

Evaluation of the Early Years Sector-Endorsed Foundation Degree: Findings from the Final Student Survey

Dawn Snape, Jennifer Parfremment, Steven Finch
National Centre for Social Research

Research Report
No 838

*Evaluation of the Early Years
Sector-Endorsed Foundation Degree:
Findings from the Final Student Survey*

*Dawn Snape, Jennifer Parfremment, Steven Finch
National Centre for Social Research*

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education and Skills.

© National Centre for Social Research 2007
ISBN 978 1 84478 904 7

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	0
1.1	Background.....	0
1.2	Aims of the student survey	1
1.3	Sampling	1
1.4	Methodology and response	3
1.5	Guidance for interpretation of the data	3
2	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
3	STUDENT PROFILES	7
3.1	Student profiles	7
3.1.1	Socio-demographic circumstances	7
	<i>Age</i>	7
	<i>Ethnicity</i>	7
	<i>Household type</i>	7
	<i>Household benefit receipt</i>	8
3.1.2	Previous work setting	8
3.1.3	Prior qualifications and experience	9
3.1.4	Overview of students' participation in the course.....	11
	<i>Routes through the course</i>	11
	<i>Mode of attendance</i>	12
	<i>Length of time on the course</i>	13
	<i>Institution type</i>	13
	<i>Financial support</i>	13
	<i>Accreditation of prior learning or experiential learning (APL and APEL)</i>	14
3.2	Profile of current students.....	14
3.2.1	Socio-demographic circumstances	14
3.3	Overview of course experiences.....	15
	<i>Satisfaction with teaching</i>	15
	<i>Satisfaction with personal tutors</i>	15
	<i>Satisfaction with mentor for the work-based learning aspect of the course</i>	16
	<i>Satisfaction with the work-based learning aspect of the course</i>	16
	<i>Help with developing study skills</i>	16
	<i>Satisfaction with special support</i>	16
3.3.1	Benefits and problems with the course	17
	<i>Work-related benefits of the course</i>	17
	<i>Work-related problems with the course</i>	18
3.3.2	Anticipated barriers to completing the course	19
	<i>Financial concerns</i>	19
	<i>Other concerns</i>	20
3.3.3	Reasons for non-completion.....	21
	<i>Financial concerns</i>	21
	<i>Other reasons</i>	22
3.4	Summary.....	23
4	PATHWAYS OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE COMPLETED THE FOUNDATION DEGREE	24
4.1	Current main activity.....	24
4.2	Employment outcomes	25
4.2.1	Level of responsibility	25
4.2.2	Change in income.....	27
4.3	Summary.....	28

5	WERE STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF THE COURSE FULFILLED?	29
5.1	Work-related aspirations	29
	<i>To gain new skills for a job</i>	30
	<i>To receive recognition of existingskills.....</i>	31
	<i>To change to a different type of work within the early years field.....</i>	32
	<i>To increase the chances of a payrise</i>	33
	<i>To increase chances of a promotion at work.....</i>	34
5.2	Non work-related aspirations	35
	<i>To improve knowledge or ability in the subject</i>	35
	<i>To gain a higher qualification in early years</i>	36
	<i>To be able to go on to another course</i>	37
	<i>To find out more about the subject generally</i>	38
	<i>To improve study skills.....</i>	39
	<i>To gain more confidence, self-esteem or independence</i>	40
	<i>To gain a qualification in early years for the first time.....</i>	41
5.3	Summary.....	41
6	FUTURE PLANS OF STUDENTS	43
6.1	Expected future work setting	43
6.2	Expected future role	45
6.3	Students' expectations about future courses	46
6.4	Summary.....	47
7	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	48
	<i>What were the characterisitcs of EYSEFD students?.....</i>	48
	<i>What were the key features of students' participation in the degree?.....</i>	48
	<i>How have things changed for students who completed the course?</i>	49
	<i>Did the EYSEFD meet students' expectations?</i>	50
	<i>What are EYSEFD students future plans?</i>	50
	<i>Why did some students not complete the course?</i>	51
	<i>Key issues for consideration.....</i>	53

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Early Years Sector-Endorsed Foundation Degree (EYSEFD) is a vocational qualification launched in the autumn of 2003. The EYSEFD is part of a range of measures introduced to raise standards in the early years education and childcare sectors. The qualification was intended to give early years practitioners, teaching assistants and play workers greater recognition for their skills and professional experience and to create a new level of professional practice described as Senior Practitioner. Apart from providing a framework for consistency and quality in the training of practitioners in the Early Years sector, the degree is also intended to enhance professional development by enabling career progression both within this area and to other related sectors. The Foundation Degree provides a pathway for those who wish to progress onto the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS)¹ or to becoming qualified teachers by linking with various routes to Qualified Teacher Status, including those that are employment-based.

The EYSEFD is organised into different routes, each with a different set of learning requirements, corresponding to different career orientations. These are: (1) Senior Practitioners in Early Years working with children from birth to three years; (2) Senior Practitioners in Early Years working with foundation stage children; (3) Senior Practitioners in playwork settings working with children from four to eight years; and (4) the Teaching Assistant route. The Statement of Requirement for the EYSEFD emphasises the importance of providing adequate support to students undertaking the Degree as learners are expected to *'be performing demanding work roles and have complex domestic situations'*. For this reason, a range of course design has been used including: the availability of a variety of learning modes (e.g., distance and online learning): individually paced learning whereby students control the speed at which they progress through the course (i.e., a minimum of 2 years but possibly as long as 'three or more years' to complete); work-based learning with support and mentoring in the workplace; and peer group support.

During the 2003/4 academic year, the DfES introduced a two year student support package to improve the level of qualifications and contribute to the development of the early years workforce. The package was designed to encourage learners onto the course, to support them and to optimise their chances of success. It provided for employer supply cover and mentor support and, for part-time students, a bursary and financial assistance with fees and childcare costs. Students were also eligible for the loan of a laptop computer and printer through a special initiative by the DfES. In September 2004, following a change in national student support arrangements that offered provision for fees and childcare costs, the DfES decided to continue to provide for employer and mentoring costs and the loan of the laptop. From September 2006, following a review of the EYSEFD package by the CWDC, institutions are now offered £600 per student to help towards meeting student's information and support needs, including their mentoring, employer supply and ICT costs. In addition, the DfES has given, as a part of the Home Grown Graduate

¹ The Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) was introduced in September 2006. More details on the various training routes/pathways to EYPS are available in the CWDC's EYP prospectus which can be found on their website at : <http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/>

Incentive, local authorities discretion to pay an incentive of £2,000 each year for up to three years to the private, voluntary or independent (PVI) setting of an employee committed to proceed onto the Early Years Professional by first undertaking an EYSEFD.

1.2 Aims of the student survey

In August 2002, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) commissioned the *National Centre for Social Research* (NatCen) to evaluate the introduction of the EYSEFD. One component of the evaluation is a longitudinal telephone survey of students who began the course with the first full student intake in the autumn of 2003. A key objective of the student survey is to measure the participation and achievement of students undertaking the Foundation Degree course. It also explores students' views of the course, reasons for take up of the Degree and whether expectations have been met. It will provide an indication of the relationship between methods of course delivery and student outcomes.

The longitudinal design involves tracking the progress of the autumn 2003 intake of students throughout the degree course and immediately afterwards. The same students have therefore been surveyed at three points: 3-6 months after beginning the course in early 2004; approximately nine months later in autumn 2004 and approximately twenty-two months later in the late summer of 2006. Their motivations in taking the course as well as their experiences and views of it have been measured over time and are analysed here particularly in relation to student retention and achievement of the Foundation Degree.

This report presents the findings of the final student survey, conducted between August and October 2006. A number of other studies have also been undertaken as part of the overall evaluation of the introduction of the EYSEFD. These include: qualitative case-studies of the introduction of the Foundation Degree among the pre-pilot and pilot institutions; a postal survey among institutions offering the course to obtain aggregate statistical information about the institutions and students involved in the Foundation Degree over the first two years of the course; a qualitative study examining course delivery strategies in a range of institutional settings; qualitative interviews among former students to explore barriers and facilitators to completion of the course, and qualitative research with employers who have been involved with the work-based component of the course to obtain their views of its impacts and value to employers.

1.3 Sampling

The original sample design for the student surveys involved drawing a stratified sample of institutions offering the EYSEFD and from within these, a random sample of students from the autumn 2003 intake. However, due to concerns about data protection among the institutions offering the EYSEFD, it proved necessary to conduct a student consent exercise whereby students were asked for their consent to participate in the survey. Those who were willing to take part in the study were asked to fill in a form providing their contact details to the researchers. Every institution that had received DfES recognition by September 2003 and their affiliated partner colleges was asked to distribute explanatory letters to students about the study along with consent forms to be filled in and returned in a sealed envelope either to the course co-ordinator or to the research team (reply-paid envelopes were supplied where the latter method was used). The consent exercise took place

between May and October of 2003. In some cases, institutions distributed the forms to students who were offered a place on the course during the summer of 2003, while others waited and distributed the forms on Induction Day to students just beginning the course. Finally, some course co-ordinators waited and distributed the forms in classes soon after the course had begun.

Figures from the D/ES on the total maximum number of funded student places for the autumn 2003 intake to the course was 2,852 students at 130 institutions. This also includes students at institutions which were recognised after August and whose students did not take part in the student consent exercise. After excluding cases where the information provided was incomplete or illegible, a sample of 971 students signed and returned a student consent for indicating that they would be willing to participate in the research. This suggests that approximately 34 per cent of the autumn 2003 intake consented to take part in the Wave 1 survey.

In the report of the baseline student survey, characteristics of the students participating in the survey were compared to: (1) the findings of the Childcare and Early Years Workforce Survey (2002/3) to determine how closely the sample reflected the characteristics of the wider early years workforce, and; (2) to the findings from the first administrative database survey which gathered aggregate statistical information on EYSEFD students across all (participating) recognised institutions. The findings showed that respondents to the survey were similar to the wider early years workforce in terms of gender, ethnicity, and disability. In terms of age, survey participants were more likely to be in the middle age ranges (aged 26-50) and less likely to be aged 25 or less or 51 and over than those in the wider early years workforce. This is probably attributable to the entrance requirements of the EYSEFD of a minimum of 2 years work in the field and a Level 3 qualification limiting the number of younger course participants.

Findings from other surveys also consistently find that participation in adult education declines with increasing age, so those in the 51+ age group are not surprisingly under-represented among this sample of EYSEFD students in comparison to the wider workforce. The age distribution of the sample closely resembled the age distribution of students reported in the administrative database findings, suggesting that the survey respondents are not dissimilar to the wider population of EYSEFD students.

The only area in which there appeared to be a consistent bias is in relation to the highest level of qualification where the survey respondents were more likely to have a level 4 qualification than those in the wider workforce. The administrative database did not collect information on highest levels of qualification, so it is unclear whether the survey respondents differed from the wider population of EYSEFD students in this regard. However it is important to bear in mind that this first cohort of EYSEFD students may have attracted the most senior and qualified in the field who may have been among the first to do the course².

The surveys covered students from a large number of institutions. There were 119 institutions represented in the sample for the Wave 1 survey³, contributing between one and 35 students each. About a third of these institutions contributed only one or

² These findings are reported in: Blom and Snape (2004) *Evaluation of the Early Years Sector-Endorsed Foundation Degree: Report of the Baseline Student Survey*, SureStart.

³ This represents 92% of all recognised institutions and affiliated colleges offering the course in the autumn of 2003.

two students while, at the upper end, there were 26 institutions that contributed more than 10 students. The mean number of students per institution was seven. Due to attrition, the number of institutions represented in the sample fell to 94⁴ at the Wave 2 survey and 80⁵ at this final survey.

1.4 Methodology and response

The student survey involved a computer assisted telephone interview (CATI), of approximately 35 minutes duration, though the final survey primarily exploring outcomes was shorter⁶. The survey was conducted between August and October 2006 among those who had taken part in the Wave 1 and Wave 2 surveys and who consented to be re-contacted for a further interview. Respondents to the final survey were based at 80 institutions.

Of the 642 respondents who were interviewed at Wave 2, 638 agreed to be re-contacted and 566 interviews were completed for the final survey. This represents a response rate of 89 per cent of the Wave 3 issued sample, and 58 per cent of the sample issued at the baseline stage. This is equivalent to 20 per cent of all students who started the course as part of the autumn 2003 intake, according to figures provided by the DfES⁷.

Subjects covered in the interview included:

- Factual information about respondents' participation on the course
- Course experiences and aspirations in taking the course
- Impacts of the course on respondents' work and personal lives
- Potential barriers to completion of the course (among those still on the course)
- Reasons for leaving the course (among those who had left without completing the course)
- Future plans for education and employment
- Update of key demographic information (i.e., changes since the baseline stage)

1.5 Guidance for interpretation of the data

The percentages presented in the tables have been calculated from the responding bases. Base descriptions are shown at the bottom of the table, along with any notes appropriate for guiding interpretation. Respondents who did not answer a question have been excluded from the calculations, unless stated otherwise. The number of missing cases are not generally reported, as in the majority of questions this figure is very low. When a 'total' column is presented, as well as columns for different sub-groups, the sum of the bases for the sub-groups may not be the same as the base of the 'total' column, because of missing cases.

⁴ This represents 72% of all recognised institutions and affiliated colleges offering the course in the autumn of 2003.

⁵ This represents 62% of all recognised institutions and affiliated colleges offering the course in the autumn of 2003.

⁶ Average interview duration of the final student survey was approximately 15 minutes.

⁷ This estimate is based on the number of students responding to the final survey (n=566) as a proportion of the total maximum number of DfES funded student places for the autumn 2003 intake to the course (2,852 students).

Due to rounding, percentage figures may not add up to exactly 100 per cent, but may total between 98 per cent and 102 per cent. A note is included when percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents could choose more than one reply.

The following symbols have been used in the tables:

- [] to indicate a percentage based on fewer than 50 respondents
- * to indicate a percentage value of less than 0.5 per cent
- to indicate a percentage value of zero

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

This executive summary highlights the key findings of the final student survey. At this stage most students had completed the course and were able to comment on the impact it had had on their lives and on their future plans. Most course completers viewed their experiences of the course favourably and reported positive outcomes in terms of employment and further study on completion of the course.

Student characteristics

The characteristics of course completers were consistent with the general profile of EYSEFD students at the baseline and first follow up survey.

- Course completers were virtually all female (less than 1 per cent were men), White (7 per cent were from an ethnic minority background) and most (77 per cent) were aged 36 or older. Most (68 per cent) lived in a double headed household with at least one child.
- Eighty-four per cent of completers held an NVQ level equivalent of level 3 or above prior to starting the course and nearly all (90 per cent) had an early years qualification prior to starting the Foundation Degree. Ninety-five per cent had worked in the early years field for at least 2 years.
- Fifty-eight per cent of completers completed the course in 2005 or before while the remaining 42 per cent completed in 2006. Three-quarters of students had studied for the course part-time. Almost half specified Foundation Stage children as the focus of their studies, 38 per cent mentioned children from birth to 8 years and 10 per cent mentioned a teaching assistant focus.
- Course completers were generally satisfied with their experiences of the course and perceived more benefits of the course than non completers. Satisfaction was highest with the quality of teaching on the course and the work-based learning aspect of the degree.
- The characteristics of students who had not completed the course were broadly comparable with completers. The main differences between the groups were that:
 - Non completers were more likely to receive means tested benefits (suggesting non completers as a whole had lower incomes),
 - Nearly half of non completers had not specified the focus of their studies at Wave 2 (one year into the course) compared to just 2 per cent of completers,
 - Non completers showed slightly lower levels of satisfaction and perceived more work-related problems, financial concerns and other concerns associated with the course,
- The time commitment required by the course was the most common 'other' reason given for why students had not completed the EYSEFD. Other reasons included health problems that prevented course attendance and the impact of the course on students' partners and families.

Impacts of the course for course completers

- Nearly all students who had completed the course were in some form of paid work. Only 1 per cent were unemployed and looking for work. Almost all reported that their current job was related to early education or childcare.
- Forty-two per cent of course completers had changed their main job since the Wave 2 interview. Those who had changed jobs reported a larger increase in their level of responsibility and in their income than students who had stayed in the same job. A large proportion of students who had changed jobs (78 per cent) and who had stayed in the same job (47 per cent) said that they thought their change in income was related to the course.

Were students' course expectations fulfilled?

- Overall, students' course expectations were very well met.
- The most commonly cited work-related aspirations, such as gaining new skills for your job and receiving recognition of your skills, were particularly well met. The least well met aspiration was to increase the chances of a pay rise. Non-completers were more likely to report lower levels of satisfaction with how well work-related aspirations had been met.
- Non work-related aspirations were also very well met, including to improve knowledge or ability in the subject and to gain a higher qualification in early years.

Future plans

- Students showed a firm commitment to continuing to work in the early years or childcare field. Nearly all (95 per cent) expected to work in an early years or childcare setting, most commonly in a primary school.
- Just under half of students said that they expected to be in a senior early years role such as a manager, head or early-years co-ordinator in future, while about half expected to be an employee (including some who expected to be in a job at a higher level than they were currently working).
- Non completers were also less likely than completers to anticipate a future role at a higher level than their current job. Most expected to stay at the same level.
- A third of course completers reported that they had already taken or were currently on another course which built on the Foundation Degree. A further 50 per cent said that they were fairly or very likely to go on another course. Almost all (87 per cent) said that the subject of the course was early years or childcare.
- Eleven per cent of non completers had gone on another course in early years or childcare after leaving the EYSEFD.

3 STUDENT PROFILES

This chapter presents a profile of the characteristics of EYSEFD students and details their course experiences. Comparisons are made between respondents who had completed the course and obtained the Foundation Degree by the time of the Wave 3 interview ('course completers') and those who had not completed the course, either because they had left before completing or because they were taking a temporary break ('non course completers'). Current students, who were still on the course at the Wave 3 interview, are discussed separately at the end of this chapter, due to the small number of respondents in this group.

3.1 Student profiles

This section presents profiles of 474 course completers and 66 non course completers (this group comprised 58 respondents who had finished the course before completing it and 8 who were taking a temporary break from it but intended to return).

Analysis is based on a combination of measures at all three waves of interviewing, as some questions were not re-asked of students in the later interviews. Unless otherwise stated, those who refused to answer or who said 'don't know' to any given question have been excluded from the bases and percentages reported.

3.1.1 *Socio-demographic circumstances*

Students' socio-demographic circumstances were recorded at the baseline interview in 2003.

Age

Course completers ranged between 22 and 57 years of age. About a quarter of these were aged 35 years or younger (23 per cent). Similar proportions were aged between 36 and 40 (23 per cent), between 41 and 45 (29 per cent) and aged 46 or older (25 per cent). Non completers had a similar age profile.

Ethnicity

The majority of course completers stated that they were White (93 per cent). A further 3 per cent said they were of Black or Black British origin, 2 per cent of Asian or Asian British origin, 1 per cent of mixed origin and 1 per cent of another origin. Non course completers had a comparable profile; 89 per cent White, 5 per cent Asian or Asian British origin, 3 per cent of Black or Black British origin and 3 per cent of a mixed origin).

Household type

Most (68 per cent) course completers lived with a partner (i.e. husband, wife, boyfriend or girlfriend) and at least one child while 11 per cent lived as a single parent household. The remaining 21 per cent did not live with a child. Non completers had a broadly similar profile.

Household benefit receipt

Just under three-quarters (72 per cent) of course completers reported that they received a benefit at Wave 3. As Table 3.1 shows, the most commonly received benefits were universal (non-means tested) benefits, such as Child Benefit (92 per cent), or a credit or allowance, such as Child Tax Credit (49 per cent) and Working Tax Credit (25 per cent). Non completers were more likely than completers to receive Working Tax Credit (38 per cent), Council Tax Benefit (16 per cent) and Housing Benefit (11 per cent). This suggests that non completers as a whole had lower incomes than completers.

Table 3.1: State benefits and allowances received by the respondent's household.

	Course Completer	Non Course Completer
	%	%
Child Benefit	92	89
Child Tax Credit	49	46
Working Tax Credit	25	38
Council Tax Benefit	6	16
A pension	6	4
Disability Living Allowance	4	4
Housing Benefit	2	11
Statutory Maternity Pay	2	4
Incapacity Benefit	2	4
Income Support	1	4
Jobseeker's Allowance	1	4
Invalid Care Allowance	*	-
Severe Disablement Allowance	*	-
Other	-	-
<i>Base (395)</i>	<i>340</i>	<i>55</i>

Base: All respondents whose households received state benefits or allowances

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents could give more than one reply.

3.1.2 Previous work setting

Almost all course completers were employed where they did their work-based learning at Wave 2 (97 per cent). Just over half were employed in a school setting (Table 3.2). Other commonly reported settings included pre-school and nursery settings, mentioned by 18 and 22 per cent of completers respectively. One per cent of completers reported working in a private home, and the remaining 5 per cent somewhere else (not specified).

Table 3.2: Previous work setting

	Course Completer	Non Course Completer
	%	%
School	53	[72]
Pre-school	18	[8]
Nursery	22	[12]
Private home	1	[-]
Somewhere else	5	[8]
<i>Base (338)</i>	<i>313</i>	<i>25</i>

Base: All respondents who were employed at the place that they did their work-based learning⁸

Completers whose work setting was a school, pre-school, nursery or somewhere else were asked about the ownership of their workplace. Over two-thirds of completers reported that they worked in a publicly owned setting (68 per cent), 20 per cent in a privately owned setting and 12 per cent in a setting owned by a charity or not for profit organisation.

3.1.3 Prior qualifications and experience

When asked to state which types of qualifications they held before starting their course, course completers most commonly reported NVQ Level 3 (25 per cent), a Diploma in Higher Education (13 per cent), A levels or A2 levels (11 per cent) and a BTEC Higher Certificate (10 per cent). When their highest prior qualifications were classified into NVQ level, 40 per cent of course completers were at level 4 or 5, 44 per cent were at level 3 and 16 per cent were at a lower level. Non course completers had prior qualifications at comparable levels to completers (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 NVQ level equivalent prior to starting Foundation Degree

	Course Completer	Non Course Completer
	%	%
Level 4/5	40	33
Level 3	44	52
Level 1/2	16	16
<i>Base (504)</i>	<i>446</i>	<i>58</i>

Base: Wave 3 respondents with classified qualification⁹

Ninety per cent of course completers and 85 per cent of non completers had a prior qualification (regardless of whether it was their highest) in an early years education or childcare subject (Table 3.4).

⁸ Due to an error in the interview routing, 120 course completers and 11 non completers who should have been asked this question were not. Table 3.2 excludes these numbers.

⁹ Referring to Table 3.3, qualifications from a first degree or post-graduate qualification through to an RSA Higher Diploma were deemed to be qualified at NVQ Level 4/5. Qualifications from A/A2 Levels through to a Trade Apprenticeship were deemed to be at NVQ Level 3. Qualifications from GCSEs through to a BTEC first/general certificate were deemed to be at NVQ Level 1/2. It should be noted that this method of determining the NVQ equivalence of respondents' qualifications is only very approximate as whether a qualification is at NVQ level 2 or 3 depends, for example, on the number of A/A2 Levels held and the grades achieved. It is likely that the number of respondents with a qualification at NVQ level 3 is over-estimated using this method.

Table 3.4 Whether student had early years qualification prior to starting Foundation Degree

	Course Completer	Non Course Completer
	%	%
Yes	90	85
No	10	15
<i>Base (540)</i>	<i>474</i>	<i>66</i>

Base: All Wave 3 respondents

The majority (61 per cent) of course completers who had an early years qualification prior to starting the course reported that their highest qualification in early years education or childcare was at level 3, while 30 per cent said their highest qualification in this field was level 4 or 5 (Table 3.5). The remaining 9 per cent said their highest qualification in early years education or childcare was at level 1 or 2 (i.e. below the normal entry requirements for the EYSEFD course). Non completers had similar levels of prior early years or childcare qualifications to completers.

Table 3.5 Early years NVQ level equivalent prior to starting Foundation Degree

	Course Completer	Non Course Completer
	%	%
Level 4/5	30	23
Level 3	61	65
Level 2/1	9	13
<i>Base (446)</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>48</i>

Base: Wave 3 respondents who had early years qualification

A pre-requisite of participation on the EYSEFD course is that students must have had a minimum of 2 years full or part-time work experience in early years education or childcare. Respondents were asked to estimate the total amount of time (in years) that they had worked in an early years or childcare setting prior to starting the course (Table 3.6).

Forty-three per cent of course completers had over 10 years' experience of working in such a setting. A further 27 per cent said they had between six and 10 years experience, while 25 per cent said they had worked in the sector for between two and five years. This equates to 95 per cent of the total sample having worked in this field for over two years. Only 1 per cent of students had never worked in an early years education or childcare setting and 4 per cent had done so for less than two years. This suggests that 5 per cent of respondents who had completed the EYSEFD course did not have the minimum amount of relevant work experience required, yet still completed the course.

Table 3.6 Years working in early years field prior to starting Foundation Degree

	Course Completer	Non Course Completer
	%	%
Less than 2 years	4	2
2-5 years	25	35
6-10 years	27	35
More than 10 years	43	29
Never worked in EY	1	-
<i>Base (540)</i>	<i>474</i>	<i>66</i>

Base: All Wave 3 respondents

The highest previous qualifications of respondents who had not completed the course were broadly comparable with those who had completed it. Course completers tended to have a slightly higher NVQ equivalent and early years NVQ equivalent than non completers, with 40 per cent of completers having an NVQ level 4 or 5 compared with 33 per cent of non completers, and 30 per cent of completers having obtained a level 4 or 5 early years equivalent compared to 23 per cent of non completers.

In keeping with this trend, a higher proportion of course completers had an early years qualification before they started the EYSEFD (90 per cent compared to 85 per cent of non completers), and they tended to have spent a longer amount of time working in the early years field. However, despite these differences, the majority of both groups of students had NVQ levels of level 3 or above prior to beginning the course, so it is unlikely that either were more or less 'academically prepared' for the Foundation Degree.

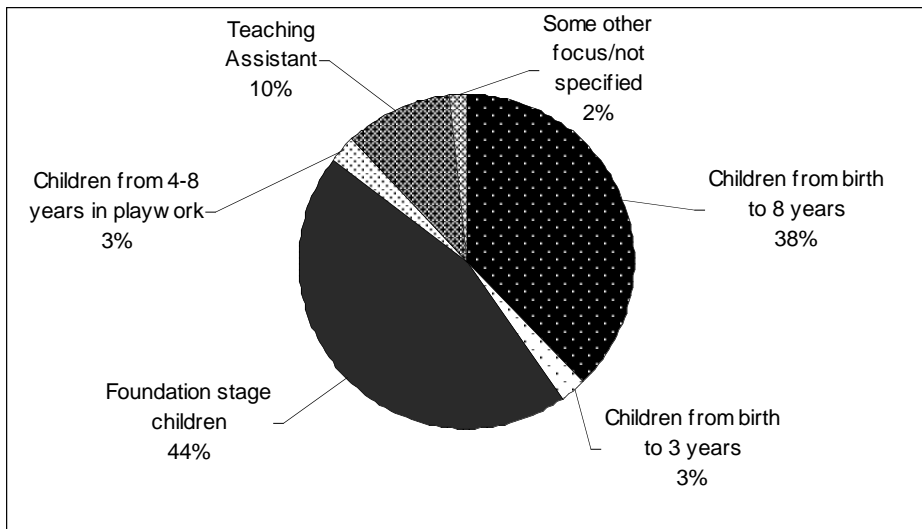
3.1.4 Overview of students' participation in the course

This section provides an overview of students' participation in the course, including their mode of attendance, length of time on the course, the type of institution they attended, the types of financial help they received and any accreditation they had gained from prior (course-based) learning. Again, the profiles of course completers and non completers are compared.

Routes through the course

In the wave 2 interview respondents were asked to specify the main focus of their course in terms of the role or the ages of child that would be covered. The most common answers among those who subsequently completed the course were Foundation Stage children (mentioned by 44 per cent) and the broader category of children from birth to 8 years (mentioned by 38 per cent). Ten per cent specified the role of teaching assistant as their main focus. Full results for this question are shown on Figure 3.1.

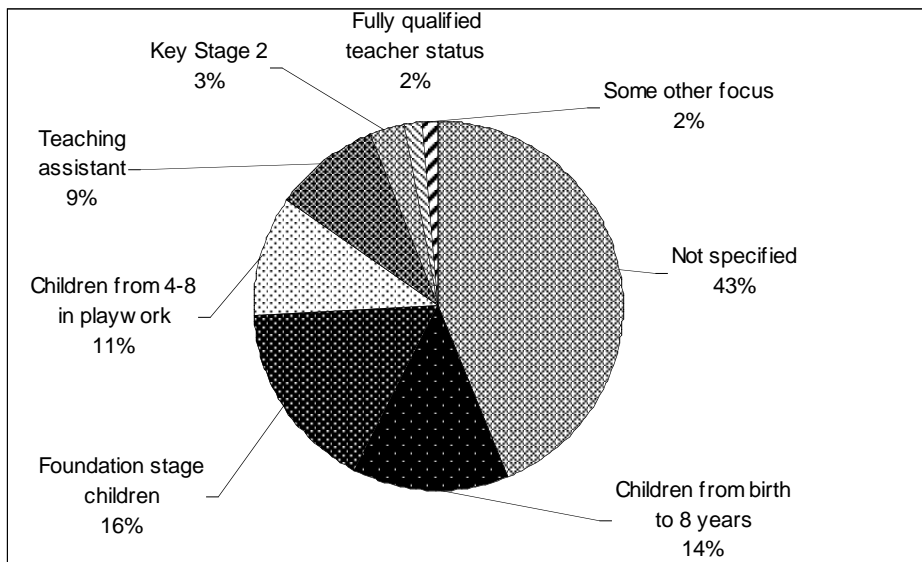
Figure 3.1: Course routes taken (course completers)



Base: Students who had completed the course at Wave 3 (474).

In contrast, almost half (43 per cent) of respondents who had not completed the course had not yet specified the focus of their studies one year into the course, at Wave 2 (Figure 3.2). This compares to less than one per cent of those who became course completers and suggests a strong association between having a clear focus for studies and completing the course. Amongst non completing students who had specified the focus of their studies, Foundation stage children (16 per cent) and children from birth to 8 years (14 per cent) were the most common focuses, as for course completers.

Figure 3.2 Course routes taken (non course completers)



Base: Students who had not completed the course at Wave 3 (66).

Mode of attendance

A measure of mode of course attendance was obtained from respondents in the Wave 2 interview, about a year into the course. Three quarters (76 per cent) of respondents who had completed the Foundation Degree by Wave 3 reported that

they were studying part-time at Wave 2, whilst the remaining 24 per cent were studying full-time. Hardly any students had changed their mode of study since Wave 1.

Almost all non completers (95 per cent) had studied part-time. In comparison, almost a quarter (24 per cent) of completers had studied full-time. This suggests that non completers may have had more demands on their time than course completers and were thus less able to study for the degree full-time. In fact, when asked about their perceived barriers to completing the course at Wave 2, planning time and the time commitment required by the course were some of the main concerns, cited by 71 and 70 per cent of non completers (Figures 3.5 and 3.7).

Length of time on the course

The majority (92 per cent) of course completers had spent two or more years on the course. Eight per cent reported spending more than twelve months but less than two years on the course, and one student said that they spent more than 9 months but less than 12 months on the course.

Institution type

Seventy-two per cent of students who had completed the course had studied for it at a Further Education institution and the remaining 28 per cent at a Higher Education institution, such as a university. The proportions for non completers were broadly similar (61% FE and 39% HE).

Financial support

A substantial support package was available to students on the EYSEFD course¹⁰. Respondents were asked at Wave 1 about the types of support they received. The financial assistance received by course completers and non completers was broadly similar. Table 3.7 shows the type of financial and other assistance received by course completers and non completers.

- The most frequently reported type of assistance was the loan of a laptop computer and printer (95 per cent of course completers).
- Most students received a partial or full fee waiver (86 per cent of course completers).
- A large proportion of students (74 per cent of course completers) had received a bursary or grant, or had received payments to their employers to pay for the costs of substitute cover while the respondent was involved in course activities (61 per cent).

Non completers had received similar financial assistance to completers.

¹⁰ Although the specific aspects of support available and the level of support changed over the study period. See a description of changes in the student support package in section 1.1.

Table 3.7 Financial assistance received by students

	Course Completer	Non Course Completer
	%	%
Loan of laptop/printer	95	91
Financial assistance with fees	86	88
Bursary/Grant	74	82
Payments to employer	61	59
Grant for childcare costs	10	14
Student loan	2	2
Hardship fund	-	-
<i>Base (540)</i>	<i>474</i>	<i>66</i>

Base: All respondents at Wave 3, excluding current students

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents could give more than one reply.

Accreditation of prior learning or experiential learning (APL and APEL)

One of the key aspects of the EYSEFD course was that students could be accredited for prior learning as well as prior experiential learning. Respondents were asked at Wave 1 whether they had received this type of accreditation, and if they had not, these questions were asked again at Wave 3. Overall, 27 per cent of course completers (and the same proportion of non completers) had received APL or APEL credits at some point between the Wave 1 and Wave 3 interviews.

3.2 Profile of current students

At the Wave 3 interview, 26 students were still studying for the EYSEFD course. This section presents a brief profile of the characteristics of this group of students and highlights any important differences from those who had completed the course.

3.2.1 Socio-demographic circumstances

Current students were aged between 29 and 58. Most students were aged between 36 and 50 years old. Nearly all (22) said that they were White. Most reported (20 out of 26) living with a partner and at least one child.

The profile of current students in terms of benefit receipt was broadly similar to that of course completers. Around three-quarters of current students reported that they received benefits at Wave 3 (19 out of 26), and these were mainly Child Tax Credit and Child benefit.

The prior qualifications and experience of current students were also generally comparable with course completers; current students most commonly reported NVQ level 3 and A levels or A2 levels. Most current students (19) reported that they already held an early years qualification prior to starting the Foundation Degree and had typically worked in the early years field for 6 years or more (18 out of 26).

All current students reported studying for the course part-time. Sixteen were studying at a HE institution and the remaining 10 at a FE institution. Eight reported having

taken a break from the Foundation Degree. The most common focus of studies was Foundation Stage children and the broader category of children from birth to 8 years.

All current students reported that they had received financial assistance with their course fees and most (22) also received a bursary or grant. Nearly all had been loaned a laptop or printer while on the course (23) and 18 also said that they had received payments to their employers.

3.3 Overview of course experiences

This section focuses on students' experiences of, and satisfaction with, various aspects of their teaching and learning whilst on the EYSEFD course. Given that we are focusing on students who had completed the course by the time of the Wave 3 interview, the analysis presented here is of their experiences at Wave 2, while they were still on the course. This represents a snapshot of their experiences when they were about one year into the course.

As may be expected, satisfaction with all aspects of the EYSEFD course was higher amongst students who had completed the course than among non completers, although non completers' ratings were also generally favourable. This section will focus on the views of the majority of students who were course completers. Results for non completers are also shown on Figure 3.3.

Satisfaction with teaching

Ninety per cent of course completers were either quite (53 per cent) or very (37 per cent) satisfied with the quality of teaching on the EYSEFD course. A further 8 per cent were not very or not at all satisfied (6 and 2 per cent respectively) and 2 per cent felt that their experiences of teaching varied too much to say.

Satisfaction with personal tutors

Ninety-one per cent of course completers had a personal tutor to support them on the EYSEFD at some point while they were on the course. Nine per cent reported having a tutor at Wave 1 only, 11 per cent at Wave 2 only, 42 per cent had the same tutor at both waves and 11 per cent had a tutor at both waves but they had changed between the interviews. Only 9 per cent said that they did not have a tutor at either wave.

Satisfaction with personal tutors for the course was measured in two different ways, for academic support and for personal support. Satisfaction for both measures was generally high, with 83 per cent of course completers reporting that they were quite or very satisfied with the academic support provided by their tutor and 78 per cent with the personal support provided by their tutor. A small proportion of students reported that they were not very or not at all satisfied with the academic support that they received from their tutor (13 per cent) and a similar proportion were not satisfied with the personal support they received (14 per cent). Three per cent had not sought any academic support from their tutor and 6 per cent had not sought any personal support.

Students who did not complete the course did not appear to have been disadvantaged in terms of their access to personal tutors or continuity of tuition. Ninety-four per cent of non completers reported that they had a tutor at some point while on the course and 59 per cent said that their personal tutor had not changed between interviews. However, in keeping with the other measures, non completers

had slightly lower levels of satisfaction with their tutoring than completers (Figure 3.3).

Satisfaction with mentor for the work-based learning aspect of the course

Almost all course completers (91 per cent) reported that they had a mentor for the work-based learning aspect of the course. The majority of these said that they had the same mentor at both waves (81 per cent), 6 per cent at the first wave only and 4 per cent at the second wave only. Nine per cent reported no mentor at either wave. Most course completers mentioned that their mentor was from their own work place (69 per cent).

Eighty-six per cent of course completers were either quite (29 per cent) or very (58 per cent) satisfied with their mentor for the work-based learning aspect of the EYSEFD course. Twelve per cent were not very (9 per cent) or not at all (3 per cent) satisfied.

Respondents who had not completed the course were equally as likely to have had a mentor for the work-based learning element of the EYSEFD course (92 per cent had one), to have had the same mentor at both waves (79 per cent) and to have had a mentor from their own workplace (71 per cent). Thus, their slightly lower satisfaction levels for this measure, as for others, would appear not to be associated with poorer availability of mentoring (Figure 3.3).

Satisfaction with the work-based learning aspect of the course

General satisfaction with the work-based learning aspect of the course was also measured at Wave 2. Satisfaction with this aspect of the course was extremely high amongst students who had completed the course. Ninety-three per cent this group reported that they were quite (50 per cent) or very (43 per cent) satisfied with their work-based learning for the course. Just 5 per cent said that they were not very satisfied and 1 per cent were not at all satisfied.

Help with developing study skills

Since the EYSEFD course was specifically designed for people who had been out of education for some time, developing study skills needed for success in higher education may have been an important requirement of the course for some students. Amongst course completers who received this type of help, the majority were either quite (58 per cent) or very (31 per cent) satisfied with the help that they received. Eleven per cent were not very satisfied with the help received and one per cent were not at all satisfied.

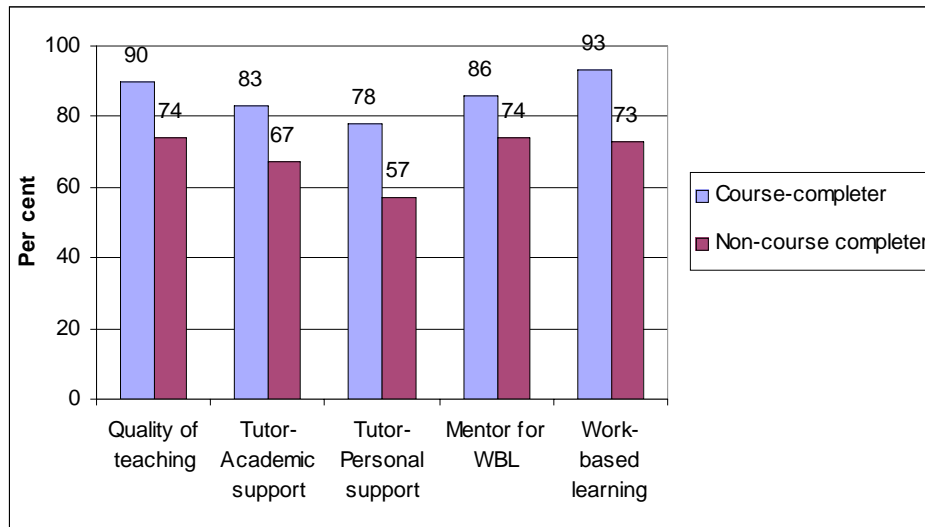
Respondents who had not completed the course were similarly satisfied with the help they received with developing study skills (88 per cent were either quite or very satisfied with the help they received). Thus it is unlikely they were 'academically disadvantaged' in any way compared to course completers.

Satisfaction with special support

Respondents were also asked whether they needed any special support with the course, because of a disability, health condition or learning difficulty (such as dyslexia). Only a small number of course completers (1 per cent) said that they needed this type of support. Of these students, all were quite or very satisfied with the support that they received. No respondents who had not completed the course

stated that they required any special support with the course because of a disability, health condition or learning difficulty.

Figure 3.3 Proportions satisfied (quite/very) with course



Base: Respondents who answered each question¹¹

Note: Figure excludes respondents who did not give a measure of satisfaction (had not sought support, experiences varied too much to say or refused to answer). As a result percentages do not add up to 100%.

3.3.1 Benefits and problems with the course

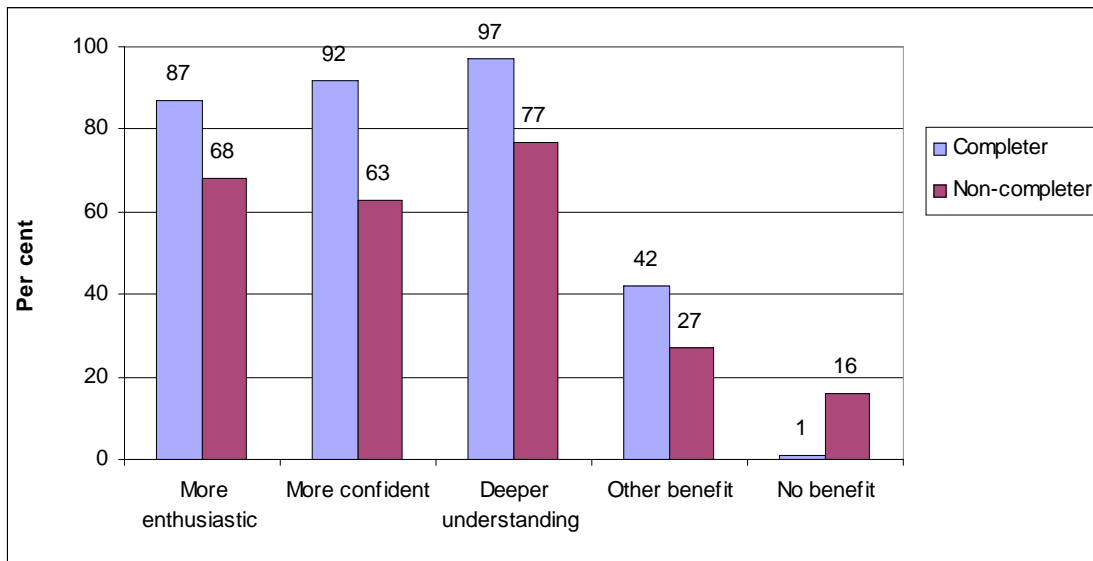
This section covers students' perceptions of the work-related benefits of the course and any problems with it. Again, these findings are taken from the Wave 2 interview, when students were about one year into the course. Thus, any perceived benefits or problems at this stage suggest that effects of the course were already being felt at a fairly early stage. Findings for course completers are discussed in detail while those for non completers are also presented (in Figures 3.4 and 3.5) but only commented on when of particular interest. In general, non completers perceived fewer benefits of the course and more problems compared with completers.

Work-related benefits of the course

Students were asked whether they thought their involvement on the course had any wider benefits at work. Most course completers perceived the course to have had some notable work-related benefits (Figure 3.4). A high proportion felt more enthusiastic about their work (87 per cent), more confident in their work (92 per cent), had a deeper understanding of their work (97 per cent) or perceived some other benefit not already specified (42 per cent). Only one per cent of course completers felt that there had been no work-related benefits related to their involvement in the course. Most non completers also reported some work-related benefits, although 16 per cent felt that they had had no benefit from it.

¹¹ Course completers: Quality of teaching (474), Tutor-Academic support (386), Tutor-Personal support (386), Mentor for work-based learning (405), Work-based learning component of course (474). Non-course completers: Quality of teaching (66), Tutor-Academic support (54), Tutor-Personal support (54), Mentor for work-based learning (53), Work-based learning component of course (66).

Figure 3.4 Perceptions of work-related benefits (at Wave 2) by course completion

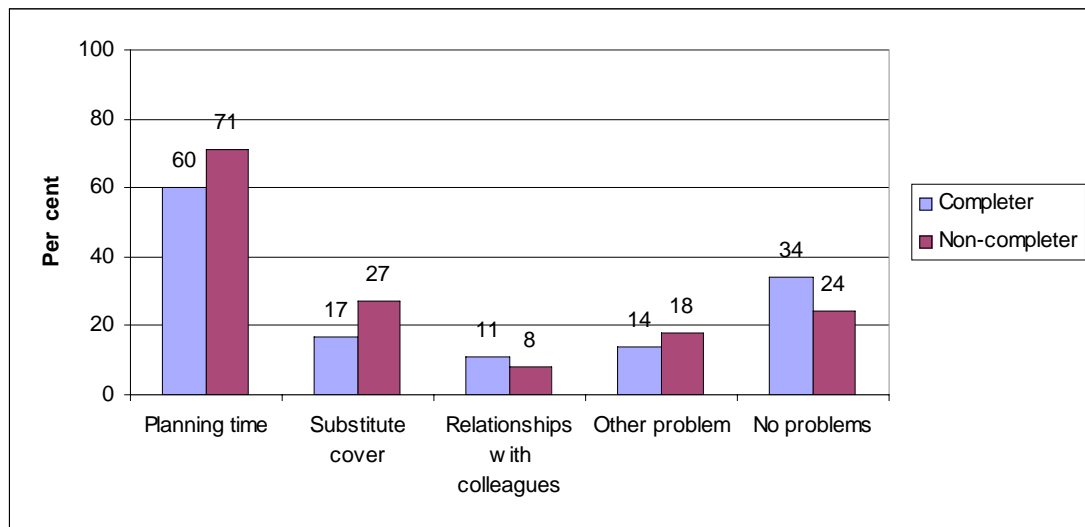


Base (510): Students who had completed the course at Wave 3 and answered the question at Wave 2 (448); Students who had not completed the course at Wave 3 and answered the question at Wave 2 (62)

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents could give more than one reply

Work-related problems with the course

A similar format was used to ask whether students had experienced any problems resulting from their participation on the course (Figure 3.5). The most commonly reported problem was that of difficulties in planning time, with just under two-thirds of course completers citing this as a problem related to the course. About one-in-six respondents had difficulties organising substitute cover while they did activities related to the course and 11 per cent felt relationships with colleagues suffered as a result of their participation. Fourteen per cent reported other (unspecified) problems that had not already been mentioned. However, over a third of course completers (34 per cent) said that they had not experienced any work-related problems as a result of their involvement in the course. The answers given by non completers were broadly similar although they reported slightly more problems overall.

Figure 3.5 Perceptions of work-related problems (at Wave 2) by course completion

Base (540): Students who had completed the course at Wave 3 and answered the question at Wave 2 (474); Students who had not completed the course at Wave 3 and answered the question at Wave 2 (66)

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents could give more than one reply

3.3.2 Anticipated barriers to completing the course

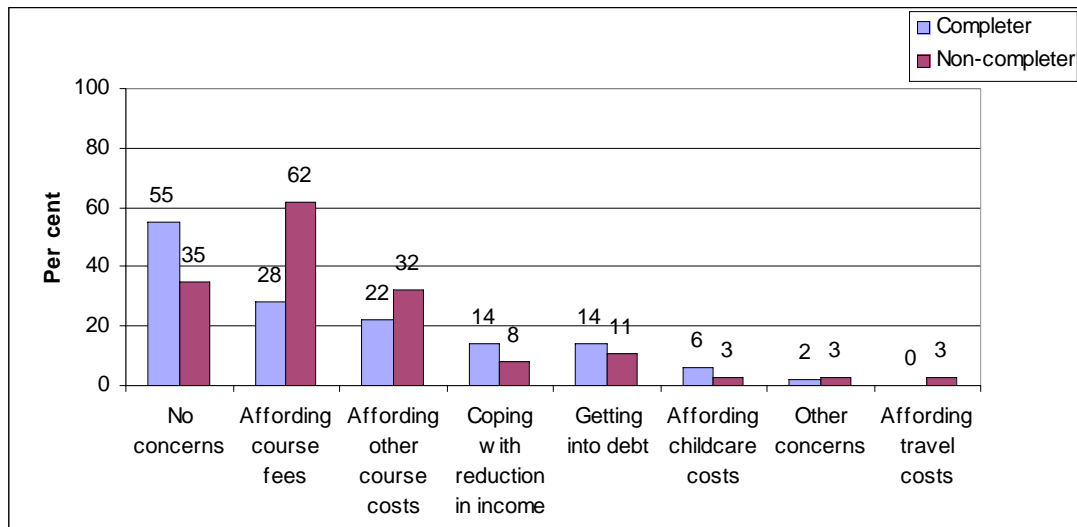
The second interview also repeated some questions from the first about perceived barriers to completion of the course. Separate questions were asked about financial concerns and non-financial concerns. As for the previous section, the analysis presented is of the responses to questions in the Wave 2 interview, one year into the course. Results are presented for course completers and non completers (Figures 3.6 and 3.7) while the findings focus mainly on completers as only a small number of non completers were asked these questions.

Financial concerns

Respondents were read out a list of financial concerns and asked which, if any, they felt might prevent them from completing the course (see Figure 3.6 for an overview of responses to this question). Amongst students who had completed the course, the majority (55 per cent) said that they had no financial concerns that might prevent them from completing the course. However, minorities of completers expressed concerns about the course fees (28 per cent), affording other costs related to the course (22 per cent), and coping with a reduction in income or getting into debt (both 14 per cent).

In contrast, the majority of non completers (62 per cent) said that affording the course fees was a problem for them. Affording other course costs and getting into debt were also frequently reported barriers (32 per cent and 11 per cent). Given that we have already identified that non completers were more likely to receive state welfare benefits, it is unsurprising that they tended to have greater financial concerns than course completers.

Figure 3.6 Financial concerns that might prevent course completion

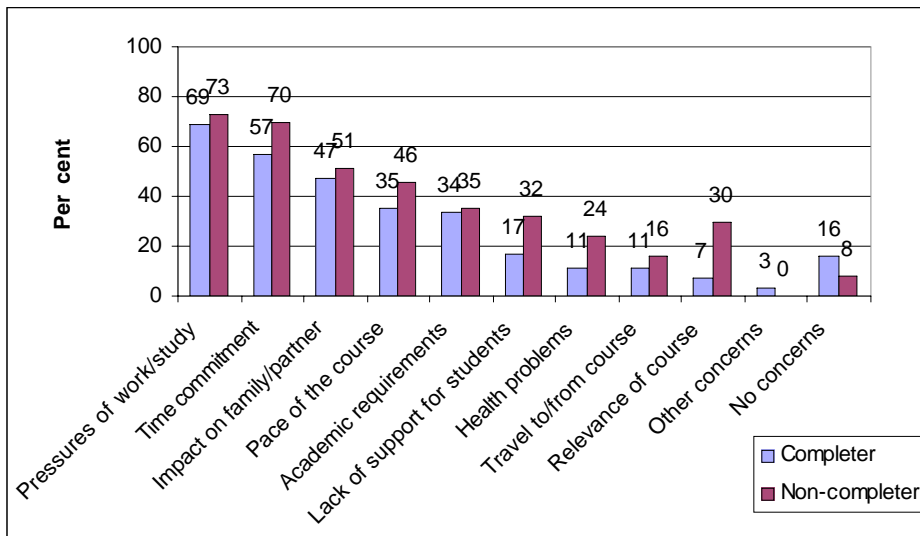


Base: (510): Students who had completed the course at Wave 3 and answered the question at Wave 2 (473); Students who had not completed the course at Wave 3 and answered the question at Wave 2 (37)

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents could give more than one reply

Other concerns

Respondents were also asked whether a list of other (non-financial) concerns applied to them (Figure 3.7). A number of different concerns were found to be common and only 16 per cent of course completers stated that they had had no concerns at all. The most common concerns among completers were the pressures of combining work and study (69 per cent) and the time commitment required by the course (57 per cent). Other common concerns included the impact of course participation on respondent’s families or partners (47 per cent), keeping up with the pace of the course (35 per cent) and meeting the academic requirements of the course (34 per cent). Miscellaneous other concerns, such as health problems, travel difficulties and the relevance of the course to their work were only mentioned by a small number of completers. The answers given by non completers were broadly comparable with those given by completers.

Figure 3.7 Other concerns that might prevent course completion

Base: (510): Students who had completed the course at Wave 3 and answered the question at Wave 2 (473); Students who had not completed the course at Wave 3 and answered the question at Wave 2 (37)

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents could give more than one reply

3.3.3 Reasons for non-completion

Respondents who were current students at Wave 2 but did not complete the course by Wave 3 were asked for the reasons why they had not completed the EYSEFD. Respondents were asked to choose from a list of financial and 'other' reasons why they did not complete the course. The answer categories were the same as the Wave 2 questions about students' anticipated barriers to completing the Foundation Degree, enabling us to assess whether students' concerns at Wave 2 were well founded and, in reality, reasons why they did not complete the course. Note that percentages reported for these questions were based on a relatively small number of students (37) so should be treated with this in mind.

Financial concerns

Non completers were asked about any financial reasons that prevented them from completing the course. Very few students reported a financial reason why they did not complete the course, despite the fact that financial concerns were commonly mentioned at the Wave 2 interview (see Table 3.6). Under a fifth of non completers (6 students) mentioned difficulties affording course fees as a reason why they did not complete the course. One student mentioned affording childcare costs. No other financial reasons were given as a reason for non completion¹².

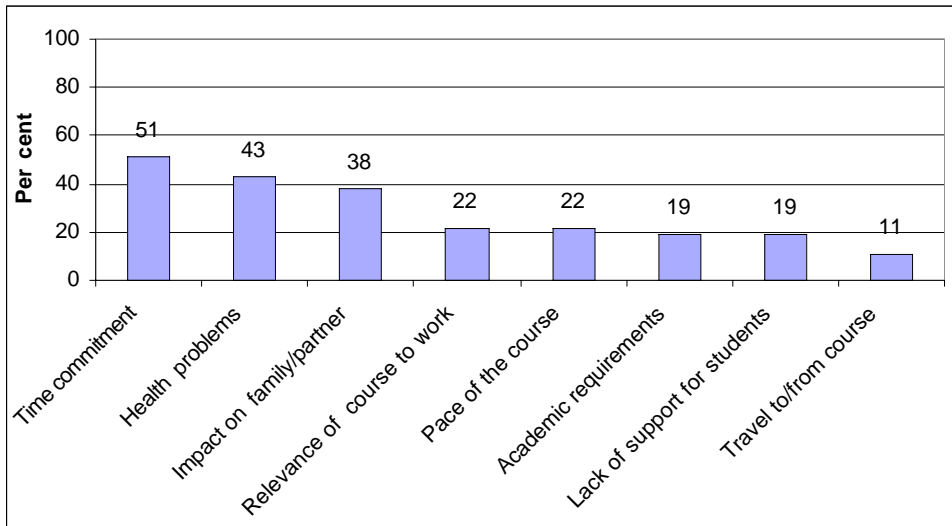
¹² Other financial reasons that were not mentioned by non completers were; Other costs relating to the course, coping with a reduction in income while on the course, and getting into debt while on the course.

Other reasons

Non completers were also asked about any other reasons why they did not complete the course¹³ (Figure 3.8). The time commitment required by the course was the most regularly cited reason for non course completion, mentioned by just over half of respondents. This was also a common concern for non completers at Wave 2; 70 per cent mentioned it as a possible barrier to course completion. Other commonly given reasons for not completing the course were health problems that prevented course attendance (including pregnancy/maternity leave), mentioned by 43 per cent of students, and the impact of the course on students' partners and families, mentioned by 38 per cent. These were also common concerns amongst students at Wave 2 (see Figure 3.7).

A smaller number of students mentioned other problems with the course as reasons why they did not complete the EYSEFD, including; the relevance of the course to their work (22 per cent), keeping up with the pace of the course (22 per cent), meeting the academic requirements of the course (19 per cent), a lack of support for students (19 per cent) and travel to and from the course (11 per cent).

Figure 3.8: Other reasons why student did not complete course



Base (37): Current students at Wave 2 who had not completed the course at Wave 3.

¹³ Other non financial reasons that were not mentioned by non completers were; Coping with the pressures of work and study, getting along with other students, difficulties accessing course materials, and the time of the course was inconvenient/unsuitable.

3.4 Summary

The main findings about students' characteristics and course experiences at Wave 3 were:

Socio-demographic circumstances

The socio-demographic circumstances of course completers were broadly similar to those of non-completers. Notable differences were that:

- Non-completers were more likely to receive means tested benefits, suggesting lower incomes as a whole than completers.
- A slightly higher proportion of course completers held an early years qualification before they started the EYSEFD and tended to have spent a longer amount of time working in the early years field.

Participation in the course

- Almost half of non-completers had not specified the focus of their studies at Wave 2, compared to just 2 per cent of completers.
- Non-completers were slightly more likely to have studied for the course part-time than completers.
- Satisfaction with the course was generally high. Satisfaction tended to be slightly lower amongst non completers than for completers.
- Non completers also perceived fewer benefits and more problems with the course than completers.
- Non completers had particular concerns related to planning their time and the time commitment required by the course, coping with the pressures of work and study and affording course fees and other associated costs.

Profiles of current students

Current students had generally very similar profiles to those who had completed the Foundation Degree in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics.

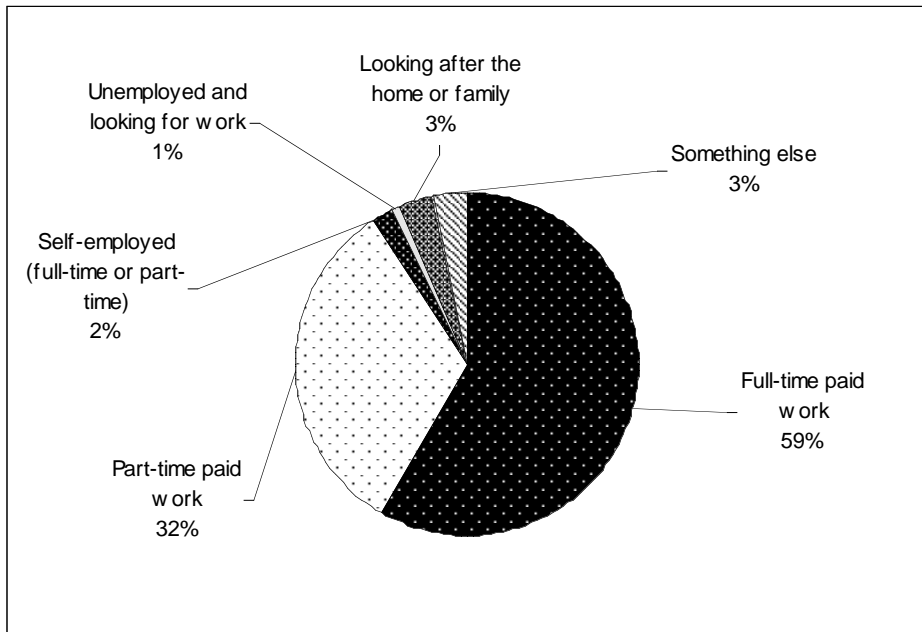
4 PATHWAYS OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE COMPLETED THE FOUNDATION DEGREE

This chapter gives a picture of the pathways taken by students who had completed the EYSEFD at the time of the Wave 3 interview. It describes their current activities and how their employment status and experiences have changed since starting the Foundation Degree.

4.1 Current main activity

The majority of students who had completed the Foundation Degree described some form of paid employment as their main current activity (Figure 4.1). In total, 93 per cent of course completers were in paid work, with 59 per cent in full-time work, 32 per cent part-time work, and 2 per cent were self-employed (either full or part-time). Only a very small number were unemployed and looking for work, 1 per cent, 3 per cent were looking after the home or family and 3 per cent were doing some other kind of activity.

Figure 4.1 Current main activity (course completers)



Base (474): All respondents at Wave 3 who had completed the course

The activity profiles of students who completed the course in 2005 or before ('early completers') differed from those who completed it in 2006 ('late completers'). Early completers were mostly in full-time work whereas the late completers were evenly divided between those who were in full-time work and those who were in part-time work (Table 4.1). Most early completers had studied for the course full-time (81 per cent) whereas most late completers had studied part-time (67 per cent). Thus, their choice of full or part-time work after completing their course generally reflected their earlier choice of study mode. In addition, students who had studied for the course full-time were more likely to currently be in full-time work after the course than those who had studied part-time (65 per cent compared with 56 per cent).

Students who had studied for the course at an HE institution rather than an FE institution were also more likely to be in full-time work than part-time work (65 per cent compared with 56 per cent).

Table 4.1: Current employment status by sub-group

	Early completers (2005 or before)	Late completers (2006)	Full-time study	Part-time study	HE institution	FE institution
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Full-time paid work	67	46	65	56	65	56
Part-time paid work	24	44	23	35	27	35
Self-employed (full-time or part-time)	2	2	2	2	2	2
Not in paid work	5	4	6	4	5	4
Other	2	4	4	3	2	4
Base	275	199	111	358	132	342

Base (474): Course completers

Respondents who had completed the course and were currently in paid work were asked whether their job was related to early years education or childcare. Almost all (97 per cent) reported that their current job was related to early years education or childcare.

Forty-two per cent of course completers stated that they had changed their main job since the Wave 2 interview.

4.2 Employment outcomes

This section looks at the employment outcomes for respondents who had completed the Foundation Degree in terms of how their levels of responsibility and earnings had changed. It should be noted that more than three years had typically passed between the start of the course and the wave 3 interview and we would expect that some students would have achieved increased responsibility in this period even without the benefit of the course. Therefore, students were also asked whether any improvements were related to their study.

4.2.1 Level of responsibility

Amongst respondents who had not changed jobs since Wave 2, 35 per cent reported that their level of responsibility had increased compared to before the course. Only 1 per cent said that it had decreased and just under two thirds (64 per cent) said that it had stayed the same (Table 4.2). Eighty per cent of students who said that their level of responsibility had changed, attributed this to their participation on the course.

The proportion of students who said that their level of responsibility had increased in a continuing job was slightly higher at Wave 3 (35 per cent) than at Wave 2 (25 per cent).

Table 4.2: Level of responsibility (stayed in same job)

	Wave 2	Wave 3
	%	%
Increased	24	35
Decreased	1	1
Stayed the same	76	64
Base*	383	244
Related to course	-	80
Not related	-	20
Base**	-	87

Base: *Students who had not changed jobs

**Level of responsibility increased/decreased

Respondents who had changed jobs since Wave 2 were asked about the level of responsibility in their current job compared to what they were doing when they started the course (Table 4.3). Three-quarters of students who had changed job (76 per cent) felt that their level of responsibility in their current job was higher than when they started the course. Eighteen per cent said their level of responsibility was at the same level and 5 per cent said that it was not directly comparable. Just 2 per cent felt their current level of responsibility was at a lower level than when they started the course.

A much higher proportion of students had changed their jobs at Wave 3 than at Wave 2 and the proportion of job changers who reported a higher level of responsibility had also increased substantially, from 47 per cent to 76 per cent. When compared with those who had continued in the same jobs, job changers appeared to have achieved a greater increase in responsibility.

Eighty per cent of students who had changed their jobs attributed this to their participation on the course.

Table 4.3: Level of responsibility (changed job)

	Wave 2	Wave 3
	%	%
Higher level	47	76
Lower level	12	2
Same level	28	18
Not comparable	14	5
Base	58	176
Job change related to course	-	80
Not related	-	20
Base*	-	173

Base: *Students who had changed jobs

4.2.2 Change in income

Course completers were also asked whether they had experienced any changes in their income since starting the Foundation Degree. Respondents who had changed jobs at either Wave 2 or Wave 3 reported a higher likelihood of having received an increase in their income than those who had stayed in the same jobs (Tables 4.4 and 4.5). Unsurprisingly, the most commonly reported reason for the increase in pay was that the student had moved to a better paid job, cited by 80 per cent of this group. Seventeen per cent also reported a pay rise in an existing job.

For those who had not changed jobs, the majority reported that their income had stayed the same (85 per cent at Wave 2 and 68 per cent at Wave 3). However, a higher number reported an increase at Wave 3 than Wave 2, suggesting that completion of the course may have had benefits for some students in financial terms (although some improvement might be expected over time even without participation in the course). The most commonly reported reason for an increase in income was that the respondent had received a pay rise in their existing job (79 per cent gave this as a reason). Just under half of students whose income had changed felt that it was related to the course (47 per cent).

Table 4.4: Change in income (stayed in same job)

	Wave 2	Wave 3
	%	%
Increased	7	27
Decreased	8	5
Stayed the same	85	68
Base*	382	244
Related to course	-	47
Not related	-	53
Base**	-	79

Base: *Students who had not changed jobs

**Level of income increased/decreased

Almost half (47 per cent) of those who had changed job at Wave 2 reported an increase in income and this proportion rose to almost three-quarters (73 per cent) for job changers at Wave 3. Respondents who had changed their job were more likely than those who had stayed in the same job to relate their change in income to their participation in the EYSEFD (78 per cent compared with 47 per cent). Those who had experienced an increase in their income were more likely to have felt that it was related to their participation in the course than those who had experienced a decrease.

Table 4.5: Change in income (changed job)

	Wave 2	Wave 3
	%	%
Increased	47	73
Decreased	3	6
Stayed the same	50	21
Base*	58	176
Related to course	-	78
Not related	-	22
Base**	-	135

Base: *Students who had changed jobs

**Level of income increased/decreased

Forty per cent of course completers who had not changed their job since Wave 2 reported an increase in responsibility and a corresponding increase in income. A larger proportion of this group (57 per cent), however, reported an increase in their level of responsibility but no change in their levels of income.

Course completers who had changed their job experienced an increase in both their levels of responsibility and in their income. Of this group, 84 per cent reported a higher level of responsibility than when they started the course and a corresponding increase in their income.

4.3 Summary

Current main activity

- Nearly all course completers were in paid work. Fifty-nine per cent were working full-time, 32 per cent working part-time and 2 per cent were self-employed. Only 1 per cent of completers were unemployed and looking for work.
- Whether the student studied for the course full or part-time influenced whether they currently worked full or part-time, with their choice of full or part-time work generally reflecting their earlier choice of study mode.
- Almost all course completers (97 per cent) reported that they were currently working in a job related to early years education or childcare.

Employment outcomes

- Forty-two per cent of course completers had changed their main job since the Wave 2 interview.
- A third of completers who had stayed in the same jobs reported an increase in their levels of responsibility.
- Completers who had changed jobs reported a greater increase in their level of responsibility than those who had stayed in the same jobs (76 per cent).
- Those who had changed jobs were also more likely to report an increase in their income (73 per cent compared to 27 of those who did not change jobs), and to relate this to their participation in the course.

5 WERE STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF THE COURSE FULFILLED?

Respondents were asked about their reasons for doing the EYSEFD course at the baseline survey. At the Wave 3 interview they were asked how well these aspirations had been met.

This chapter examines how well students' expectations were met by the EYSEFD course for all students and for specific sub-groups of respondents¹⁴. The first section discusses how well students' work-related aspirations, such as gaining new skills, a promotion or a pay rise, had been met. The second section concentrates on non-work-related aspirations such as improving knowledge or gaining a qualification. Each group of aspirations is discussed in terms of how commonly they were reported at the outset of the course.

5.1 Work-related aspirations

Students were asked about a number of work-related aspirations¹⁵ they had in relation to the EYSEFD course. These aspirations had generally been well met, with around half of students agreeing at the Wave 3 interview that they had been met either quite or very well.

¹⁴ Systematic analysis was performed for respondents who had and had not completed the course and for those studying at either Higher Education (HE) or Further Education (FE) institutions. Results are not presented by institution type in this section as very little difference in how well aspirations had been met was observed between these groups.

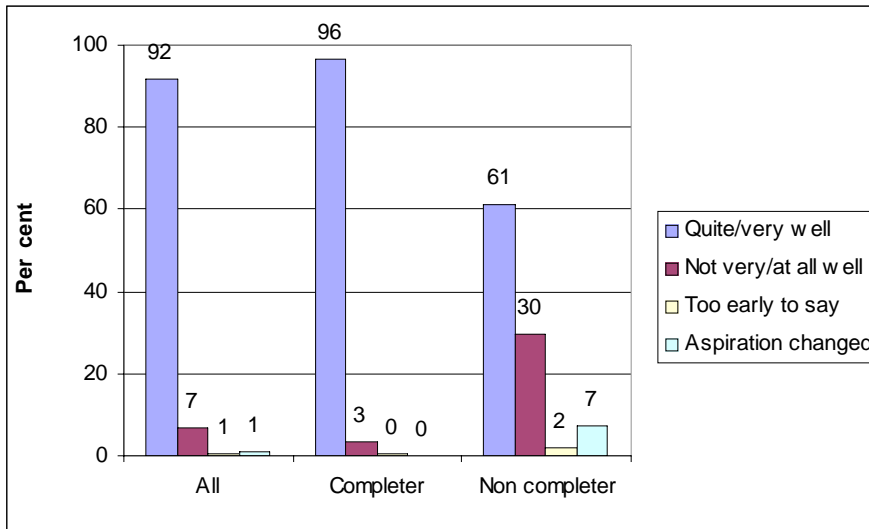
¹⁵ A small number of work-related reasons for taking the course at Wave 1 were cited by only a small number of respondents at Wave 3. How well these aspirations had been met is not discussed any further in this section due to their low bases. These reasons were; to get a job in early years education or childcare for the first time (n=19), to return to a job in early years after taking a break (n=11) and to keep a job you might otherwise have lost (n=29).

To gain new skills for a job

Gaining new skills for a job was the most commonly cited reason for taking the course by respondents at Wave 1 (about four-fifths reported this motivation). Most students were extremely satisfied with how well this popular aspiration had been met (Figure 5.1). The majority of these students (92 per cent) felt that this aspiration had been met quite well (24 per cent) or very well (68 per cent).

Although a majority of students (61 per cent) who had not completed the course felt that their aspiration to gain new skills for their job had been met, nearly a third (30 per cent) felt that it had not been met very or at all well.

Figure 5.1 How well aspirations met- To gain new skills for your job



Base (464): Wave 3 respondents who cited this as an aspiration at Wave 1¹⁶

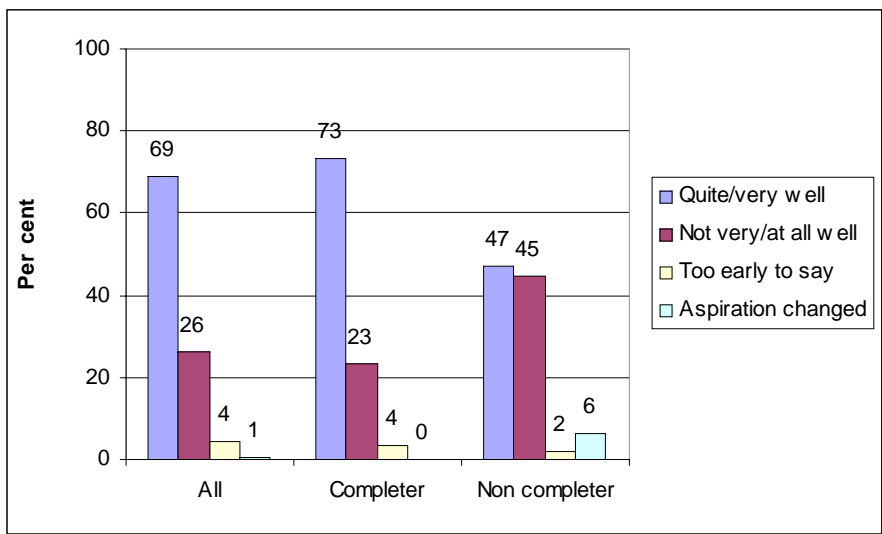
¹⁶ All (464), Completers (388), Non-completers (54; excludes current students at Wave 3).

To receive recognition of existingskills

Gaining recognition for existing skills was another popular reason for taking the course, with over three-quarters of the Wave 3 sample citing this in the first interview. Of this number, around two-thirds (69 per cent) felt that this aspiration had been met quite or very well while just over a quarter (26 per cent) felt that it had not been met very or at all well. Four per cent felt that it was too early to say (Figure 5.2).

Non course completers were less likely to feel that this aspiration had been met well than completers. Almost equal proportions of this group felt that this aspiration had been met as felt that it had not been met.

Figure 5.2 How well aspirations met- To receive recognition for existing skills



Base (432): Wave 3 respondents who cited this as an aspiration at Wave 1¹⁷

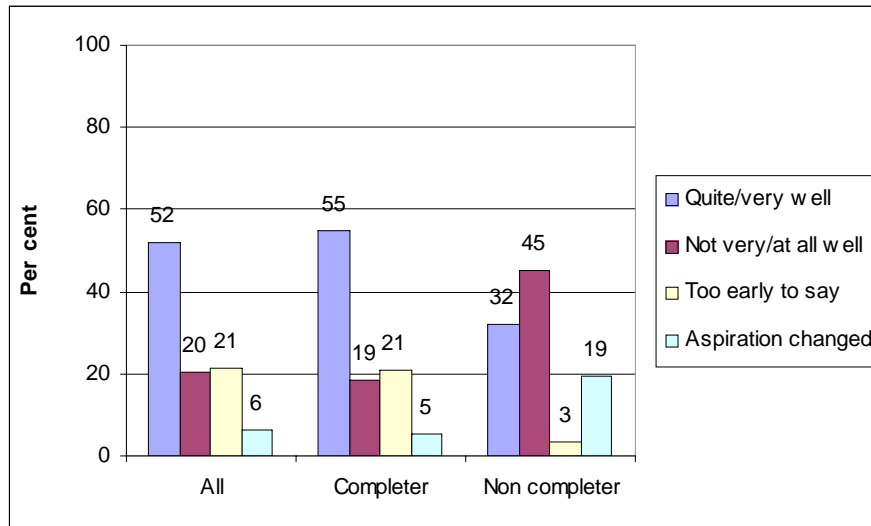
¹⁷ All (432), Completers (364), Non-completers (49; excludes current students at Wave 3).

To change to a different type of work within the early years field

Over two-thirds of the Wave 3 sample (67 per cent; Figure 5.3) said at the first interview that changing to a different type of work in the early years field was an aim of their involvement in the EYSEFD course. Just over half of these respondents felt that this aspiration had been met quite or very well (52 per cent). A fifth felt that it had not been met very or at all well, while a further fifth felt it was too early to say how well this aspiration had been met. A small proportion (6 per cent) said that their aspiration had changed since the first interview.

Non course completers were less likely than completers to feel that this aspiration had been well met and nearly half of them felt that it had not been met very or at all well. However, it is important to note that these figures were based on only a small number of students (31).

Figure 5.3 How well aspirations met- To change to a different type of work in the early years field



Base (382): Wave 3 respondents who cited this as an aspiration at Wave 1¹⁸

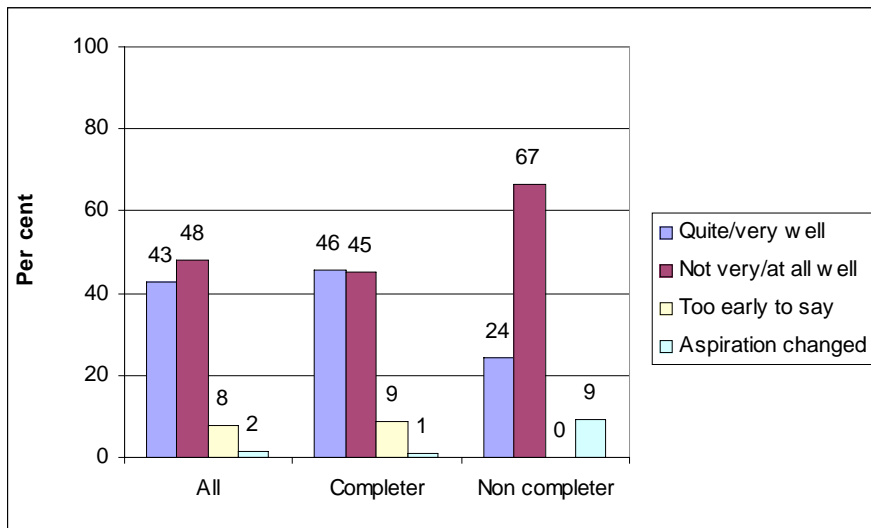
¹⁸ All (382), Completers (333), Non-completers (31; excludes current students at Wave 3).

To increase the chances of a payrise

Over half (53 per cent) of Wave 3 respondents stated that increasing their chances of a pay rise was a reason for taking the course when they started. This aspiration was the least well met of all of the work-related reasons given for taking the course at Wave 1. Less than half (43 per cent) of all respondents felt that this aspiration had been met quite or very well, whilst a slightly higher proportion (48 per cent) felt that it had not been met very or at all well. Eight per cent felt that it was too early to say how well this aspiration had been met.

Only a quarter of non course completers who had hoped to increase their chances of a pay rise felt that this had happened whereas two thirds said that they had not. Again, these figures were based on only a small number of students (33).

Figure 5.4 How well aspirations met- To increase your chances of a pay rise



Base (302): Wave 3 respondents who cited this as an aspiration at Wave 1¹⁹

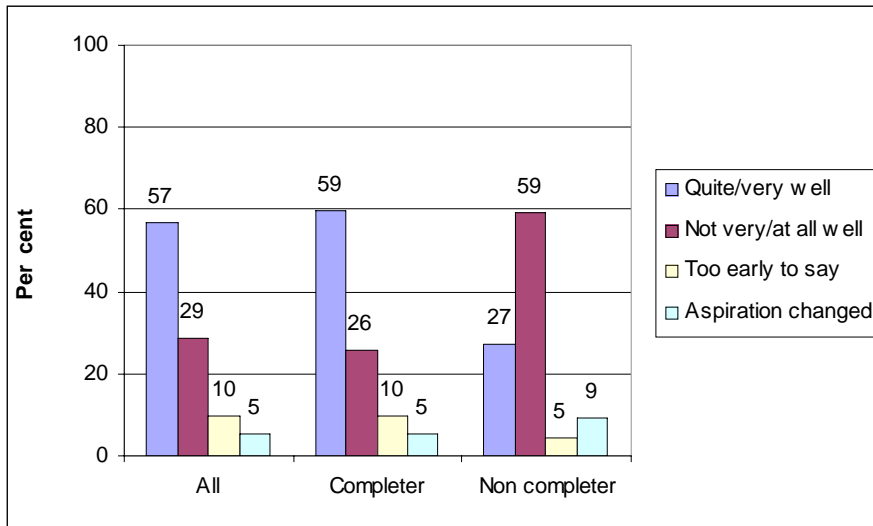
¹⁹ All (302), Completers (257), Non-completers (33; excludes current students at Wave 3).

To increase chances of a promotion at work

Forty-one per cent of all respondents at Wave 3 stated that increasing their chances of a promotion at work was an objective of being involved in the EYSEFD course when they first began the course. Of this number, 57 per cent felt that this aspiration had been met quite well or very well. A smaller proportion, 29 per cent, did not feel that this aspiration had been met very or at all well. A further 10 per cent said that it was still too early to say how well this aspiration had been met and 5 per cent that this aspiration had changed since their first interview.

Only about a quarter of non completers said that their aspiration of increased chance of promotion had been realised whereas three fifths said that it had not been realised. Note that these figures were based on only a small number of non completers (22).

Figure 5.5 How well aspirations met- To increase chances of promotion at work



Base (231): Wave 3 respondents who cited this as an aspiration at Wave 1²⁰

²⁰ All (231), Completers (196), Non-completers (22; excludes current students at Wave 3).

5.2 Non work-related aspirations

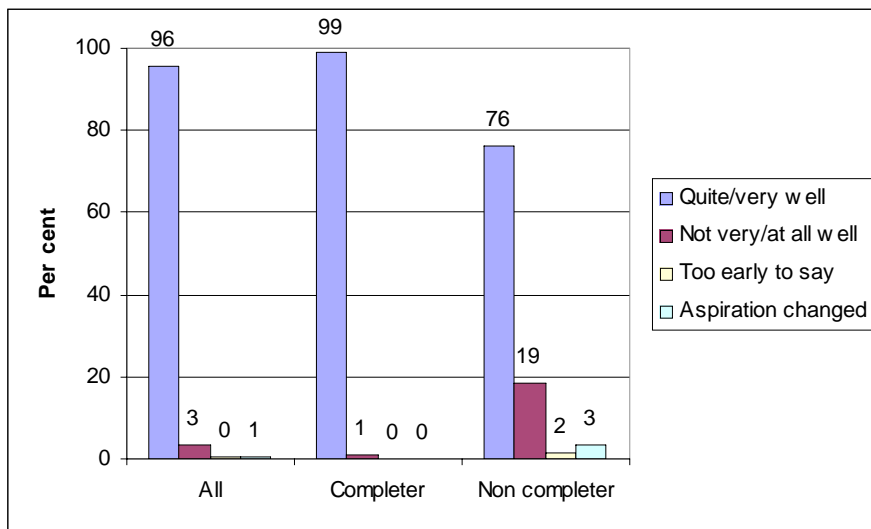
Students were also asked about a number of other, non work-related, aspirations they had in relation to the EYSEFD course such as improving their knowledge or gaining a qualification. These wider aspirations were generally better met than their work-related aspirations, with at least 70 per cent of respondents reporting they had been met quite or very well.

To improve knowledge or ability in the subject

Improving your knowledge or ability in the subject was the most commonly mentioned non work-related reason for being involved in the EYSEFD course when students were first interviewed. Nearly all (92 per cent) of Wave 3 students said that this was an aspiration of the course at Wave 1.

Nearly all students (96 per cent) who stated this aspiration at Wave 1 reported at Wave 3 that it had been met, including 19 per cent who said it had been met quite well and 76 per cent who said that it had been met very well (Figure 5.6). Even non completers generally felt that they had gained this benefit.

Figure 5.6 How well aspirations met- To improve knowledge or ability in the subject



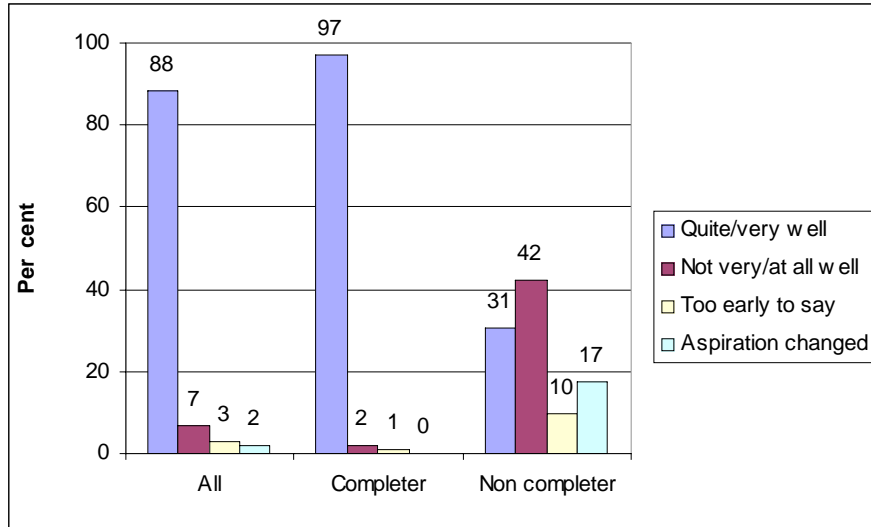
Base (518): Wave 3 respondents who cited this as an aspiration at Wave 1²¹

²¹ All (518), Completers (437), Non-completers (59; excludes current students at Wave 3).

To gain a higher qualification in early years

A large proportion (86 per cent) of respondents at Wave 3 stated that gaining a higher qualification in early years was a course aspiration at their first interview. Overall, the majority of students felt that this aspiration had been quite or very well met. Unsurprisingly, whereas nearly all course completers said that this aspiration had been met, under a minority of non completers said the same.

Figure 5.7 How well aspirations met- To gain a higher qualification in early years



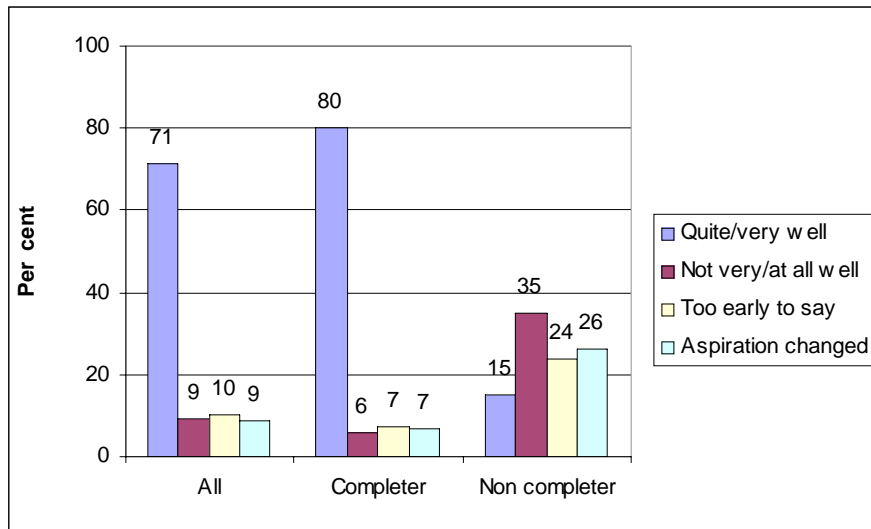
Base (485): Wave 3 respondents who cited this as an aspiration at Wave 1²²

²² All (485), Completers (415), Non-completers (52; excludes current students at Wave 3).

To be able to go on to another course

Around three-quarters (74 per cent) of students cited being able to go on to another course (such as training for Qualified Teacher Status) as a reason for taking the EYSEFD course at Wave 1. Nearly three quarters of these students (71 per cent) said that this aspiration had been met. The proportion was very high (80 per cent) for course completers who had this aspiration but very low for similar non completers (Figure 5.8). In fact, among completers as a whole, 37 per cent said that they had already started another course while 35 per cent said that it was very likely that they would do so in future and 15 per cent said that this was fairly likely (see Section 4.3).

Figure 5.8 How well aspirations met- To be able to go on to another course



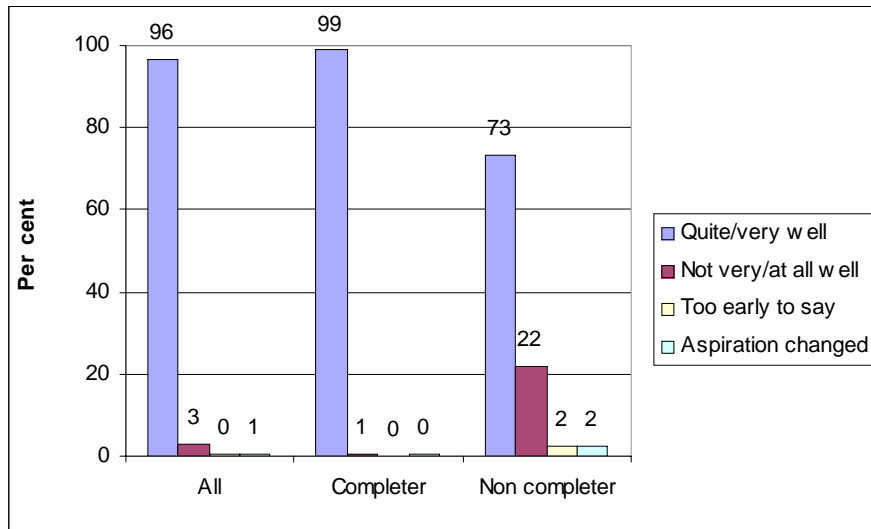
Base (419): Wave 3 respondents who cited this as an aspiration at Wave 1²³

²³ All (419), Completers (356), Non-completers (46; excludes current students at Wave 3).

To find out more about the subject generally

Finding out about the subject generally was another commonly reported reason for taking the course mentioned by Wave 3 students at the first interview (69 per cent). Of this number, the majority (96 per cent) agreed that this aspiration had been quite or very well met. Only a small number felt that it had not been met very or at all well (3 per cent; Figure 5.9). Even among non completers a clear majority of about three quarters who had hoped to find out more about the subject felt that this aspiration had been met, while under a quarter felt that it had not been met.

Figure 5.9 How well aspirations met- To find out more about the subject generally



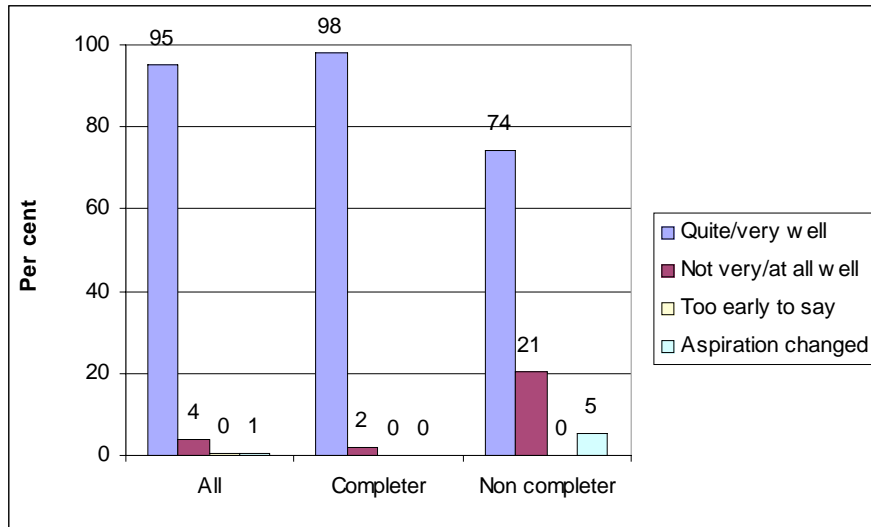
Base (393): Wave 3 respondents who cited this as an aspiration at Wave 1²⁴

²⁴ All (393), Completers (336), Non-completers (41; excludes current students at Wave 3).

To improve study skills

Two-thirds of Wave 3 respondents (66 per cent) also felt that improving their study skills was an objective of their involvement in the course. Most students felt that this aspiration had been quite or very well met (95 per cent; Figure 5.10). Non completers who had hoped to complete their study skills were slightly more likely than completers to feel that it had not been met well, although about three quarters still felt that they had gained this benefit.

Figure 5.10 How well aspirations met- To improve your study skills



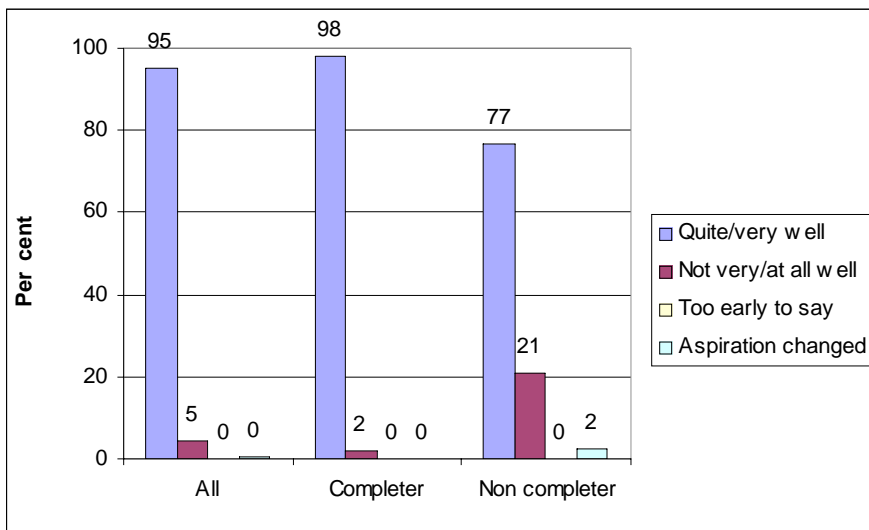
Base (374): Wave 3 respondents who cited this as an aspiration at Wave 1²⁵

²⁵ All (374), Completers (320), Non-completers (39; excludes current students at Wave 3).

To gain more confidence, self-esteem or independence

Gaining more confidence, self-esteem or independence was another important reason for taking the course for a large proportion of the Wave 3 sample (63 per cent). Most respondents felt that this aspiration was generally well met (95 per cent; Figure 5.11). Students who had not completed the course tended to have slightly less positive feelings about how well this aspiration had been met, although about three quarters of non completers who had hoped to gain these sorts of benefits felt that this had in fact happened to some extent.

Figure 5.11 How well aspirations met- To gain more confidence, self-esteem or independence



Base (354): Wave 3 respondents who cited this as an aspiration at Wave 1²⁶

²⁶ All (354), Completers (296), Non-completers (43; excludes current students at Wave 3).

To gain a qualification in early years for the first time

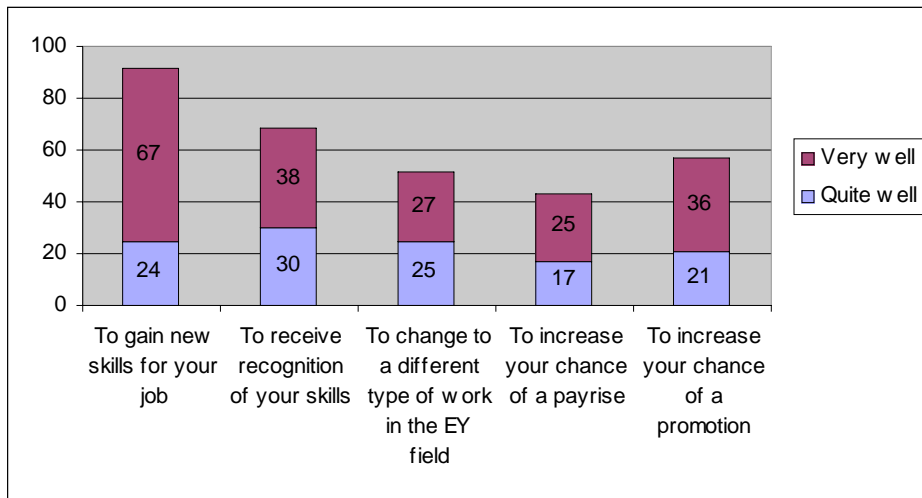
Only a small number of Wave 3 respondents said that gaining a qualification in early years for the first time was a reason for taking the course at Wave 1 (n=64; 11 per cent). This is unsurprising given that most students already had qualification in early years prior to beginning the course (87 per cent). Among the minority of students who had this aspiration on taking the course, 84 per cent said that it had been met quite or very well. Due to the small numbers reporting this as an aspiration of the course at Wave 1 no further analysis is presented for this aspiration.

5.3 Summary

Figures 5.12 and 5.13 present aspirations in descending order of how commonly they were reported at Wave 1, and give an indication of how well (quite or very) respondents felt that they had been met at Wave 3.

- Respondents’ work-related aspirations were generally well met, with the most popular aspirations appearing to be the best met.
- The most popular aspirations (gaining new skills for your job, receiving recognition of your skills) were also more likely to have been judged to have been met very well rather than quite well.
- Although it was a less common work-related aim than the others, increased chances of a promotion were realised by most students who hoped for this.

Figure 5.12: Work-related aspirations



Base: Wave 3 respondents who cited work-related aspirations at Wave 1²⁷

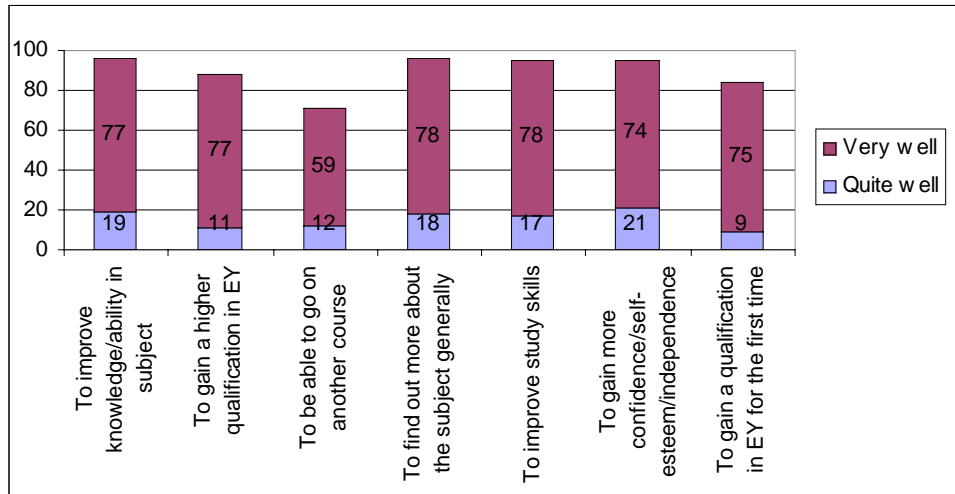
- Respondents’ non work-related aspirations, such as improving their knowledge and gaining a qualification, were more often well met than their work-related

²⁷ To gain new skills for your job (464); To receive recognition of your skills (432); To change to a different EY setting (382); To increase your chance of a payrise (302); To increase your chance of a promotion (231).

aspirations. Typically over 70 per cent of students who had such aspirations at Wave 1 said that they had been well met and over half said that they had been very well met (Figure 5.13).

- This high level of success in meeting students' wider aspirations of the course applied to both the more and less common aspirations.

Figure 5.13: Non work-related aspirations



Base: Wave 3 respondents who cited non work-related aspirations at Wave 1²⁸

²⁸ To improve knowledge/ability in subject (518); To gain a higher qualification in EY (485); To be able to go on another course (419); To find out more about the subject generally (393); To improve study skills (374); To gain more confidence/self-esteem/independence (354); To gain a qualification in EY for the first time (64).

6 FUTURE PLANS OF STUDENTS

This chapter reports students' future plans for the next two years and their expectations of the type of setting in which they will work, the type of job they will do and its seniority, whether they will stay with the same employer or move, and whether they will continue with further study.

Findings are reported for all students, and separately for students who had and had not completed the course, where base sizes allowed for comparison.

6.1 Expected future work setting

Respondents generally showed a firm commitment to working in the early years and childcare sector on completion of the Foundation Degree. Eighty-six per cent of all respondents said that they definitely intended to continue working in a related job, and a further 9 per cent said that they probably would. Only 3 per cent stated that they would not work in the sector while 2 per cent did not know.

Course completers were slightly more likely than non completers to intend to continue in the sector after completing the EYSEFD course (Table 6.1). Ninety-six per cent of course completers said that they would definitely or probably continue to work in this field compared with 86 per cent of non course completers.

Table 6.1: Intention to continue to work in early years or childcare

	All	Course Completer	Non completer
	%	%	%
Yes-definitely	86	89	71
Yes-probably	9	7	15
No	3	3	8
Don't know	2	1	6
Base	555	474	66

Base: All respondents.

When asked about the type of setting in which they would be most likely to work, the most commonly reported setting was working in a primary school, mentioned by 59 per cent of all respondents. The next most common types of setting were a nursery, reported by 13 per cent of respondents, a Children's or Family centre and a nursery school, both reported by 6 per cent of respondents. The type of settings in which respondents felt they would be most likely to work differed very little between those who had and had not completed the course (Table 6.2).

Since primary schools cover a wide age range, students who selected this setting were asked to specify which stage they would cover (lower part of Table 6.2, students could give more than one answer). The most common answers were reception class and Key Stage 1 (34 and 29 per cent overall), as would be expected given their focus on early years.

Respondents who planned to work in a primary school with children of reception class age, at Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2 were asked whether they expected to take a teaching assistant role. Just under half of this group expected to be a teaching

assistant (22 per cent overall) while the remainder (30 per cent overall) reported that they expected to do something else.

Table 6.2: Type of setting where respondent is most likely to work in future (Wave 3)

	All	Course Completer	Non completer
Setting	%	%	%
Primary school* (including nursery)	59	58	60
Nursery	13	14	18
A children's centre or family centre	6	7	7
Nursery school	6	6	2
Other type of setting	5	5	4
Playgroup	5	5	2
Advisory role in Early Years	2	2	0
Teaching/lecturing role in Early year	2	1	4
A private home as a nanny or a childminder	1	1	4
Out of school or holiday club	1	1	2
Social work/Social services	*	*	-
A therapeutic setting	*	*	-
Base	528	458	57
*Type of setting within a primary school (all students) [Note: students could mention more than one option]			
Nursery	24	-	-
Reception class #	34	-	-
Key Stage 1 #	29	-	-
Key Stage 2 #	18	-	-
Base	315	-	-
# Role in reception class or Key Stages 1 or 2 (all students)			
Teaching Assistant	22	-	-
Other role	30	-	-
Base	276	-	-

Base: Respondents at Wave 3 who expected to have an early years or childcare job after completing the EYSEFD

Settings are ranked in descending order of mentions (all)

For type of setting within primary school percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents could give more than one reply.

These answers were broadly similar to those the respondents had given in the Wave 2 interview except that the proportion choosing a primary school had fallen a little (59 per cent at Wave 3 compared with 70 per cent at Wave 2) as had the proportion choosing a nursery school (6 per cent compared with 17 per cent).

Table 6.3: Type of setting where respondent is most likely to work in future (Wave 2)

	%
Primary school	70
Nursery school	17
Nursery	6
Playgroup	2
Out of school or holiday club	1
Social work/social services	1
Therapeutic setting	1
Other type of setting	1
Base (309)	

Base: Respondents at Wave 2 who expected to have an early years or childcare job after completing the EYSEFD

Settings are ranked in descending order of mentions

6.2 Expected future role

Over half of all students (56 per cent) chose the category 'employee' from the list read out to them when asked to specify the level of the role they expected to play in their early years or childcare setting (Table 6.4). This may have signified an increase in level for some students, since most teaching roles would be classified under this heading. Nearly all of the remainder specifically chose a more senior role, of manager, head or early years co-ordinator (31 per cent), or of supervisor (8 per cent). A further 2 per cent said that they would be an owner or partner in their own business, 2 per cent another role and 1 per cent expected to be self-employed.

Respondents who had not completed the course were slightly less likely than completers to say that they expected to take a senior role in future. Two thirds said that they expected to be an employee.

Table 6.4: Expected future role in early years job

	All	Course Completer	Non course Completer
	%	%	%
Employee	56	55	67
Manager, head or early years co-ordinator	31	32	18
Supervisor	8	8	5
Owner or partner in own business (with employees)	2	2	2
Other role	2	2	4
Self-employed person (with no employees)	1	*	4
Base	525	449	55

Base: Respondents at Wave 3 who expected to have an early years or childcare job after completing the EYSEFD.

Roles are ranked in descending order of mentions (all)

Around half (54 per cent) of all students who worked in an early years or childcare setting expected to work at a higher level in a future early years job and 42 per cent expected their new job to be at the same level (Table 6.5).

Non completers had lower expectations than completers; only 29 per cent expected to be in a higher level job and 69 per cent thought their future role would be at the same level as their current job.

Table 6.5: Expected level of future early years job

	All	Course completer	Non course completer
	%	%	%
Higher level than current job	54	56	29
Lower level than current job	1	1	-
Same level as current job	42	40	69
Not directly comparable	3	3	2
Base	476	410	45

Base: Respondents at Wave 3 who expected to have an early years or childcare job after completing the EYSEFD and were currently working in a job related to early years or childcare.

6.3 Students' expectations about future courses

Course completers were asked how likely it was that they would do another course which built on the EYSEFD in future (Table 6.6). Over a third (37 per cent) reported that they were already on another course which built upon their Foundation Degree²⁹. Another third (35 per cent) said that they felt it was very likely and a further 15 per cent fairly likely that they would do such a course. Eight per cent felt it was not very likely and 5 per cent not at all likely. Thus, 87 per cent of course completers had either taken further relevant study or expected to do so.

Amongst those who reported that they were likely to go onto another course, the vast majority expected the subject of the course to be early years education or childcare (90 per cent; Table 6.7). Similarly, 87 per cent of those who had already started another course said that it was another early years or childcare course.

Table 6.6: How likely to go on another course that builds on the EYSEFD

	%
Very likely	35
Fairly likely	15
Not very likely,	8
Not at all likely	4
Already went on another course	37
Base	470

Base: Course completers

²⁹ All respondents who had already gone onto another course which built on the EYSEFD had completed the course (n=173; 37 per cent of course-completers).

Table 6.7: Likely subject of further course

	%
Early years education or childcare	90
Social work	2
Health,	1
Youth and community work	1
Something else	7
Base	259

Base: Respondents who expected to go on to a further course after EYSEFD

A small number³⁰ of respondents who had finished the course without completing, or were taking a break from the course and were unsure³¹ whether they would return, were asked how likely it was that they would do another course in early years education or childcare. Fewer than half of these non completers had gone on to another course (11 per cent) or thought that they were likely to do so (36 per cent). Just over half of this group said that it was not very (23 per cent) or not at all (30 per cent) likely that they would go on to another course.

6.4 Summary

- Nearly all respondents expected to work in the early years and childcare sector on completion of the Foundation Degree (95 per cent), most commonly in a primary school, in either a reception class or at Key Stage 1.
- Just over half of respondents expected to work as an employee in an early years or childcare setting while about a third expected to work in a more senior role such as manager, head or as an early years co-ordinator.
- Over half of respondents expected to work at a higher level in a future early years job than in their current job.
- A third of course completers were already on another course which built on their Foundation Degree. A further 50 per cent thought it was fairly or very likely that they would go on another course that builds on the EYSEFD.
- The most common further subject of study for students was early years education or childcare.

³⁰ N=47

³¹ Said that they did not think, or didn't know whether they would return to the course.

7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

What were the characteristics of EYSEFD students?

This report has looked at the characteristics of 474 students who had completed the course at the Wave 3 interview and a smaller group of students who had finished the course without completing (58) or who were taking a temporary break but intended to return to it (8). It has also reported briefly on the characteristics of 26 students who were still studying for the Foundation Degree at the time of the Wave 3 interview. Despite attrition of 12 per cent to the sample of the second survey, and 29 per cent to the first survey, the profile of respondents changed little and remained comparable to the Wave 1 and 2 respondents. Consequently it has not been necessary to weight the data.

Students who had completed the course at Wave 3 remained overwhelmingly female, with less than 1 per cent of course completers being men. Around three-quarters of completers were aged 36 or older. Seven per cent of course completers belonged to an ethnic minority group, including 3 per cent who were of Black or Black British origin, 2 per cent of Asian or Asian British origin, 1 per cent of mixed origin and 1 per cent of another origin. The remaining 93 per cent of students reported that they were White. Most completers (68 per cent) lived in a double headed household with at least one child. Eleven per cent lived in a single parent household.

Eighty-four per cent of course completers held an NVQ equivalent of level 3 or above prior to starting the EYSEFD course. Nearly all (90 per cent) had an early years qualification prior to the Foundation Degree. Most completers also had a long history of working in the early years field. Forty-three per cent had worked in the field for over 10 years, 27 per cent between 6 and 10 years and a further 25 per cent between 2 and 6 years. This equates to 95 per cent of course completers having worked in the early years field for at least 2 years.

The profile of the 26 students who were still studying for the Foundation Degree at Wave 3 was generally similar to that of students who had completed the course in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics.

What were the key features of students' participation in the degree?

Fifty-eight per cent of course completers reported that they finished the course in 2005 or before, while the remaining 42 per cent completed in 2006. Most students (92 per cent) spent 2 or more years on the course. Three-quarters of completers had studied for the course part-time and most studied at a Further Education institute (72 per cent).

Almost half of completers (44 per cent), specified Foundation Stage children as the main focus of their studies. Other popular choices of routes through the course were children from birth to 8 years (mentioned by 38 per cent of completers) and the teaching assistant route (mentioned by 10 per cent).

Most course completers received some form of financial assistance with the course. Nearly all completers (95 per cent) reported the loan of a laptop computer and printer and most received a full fee waiver (86 per cent) or bursary or grant (74 per cent).

Course completers' satisfaction with their experiences of the EYSEFD course was generally high. Ninety per cent were either quite or very satisfied with the quality of the teaching on the course. Most completers reported having had a personal tutor to support them on the EYSEFD during the course (91 per cent). Of these students, 83 per cent were quite or very satisfied with the academic support provided by their tutor and 78 per cent with the personal support they received from their tutor. Almost all completers also mentioned having a mentor for the work-based learning aspect of the course (91 per cent) and 86 per cent were either quite or very satisfied with their mentor. Satisfaction with the work-based learning aspect of the course was also high, with 93 per cent of completers reporting that they were either quite or very satisfied with their work-based learning.

Course completers were more likely to rate the EYSEFD favourably in terms of the benefits they had experienced as a result of their participation. Most felt that their involvement had had wider benefits at work; 97 reported a deeper understanding of their work, 92 per cent felt more confident and 87 per cent felt more enthusiastic about their work. Over a third (34 per cent) of course completers reported no work-related problems resulting from their involvement in the course. Where problems were reported, the most common was difficulties in planning time.

How have things changed for students who completed the course?

Nearly all of course completers (93 per cent) described some form of paid work as their main activity at the Wave 3 interview. Nearly all of those who were in paid work were working in a job related to early years or childcare (97 per cent). Forty-two per cent of completers had changed their main job since the Wave 2 interview. Eighty per cent of students who had changed their jobs attributed their job change to their participation on the course.

A large proportion of course completers who had changed their jobs, and those who had not, reported an increase in their level of responsibility compared to when they started the course. Levels of responsibility increased more for those who had changed jobs compared with those who had remained in the same job as at Wave 2; 76 per cent of job changers reported an increase in responsibility compared to 35 per cent of those in the same job. Eighty per cent of students who had changed jobs related their job change to their participation in the Foundation Degree.

Course completers who had changed their jobs were also more likely to report an increase in their income since starting the Foundation Degree. Seventy-three per cent of job changers reported an increase in their income, compared to 27 per cent of those who stayed in the same job. Unsurprisingly, the main reason for job changers' increased income was that they had moved to a better paid job; this reason was cited by 80 per cent of job changers. Job changers were also more likely to have felt that their change of income was related to their participation in the course than those who had stayed in the same job.

Thus, it would seem that the greatest benefits of course completion in terms of employment have been experienced by students who have changed jobs since they started the Foundation Degree. Those who had changed jobs were more likely to have experienced an increase in their levels of responsibility compared to when they started the course, and also a corresponding increase in their income. In comparison, a fairly large proportion of completers who had not changed jobs were given more

responsibility, but many (57 per cent) experienced no subsequent change in their income.

Did the EYSEFD meet students' expectations?

Respondents were asked about their reasons for doing the EYSEFD course at the baseline survey. At the final survey they were asked how well these aspirations had been met. In general, students' expectations of the course had been fulfilled and most reported high levels of satisfaction with how well their aspirations had been met. Non completers, in general, tended to report that their aspirations had not been met as well as those who had completed the course.

Around half of students agreed at the final survey that their work-related aspirations had been met quite or very well. The most common work-related aspirations mentioned at the baseline survey were particularly well met. These included gaining new job skills, which was met quite or very well for 91 per cent of students and receiving recognition for existing skills, met quite or very well for 68 per cent of students. These aspirations were also more likely to have been judged to have been met very well rather than quite well. Furthermore, although it was a less common work-related aim, the hope of increased chances of a promotion was realised for most students who had hoped for this.

The least well met work-related aspiration was to increase the chances of a pay rise; 43 per cent felt this aspiration had been quite or very well met. Overall, at the final survey almost half (47 per cent) of all students reported an increase in their income since starting the course and 62 per cent of students felt that their increase in income was related to their participation in the course. However, some improvement may have been expected over time even without participation in the course, so improvements in income cannot be fully attributed to the Foundation Degree.

Respondents' non work-related aspirations, such as improving their knowledge of the subject area and gaining a qualification, were more often well met than their work-related aspirations. Over 70 per cent of students who had such aspirations felt they had been well met and over half said they had been very well met. This high level of satisfaction with students' course aims applied to both the more and less common reasons for taking the course. The least well met aspiration was to be able to go on to another course, although a high proportion (71 per cent) still felt that this aim had been well met. However, a significant minority of respondents (10 per cent) said that it was still too early to say how well this aspiration had been met, suggesting it may take longer to achieve. Indeed, at the time of the final survey, a third of course completers were already on another course that builds on the EYSEFD and a further 50 per cent felt they were likely to do such a course.

What are EYSEFD students future plans?

In terms of their future plans, most respondents anticipated that they would continue to work in the early years and childcare sector (95 per cent). Most expected to work in an educational setting, most commonly in a primary school (mentioned by 59 per cent of respondents). Within a primary school, students most commonly expected to work in a reception class or at Key Stage 1 (34 and 29 per cent overall), which is consistent with the focus of the EYSEFD

Other popular choices of future work settings included working in a nursery (13 per cent), a Children's or Family centre (6 per cent) or a nursery school (6 per cent).

Other settings that were less frequently mentioned by students were a playgroup (mentioned by 5 per cent), an advisory role in early years (2 per cent), a teaching or lecturing role in early years (2 per cent), working in a private home as a nanny or childminder (1 per cent) or in an out of school or holiday club (1 per cent). A further 5 per cent of students mentioned some other unspecified setting.

In terms of the level of the job that respondents hoped to do, just over half (56 per cent) expected to work as an employee in their future role. Nearly all of the remainder expected a more senior role, of manager, head or early years co-ordinator (31 per cent) or as a supervisor (8 per cent). Only a small proportion expected to be an owner or partner in their own business (2 per cent) or to be self-employed (1 per cent). Around half of respondents (54 per cent) expected to work at a higher level in a future early years job compared to their current job, and most of the remainder (42 per cent) expected to work at the same level as their current job.

Students were also asked about their expectations about doing future courses that built on the Foundation Degree. Doing further courses was a common aspiration amongst EYSEFD students at the baseline interview, mentioned by 73 per cent of respondents. At the final survey, 87 per cent of course completers had either taken further relevant study (37 per cent) or expected to do so (35 per cent said this was very likely and 15 per cent fairly likely). This commitment to continuing education is similar to that observed at both the baseline and second student surveys and highlights the dedication and enthusiasm of this group of students to gaining higher levels of qualifications and seniority in the early education and childcare fields.

Why did some students not complete the course?

A small number of students at the Wave 3 survey had not completed the course. Fifty-eight students had finished the course without completing it and 8 described themselves as taking a temporary break from the course. Although it is very difficult to pinpoint the exact reasons why these students did not complete the course, it is possible to identify differences between this group, and those students who did complete the course, which may be associated with their non completion of the Foundation Degree.

Non course completers were more likely to have anticipated barriers to course completion at the time of the second student survey (that is, about one year into the course) than students who went on to complete the course. This suggests that, even at this early stage, some factors influencing non course completion were already affecting students.

For example, non completers were more likely to report financial barriers to course completion, such as affording course fees (mentioned by 62 per cent) and affording other course costs (32 per cent). Given that the funding available for the EYSEFD course decreased over the evaluation period, some students may have been uncertain of the support that they were to receive. Moreover, as this group appears to have been less affluent than completers, it is unsurprising they reported higher levels of finance-related concerns associated with the course at the time of the first follow up survey. Non completers were also more likely to report other (non-financial) concerns that might prevent course completion. Their most common concerns were about the pressures of work and study, the time commitment required by the course and the impact their studying had on their partner or family.

When asked at the final survey why they had not completed the course, the most common reasons generally matched students' earlier concerns, although financial issues did not seem to play as large a role as might have been expected. The most common reasons given for non completion of the Foundation Degree were the time commitment required by the course (mentioned by 51 per cent of non completers), health reasons (including pregnancy/maternity leave; 43 per cent) and the impact of studying on the respondent's family or partner (38 per cent). Thus, it would seem that more personal than academic issues were keeping students from completing the course. Only a small number of non completers reported issues of a more academic nature, including; the relevance of the course to their work (22 per cent), keeping up with the pace of the course (22 per cent) and meeting the academic requirements of the course (19 per cent), suggesting such issues were not barriers to completion for most students who did not complete the course.

Levels of satisfaction with the course at Wave 2 were also generally lower for students who did not complete the course, although it should be noted that non completers' ratings were generally favourable. Non completers did not appear to have been disadvantaged in terms of access to personal tutors or mentors for the work-based learning aspect of the course. Ninety-four per cent of non completers had access to a personal tutor whilst on the course, and 92 per cent had a mentor for their work-based learning. Thus, their lower levels of satisfaction with the support received with both tutors and mentors is unlikely to be associated with poorer availability. Non completers were also more likely to identify work-related problems with the Foundation Degree than course completers, in particular with difficulties planning time and finding substitute cover.

In terms of their socio-demographic circumstances, students who had not completed the course had broadly similar characteristics to course completers in relation to age, sex, ethnicity and household composition. However, non completers were more likely to receive means tested benefits, such as Working Tax Credit, Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit, as well as universal benefits including Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit. This suggests that, as a whole, non completers may have come from lower income households than course completers. Accordingly, non completers reported a higher level of financial concerns that might prevent course completion, such as affording course fees and other course costs. However, non completers were no less likely to receive financial assistance such as the loan of a laptop or printer, assistance paying fees and bursaries or grants.

Non completers also tended to have a slightly lower NVQ equivalent and early years NVQ equivalent than completers. Thirty-three per cent of non completers held an NVQ level equivalent of level 4 or 5 prior to starting the Foundation Degree compared with 40 per cent of completers, and 23 per cent had obtained a level 4 or 5 early years equivalent compared to 30 per cent of completers. A slightly lower proportion of non completers held an early years qualification before they started the EYSEFD than completers (85 per cent compared to 90 per cent), and they tended to have spent less time working in the early years field. However, despite these small differences, the majority of both groups of students had NVQ levels of 3 or above prior to starting the course, so it is unlikely that either were more or less 'academically prepared' for the Foundation Degree.

A lack of defined focus to their studies may have been a possible factor associated with non course completion of the Foundation Degree. A substantial proportion of non-completers (43 per cent) had not yet specified the focus of their studies at the

Wave 2 interview, about a year into the course. This compares to just 2 per cent of course completers.

Key issues for consideration

- At this final stage of the evaluation of the EYSEFD, the evidence has consistently shown that students have been very satisfied with the course and feel they have benefited from it both in relation to their work and more widely.
- In terms of where they go upon completion of the course, the survey findings suggest that students generally have to move to a new employer to gain a promotion or increased pay. If they stay with the same employer, they are likely to gain more responsibility, but their level of pay may remain static. This suggests the possibility for increased employee turnover within the sector (at least initially) as staff become better qualified and change employer to improve their prospects. Among those staying with the same employer, it seems likely that a lack of increased pay despite their higher level of qualification could become a source of discontent. However, new policy initiatives such as the Recruitment Incentive and Quality Premium associated with the Transformation Fund may help to offset these potential problems, at least in the short term if funding is used to increase wages of such staff.
- These students were also apparently very interested in pursuing careers in Infant level education (either at in Reception classes or at Key Stage 1). They are not necessarily focusing on becoming Teaching Assistants and many have gone on to further courses after the Early Years Foundation Degree (such as courses leading to Qualified Teacher Status). The survey highlighted that this a strongly motivated group of students interested in enhancing their qualifications and progressing within the early years education and childcare sectors.
- However, it is also important to consider these findings in the light of the particular student group included in the survey: the first full cohort of students on the EYSEFD. It is unclear whether these students are typical of others in the sector, in that they may be drawn from amongst the most senior and experienced members of staff who are perhaps the most motivated to obtain further qualifications and progress their careers. It may be more necessary for these people to change employers to gain promotion or pay increases, particularly if they were already among the most senior staff at their setting. If subsequent cohorts to the course are less senior, then their chances of promotion while remaining with the same employer may be greater.
- Considering the lessons to be learned from the introduction of the EYSEFD, the findings show that students have commonly found the course onerous in terms of the time commitment required by the course and difficulty in planning time and juggling work, study and home commitments. These issues affected both completers and non-completers and have been noted on each of the three surveys conducted. Although the course was designed to enable flexibility in terms of the time taken to progress through to completion, and also to enable students to access course materials flexibly and at times most suited to their needs, students have nonetheless struggled to balance their competing commitments. Previous surveys have highlighted that although students felt that various types of flexibility were important features of the course, their experience

was that these were not always delivered fully. Ensuring that the course is as flexible as possible to enable students to do coursework when it suits them best, to progress at their own pace and to complete at their own pace is therefore an important lesson.

- Additionally, employers need to be supportive, both of students' participation on the course and in terms of their career progression and remuneration after completion of the qualification. For example, employers need to allocate suitable cover for students on the course; problems with substitute cover was an issue noted particularly by non-completers as an obstacle to their participation. Similarly, completers who stayed with their current employer did not reap the same benefits in terms of increased pay and promotion as completers who moved to another employer. This would suggest either that employers are not fully recognising the enhanced worth of their employees that have gained this qualification, or that they simply do not have the ability or the funds to offer the types of prospects these employees are seeking.
- In terms of students' participation on the course, the findings suggest that guidance should be given early on in choosing a particular focus for the course and planning how this will contribute to the students' career in the sector afterwards. The evidence is that non-completers were much less likely than completers to have specified a focus for their studies a year after starting the course. A clearer, early sense of how the course will contribute to their career in the sector might help students to maintain a stronger motivation to complete it.

Copies of this publication can be obtained from:

DfES Publications
P.O. Box 5050
Sherwood Park
Annesley
Nottingham
NG15 0DJ

Tel: 0845 60 222 60
Fax: 0845 60 333 60
Minicom: 0845 60 555 60
Online: www.dfespublications.gov.uk

© National Centre for Social Research 2007

Produced by the Department for Education and Skills

ISBN 978 1 84478 904 7
Ref No: RR838
www.dfes.go.uk/research