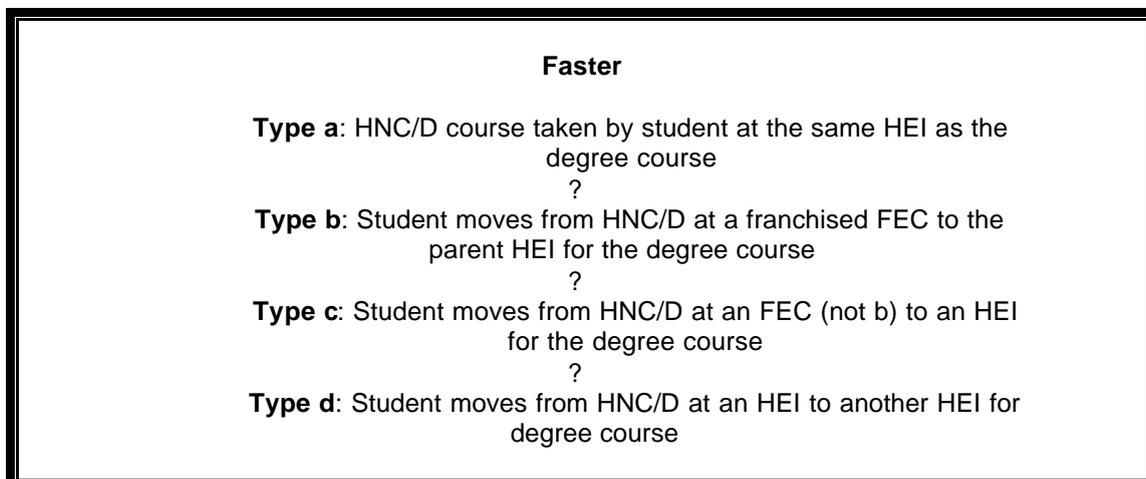
The key features of these progression patterns among those who had registered for the HNC/D in 1998 and progressed to a degree in 1999 were:

- Overall, 17% of the students progressed on to a part-time degree programme. However, the year of programme for these part-time students is ambiguous in the data and not differentiated in the tables provided in this report.
- For those progressing to a full-time degree course, 30% enter the first year of the programme, 40% the second year and 30% the third (or later) year (table 5, Annex 1).
- Progression to a full-time degree from an HND programme appeared to be 'faster' than from an HNC programme: only 28% of HND students progressed to the first year of the degree course, compared to 69% of HNC students; 32% of HND students progressed to the third (or later) year compared to 5% of HNC students (table 5, Annex 1).
- Progression to a full-time degree almost always appeared 'faster' if the students had achieved the HN award than if they had not: only 26% of those with an award moved into the first year of a degree compared to 39% of students without an award recorded (table 5, Annex 1).

The term 'fast' has been used here to denote the quickest route to the achievement of a degree via an HNC/D. However, the data used did not differentiate between year of HNC/D programme on which the student was registered in 1998. This suggested a line of enquiry in the telephone interviews and fieldwork since a possible interpretation was that some students were progressing from the **first** year of an HNC/D (and thus without an award) to a degree and if this was the case, progression to the first year of a degree could also be a fast model.

The progression patterns also depended on the relationship between the institutional location of the students' study for an HNC/D and the HEI they moved into for the degree. Figure 1 shows the observed order of speed in the progression arrangements.

Figure 1. Relative speed of progression from HNC/D to degree study in different institutional relationships



The speed of the progression route declines from type a to type d:

- For students remaining at the same HEI (type a), only around 21-22% moved into the first year of the degree course.
- For students moving from a franchised HNC/D programme at an FEC to a degree course in the parent HEI (type b), around 30% moved into the first year.
- For students who changed their registered institution (types c and d), the propensity to move into the first year was highly dependent on whether or not they had been awarded the HN qualification.
- Types c and d include a variety of relationships, ranging from students moving independently from one institution to another, sometimes even changing their subject of study, through to highly structured progression paths in consortia or other arrangements.

More detailed data on which these types are based are given in table 6 (based on data collected from the HESA record) and table 7 (based on data collected from the FEFC ISR) in Annex 1.

This analysis suggested a further line of enquiry in the telephone survey and case study visits that followed in phase 2. In particular, there appeared to be clear differences between the progression patterns for each of the institutional relationship types as described above.

The analysis was used to select the 40 institutions for telephone survey. An attempt made to ensure that the list included the range of patterns identified above. However, the numbers were small at institution level once subject area had been introduced so that the data was used as indicative rather than definitive. In addition, institutions were included (at least for the telephone survey) where, from the data supplied by the HEFCE and other sources, something odd or interesting seemed to be happening (e.g. very high progression or no progression at all).

This produced the list of 40 institutions and the 37 who agreed to participate. These are listed in Annex 2.

6.2 Stage 2 – the telephone survey

The survey had two elements:

- An institutional questionnaire that explored current and planned institutional policy and any recent changes, relationships with other institutions and models of provision, and identified contacts for courses to be surveyed. The institutional questionnaire is included here as Annex 3.
- A course questionnaire that explored course specific issues relating to progression arrangements and routes. The course questionnaire is included here as Annex 4.

Of the 40 institutions identified, three declined to participate and one failed to make an appointment and thus de facto did not participate. Of the remaining 36, three HEIs had ceased to offer HNC/Ds and thus did not complete the institutional questionnaire; instead a different telephone interview was conducted with a senior manager in the institution to explore the reasons for this policy change. Two further institutions (1 HEI and 1 FEC) did not complete the institutional questionnaire although they did complete course questionnaires. The results reported below are therefore based on 3 telephone interviews and 31 institutional questionnaires (20 HEIs and 11 FECs). From the 32 institutions that provided data for the course questionnaire, a total of 113 courses were covered; the details are set out below and in Annex 5.

6.2.1 Institutional responses

It rapidly became clear that the picture had changed considerably since 1998/9 (the data supplied by HEFCE). Some HEIs had already ceased to offer HNC/Ds (3 of the 40); others were allowing them to 'wither on the vine' (at least one took this view). Some were rather equivocal, adopting a 'wait and see' approach, particularly in relation to Edexcel policy and FD developments. Others were still committed to the provision, seeing HNC/Ds as an important element in the provision of vocational higher education, and as supporting the widening participation agenda. In addition, some HEIs (particularly those in rural regions) saw their provision of HNC/Ds as a means of ensuring a wide range of HE provision across

their region. The HEIs that remained committed to a relatively large number of HNC/Ds tended to view the courses as part of the provision delivered through a complex pattern of relationships with FECs for progression, for alternatives to the standard full-time first degree, and for alternative entry routes in general.

Reasons for ceasing HNC/D provision

Six reasons emerged for ending the provision of HNC/Ds and these were sometimes also cited as issues by the HEIs that expressed concerns but were nevertheless continuing to offer them, at least for the next two or three years.

- The complexity of inspection and quality assurance arrangements where the HNC/Ds were franchised to FECs and the consequent difficulty of meeting all the quality criteria of the different bodies involved.
- The sharing of the funding between the HEI and FEC, especially on franchised courses, was perceived as resulting in an unsatisfactory level of resources for both parties.
- HNC/Ds were seen as an investment but one that did not give the best rate of return in terms of progression; HE diplomas (including, but not only, FDs) were claimed to give a better return.
- The HEIs understood that the requirement that HNC/Ds would have to conform to Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) requirements from 2003 or thereabouts and the resulting policy changes in Edexcel would mean that they would lose control of the curriculum. This was partly a general issue related to the principle of institutional autonomy but, more significantly was related to the difficulties of dovetailing HNC/D curricula designed elsewhere on to their own degree provision. Thus they thought that progression from such programmes would be much more problematic. This development generated quite strong feelings in one or two HEIs that had decided to cease HNC/D provision. Among those who were waiting to see how policy developed, it was this issue that was at the heart of their concern.⁴
- There was a sub-text to the response from at least one HEI, which related to the positioning of the institution in the hierarchy of HEIs. The view was that full-time first degrees have higher status and high status institutions are not involved in HNC/Ds.
- One institution claimed that HNC/Ds were perceived to be old fashioned and/or had no good links with employers. FDs on the other hand were seen as more modern and/or had better links with employers. The HEI was thus switching its attention to FDs. However, this did not seem to be a widely held view among other institutions (see below).

Institutional policy

The majority of institutions had a centralised HNC/D policy in relation to new developments, quality assurance, contacts with Edexcel, validation and institutional relationships (for example, franchises and other formal links). Course development, course management, relations with employers, progression arrangements, and contacts with degree courses were generally devolved to faculty or department where expertise in the relevant market for students and job opportunities was located, where the detail of the curriculum was developed and best understood, and where the responsibility for delivery was located. Thus usually, the initiative for a new course or changes to existing course appeared to come from the department/faculty. In franchise arrangements a similar division of responsibility was evident, with the FEC undertaking delivery and associated functions. Only in a minority of cases did the institutional responses refer to joint delivery between the HEI and FEC (although this varied considerably between courses and was explored in more detail in the course questionnaire). Most institutions seemed to be investing considerable time in elaborating the

⁴ In the light of the QCA's role in accrediting awarding bodies' qualifications (such as Edexcel), the HEFCE decided that in future it would fund only qualifications that are accredited by the QCA at a higher level, or those that are awarded by HE institutions. These developments caused some complications around the future funding of centre-devised HNCs and HNDs, which were not expected to be accredited by the QCA, and also were not considered to be HE institutions' awards. Edexcel has since revised its License Agreement, to transfer the responsibility for the quality and standards of centre-devised HNCs and HNDs to the HE institution, so that the HEFCE will in future fund them as HE institutions' own qualifications.

details of collaborative arrangements when franchises and consortia relationships were organised.

FD Policy

Of the 31 institutions that replied to the institutional questionnaire, 27 had a policy on FDs; of those that did not, 2 were FECs, 1 was a specialist HEI and one was a university. Approximately 1 third of the institutions were involved in prototype FDs and in consortia arrangements, 1 third in the second phase (ASN only) developments and 1 third were in the process of developing policies, relationships and courses. This last category hides a wide range of positions: some were 'thinking about it', some were starting with one 'to see how it goes', some had tried and failed to get employers interested. One of the problems identified was the reluctance of employers to give any staff time for curriculum development. Further questions were asked about FDs in the course questionnaire and are reported below.

Progression arrangements

Most HEIs tended to support a similar pattern of progression for all their HNC/D courses and it was quite clear that the most common and the preferred model was for progression to a named or linked degree programme in the same institution, although this was implemented more comprehensively in some HEIs and more loosely in others. However, in some HEIs with a larger number of HNC/D courses covering a wider range of subject areas, there was much more variety in the arrangements, in particular where the provision was franchised and, although more rarely, part of all of the degree programme was franchised. In such cases it was very difficult to generalise about arrangements across the institution, much depended on the breadth of the subject area of the HNC/D and the range of possibilities for future study that it opened up. Among FECs there tended to be more variety in progression arrangements. Only very seldom was there a franchised degree programme that would enable students to pursue their studies in the same college; more frequently students progressed to the local HEI or one of a group of local HEIs.

In terms of level/year of degree into which students from HNC/Ds progressed, considerable variety was reported by most institutions, particularly the FECs. Much depended on the relationships between the institutions and between the course leaders, the curriculum fit and the subject area. However, just over half of the respondents reported that year 2 of a 3 year full-time degree (or its equivalent) was the most common and just under half said year 3 was the most common. In almost all cases, the students' performance on the HNC/D was a relevant factor. One FEC reported that there was no real pattern, students might progress to year 1, 2 or 3, but this was said to be primarily because the local HEI enrolled all HNC/D students onto year 1 as a general rule and so there was considerable negotiation on a case by case basis.

The widening participation agenda

For some institutions, HNC/D provision was an important element in their widening participation policy since it provided opportunities for students who may not otherwise be able to study at HE level for a number of reasons, for example, lack of finance or time for more than 2 years, or with less than 2 A levels. Some of the course tutors in these institutions were concerned about the perceived strong emphasis on progression measures in the quality agencies (and in our project). Staff perceived that low progression rates were being seen as a measure of failure rather than, as they saw it, a success in attracting those who might otherwise not have been able to enter HE and who often have a lower chance of success. The QAA reviews have a range of indicators with respect to grading, progression being only 1 component of a larger suite of indicators. There appeared to be a tension between the widening participation agenda and the institution/system level imperative for efficient progression patterns.

All these findings were explored in more detail through the course questionnaire.

6.2.2 Course leader responses

The detail of subject coverage in the course questionnaire survey responses is set out in Annex 5; the course questionnaire is included as Annex 4.

Summary of course questionnaire responses by HNC/HND and subject

Type of Course	Business Studies	Art, Design	Leisure, Tourism	Engineering, Environ, Science	Computing	Others	Total
HNC/D	7	-	2	6	4	1	20
HNC	6	1	1	10	6	4	28
HND	15	12	14	7	12	5	65
Total	28	13	17	23	22	10	113

The validity of statistical data at course level

The course questionnaire was administered over the telephone with course tutors (in one or two institutions they were posted or returned by e-mail). Although the telephone interview was conducted by appointment and course tutors were alerted in advance to the kind of questions that would be asked, it was almost always difficult to obtain numbers of students enrolled, completed and progressed for the most recent two years. In particular the data on progression was not clear since tutors knew of students intentions but did not necessarily know precise information about their progression (institution, course and year/level of entry) and often were only able to estimate the proportion or percentage who had progressed onto a degree programme. Some were not able to provide any data at all. In addition, tutors drew on different sources to derive the data and it was thus not possible to aggregate the data for presentation in this report.

A suggested typology of progression patterns

Analysis of the course questionnaires completed in the telephone survey suggested 4 main types of progression arrangements. It should be noted that these are 'ideal types'- they may not exist in precisely this form in practice; and there may be some examples of hybrids.

- The HNC/D as an end qualification.
In this model typically there is no progression at all and no linked or named degree programme. It is designed as an end qualification rather than a means to an end and is likely to be recognised by employers and/or the relevant professional association as a qualification with job market possibilities, linked to recognised job roles. This is particularly common in the case of HNCs and in our survey seemed to be most common in engineering courses. For example, in one FEC, some students progressed from the HNC in Engineering to an HND by taking four additional modules full-time but it was rare that they progressed to a degree. Reasons given for this were that the HNC was accepted locally as an important end qualification but also that part-time routes provided very slow progression if the route involved an HNC (3 years) topped up to an HND (a further semester or year) and then a degree part-time (anything up to a further 5 years). Rarely, where progression did take place it was most likely to be to year 1 of a full-time degree (or equivalent) and negotiated on an individual basis, albeit often with some support from the course tutor. This corresponds with institutional relationship type c or d derived from the statistical data (see section 6.1 above). Interestingly in one particular FEC where the 1998/9 data indicated that there was almost no progression from most courses, the college had in the meantime introduced a degree progression route, for example in tourism and leisure, franchised from a linked HEI and the course leader claimed that around 33% of students now progressed to that degree. In another FEC, the course tutor (HND Hospitality management) reported that there was not enough progression to know whether there was a pattern.
- The open exit model
Here the HNC/D was designed primarily as an end qualification but it was also recognised that some students may wish to progress to a degree so there may be informal links or courses to which a small number of students routinely progress. In this model course

tutors may have personal links with HE tutors or may simply be familiar with the HE courses and advise students that it is an appropriate route. References are particularly important here. The entry point to the degree is more variable: it is mostly into year 2, although sometimes year 1, and only very exceptionally 3. Only a small proportion of students progress and the HNC/D course leaders rely on informal feedback from the HEI tutor or the students themselves to know about such progression. Here progression takes place by students making an individual decision to opt in progression.

- The structurally linked model
Here there is a formal link between the HNC/D and a named or linked degree, usually in the HEI that validated the course or in a neighbouring HEI (particularly if the HNC/D is delivered in an FEC). This is common in consortia where progression may be to named/linked degree in more than one HEI. The HNC/D is seen as a valid route into a degree programme but one that also provides a qualification in its own right if students do not wish or are not able to proceed to a degree. The model is one in which progression is anticipated but there is an opt-out arrangement so that students can leave with a valid qualification. The progression pattern is more closely linked to marks: often a required number of merits provide progression to year 3 of degree and less than the required number provides progression to year 2. For example in one FEC, students progress to year 2 of a linked degree if they achieve 180 credits and to year 3 if they achieve 240 credits. Sometimes marks differentiate between progression to ordinary degree and Honours Degree and in one HEI the arrangements for progression from the local FEC were very complex and considered almost on an individual basis resulting in a wide range of different patterns. In this model a fairly high proportion of students progress. In some cases students who do not qualify for progression to year 3 look around and obtain places in non-linked institutions; the pattern of progression for these students is reported to be less favourable (e.g. into year 1 or 2 rather than year 3 of the linked course). One course tutor represented this as a lowering of standards quoting an example of students who had been refused a place on the linked degree programme on the basis that were not strong enough to succeed but had been accepted into year 3 on a non-linked course and believed that such arrangements were unlikely to lead to successful completion of the degree.

Two sub-types appear to exist:

- HNC/D with progression arrangements to a 'standard' degree often full-time or part-time.
 - HNC/D with progression to a special top-up degree (usually 3 semesters or 15 months). The top-up degree is usually derived from a 'standard degree' but is separate and recruits as a 'different degree', mostly from a local FEC, but also more widely as a possibility for HND students from any institution. This model could exist in institutional relationship type a or b (or c if there is no formal franchise agreement) as derived from the statistical data (see section 6.1 above).
- The fully integrated model
Here the design of HNC/D and degree are concurrent and usually designed, validated and delivered by an HEI (although occasionally it may be delivered in part or whole in a linked FEC especially if the degree is also franchised). Progression is the prime objective, with a common or shared curriculum in year 1 and year 2 of HNC/D and degree. The HNC/D is often operated as a route to a degree for students with less than 2 A levels at entry. Progression to the degree is 'smooth' (directly to year 3) and 'normal' for those who pass the HNC/D. Sometimes only the leavers are actually awarded the HNC/D; those who progress onto the degree programme may not be. Sometimes there is a possibility of transferring from year 1 of HNC/D to year 2 of degree and/or the opportunity to repeat a unit of the HNC/D alongside year 3 of the degree. In some HEIs those students who achieve distinctions in year 1 of the HND can transfer into year 2 of the degree and students who achieve merits in year 2 of the HND can transfer to year 3 of the degree. Frequently in this model progression is referred to as 'transfer' rather than 'progression'. Since often only a 'pass' in the HNC/D is required for progression, references from tutors are important particularly in identifying any top-up or additional courses/support the student may require. A high proportion of students progress and in general, all go on to the specific integrated degree. Progression is usually within the same HEI or within the same FEC where both the HNC/D and the degree are franchised

from the same HEI. This model can only exist in the institutional relationship type a or b as derived from the statistical data (see figure 1, section 6.1 above).

These 'types' related to courses rather than to institutions but there appeared to be a strong tendency for all courses in same institution to be of the same or similar type. However, there were some clear exceptions to this, for example in one of the HEIs a wide range of different institutional relationships, courses and types of progression arrangements existed.

The relationship between subject area and progression arrangements was not clear and varied according to institution. However, in newer curriculum areas such as sports studies, digital media or leisure management progression was more likely to be built-in (i.e. the fully integrated model) as there was no recognised HND history.

It was clear that although there was some correspondence between types of institutional relationship as a factor in progression patterns, there was also overlap and variations on the models set out above were found in most of the institutional relationship types.

Overall therefore the picture that emerged from phase 1 was one of diversity and complexity in the arrangements for progression both within and between institutions. Examples of the key aspects of this complexity reported by course tutors included: year of study, labour market influence and links with employers, admissions strategies, flexibility, the development of FDs. A brief note on each of these is set out below.

Year of study

'Year of study' is not always a valid measure for progression purposes. The notion of level rather than year is used by some institutions, especially where there is part-time provision or where Assessment of Prior (Experimental) Learning (APEL) is often used. In addition, some HNC/Ds are work-based or have a compulsory unit/module/year in the workplace and some degrees have a compulsory semester or year in a work placement. In such circumstances there are often cross over exemptions from the work placement. For example, students with previous work-experience may be exempt from the work placement unit in the HNC/D and/or the degree, or students from a work-based HNC/D may be exempt from the sandwich year part of the degree. Such exemptions reduce the time taken on the particular programme(s) and/or the apparent 'smoothness' of the progression but this may not be evident from the raw data.

Labour market influence and links with employers

The course questionnaire sometimes evoked different responses from course tutors in the same or similar subject areas with regard to labour market opportunities as an alternative to progression to a degree for students who successfully completed the HNC/D course. For example, for students on HNC/D courses in computing, in some locations skills shortages meant that the job market was buoyant and there was no clear need for a degree to obtain employment but in other locations there were large numbers of students with computing degrees entering the local job market so that an HNC/D was not seen as sufficient to successfully compete.

Links with employers were variable but most of the courses surveyed seemed to have quite weak links, with minor inputs to the delivery or some sort of advisory group of local or relevant employers, which was consulted from time to time by the course leaders. Very few courses reported sponsored students. The strongest links were in those courses with work placements as a key element and here good relationships with employers were essential. Only a small number of courses were work based.

Admissions strategies

The majority of students on most HNC/D courses were recruited with similar qualifications ranging from BTEC Nationals, occupational experience, and 1 A-level. There was no clear relationship between subject area and admissions practices. These practices may also impact on progression. In particular if the HNC/D is being used as a way of admitting students with less than the usual a level requirements to a degree indirectly, it may explain the relatively high proportions of students entering a degree programme

(sometimes to the second year who did not achieve the HNC/D qualification before progressing -see figure 1, section 6.1).

Flexibility

Most courses reported that arrangements and procedures for APEL were in place; usually these were either set down in institutional regulations in the case of HNC/Ds validated by HEIs or in Edexcel rules in the case of FECs. However, there was little evidence that this was widely used and many respondents pointed out that it was rare. There was little evidence of any flexibility in delivery arrangements, for example, only one of the respondents reported distance learning elements.

Foundation Degrees

There seemed to be little overlap between the HNC/D provision and current or planned FD developments. Of the 113 courses surveyed, only 16 respondents reported that there were FD developments in a related subject area and only 28 reported developments in a similar subject area.

6.2.3 Lines of enquiry for phase 2

The telephone interviews provided initial insights into the complexity of the links between course structures and progression arrangements and the key elements were incorporated into the design of the fieldwork visits. Six areas broad categories of factors were distilled from the institutional and course tutor interview data: national policy, institutional policy, course/subject, students, and labour market/employer related issues. A series of open and more specific questions were developed from them. These are set out in annex 6.

7. Phase 2 – the fieldwork

Outline of the fieldwork

Phase 2 of the project consisted of fieldwork visits to 20 institutions (those marked with an asterix in Annex 2). The case studies were selected to provide coverage of the following features:

- Institutional progression models
 - a. In-house HNC/D to same HEI (11).
 - b. In-house HEI - multi exit (1).
 - c. Franchised FEC to 'same' HEI (11).
 - d. Consortium FEC to consortium HEI (3).
 - e. FEC to specific HEI (1).
 - f. FEC to same FEC (3).
 - g. FEC to multi exit (3).
 - h. Multi model - combinations (2).

The numbers in brackets indicate the examples of the model in the 20 selected institutions; these add to more than 20 since some institutions operate with more than one model. However, most case studies (and this seemed to be an increasing tendency) fell into category a or c above.

- Course progression model
 - a. Formally linked course.
 - b. Named course (traditional/'normal' route).
 - c. Many courses.

All these were covered in the courses surveyed but most were in category a or b.

- Patterns of progression
 - a. No progression.
 - b. To Year 1.
 - c. To Year 2.
 - d. To Year 3.
 - e. To Year 4.
 - f. 1-2 year top-up arrangement.

All these were covered by the courses surveyed but most were in category c, d or f.

- Subject coverage.
Most HNC/Ds are in three main subject areas: business, computing and engineering, and these were well covered by the case studies. Also included were art and design, leisure and tourism, health and social care and one or two others such as public administration, music, wine studies, and biomedicine (see Annex 5).

The objectives of the case study visits were derived from the overall aims of the project, the survey activities and the analysis of the data collected in the first phase. They were:

- To fill any gaps in the information collected in the telephone survey and explore particular points of interest or contradiction.
- To probe the patterns of progression in greater depth and the explanations for them.
- To check the validity of the preliminary analysis derived from the telephone survey, and in particular to validate, refute or modify the typology set out in section 2.2.2 above.
- To explore in more detail the various groups of factors identified in phase 1 and their impact on progression.
- To explore the interaction between the various kinds of factors and the effect of such interaction on progression.
- To make contact with students in order to access their perspectives on progression.
- To explore student perspectives and perceptions of the issues surrounding progression.

The template for the fieldwork visits is set out in Annex 6. The results from the fieldwork visits (see Section 8) follow the questions used in the template.

8. Phase 2 - the Fieldwork Visits

Each of the 20 institutions chosen for the fieldwork stage of the project received at least 1 visit. In total 31 institutions were involved in interviews as additional visits were made to some partner institutions, specifically where the partnerships were part of formal consortium arrangements.

A wide variety of staff were interviewed, ranging from course tutors through to Principals and Pro-Vice Chancellors, and totalling over 75 staff in the 31 institutions. Staff availability on the days of the visits required that some of the interviews had to be undertaken over the telephone.

Owing to delays during the data analysis period, the timing of the visits (late April and May) coincided with the end of year assessments or examinations. In spite of this the researchers were able to meet and talk to more than 200 students face to face and over the telephone. There were rarely full groups of students for all courses, and responses are only representative of those interviewed. This restricted availability of students inevitably restricted the general applicability of the responses noted.

In addition a few interviewees were able to obtain access to a limited number of employer representatives, and their responses have been included together with the responses from staff within the labour market and employment factors section below.

The following section reviews the responses obtained in relation to the factors identified in phase one of the work. The models identified at the end of the telephone survey work are revisited in section 9 in the light of the fieldwork.

8.1 National Policy Factors

The National policy factors identified from the telephone survey related to the widening participation agenda and Foundation Degree developments. These reflect concern over achieving the government's 50% HE participation target. In addition, the issues explored within the fieldwork visits looked at the impact on progression as a result of the perceived policy changes on the part of Edexcel and the impact, if any, on the switch from FEFC to HEFCE funding that had occurred since the statistical data that was available at the start of the project.

The research found that, for the majority, changes in Edexcel policies and procedures had no effect on progression. Responses from institutional managers indicated that it was more likely to be the policies of the Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (QCA), rather than Edexcel that could have an impact on progression. There was some confusion over whether the HEFCE had agreed to continue to fund HNDs that had not received QCA approval and when any changes might take effect (see footnote 4). There was a significant minority who made very specific comments regarding the impact that they believed that Edexcel had on progression, particularly in relation to multi-exit models of provision. These related to a lack of clarity regarding the recognition of HNC/D awards in terms of the awarding of credit accumulation and transfer (CATs) points.

8.2 Institutional Factors

Institutional partnerships and arrangements for collaboration

The fieldwork visits had been chosen to represent the variety of models of institution, course and pattern of progression (outlined in section 7).

The research indicated that where there were effective partnerships i.e. good staff relationships and clearly articulated progression routes between HEIs and FECs, this supported faster progression. This was seen most strongly where there were fully integrated or highly structurally linked programmes. FECs valued the partnerships as part of a growth and widening participation strategy. Specific arrangements were developed which included regular visits between the institutions, special open days for progressing students and access to the HEIs' facilities for the FEC students.

Within HEFCE recognised funding consortia, where there were apparently the most robust institutional partnerships and arrangements for collaboration, progression to the HEI was not the same either amongst or within the partner FECs. This was due partly to geographical location, where students at those institutions at farthest distance from the parent HEI chose alternative progression opportunities. It was also due to the progression strategies operating at department level where the progression model might differ from the over-arching institutional model.

Importance of progression

The research found that more institutional managers than course tutors from both FECs and HEIs regarded progression as important. There was some ambiguity over the meaning of the term "progression" which some took to mean retention within programmes as well as progression from HNC/D to degree.

A number of tutors had the perception that progression rates were highlighted during recent QAA reviews, and contributed to high scores under the previous numerical method. Progression statistics are in fact only one of a number of factors taken into consideration in arriving at the final score. The grades are arrived at by considering a range of factors that contribute to student progression and achievement.

Some institutions actively encouraged HNC/D students to progress onto a degree. This strategy was partly to compensate for retention losses on the degree programme, seen as inevitable to a widening participation strategy. It also provided a benefit in reducing the need to recruit more students through clearing. In 1 HEI this issue had been specifically targeted at institutional level. 1,000 potential progressing students had been identified by the HEI from HND/HNC programmes within partner FECs. This covered both franchised and direct Edexcel provision.

Impact of recruitment/admission practices on progression

It was most often the case that the Higher National (HN) qualifications were offered to students with lower A-level scores in both FECs and HEIs, where there was both full-time HN and degree provision within subject areas. This was more common in HEIs who were more likely to have both HN and degree provision within the same subject. It was sometimes also recommended that those with non-traditional entry qualifications took the HN route.

Where there was also franchised provision in FECs these students were most likely to be in the FEC. This did appear to have some impact on later progression rates but not consistently. There were examples of very good progression from FECs who took students with lower qualifications, suggesting that at least some FECs are providing a route to a degree for students who would not otherwise have this opportunity. One institution offered a fast track into the second year of its own HND to its own National Diploma and Advanced GNVQ/AVCE students. If these students were then also successful in the HND they could progress into the linked degree and achieve a degree outcome four years after starting their National Diploma. There were some differences in the way HND/HNC to degree progression had been developed in relation to admission practices. Some HEIs and FECs reported that their HND was sometimes taken as a first choice, usually either because it was specialist provision or because of the reputation of the institution.

Recruitment practices for part-time programmes were quite different and varied between part-time day and evening cohorts. Day groups generally recruited employed students who were supported by employers. Evening groups were more likely to recruit under-qualified mature applicants wanting promotion or career change opportunities. It was rare for part-time students to consider progression to degrees at the point of entry; most aimed for the HNC with optional top up to HND, where available.

Retention issues

There were few differences between responses for FECs and HEIs. Almost all indicated that, whether retention was an issue or not, the key point for drop out was during the first year and in particular at the time of the first assessments or end of the first semester. Reasons for these early withdrawals varied between full-time and part-time cohorts. For full-time students reasons given related to the wrong choice of course, financial difficulties and academic failure. Part-time students were thought to drop out because of personal and work commitments, though this was less likely with day release students. Generally those students who successfully completed the first year also successfully completed the second. Where there were retention problems a variety of strategies had been implemented, generally relating to study skills and tutorial support, backed up by rigorous follow up procedures. One example of a strategy to halt drop out following a three-week work placement in the first semester, was to change the pattern of the work placement to one day a week. In general, students needed to complete their HN programme in order to progress in the degree course, although this was not always the case and some examples were found of transfer from the end of the first year of the HND onto the first or second year of a degree course.

Institutional Cultures

In HEIs the major differences in the treatment of HND and degree students related to different, (usually smaller in the case of the HND), class sizes and assessment methods. In some cases the same teams taught much of the HND/degree provision. Where they were taught together this was either for viability or only for lectures. The research found that generally FECs offered smaller class sizes and greater tutor support, encouraging completion and therefore the opportunity to progress. Few institutions compared the results of students progressing from HND with those of direct degree entrants. Given the widening participation agenda it is surprising that institutions did not see the benefit of recording and analysing such data.

8.3 Course/Subject factors

Reasons for different progression rates

The research found there were differences in progression routes between and within subject areas, independent of the type of institution. This was often linked to employment opportunities and currency of the HND/HNC (see section 8.5 on Labour Market). The subject area was not a factor in progression rates to Honours Degrees *per se* - it was the correlation between subject area and occupation opportunities that was important. Where there were jobs for those with the HNC/D qualification students could take up employment rather than progressing to Honours Degrees. This was particularly evident with part-time students.

Differing progression rates between subjects, courses and years were concentrated around three main themes:

- employment opportunities, including both the number and nature of the jobs available.
- availability of clearly articulated, locally available (preferably in-house) progression opportunities.
- expectations and attitudes of staff and students.

Those who studied part-time (mostly HNC students) were already in employment and were studying for different reasons often to do with improving their prospects within their current job or because the employer or professional body required it. They did not start with the intention of doing a degree afterwards.

Impact on progression of the articulation and progression criteria between the HNC/D and the degree

The research showed that good articulation between HN and degree programmes benefited those that did progress. However, there were many other factors that determined whether students actually did progress.

- Location - where HND/HNC courses were franchised to a number of FECs in a region, offering the same provision, there were different progression rates.
- Mode of delivery - the research found some examples of part-time students only being able to progress onto full-time programmes, and therefore although in theory there was a clearly articulated route, in practice this was not a practical option for many of the students. Progression from part-time HN courses depended on the number of part-time degree routes to progress onto, and flexibility of these programmes. One institution had developed part-time progression routes in business and computer science; all students progressed through an HNC (level 1) to an HND (level 2) and then could continue to an ordinary degree and finally an Honours Degree.
- Time to achieve a degree outcome – this was important for full-time students, less so for part-timers. The younger full-time students were most likely to look for fast progression routes, which may involve moving institutions. Mature, part-time students were least likely to be influenced by the length of time required to get a degree – they were more strongly influenced by their employers and personal circumstances.

Within HEIs and FECs the highest progression rates were achieved where there was in-house degree provision, some of which were top up arrangements while others were full degree provision running in parallel.

There was a significant number of institutions which required students to gain merits or distinctions to progress directly into a third year, and those with lower grades had to progress into the second year. However, some HEIs had recently removed these requirements. Two main reasons were given: that progression into a second year meant that students were repeating subjects and/or major parts of the course; and that it prolonged the time to achieve a degree, which disadvantaged some students and encouraged them to transfer to other institutions where their grades might be accepted for entry into the third year. There were examples of this in both FECs and HEIs.

There were 1 or 2 examples where, despite the fact that HND and degree students had been taught together and followed the same programme of study, it took HND students a year longer than continuing degree students, since they were expected to do extra modules. The research showed that progression arrangements, as well as curriculum developments, are under continuous review. Should this exercise be repeated, even next year, it seems likely that there would be different responses even in the same institutions. Competitive pressures and the need for more frequent curriculum updating would appear to be the cause.

8.4 Student factors

The analysis is based on the views of about 200 students, so that it was not a large-scale student survey. It is important to note that the students were in many respects self-selected and the responses indicated can only convey an impression of student views rather than the representation of the views of all students. There were both full and part-time students present, but no record was kept of age, gender or ethnicity.

Need for local provision

Where HNC/D students were local, which was more common in FECs, there was general agreement that local and more specifically in-house degree progression was important, particularly for part-time students. Part-time day release students on HN programmes wanted day release degree courses and similarly, evening students wanted evening degree courses. Full-time HN students were less concerned with staying locally, although most had done so for financial reasons. The ability to stay locally was of considerable concern for those who were mature and had personal commitments. The younger full-time students were generally more concerned with obtaining the degree as quickly as possible and were prepared to travel to achieve this. Where the full-time HN courses recruited nationally, the need for local provision was less of an issue, though most students were happy to stay either because of the reputation of the programme simply because it was easier.

Staff, in both FECs and HEIs were generally of the opinion that students did need local provision. This was only seen as less of an issue where there was access to many institutions e.g. around London.

HNC/D to degree/FE to HE cultural changes

There was a very mixed response to these issues, ranging from a complete lack of awareness through to very positive views of the additional support that had been provided by the tutors within the FEC or within the HNC/D programme in the HEI.

The major factor that full-time HN students in FECs were aware of was the lack of social facilities for them, although some also mentioned the lack of specific resources to particular subjects. Many franchised FE students were entitled to use the facilities of their parent HEI but unless they were resident on the same campus, most students could not or did not avail themselves of these opportunities.

In terms of progression those students who were aware that there would be adjustments to make, mentioned being expected to work more on their own and of a change in assessment processes. Some commented upon the benefit of having acquired transferable, including presentation, skills on the HND.

There was the greatest awareness where there were good links between the FE and HE institutions or between internal teaching teams. This was also true when HNC/D students were taught, even if only partially, with degree students on fully integrated programmes. A specific example of the way on which such support was mobilised was the involvement of past progressing students in an element of the bridging programme between an HNC and the degree in the same institution. Where full-time HN students were taught together with degree students, usually in HEIs, there were a few comments that both tutors and students treated them differently although they did not see this as a significant issue.

Staff, from both FECs and HEIs in franchise arrangements often commented that because of the smaller class sizes in FE, students were given more personal attention. This was considered to contribute to their success in HNC/D and therefore aided progression. Good relationships between staff helped in the transfer between institutions. Staff from HEIs, who were only aware of HEI in-house provision, thought that there were no such clashes.

Impact of fees and loans

Full-time students were less concerned about fees than the replacement of grants by loans and the impact of debt. None the less, except for a few students, mostly older, money did not seem to be a major factor in their decision to progress. For part-time students the support of employers, including their willingness to pay fees and allow time off, was a very important factor. This support, or lack of it, ranged from a requirement to get a degree (chemical and automotive industries) to a refusal to support further than an HNC (early childhood studies)

There was not a marked difference in responses between staff from FECs and HEIs. The majority considered that the change in full-time student finance arrangements had not significantly impeded progression. Some mentioned that it might well have impacted upon HN

enrolments, particularly for more mature applicants, and this seemed to be borne out by the often declining numbers on HND programmes. A minority of staff also commented that this issue had been a factor in moving to a 2 + 1 from a 2 + 2 model (sports science and digital media) so that the costs were less to the students. A few staff also mentioned that the now universal tendency for students to have part-time jobs was affecting the success of weaker students, both whilst on the HND and after progressing onto degree programmes. Part-time students, particularly those on day release programmes, were affected by fees in cases where employers did not support them. They were also affected where employers would not continue to offer financial support to progress to a higher level qualification.

Employment prospects

Full-time students generally considered that whilst an HND would get them a job in most sectors, there would be both greater and better job opportunities open to them once they had a degree. The HND had greater currency in some occupational sectors, particularly engineering, hospitality, art and design. This was also true for programmes areas where there were few current degree opportunities, such as early childhood studies and health care. The few overseas students who were interviewed stated that only a degree would be acceptable in their countries and that progression was therefore vital. Some students considered that whilst initially a degree may not appear financially worthwhile, it would improve their promotion prospects. Part-time students were much more influenced by their current employer short-term needs in relation to employment prospects. There were no significant differences in responses between students from FECs or HEIs.

Progression intentions and influences

There were, as might have been expected, very wide variations in progression intentions. For full-time students the availability of a progression route was often seen as an extremely important requirement, whether there was any intention to take advantage of it or not. Influences affecting progression also varied, although the most important appeared to be that of employment prospects. It also included personal motivation and self-development, particularly the opportunity of a chance to take a degree for those who had not done as well at A-levels as anticipated or hoped. Full-time students showed more interest in, and knowledge of progression arrangements, the further they progressed through the HND. Those who were not intending to progress identified a wider range of factors, including issues relating to the time, and therefore the money to achieve a degree, dissatisfaction with the course, as well as considering that the degree was not essential.

Part-time students were mostly influenced by their employers, and specific employers were seen as a more important influence than the employment sector. Some on part-time business programmes were more interested in the opportunity to progress onto alternative professional qualifications which were perceived as more appropriate. Some on technical programmes intended to progress, but not immediately, and therefore are likely to be counted in statistical data as non-progressors. The groups with the greatest number of intended progressions were those on courses which were fully integrated or strongly structurally linked models of progression, with little variation between those from FECs to FECs, FECs to HEIs and HEIs to HEIs.

8.5 Labour Market factors

A small number of employers were interviewed and the discussion relating to labour market and employment factors was mainly undertaken with the staff in FECs and HEIs. Staff at course level in HEIs were generally more willing to discuss labour market and employment factors than equivalent staff in FECs. There were some examples of robust links with specific large employers, particularly in the scientific and manufacturing/engineering sectors. The links are more often random, variable and indirect, especially in the case of Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

The significance of the national labour market

Where students were prepared to move (more likely for full-time students at the end of their HN course) employment opportunities were available nationally, if not locally, with the HN

qualification, in nearly all employment sectors. However, the jobs on offer might not be at the level that the student aspired to.

Students with business and computing qualifications, which were seen as less sector specific qualifications, were generally considered to have good employment opportunities both nationally and locally. Art and design staff also considered that an HND was a nationally acceptable qualification and that the portfolio developed during the course was probably as important in this regard as the qualification.

Generally it was considered that in engineering, students with an HNC/D could get employment, due to the shortage of qualified technicians. Practical experience through employment or work placement was also a factor.

In some of the newer employment fields (sports science/leisure/early childhood studies) staff considered that there were fewer graduate employment opportunities, as there was still not a clearly defined career structure.

The significance of the local labour market

The research found some very good examples of strong employer involvement that encouraged progression (automotive engineering in the Midlands, art and design in the West Country, business, IT and hospitality in East Anglia). At the same time, most institutions in the far South West believed that students, particularly graduates would need to leave the region in order to achieve good employment prospects. The newer employment sectors (health, early childhood studies/leisure) indicated that there were plenty of local jobs available but not always of the nature that the students desired.

Local employers were particularly important in relation to progression of part-time students. Staff considered that employers of business studies students were more likely to support them through to a degree than not, but engineering and computing employers were less consistent in their support.

Impact of sector qualification requirements and professional body involvement

Employment sector was the major influence in the responses to this issue. HNDs are seen as an acceptable norm in the art and design field, particularly for studio based work. HNC/Ds are also generally acceptable in engineering, hospitality and computing, particularly at technician level. This was also true amongst the newer sectors of sports science, leisure, early childhood studies and health. The scientific industries (chemistry and biomedical sciences) required graduate level employees, thus encouraging progression in these subject areas.

Staff in FECs were more likely to believe that HNC/Ds are acceptable as the norm, with staff in HEIs considering that a degree is necessary. Many staff noted that more large national employers in all sectors were increasingly inclined to require degrees, particularly for their management training programmes.

Professional body influence appeared to be most influential in the engineering sector where the requirements of the Engineering Council clearly impacted upon progression, most particularly for part-time students. M.Eng is the requirement for Chartered Engineering status, whereas HNC/D and degree appeared sufficient for incorporated status. There was therefore little incentive, particularly for part-time students, to progress to the degree. There was one mention of the Chartered Institute of Marketing and two mentions of Accountancy bodies, where the professional body qualifications were seen as important alternatives to a degree for HNC and HND students.

9. Analysis

This research project has been operating in an environment of constant change and flux. Institutions are constantly responding to local labour market needs, funding imperatives, national policy initiatives, competitive pressures and perceived changes in Edexcel and/or QCA policy. It is notable that as well as institutions withdrawing from HND/HNC provision 1 FEC had been advised that a transfer to HEI status had been confirmed during the period of the project.

The conclusions arising from the project have been summarised in relation to the main aim of the research which was to identify and investigate the factors that enable smooth progression from HNC/Ds to Honours Degrees, according to the typology of progression patterns identified within Section 6.2.2 and where relevant to the six broad categories of factors explored in the fieldwork visits.

Identification and investigation of the factors that enable smooth progression from HNDs/HNCs to Honours Degrees

The fieldwork visits generally confirmed the typology of progression patterns identified from the telephone survey; however, some additional layers of complexity were identified.

Two terms have mainly been used to describe progression – fast and smooth.

- Fast: this term relates to the length of time taken for a student to achieve a degree. Where a student progresses from the HND to year 3 of a degree this is deemed as fast progression. This is the fastest route in terms of achieving a degree in the shortest time.
- Smooth: this relates to the curriculum arrangements that ensure progression routes for students are such that there are no additional barriers to that progression, such as additional bridging programmes, additional modules, duplicated modules and extra requirements for additional CATS points or even additional years. Whilst bridging courses are often designed to be enabling, often they are not delivered appropriately to support students' smooth progression. The timing of bridging courses is important, especially if students have to take on paid work during the summer vacation. The smoothest progression occurs where the HN programme is fully integrated with the degree programme.

The visits confirmed that whilst models were more consistent within institutions than across institutions, individual programmes associated with specific subject areas frequently exhibited a hybrid typology. This was particularly true of structurally linked and fully integrated models where the differences between the most strongly linked and the least fully integrated were minimal. This was frequently due to historical factors relating to curriculum areas or institutional relationships. In addition in some HEIs with a wide range of HNC/D provision, a range of different institutional relationships and a number of different models of progression arrangements were in place.

There was no close link between the impact of national policy factors and the models of progression from HNC/D to Honours Degrees identified. The development of FDs and the government target of 50% participation are likely to encourage closer collaboration as envisaged in Partnerships for Progression report (HEFCE 2002) and this may well affect models of progression in place, and indeed their effectiveness in increasing progression and/or making it more efficient.

Institutional factors clearly affected progression, as described within the models below. Subject and course factors were related to the models of progression. Not surprisingly the three most common subject areas identified, business studies, computing and engineering, exhibited the greatest diversity of models, offering examples in all of the four models across both FECs and HEIs.

Recently validated, or re-validated, programmes were more likely to offer faster and more clearly differentiated progression routes to achieving a degree. With more frequent validations or reviews in place, progression arrangements are also likely to continue to be under more frequent review.

Much more diversity was observed for part-time students where the models of progression were less clearly established, since they often want part-time degree provision. Part-time HN students represent a smaller market so that individual arrangements are often made, as in the open-exit model, rather than formal structures as in fully integrated models.

It is noted that the time taken to achieve a degree for students who start with an HN programme under all models particularly for full-time students, is becoming shorter through the increased activity around the integration and articulation of the curriculum on the 2 programmes. For full-time students it is also becoming more likely that they will progress into a third year rather than into a second year of a degree.

Labour market factors have a significant impact upon the progression model, particularly in the case of part-time provision, where employer support is critical to any kind of progression.

The HNC/D as an end qualification

The fieldwork visits confirmed that this model is most prevalent within FECs, for engineering and for part-time provision. It was most likely where the local, and sometimes, national employment situation meant that employers accept this level of qualification as appropriate and standard for the job opportunities available. It is noticeable that it is not a common model, and has often developed into the open exit model where students or employers have required further progression.

The HNC/D as an open exit qualification

This model developed from the end qualification model. Fieldwork visits found that this model was most likely where there were students seeking to progress and there were no formal partnership arrangements, or where they did exist they were not effective. The open exit qualification model was also found where there were a number of alternative local progression opportunities available, enabling students to negotiate the most advantageous progression for their situation. The model was more likely to be found in an FEC, and for part-time provision. It was also found within employment sectors that did not require degree level qualifications. Employers were more likely to support progression from HNC to HND rather than to a degree, where this provided additional specialisation or breadth of knowledge. Because no formal arrangements were in place, when students did seek to progress to a degree course there were often problems relating to the level and number of CATs points that could be counted towards the degree and thus there was great variety in the point at which students were able to access degree programmes. This did not always mean that the route to a degree was longer; indeed some students were able to negotiate entry directly to the third year of a degree even where no formal links existed (although staff reported that these arrangements often did not lead to successful completion of a degree).

The HNC/D as part of a structurally linked progression model

The fieldwork visits confirmed that it is this model which is the most likely to be found currently in HEIs, or in FECs where there are franchise arrangements with an HEI. The structurally linked model does in fact exist in a rather variable form, albeit with minor variations, and is not consistently applied within an institution, far less across institutions. It is more likely to be in place for full-time students than for part-time and more likely to provide a faster route for full-time students than for part-time students.

There are still a number of issues which affect progression from this model, one of which is the perceived need for bridging arrangements to cover the lack of curriculum fit and differing assessment requirements for which HN students are not prepared. In part this accounts for the noticeable tendency for structurally linked progression models to evolve over time into more fully integrated progression models.

The HNC/D as part of a fully integrated progression model

The fieldwork confirmed that this model provides opportunities for the fastest route to degree for HN students, the most efficient in institutional terms and the smoothest in terms of the match between the curriculum of the programme(s). Whilst it is found more frequently where

the HN and degree programme are both delivered in an HEI, it is also a preferred model for formal consortia and some franchise partnerships. The fully integrated model is most likely to have been designed and validated by the HEI, although there were examples of collaborative curriculum development with consortia members and franchise partners. Again whilst delivery is more likely within an HEI, the HNC/D and sometimes the degree provision, is sometimes delivered in an FEC. However, clearly institutional relationships need to be strong for this model to be effective. The close articulation of the curriculum in all its aspects is the key to this model and in particular the explicitness of the level and number of CATs points from the outset.

Some of the newer subjects, such as leisure management, were more likely to be fully integrated models, although there were also such examples from the most common subject areas of business, computing and engineering. It should be noted that the model does not in itself ensure smooth and fast progression if the location of the franchised or collaborative provision is not conducive to such progression. In both FECs and HEIs the smoothest and fastest progression is where it occurs within the same institution. Where this is not the case, it is noticeable that the relationships between staff in the respective institutions have an effect on the way in which the model works.

It should also be noted that not all students want or are able to take advantage of such routes. This is particularly true for part-time students and/or employer sponsored students and it was clear in most cases that the arrangements were put in place with full-time rather than part-time students in mind.

10. Foundation Degree progression to Honours Degrees.

The research did not specifically set out to look at FDs but where there were significant developments in the institutions surveyed note was taken.

Foundation Degree developments

Fieldwork visits revealed more FD development activity than was apparent from the telephone surveys. There were only 3 of the 31 institutions visited where there was not either an FD already in operation (leisure, multimedia), in planning for a September 2002 start, or under discussion. There were FDs planned in all the main subject areas covered in the project. Staff at the 3 institutions that did not yet have an FD even under discussion, all considered that their current HNC/D had "national currency" and that employers understood the nature of the qualification and may not want, what the staff saw as, a local alternative. A further comment, echoed by numbers of other staff who are not directly involved in delivering or planning FDs, was that the requirement for employer involvement would present difficulties. Of the FE and HE institutions visited 9 were involved in the current prototypes, although not necessarily including the staff who were being interviewed. The fieldwork visits indicated that decisions regarding FD provision are rapidly evolving.

As previously cited (6.2.1) there were a number of factors influencing whether HNDs/HNCs were being maintained. Different factors seemed to influence decisions as to whether FDs were being developed. Some HEIs believe FDs are for a different market to HNDs/HNCs, while others consider the markets fairly similar. FDs, not being subject to Edexcel requirements, offered greater control over the curriculum. Where there were already effective links with employers, good enrolment and progression numbers, a move into Foundation Degree provision was not anticipated.

One of the major differences emerging between HNC/Ds and FDs is in relation to the work-based element. Visits had confirmed the conclusions from the telephone survey that links with employers on HND/HNC programmes were often quite weak, although there were some significant exceptions to this. Much of the work on FDs was with specific employers or groups of employers. Another difference may be in the flexibility of provision. The research found that within the surveyed institutions there was little work-based provision or open learning within HNDs/HNCs, although there were some clear exceptions to this. This did not appear to be related to the typology of progression patterns either. It is too early to say how significant this will be on FDs. A further difference is in relation to the specific subject title. Foundation Degree provision being developed in the institutions visited tended to have a much more specific subject or employment focus than HNDs/HNCs.

FDs are designed to provide graduates with the skills to enter specific employment or to progress further onto Honours Degrees. The FD prospectus (HEFCE July 00/27) clearly states the importance of progression opportunities and that the FD must have guaranteed arrangements for progression to Honours Degrees.

At the time the research was carried out (Spring 2002) progression arrangements were not yet as clear or detailed as one might have anticipated. Progression was often referred to as an opportunity rather than guaranteed. A number of institutions envisaged that specific top up arrangements would need to be provided. Key findings from the Foundation Degree Support Team June 2002 BIR, suggest that there are likely to be a variety of ways in which this is delivered (see annex 7, section 10.3). However, the prescribed framework for progression detailed in the FD prospectus (HEFCE 2000) states that for those students wishing to progress to the Honours Degree, the time taken should not normally exceed 1.3 years for a full-time equivalent FTE student. The overall conclusion is that on current evidence, delivery and progression arrangements for FDs are likely to be as diverse as those pertaining to HNDs/HNCs.

Development Issues

In relation to the issues that the development of FDs are presenting, there was a difference in responses by staff from FECs and HEIs. Although both considered the issue of working with employers to be problematic, for the staff from FECs it was the issue of working in consortia that caused them more difficulties. This was particularly evident where more than one HEI was involved. Staff in FECs also mentioned that progression arrangements had not always been finalised even where programmes had started. In one consortium there was a different progression arrangement from the same FD into the two receiving HEIs. Only one member of staff in an HEI mentioned a concern that offering their validated FDs in local FECs may run into problems over quality issues. Two institutions that had previously allowed partnerships with FECs to cease had re-activated them to develop FDs, but with a smaller, more local group of FECs.

Staff from those institutions that had embraced FDs, whether through prototypes or not, were much more positive towards them. A number had worked closely with local employers including a city council, a motor manufacturer and a university. The majority of FDs in these institutions were to be delivered on a flexible part-time basis to those in employment. Most FDs planned were to be in either niche markets (licensed retail management, automotive manufacturing) or the newer areas such as early years, pre-16 teaching and learning, multimedia, e-business, retail technology and logistics. There were some examples of HNDs being replaced by FDs, but this was occurring where numbers were falling and a more generic FD was planned to attract a wider range of students. Within one consortium there was an interesting example of embedding an FD within a full range of entry and exit routes to include an HNC (120 CATs), an HND (180 CATs), an FD (240 CATs), a Dip HE (240 CATs) and an Honours Degree (360 CATs). Another new university was also thinking of offering both a Dip HE and an FD to replace a current HND.

10.1 Implication of the factors influencing HNC/D progression for Foundation Degrees

National policy initiatives

The FD prospectus clearly states the policy on progression to Honours Degrees. There is no such policy direction for progression from HNC/D qualifications. National policy in relation to support in terms of both institutional/course funding and student support is likely to have a bearing on the number of courses on offer and the take up by students. National policy could also be used to support progression by actively encouraging collaboration between FECs and HEIs.

Institutional policies

FDs are institutional awards. Whilst needing to meet the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, unlike HNC/Ds they do not need to meet an

external awarding body's requirements. Institutional policies in relation to mission, partnership arrangements and admission strategies will all impact upon FD progression.

Subject/occupational factors

The majority of FD developments have been in relation to newer or highly specific subject areas. As there are so few FDs currently in operation it is not yet apparent whether these factors will have any impact on progression. This may well be influenced by the employment opportunities and relationships with current or new professional bodies.

Labour market and employment influences

Links with employers should be much more structured and developed within FDs, than is apparently the case with the majority of HNC/Ds surveyed. Evidence from the fieldwork visits indicates that employer commitment and support will be crucial to achieving smooth and fast progression rates.

10.2 Application of the HNC/D models of progression to Foundation Degrees

The end qualification model

Based on the experiences from the project this model is most likely to be related to the labour market influences and job role requirements of local employers. Fieldwork interviews indicated that a number of FDs were being developed with specific employers. All FDs are expected to have a programme that delivers specialist knowledge required by employers. Whilst progression arrangements are a core feature of the FD it is also true that FDs will in practice become an end qualification. The Foundation Degree prospectus (HEFCE July 00/27) states "*Foundation Degrees will be valued HE qualifications in their own right, equipping people with skills for tomorrow's jobs*".

The open exit model

The project found that this model was more likely to exist in an FEC and in subjects where employers accepted a higher intermediate qualification. FDs were being developed to replace HNDs with falling numbers, where the use of the word 'degree' within the title was thought to be advantageous. They were also being developed to broaden some existing HN qualifications and thus expand group sizes. At least one progression opportunity will undoubtedly be included when validating the FD. Smooth and fast progression may still depend upon the location of the progression opportunities and the relationships between staff in the different institutions. This is unlikely to be a model that easily transfers across to the FD since arrangements must be guaranteed and link to specific Honours Degree programmes. The variability and flexibility of this model is unlikely to be appropriate for FDs which are more prescribed than HNC/D qualifications.

The structurally linked model

Where an FD is offered in a loose partnership arrangement between FECs and HEIs results from the project indicates that the structurally linked model is a likely to be used. As well as providing a qualification in its own right the progression opportunities are likely to be determined by the grade/marks achieved in the FD. It could also prove a useful model for alternative progression opportunities to a wider range of qualifications. For example, 1 HEI is offering more restricted access to specific faculty based degrees, in a structurally linked way, whilst offering freer access to its combined modular scheme, in a more fully integrated framework.

It may also be a suitable model for the development of specific top up degrees where the FD is in a new or niche market for which a full named degree is not yet available.

The fully integrated model

The FD as part of a fully integrated model, where the design of the FD and the degree are concurrent, should provide the strongest model in relation to smooth and fast progression

opportunities into the degree programme. As with the HNC/D, the model would provide the opportunity for a faster route to a degree for those learners with lower or non-traditional entry qualifications. However, the dual functions of the FD as both an end qualification for specific employment and a route to progress to Honours Degrees means that this model cannot be easily applied directly across to the FD situation. The research shows it is certainly the smoothest and fastest route through for HNC/D student, but if the FD development concentrates on such a progression model then it may put at risk the very employment opportunities afforded to students by completing the FD as an end qualification.

Implications for progression from the Foundation Degree

The research on progression from HNC/D to Honours Degrees clearly has implications for how FDs might offer progression to Honours Degrees for their students. These include:

- The value of a fully integrated model of curriculum articulation in providing for smooth progression; however, there are risks that this model may compromise other aspects of the aims of the FD, notably the loss of the employability focus.
- The need for clearly defined progression routes with clear entry criteria for transition on to the Honours Degree.
- The importance of explicit support from employers for progression of part-time students.
- The significance of effective relationships between staff in consortia, franchises and the transferring and receiving institutions in supporting smooth progression
- The role of a strong match between the two elements of pedagogy and curriculum match with the degree programme in developing smooth progression.
- The importance of clear advice to students to ensure they are on the most appropriate programme for their needs.
- That certain types of students value fast progression (particularly young full-time students) whilst others value slow progression (generally mature part-time students).

10.3 Key findings on progression from Foundation Degree Support Team

In June 2002 the Foundation Degree Support Team conducted the 6th Baseline Information Return (BIR - see appendix 7) where it looked at progression routes from FDs. From the data provided to date (August 2002)⁵, based on an 82% return of prototype programmes and 45% of ASN-only programmes, they found that 47% of all programmes were intending to provide a progression route to one Honours Degree, 39% to a small number of specified Honours Degrees. In addition, there were those planning progression to specified professional qualifications and higher level NVQs. It is difficult to say whether this matches with the HNC/D structurally linked or integrated models or is a looser arrangement with multi-exit. It looks as if all 4 types of model are in evidence for FD progression.

53% plan to offer a bridging course between the FD and final year of an Honours Degree. Where there is no bridging course planned 56% of programmes will progress students directly on to an existing Honours Degree, and 44% onto a bespoke "top-up" year. The HNC/D research showed there were some institutions offering bridging and top-up courses to support those students moving from HND to Honours Degrees, but it was by no means universal. There was clearly a certain amount of individual negotiation between providers over the best year or degree course for particular HNC/D students to progress to. In addition, as stated previously, there were examples of HNC/D progression to a special to-up degree (see Section 6.2.2). 84% of the FD programmes were planning to provide the "top-up" to Honours Degrees at the HEI validating the FD, rather than the FEC. There was limited top-up planned at the FEC providing the FD. Some programmes are planning the top-up to be delivered at other HEIs, either within or outside the consortia. This has similarities with the multi-exit HNC/D progression model.

The BIR results show that the majority (76%) of programmes require students only to pass the FD and bridging course in order to progress to the Honours Degree. 18% of programmes require students to obtain a threshold above the pass level, and 16% have other requirements. This data does not match with the HNC/D progression models where the

⁵ The BIR return was not complete at the time of writing so the results are based on an incomplete response rate. The data is liable to change from that included in this report to publication of the final BIR from the Foundation Degree Support Team.

majority of institutions require a specific level of performance on the HNC/D to enable progression, although in some places these requirements were being reviewed. In terms of guarantee of a place, 71% of programmes intend to provide a place for the FD graduates that meet the criteria to progress. There was no such guarantee with progression from HNC/D to Honours Degrees.

The return suggests that providers estimate that on 58% of the FD programmes more than half the students will progress on to Honours Degrees, but that it will be more common for full-time students. This accords with the results of the research on HNC/D progression where clearly full-time students thought that the opportunity to progress to the Honours Degree was essential, whilst part-time students saw the HN as an end qualification in itself.

Providers do not envisage transitional problems for students moving from the FD to an Honours Degree, or equivalent. 50% of the FD programmes will provide the bridging course at the institution that provided the FD and 50% at the institution providing the 3rd year of the Honours Degree. The HNC/D research showed that there was more likely to be successful progression where there was close collaboration between providers, where efforts had been made to integrate HND and honours programmes and where there is a clearly integrated pedagogy and curriculum between the honours and HNC/D. The smoothest progression was where there is a fully integrated model and the HN and degree programme are delivered in the same institution.

11. Conclusions:

Patterns of progression:

- The research resulted in the identification of 4 main types of progression arrangements although it should be noted that these are 'ideal types'- they did not exist in precisely this form in practice and there were many examples of hybrids.
 - i). The HNC/D as an end qualification.
 - ii). The open exit model.
 - iii) The structurally linked model.
 - iv) The fully integrated model.The research found that there was a great diversity of arrangements in operation and the complexity of the different ways in which the various factors play out in each model have to be taken account of in describing progression.

- Within HEIs most tend to support a similar pattern of progression for all their HNC/D courses. The most common and the preferred model was for progression to a named or linked degree programme in the same institution, although this was implemented more comprehensively in some HEIs and more loosely in others.

Amongst FECs there tended to be more variety in progression arrangements. In some cases the franchised degree programme enabled students to pursue their studies in the same college; more frequently students progressed to the local HEI or one of a group of local HEIs.

The picture is one of variety and complexity in the arrangements for progression. Examples of the key aspects of this complexity included: year of study, labour market influence and links with employers, admissions strategies, flexibility, and the development of FDs.

- Progression to year 2 of a 3-year full-time degree (or its equivalent) was the most common with progression to year 3 was the next most common. In almost all cases, the students' performance on the HNC/D was a relevant factor. There were a significant number of institutions which required students to gain merits or distinctions to progress directly into a third year, and those with lower grades had to progress into the second year. It was noted that there were also a number who had removed these requirements recently.
- Recruitment practices for part-time day and evening programmes were quite different. Day groups generally recruited employed students who were supported by employers. Evening groups were more likely to recruit under qualified mature applicants wanting

promotion or career change opportunities. Generally part-time students did not consider progression to degrees at entry to the HN qualification. Students aimed for the HNC with optional top up to HND, where available.

- There was no clear relationship between subject area and progression arrangements and the relationship varied according to institution. In newer curriculum areas such as sports studies, digital media or leisure management, progression was more likely to be built-in (i.e. the fully integrated model).
- Few institutions compared the results of students progressing from HND compared with those of direct degree entrants.
- Matching of the datasets between FE and HE registered students remains problematic, despite considerable progress in the techniques used. The analysis of that data is therefore a useful starting point but the picture of progression that it is able to provide tends to suggest stronger and clearer patterns than were found in the qualitative work. The telephone survey and the fieldwork uncovered layers of diversity and complexity in the models and the way in which different factors play out differently in those models

Factors affecting progression:

- The research indicates that where partnerships between HEIs and FECs are based on strong articulation this enables smooth progression. This was seen most strongly where there were fully integrated or highly structurally linked programmes. Good articulation between HN and degree programmes benefited those that did progress. Pro-active liaison on either or both the part of the transferring or receiving institution played a factor in increasing progression rates. However, there were many other factors that determined whether students actually did progress.
- Where students were local, which was more common in FECs, there was general agreement that local and more specifically in-house degree progression was important, particularly for part-time students who having completed their HN qualification wished to progress. For these students the support of employers, including their willingness to pay fees and allow time off, was a very important factor.
- For full-time students the availability of a progression route was often seen as an extremely important requirement, whether there was any intention to take advantage of it or not. Influences affecting progression also varied, although the most important appeared to be that of employment prospects.
- The HNC/D picture has changed considerably since 1998/9 (the data supplied by HEFCE). Some HEIs had already ceased to offer HNC/Ds; others were allowing them to 'with on the vine'. Some are developing FDs whilst others are maintaining their HNC/D offer. HNC/Ds are still important in certain areas of the labour market and represent a valid end qualification. FDs are developing in newer areas or those areas where there are currently no appropriate intermediate qualifications.
- Where there was both full-time HN and degree provision within subject areas it was most often the case that the Higher National (HN) qualifications were offered to students with lower A-level scores in both FECs and HEIs. This was more common in HEIs who were more likely to have both HN and degree provision within the same subject. It was sometimes also recommended that those with non-traditional entry qualifications took the HN route.

Where there was franchised provision in FECs the students with non-traditional entry qualifications or lower A-level scores were most likely to be in the FEC. This did not appear to have consistent impact on later progression rates. There were examples of very good progression from FECs who took students with lower entry qualifications. This indicated that FECs are providing a route to a degree for students who would not otherwise have this opportunity.

- Whether retention was an issue or not, the key point for drop out was during the first year, and in particular at the time of the first assessments or end of the first semester. Reasons for these early withdrawals varied between full-time and part-time cohorts.
- There were differences in progression routes between and within subject areas, independent of the type of institution. This was often linked to employment opportunities and currency of the HNC/HND.
- Within FECs the highest progression rates were achieved where there was in-house degree provision, some of which were top up arrangements while others were full degree provision running in parallel.

Implications for progression from the Foundation Degree:

- The value of a fully integrated model of curriculum articulation in providing for smooth progression.
- The need for clearly defined progression routes.
- The importance of explicit support from employers.
- The significance of effective relationships between staff in consortia and franchises
- The importance of a strong match between the two elements of pedagogy and curriculum match with the degree programme.
- The importance of clear advice to students.
- That not all students require the same outcome.

Annex 1

Tables derived from data supplied by the HEFCE

Table 1 Qualification aim 1998 and institution registered 1998 of 'progressors'

Qualification aim 1998	Registered with HEI 1998	Registered with FEC 1998	Total
HNC	1142	1158	2300
HND	9934	1516	11450
Total	11076	2674	13750

Table 2 Subject of study 1998 of progressors who were registered in an FEC in 1998 (ISR data)

Subject area	Qualification aim 1998			
	HNC	HND	Total	%
Agriculture, horticulture & animal care	6	16	22	1%
Arts & crafts	61	188	249	9%
Authorship, photography, publishing & media	17	85	102	4%
Business, management & office studies	353	501	854	32%
Catering, food, leisure services & tourism	9	173	182	7%
Construction & property	194	57	251	9%
Education, training & teaching	23	0	23	1%
Engineering	207	115	322	12%
Health care, medicine & health/safety	66	60	126	5%
Information technology & information	77	73	150	6%
Manufacturing & production work	66	25	91	3%
Performing arts	14	74	88	3%
Sciences & mathematics	26	16	42	2%
Services to industry	23	16	39	1%
Sports games and recreation	2	92	94	4%
Other subject areas	14	25	39	1%
Grand total	1158	1516	2674	100%

Table 3 Subject of study 1998 for progressors registered with an HEI in 1998 (HESA data)

Subject area	Qualification aim 1998			
	HNC	HND	Total	%
Architecture, building & planning	181	383	564	5%
Biological sciences	45	473	518	5%
Business & administrative studies	329	3753	4082	37%
Computer science	105	1760	1865	17%
Creative Arts & Design	4	786	790	7%
Education & combined	11	467	478	4%
Engineering & technology	287	1137	1424	13%
Languages, librarianship & information science	0	89	89	1%
Law, social, economic & political sciences	15	230	245	2%
Mathematical sciences	0	62	62	1%
Physical sciences	153	212	365	3%
Subjects allied to medicine	4	73	77	1%
Veterinary science, agriculture & related subjects	8	509	517	5%
Grand total	1142	9934	11076	100%

Table 4 Mode of study on HNC/D in 1998 and mode of study on degree in 1999

Institution of registration 1998	Mode of study 1998	% FT 1999	% PT 1999
FEC	FT	96	4
FEC	PT	50	50
HEI	FT	98	2
HEI	PT	22	78

Table 5 Progression patterns for students registered on an HNC/D in 1998 and on a degree course in 1999: type of HN programme, award of HN qualification, mode of study on degree programme and year of degree programme in 1999

HN type	Award in 1998	Mode of study on degree, 1999										
		Full-time degree								Part-time Degree Total	Un-classified mode Total	Grand Total
		Year 1	Year 1 %	Year 2	Year 2 %	Year 3 or later	Year 3 or later %	Total	Total %			
HNC	Yes	200	61%	109	33%	21	6%	330	100%	1150	133	1613
	No	198	80%	44	18%	6	2%	248	100%	398	41	687
All HNC		398	69%	153	26%	27	5%	578	100%	1548	174	2300
HND	Yes	1886	25%	2979	39%	2691	36%	7556	100%	430	276	8262
	No	988	35%	1220	43%	616	22%	2824	100%	233	131	3188
All HND		2874	28%	4199	41%	3307	32%	10380	100%	663	407	11450
HNC/D	Yes	2086	26%	3088	39%	2712	34%	7886	100%	1580	409	9875
	No	1186	39%	1264	41%	622	20%	3072	100%	631	172	3875
All HNC/D		3272	30%	4352	40%	3334	30%	10958	100%	2211	581	13750

Table 6 Progression patterns for students registered on an HNC/D in 1998 through an HEI (HESA data) and on a degree course in 1999: relationship type, award of HN qualification, mode of study on degree programme and year of degree programme in 1999

Relationship type	Award in 1998	Full-time degree 1999								Part-time Degree Total	Un-classified Degree Total	Grand Total
		Year 1	Year 1 %	Year 2	Year 2 %	Year 3 or later	Year 3 or later %	Total	Total %			
HNC/D and degree Studied at same HEI (type a)	Yes	928	21%	1692	39%	1750	40%	4370	100%	799	227	5396
	No	367	22%	877	54%	392	24%	1636	100%	214	98	1948
	Total	1295	22%	2569	43%	2142	35%	6006	100%	1013	325	7344
HNC/D at franchised FEC and degree at Parent HEI (b)	Yes	306	26%	428	36%	465	39%	1199	100%	147	24	1370
	No	105	30%	113	32%	137	39%	355	100%	54	9	418
	Total	411	26%	541	35%	602	39%	1554	100%	201	33	1788
HNC/D at an FEC And degree at an HEI, not type b (c)	Yes	136	27%	250	50%	117	23%	503	100%	54	20	577
	No	99	66%	29	19%	23	15%	151	100%	18	6	175
	Total	235	36%	279	43%	140	21%	654	100%	72	26	752
HNC/D and degree Studied at different HEIs (d)	Yes	249	38%	299	46%	104	16%	652	100%	84	14	750
	No	311	80%	59	15%	17	4%	387	100%	42	13	442
	Total	560	54%	358	34%	121	12%	1039	100%	126	27	1192

Table 7 Progression patterns for students registered on an HNC/D in 1998 through an FEC (FEFC ISR data) and on a degree course in 1999: achievement status at end of 1998, mode of study on degree programme and year of degree programme in 1999

HNC/D status at end of 1998	Full-time degree 1999								Part-time degree Total	Un-classified degree Total	Grand Total
	Year 1	Year 1 %	Year 2	Year 2 %	Year 3 or later	Year 3 or later %	Total	Total %			
Completed	467	40%	419	36%	276	24%	1162	100%	496	124	1782
Intends to continue / Transferred / Withdrawn	304	56%	186	34%	53	10%	543	100%	303	46	892
Total	771	45%	605	35%	329	19%	1705	100%	799	170	2674

Note: All the students registered through the FEFC were involved in progression arrangements located in institutional relationships type b and c as set out in section 6.2 of the report. The ISR data does not permit more elaboration in the typing of the relationships.

Annex 2

37 institutions participating in the telephone survey

Those marked * also participated in the case study fieldwork in phase 2.

IHEs (3):

Kent Institute of Art & Design
The London Institute
Southampton Institute of Higher Education

Post 1992 universities (21):

Anglia Polytechnic University*
University of Brighton*
University of Central Lancashire
Coventry University*
University of Greenwich
University of Hertfordshire*
Leeds Metropolitan University
University of Lincolnshire and Humberside*
Manchester Metropolitan University
De Montford University*
University of Northumbria at Newcastle*
University of North London
Nottingham Trent University
University of Plymouth*
University of Portsmouth
Sheffield Hallam University*
South Bank University*
University of Teesside*
University of the West of England
University of Wolverhampton*

Pre 1992 universities (2):

Brunel University
Salford University

FE colleges (14):

Blackburn College
Broxtowe College*
Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Culture*
Colchester Institute*
Dudley College*
Grimsby College*
Newcastle College*
North Herts College
Norwich City College*
Stockport College*
St Helens
Wigan College

Annex 3



HEFCE HNC/D PROGRESSION PROJECT

TELEPHONE SURVEY

We have decided to construct two telephone questionnaires, firstly a general institutional based questionnaire to be addressed initially to a senior manager who can respond on behalf of the institution and who should be able to identify the contact details, if needed, of other staff who will provide the details for the second course based questionnaire. A separate course based questionnaire will be needed for each different award (i.e. one each for an HNC and HND with the same subject title). The following introductory statement may be used for each contact in the institution.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

HEFCE are funding a study regarding progression arrangements for Higher National Qualifications, both Certificates and Diplomas. This study is being undertaken for HEFCE by The Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) in partnership with the University of Sheffield School of Education.

This initial stage of the study has involved the identification of a number of institutions from data supplied by HEFCE. These identified institutions are being asked to take part firstly in a telephone survey, and possibly to take part in a follow up visit to the institution. Your institution, being a significant player in the HNC/D market has been selected for this survey.

INSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

1	NAME OF INSTITUTION	
2	TYPE OF INSTITUTION	
3	NAME OF CONTACT PERSON	
4	ROLE IN INSTITUTION	
5	ADDRESS	
6	TEL NO	
7	E-MAIL ADDRESS	
8	IS THERE AN INSTITUTIONAL POLICY IN RELATION TO HNC/D PROVISION?	

- 8.1 **CENTRALISED OR DECENTRALISED MODEL?**
i.e. is there a general policy which someone centrally oversees or is it a Faculty/School/departmental responsibility

- 8.2 **IS THE OBJECTIVE TO** (Please add comments if any):

Please delete/ or highlight

- a) **widen participation**

Yes

No

- b) meet expansion targets Yes No
- c) link with employers Yes No
- d) combination of above Yes No

e) none of above?

Add Comments:

8.3 WHAT IS THE FUNDING MODEL?

Please delete/ or highlight

- a) Directly from HEFCE
- b) Indirectly from HEI – Franchised
- c) Other (give details)

8.4. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

Please delete/ or highlight

- a) VALIDATION? HEI/Edexcel
- b) DELIVERY? HEI/FEC/BOTH
- c) CURRICULUM DESIGN HEI/Edexcel/Combination?

8.5. IS THERE AN INSTITUTIONAL POLICY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOUNDATION DEGREES?

9. CENTRALISED OR DECENTRALISED MODEL?

i.e. is there a general policy which someone centrally oversees or is it a Faculty/School/departmental responsibility

9.1 IS THE OBJECTIVE TO (Please add comments if any):

Please delete/ or highlight

- a) widen participation Yes No
- b) meet expansion targets Yes No
- c) link with employers Yes No
- d) combination of above Yes No

e) none of above?

Add Comments:

9.2 IS THERE A PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENT?

Please delete/ or highlight

Yes	No
-----	----

If Yes please provide details of:

a) participants

--

b) status of participants, e.g. associate colleges/affiliate colleges/strategic alliances with other HEIs

c) What funding model there is for the partnership?

Please delete/ or highlight

- i) Directly from HEFCE
- ii) Indirectly from HEI – Franchised
- iii) Other (give details)

--

9.3 Contacts for Course details

HEFCE HNC/D PROGRESSION PROJECT

TELEPHONE SURVEY

We have decided to construct two telephone questionnaires, firstly a general institutional based questionnaire to be addressed initially to a senior manager who can respond on behalf of the institution and who should be able to identify the contact details, if needed, of other staff who will provide the details for the second course based questionnaire. A separate course based questionnaire will be needed for each different award (i.e. one each for an HNC and HND with the same subject title). The following introductory statement may be used for each contact in the institution.

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This initial stage of the study has involved the identification of a number of institutions from data supplied by HEFCE. These identified institutions are being asked to take part firstly in a telephone survey, and possibly to take part in a follow up visit to the institution. Your institution, being a significant player in the HNC/D market has been selected for this survey.

COURSE QUESTIONNAIRE

1	Name of Institution where course delivered	
2	<i>NAME OF CONTACT PERSON</i>	
3	ROLE IN INSTITUTION	
4	ADDRESS	
5	TEL NO	
6	E-MAIL ADDRESS	
7	HNC or HND	

8. Full Award Title
e.g. HND in Business/Engineering. Check whether there are named specialist pathways such as Business with Marketing or Electrical Engineering.

9. Programme Area i.e. the ISR/HESA subject category as indicated in identified Institution spreadsheet

10. Mode of Attendance

Please delete/ or highlight

- Full-time
- Part-time day
- Part-time eve
- Part-time day and eve
- Sandwich

Other (give details)

11. Awarding body
i.e. BTEC directly or BTEC under licence to HEI

12. Delivery/Validation Model

Please delete/ or highlight

Indicate who is responsible for:

- a) Validation HEI/FEC/Both
- b) Delivery HEI/FEC/Both
- c) Curriculum Design HEI/FEC/Both
- d) BTEC Scheme - Centre designed or 'off the shelf'

13. Structure of Course

13.1 Course Length - 1/2/3/other years

13.2 Number of modules/units

13.3 Are modules/units CATs rated?

Please delete/ or highlight

Yes	No
-----	----

If Yes please detail volume and level

13.4 Special Entry requirements
i.e. identify non standard qualifications that are not included in UCAS tariff or details of mature application requirements

13.5 Special Target Cohort

e.g. Women returners/ unemployed men on retraining schemes/ Community outreach schemes

13.6 AP(E)L Opportunity

If available, maximum number of modules obtainable by APL/APEL and whether tutor or committee authorised

13.7 Flexible Learning Opportunity

Any details of modules delivered/available in a non-traditional classroom setting e.g. open or distance learning

13.8 Employer involvement

Please highlight where there is any employer involvement in:

- a) curriculum design
- b) work placement
- c) customised provision
- d) sponsorship of an agreed number of students
- e) other (give details)

13.9 Other Special Features

e.g. any work based modules

--

14. Related Foundation Degree
i.e. in same subject

Please delete/ or highlight

Yes	No
-----	----

15. Other Foundation Degree -
e.g. in similar subject

Please delete/ or highlight

Yes	No
-----	----

Give name

--

16. Payment of Fees

Please highlight which of the following represent the contributors to fees for the majority of students:

- i) Employer All/Part/None
- ii) Student All/ Part/None
- iii) LEA All/ Part /None

17. Amount of Fees (HNC only)

Indicate if annually more/less than the appropriate pro rata of the current full-time fee (£1075) and whether includes extras such as a residential

--

18.

Number of Year I Enrolments-2001/02	
--	--

19.

Number of Year 2 Enrolments-2001/02	
--	--

20.

Number of Year 3 enrolments 2001/02	
-------------------------------------	--

21.

Number of Year 1 Enrolments-2000/01	
-------------------------------------	--

22.

Number of Year 2/3 Completers-2000/01	
---------------------------------------	--

23.

Number/proportion of Year 2/3 Progressions-2000/01	
--	--

24.

Number of Year 1 Enrolments-1999/00	
-------------------------------------	--

25.

Number of Year 2/3 Completers-1999/00	
---------------------------------------	--

26.

Number/proportion of Year 2/3 Progressions-1999/00	
--	--

27. Progression Model

Indicate which of the following statements reflects the progression route for most students and whether there has been any change in this/these models since 1999:

Please delete/ or highlight

- a) HEI to same HEI
- b) HEI to specific HEI
- c) HEI to multi-exit
- d) FEC to franchising HEI
- e) FEC to specific HEI(s)
- f) FEC to same FEC
- g) FEC to multi-exit
- h) Combinations of any of above

--

28. Courses

Indicate if students generally progress to

Please delete/ or highlight

- a) Linked course
- b) Named course
- c) many courses

29. Institutions

Provide names of institutions that students most frequently progress to:

--

30. Progression Entry Level(s)

Indicate usual year of entry to degree i.e. Year 1/2/3

--

31. Special Entry Requirements

Indicate if there are special requirements such as minimum number/ % of merits or distinctions or any bridging arrangements

--

32. Do employers continue to financially support students who progress onto Honours Degrees?

Please delete/ or highlight

Yes	No
-----	----

--

33. Willing to Participate in Next Stage of Project?

Please delete/ or highlight

Yes	No
-----	----

Annex 5

Course/subject coverage by institution – telephone survey

Institution	Business	Art Design	Leisure Tourism	Engineering, Environment, Science	Computing	Others
1. (FEC)	1c/d	1d	1d			
2. (FEC)		1d	1d, 1d		1d 1c	
3. (Univ)		1d	1d		1d	
4. (Univ)	3d		3d	1c, 1d	1d	
5. (FEC)	1d	1d		1d		
6. (FEC)	1c/d		1c/d		1d, 1c	
7. (Univ)	1c/d		1d			
8. (Univ)	1d, 1c				1d, 1c/d	
9. (Univ)	1c/d			1c, 1c/d	1c, 1d	
10. (FEC)			1d, 1c			1d, 1c early childhood studies
11. (FEC)	1d			1d, 1c		
12. Univ)	1d			1d, 1c, 1c		
13. Univ)		1d (fashion)	1d		1d	1d public administration
14. (FEC)	1c, 1d			1c		
15. Univ)				1c, 1d, 1c		
16. Univ)	1d	1d		1d	1d	
17. (FEC)			1c/d			1c care practice
18. Univ)	1d		1d (wine)		1c, 1d	
19. Univ)	1c/d	1d		3c/d	2c/d	
20. Univ)				1d		
21. Univ)	1d	1d		1c	1d	
22. (IHE)		1d				
23. (FEC)	1c, 1d	1c (pop music), 1d(theatre /dance)				
24. (IHE)	2c, 1d		1d			
25. Univ)	1d				1d, 1c	
26. (FEC)				1c, c/d		1c/d health & social care
27. (FEC)	1c/d					1d, 1d, 1c
28. (Univ)	1c		1d		1d 1c	
29. (Univ)		1d			1c/d	
30. (Univ)	1d					
31. (FEC)	1c/d	1d	1d	1c/d		1c care practice
32. (IHE)						1d (wide range of subjects)

Annex 6

Template for fieldwork visits to 20 case study institutions

National policy factors:

- Does Edexcel policy and practice impact on progression? If so how?
- Have recent changes in funding impacted on progression?

Institutional factors

- How do the institutional partnerships and arrangements for collaboration affect progression?
- Is progression an important objective for the institutions or not?
- How do recruitment/admissions practices impact on progression? (e.g. Is the HNC/D used as a potential route to a degree for students without the usual A level requirements? Are weaker students allocated to HNDs and stronger students to degrees?)
- Progression is only possible if the students complete – is retention an issue? Is anything being done about it?
- Are there institutional cultures (FE or HE) that affect student progression? Are HNC/D students viewed/treated differently from other HE students? Do they work in a similar or a very different world?

Course/subject factors:

- Why are there differences in progression between subject areas? How do you account these?
- Why do 0% progress from some courses and almost 100% from others?
- Why are there changes in progression patterns from one year to the next?
- How does the articulation between the HNC/D and the degree course(s) affect progression? Is the package designed with retention/progression as a key goal? Or as a possible option for 'good' students?

Student factors:

- Do HNC/D students need a local degree?
- Are there institutional cultures (FE or HE) which affect student progression? Does HE or FE feel more comfortable or supportive to study?
- Do institutions treat HNC/D students like 'real' students or second class citizens?
- Are issues such as gender, race, disability and so on, factors in progression?
- Are degree fees an issue?
- Are there plenty of jobs for people with HNC/D?

Labour market factors:

- What is the significance of the national labour market? For example, are there plenty of interesting employment opportunities for non-graduates in particular fields – computing or media design for example?
- What is the significance of the local labour market? Is there a major local employer that has influence on what is offered? Is there a particular sector of industry that is strong in the local area? How does this affect progression from HNC/D to degrees? For example, do these local employers recruit students with HNC/Ds?
- What is the significance of the industry/sector norms and requirements? For example, in the catering industry is the HND in hospitality recognised as an end qualification and the norm for entry into employment in the sector? Are there equivalents in other sectors? Is there a professional body involved in some way? How does this affect progression, if it does?
- Are employers who are willing to pay all or part HNC/D fees unwilling to pay fees for a top-up to a degree? If so why?

Questions for student groups:

- Who is intending to progress to a degree? Directly or via another qualification?
- Why? and Why not?
- What influences the decision?
- How important are labour market requirements? Are jobs available locally?
- What is the value of the HNC/D? As a qualification in its own right? As a stepping stone to something else?
- Do they need to study locally?
- How difficult has studying been so far?
- Have fees, loans been an issue?
- What options are available for progression?
- Are there any pressures to continue / go to particular course?
- Is the transfer process straightforward?
- Are there any particular problems/worries about it?
- How do they feel they are treated in relation to degree students?

ANNEX 7

Data provided by PWC Foundation Degree Support team BIR June 2002

(N.B. incomplete data at the time of writing - Based on 82% return of prototype programmes and 45% of ASN-only programmes. Respondents could reply to more than one answer within a question so that some questions were not restricted to one option.)

Section 1: Introduction

- This document presents the results of the sixth Baseline Information Return (BIR), which was conducted by the Foundation Degree (FD) Support Team in June 2002. The BIR was administered by e-mail to all prototype consortia and ASN-only consortia delivering FD programmes which had commenced before March 2002. It was distributed in late June 2002 in the form of a short, electronic questionnaire.
- The main aim of the BIR is to provide consortia members and officials in HEFCE/DfES with key baseline information which will assist with the planning and implementation process for FDs.
- To date, completed questionnaires have been received in relation to 28 out of 34 (82%) prototype programmes, and 10 out of 22 (45%) ASN-only programmes.

Section 2: Progression routes – key findings

- 47% of all programmes provide a progression route to *one* Honours Degree, and 39% provide progression to a small number of specified Honours Degrees.
- 84% of programmes intend to provide the 'top up' to the Honours Degree, or the equivalent thereof, at the Higher Educational Institution (HEI) that validates the FD
- The majority of programmes (76%) require students only to pass the FD and bridging course to progress onto an Honours Degree, compared to 18% of programmes which require students to obtain a threshold above the pass level and 16% of programmes which are required to meet other requirements.
- 71% of programmes intend to guarantee a place for FD graduates that meet the criteria to progress, compared to 21% of programmes in which students' will be subject to normal competition for a place. 58% of programmes estimated that more than half of students on their programmes would progress onto an Honours Degree and for those programmes which have both full-time and part-time students it is considered that progression will be more common amongst full-time students.
- 68% of respondents considered that there would be *no* transitional problems for students moving from an FD to an Honours Degree, or equivalent.
- A bridging course is intended to be offered between the FD and final year of an Honours Degree for 53% of programmes. For those programmes which do not intend to offer a bridging course, 56% of programmes will progress students directly to an existing Honours Degree, and 44% of programmes will progress students directly to a bespoke 'top-up' year.
- In relation to those programmes which offer a bridging course, it is compulsory for students to undertake this in 89% of programmes. The bridging course is considered to be roughly equivalent to 30% of an academic year in 65% of programmes.
- Credits are to be awarded by 53% of programmes for completion of the bridging course.
- 78% of programmes intend to include developing research/study assessment within the bridging course and 56% will include a focus on subject content.
- 72% of programmes will determine successful completion of the bridging course through coursework assessment.
- 50% of programmes will provide the bridging course at the institution that provided the FD and 50% of programmes will provide it at the institution providing the 3rd year of the Honours Degree.

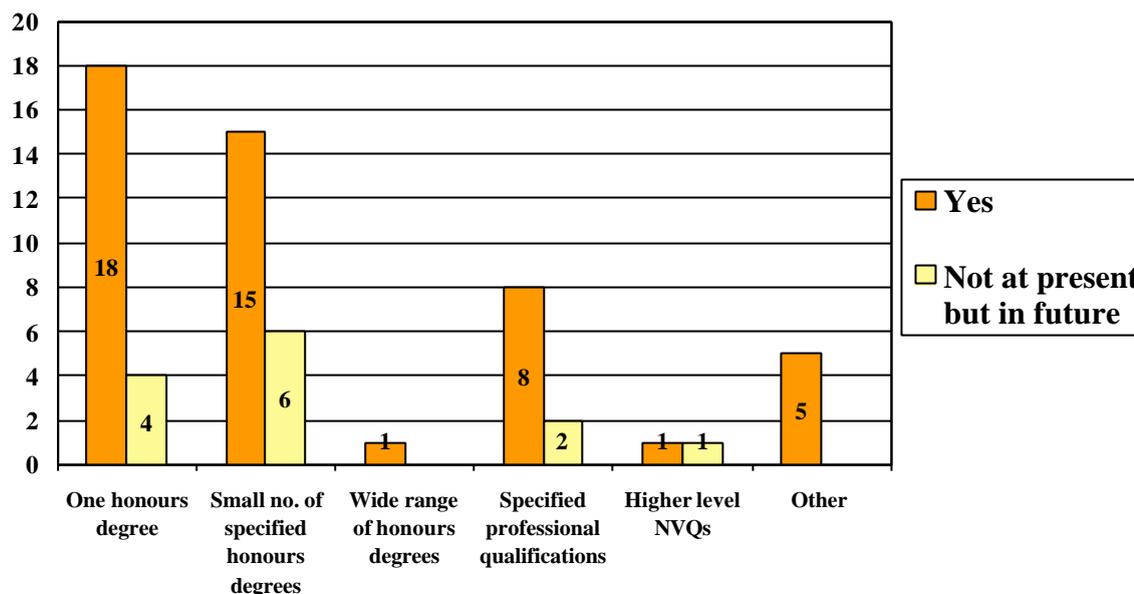
ANNEX A: Progression routes – detailed information

(Data provided by courtesy of pwc Foundation Degree Support team)

1) What higher level qualifications does the FD offer progression routes to?

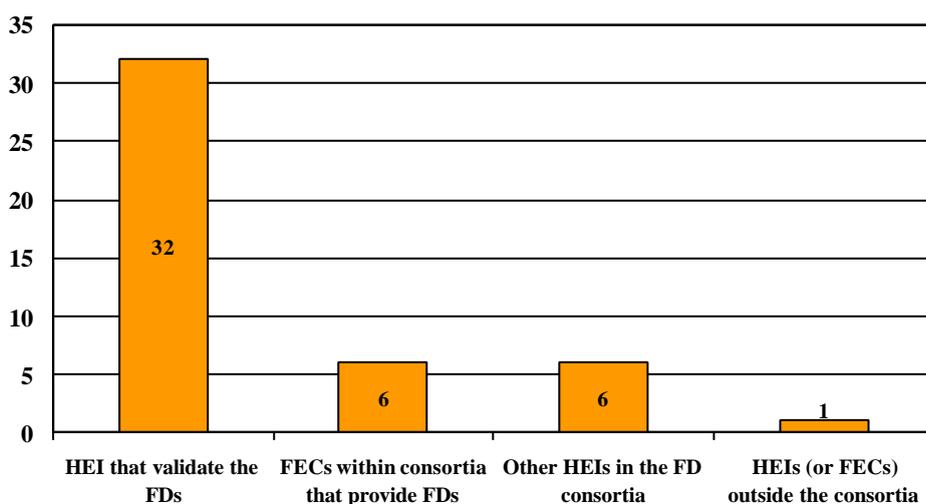
Number of FD programmes

Base: 38 programmes, including 28 prototype and 10 ASN-only programmes.



2) For those that progress, where will the 'top up' to the Honours Degree be provided?

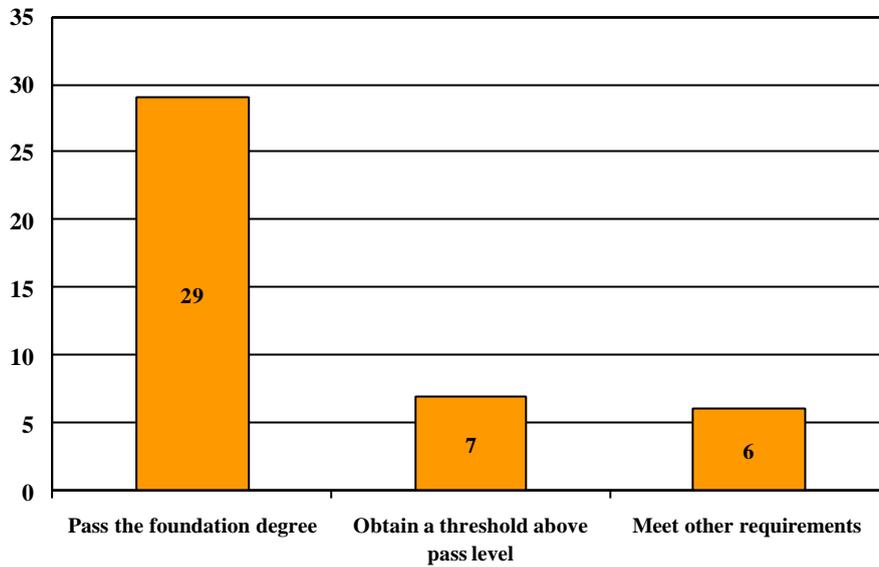
Number of FD programmes



Base: 38 programmes, including 28 prototype and 10 ASN-only

3) What will students be required to do in order to progress beyond the FD (including to a bridging course)?

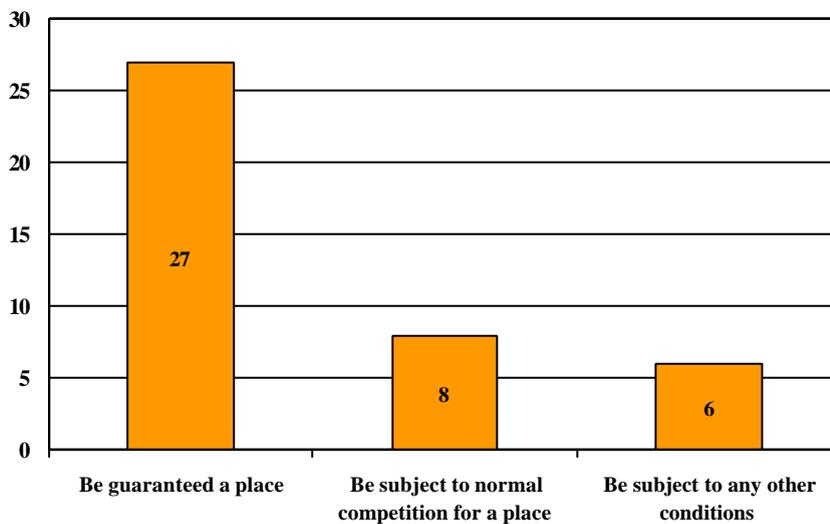
Number of FD programmes



.Base: 38 programmes, including 28 prototype and 10 ASN-only programmes

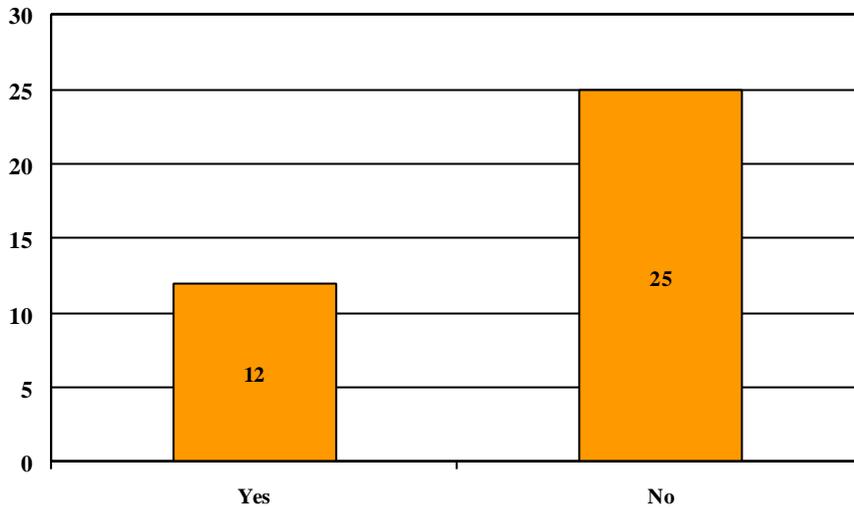
4) Will FD graduates who meet these criteria for progression...

Number of FD programmes



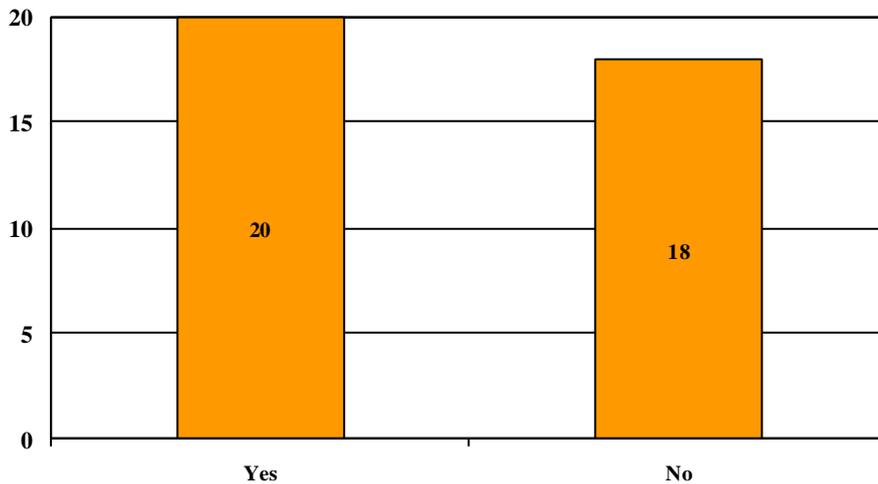
Base: 38 programmes, including 28 prototype and 10 ASN-only programmes

5) Given the vocational nature of FDs, would you consider there to be any transitional problems in moving to an Honours Degree for your FD students?
Number of FD programmes



Base: 37 programmes, including 27 prototype and 10 ASN-only programmes.

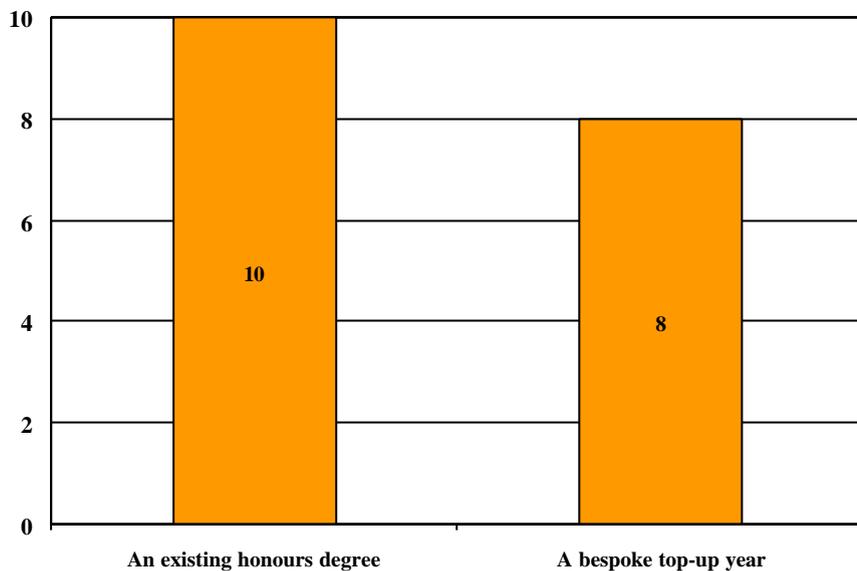
6) Do you plan to offer a bridging course between the FD and the final year of an Honours Degree?
Number of FD programmes



Base: 38 programmes, including 28 prototype and 10 ASN-only programmes.

7) If no, will students progress directly to the 3^d year of...

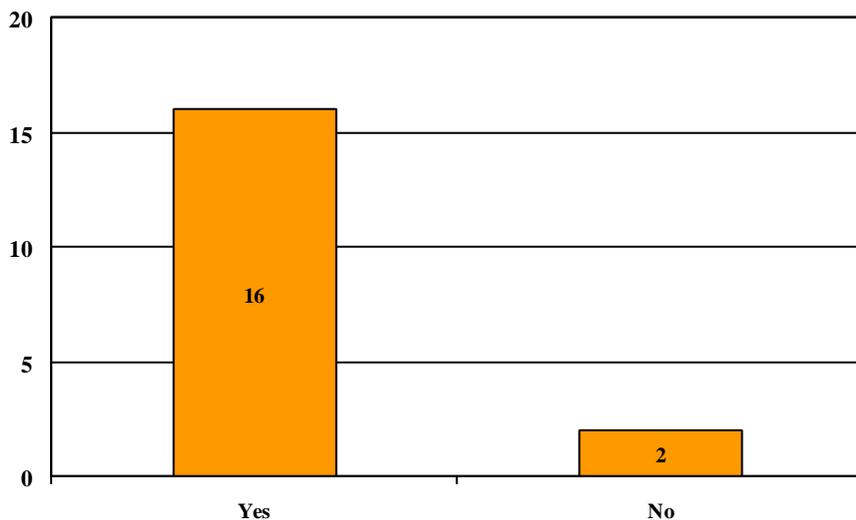
Number of FD programmes



Base: 18 programmes, including 10 prototype and 8 ASN-only programmes

8) Is the bridging course compulsory for students wishing to enter the final year of an Honours Degree?

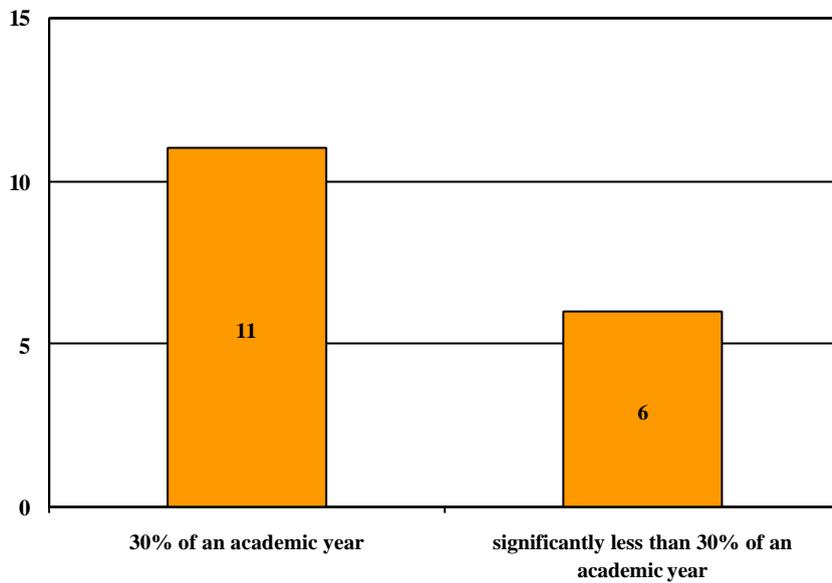
Number of FD programmes



Base: 18 programmes, including 16 prototype and 2 ASN-only programmes.

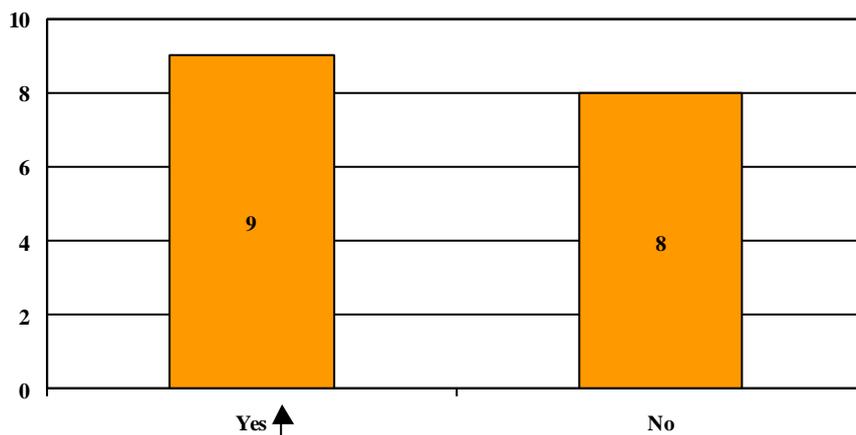
9) In terms of the volume of study or credits involved in a bridging course, what is it roughly equivalent to?

Number of FD programmes



Base: 17 programmes, including 15 prototype and 2 ASN-only programmes.

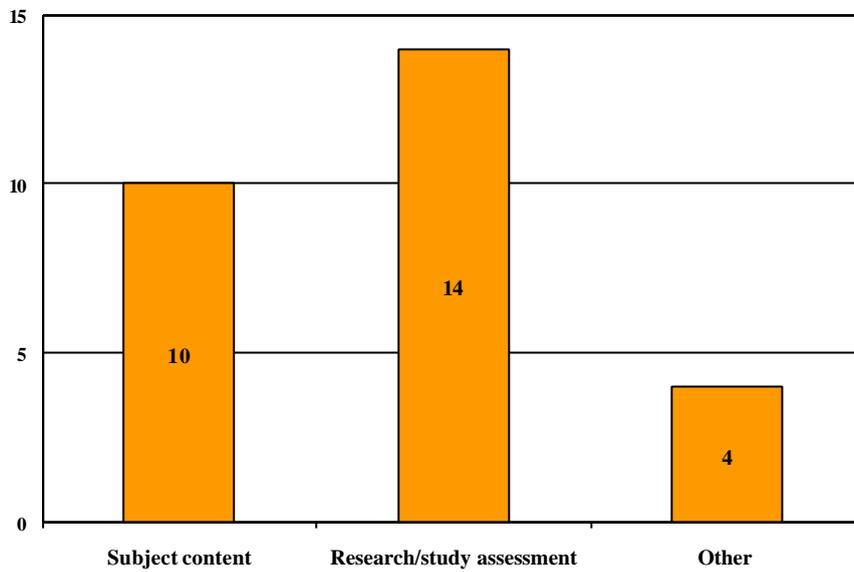
10) Will credits be awarded for the bridging course? Number of FD programmes



Ranging from 15-40 credits

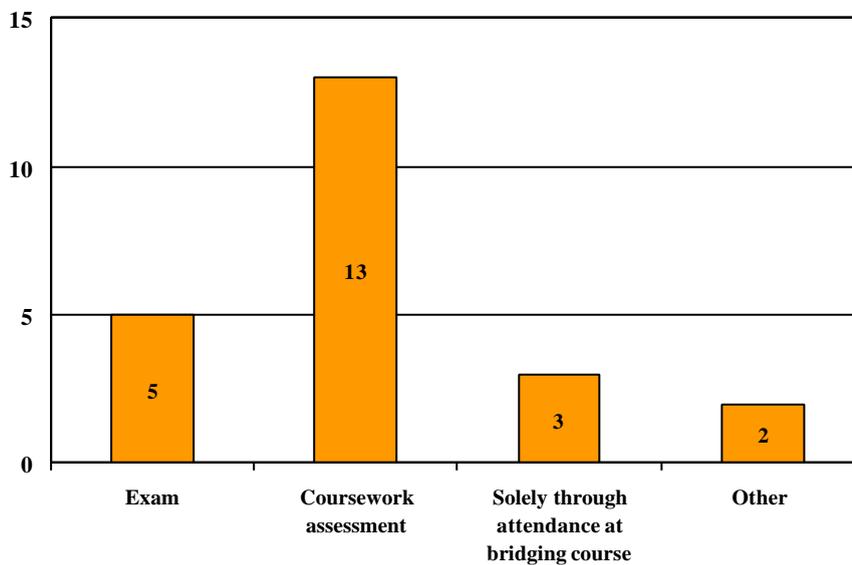
Base: 17 programmes, including 15 prototype and 2 ASN-only programmes

**11) What does the bridging course mainly focus on developing?
Number of FD programmes**



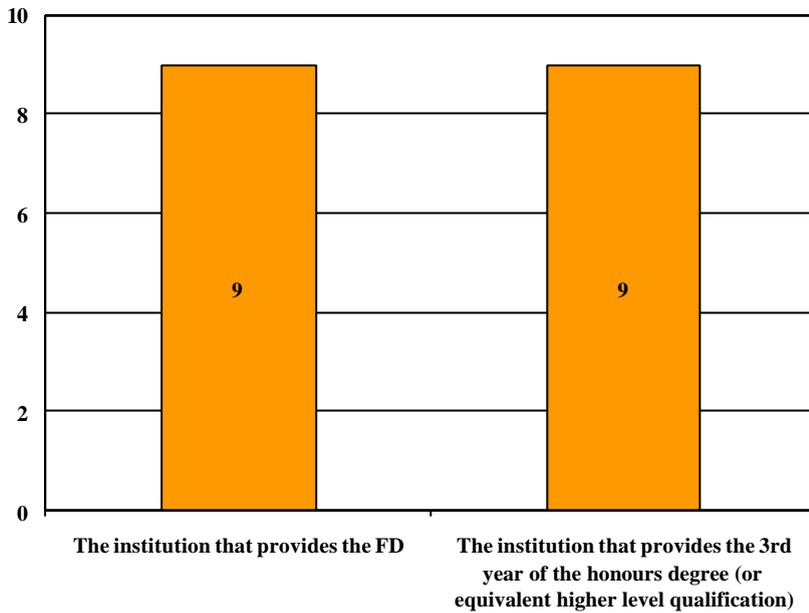
Base: 18 programmes, including 16 prototype and 2 ASN-only programmes.

**12) How will successful completion of the bridging course be determined?
Number of FD programmes**



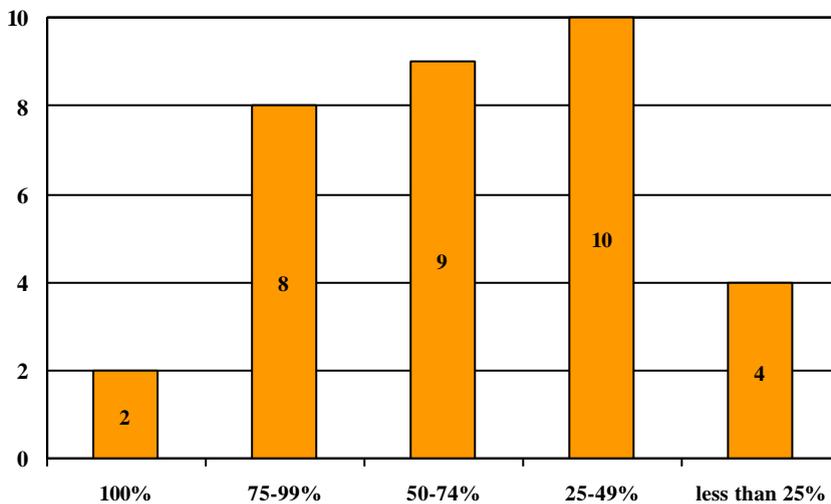
Base: 18 programmes, including 16 prototype and 2 ASN-only programmes

13) Where will the students study the bridging course? Number of FD programmes



Base: 18 programmes, including 16 prototype and 2 ASN-only programmes.

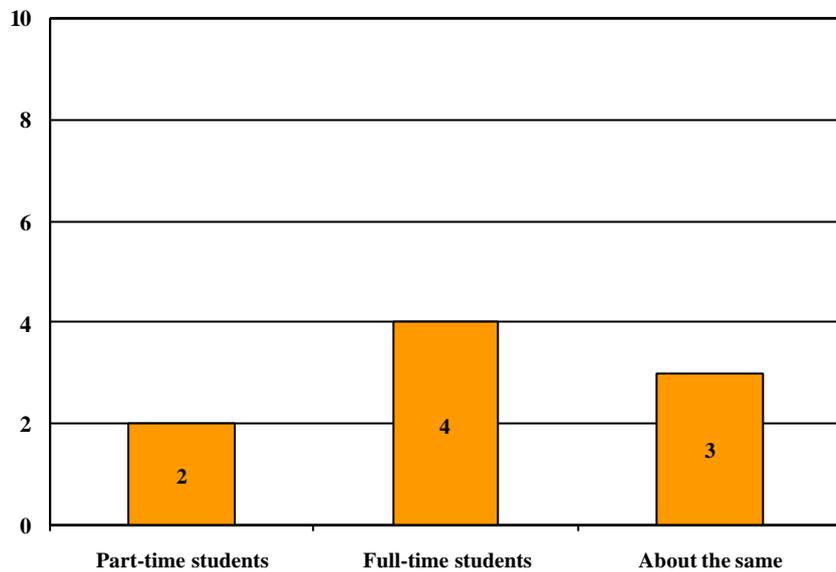
14) Can you provide your current best estimate as to what proportion of students on your FD is likely to progress to an Honours Degree (or equivalent) after completion of the FD? Number of FD programmes



Base: 33 programmes, including 27 prototype and 6 ASN-only programmes

15) If the FD course has both full-time and part-time students, which do you think progression will be greater?

Number of FD programmes



Base: 9 programmes, including 9 prototype and 0 ASN-only programmes

Annex 8

Project Staffing

The study was commissioned by the HEFCE and carried out between October 2001 and June 2002. It was undertaken by research teams from the LSDA and the University of Sheffield, with Dr Maggie Greenwood as the Project Manager. The LSDA team comprised Dr Maggie Greenwood, Priscilla Kendall, Jim Crawley, Adrian Dent, Derek Frampton and Sandra Lawrence. The Sheffield team comprised Dr Pat Davies, Dr Colin McCaig, Professor Gareth Parry and Jenny Williams.

Following an analysis and tabulation of statistics by the University of Sheffield, the telephone survey and the fieldwork visits to case study institutions were undertaken jointly by the LSDA and Sheffield teams.

Dr Pat Davies authored the first section of the report, based on analysis of HESA/FEFC data and a modelling of progression patterns. Dr Maggie Greenwood and Priscilla Kendall authored the other sections of the report, including the findings and conclusions drawn from the telephone survey and the fieldwork visits.

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