

## **Partnerships for Progression: Proposals by the HEFCE and the Learning and Skills Council**

### **Response from the Learning and Skills Development Agency**

1. The Learning and Skills Development Agency is a strategic national resource for the development of policy and practice in the Learning and Skills Sector. Our activities include research, with partners, to inform the development of policy and practice in post-16 education and training. We have a clear brief to work across this sector, providing support for colleges, work-based training, adult and community learning, and schools post-16, with a particular focus on quality.
2. We welcome the initiative being taken to connect efforts in the further and higher education sectors in order to widen participation to those groups who have traditionally not participated in higher education. However, before addressing the questions raised in the consultation paper, we wish to draw attention to the following points.

### **General comments**

3. We note that a key focus of the proposals in the paper is to enhance the quality of provision and levels of achievement, in order that more young people are able to progress to HE. The paper emphasises the need to equip young people with the 'right qualifications' for entry to higher education. In order to retain a wider range of young people in education, there will be a need for new curriculum options leading up to level 3.
4. Attention should also be given to the offer and entry requirements of HEIs. The range of options in higher education needs to meet the interests and learning styles of the new learners that the proposals aim to attract. It is particularly important that new curriculum options at level 3 are complemented by relevant progression routes at HE level and a greater understanding and recognition of the range of level 3 qualifications by HE admissions staff.
5. We welcome the fact that the paper recognises the need to attract young adults in work back into higher education. However, we feel that there remains a need to strengthen the work-based route in order to develop parity of esteem. We are not convinced that identifying the workplace learning element of the initiative as an isolated strand is the most effective approach and suggest that it should be more closely integrated with the wider efforts to widen participation. The paper does not refer in detail to how employers will be engaged in the initiative, and what their contribution has been to developing these proposals. Effective

employer engagement will be crucial to their success. Employers are keyplayers both in releasing and encouraging their staff to engage in learning and in their involvement in HE, at board level and as part of course delivery.

6. As the paper recognises, there are many young people now in work who have achieved level 3 qualifications, but have not yet progressed their studies further. Deciding to leave school at 16+ to experience the world of work, be self-sufficient or to travel can be a positive decision and many young people who enter advanced or higher level study later, are highly motivated and determined students. We suggest that attention needs to be given to recognising the positive value of delayed entry and to providing clearer mechanisms to enable re-entry into education at a later stage. It is important that routes back into education and training are available at all stages of education, and particularly for young adults who choose to delay entry to advanced or higher level education.
7. Another area for attention is the role of FE in delivering higher education, particular higher level vocational training. The strength of the vocational and work-based routes will depend on there being high quality vocational training available right through to degree level. The centres of vocational excellence (CoVE) in FE colleges and creation of new technology institutes (NTIs) provide a strong basis for enhancing vocational provision. CoVEs will be particularly important in providing a strong vocational level 3 platform for progression to vocational study at HE level.
8. The contribution of FE colleges to HE delivery is significant, but is currently primarily at the discretion of their HE partners. As we argued in our response to the consultation, '*Supply and demand in higher education*', we believe that there is a vital need for government to articulate a strategic role for FE colleges in the delivery of higher education. In particular, we are aware that to offer high quality HE, colleges need to have a sustained role and long-term horizon in order to manage the investment in staff skills and other resources. There may also need to be a minimum level of HE provision, or critical mass, to merit the investment needed to sustain quality provision.
9. We welcome the fact that this is a joint initiative between HEFCE and the Learning and Skills Council. Collaboration across the post-16 education and training sectors is crucial if the government is to succeed in its higher education participation targets. Historically, policy in the further and higher education sectors has not been well connected, and in many ways has diverged.<sup>1</sup> It will be essential to secure better co-ordination of policy development across the post-16 sectors.
10. Sound information and advice services will be essential to ensure learners choose the learning opportunities that match their aspirations. Higher education

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<sup>1</sup> This is discussed in our forthcoming publication *Closer by Degrees*, Gareth Parry and Anne Thomson, currently in publication at LSDA (March 2002)

will not be the right choice for some, and to fail at it could be humiliating for the individual and damaging to HEIs, colleges and other providers. The role of impartial information, advice and guidance services will be critical to determine whether a learner's needs are best met through a pathway to higher education, or whether they are better met through a vocational qualification, professional and staff development at work, adult and community learning or other provision.

**Question 1. Do you agree there is a case for an initiative on the lines proposed in order to meet the Government's participation target (paragraphs 7-15)?**

Agree

11. We welcome the focus on both economic and social purposes for the initiative and particularly support the emphasis placed on redressing the balance in the socio-economic profile of those participating in higher education. We agree that there is a case for more collaborative work between schools, FE colleges, employers and higher education institutions (HEIs) to help widen participation in higher education. We accept that action is required to achieve the government's targets for increasing participation in higher education and that widening participation is the appropriate approach.
12. We agree that collaboration between schools, colleges and HE will be essential and believe that this needs to be reflected in strong formal relationships at systemic levels, and joint working relationships between the LSC and HEFCE regionally and nationally. The LSC has a strategic responsibility for planning and coordinating activities in local LSC areas in order to widen participation, raise standards and improve progression opportunities. It would be helpful, in order to reflect the partnership relationship between HEFCE and LSC, if future policy papers were jointly authored between the two councils, promoting a concerted approach and explicit shared goals.
13. The consultation paper suggests that HEIs will be heavily reliant on schools and FE colleges to deliver the government's targets and emphasises the need for programmes to raise standards at this level. As the paper suggests, the HE sector will need to be equally proactive in designing appropriate courses, reviewing the part-time route, targeting adult learners, and developing new progression routes, which will attract new learners into the system, as well as providing appropriate pastoral and academic support to those who do participate.
14. There is evidence from our evaluation of college strategy statements in relation to phase one of the HE in FE Development Fund initiative<sup>2</sup> that some FE colleges are planning growth in HE provision because the new wave of level three

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<sup>2</sup> *Supporting higher education in further education colleges: a report to the HEFCE by the Further Education Development Agency*, HEFCE circular 01/07, February 2001

graduates in vocational areas can find no appropriate and relevant progression routes available in HEIs. Whilst we acknowledge that many HEIs have become more flexible in their programme offer and modes of delivery there is scope for much more diverse provision, for example building on non-prescribed HE provision delivered in FE colleges.

15. We suggest therefore that the fit between what is offered by HEIs and programmes which non-traditional learners find attractive in terms of appropriateness, relevance and flexibility needs to be explored in much greater detail. Non-traditional learners may require quite different models of HE provision, perhaps wishing to remain in their family home, to retain substantial part-time employment, to study part-time or over a longer period of time, to take breaks in study, or to continue their pre-HE social activities rather than develop new ones.
16. The paper states that '*HE needs schools and FE to equip young people with the right qualifications and motivation*'. It is important to ensure that the 'right qualifications' are defined as widely as possible if they are to attract non-traditional learners into the system. There is a clear need for HE admissions tutors to understand vocational routes and work-based routes (including modern apprenticeships) and for UCAS to develop a points system that demonstrates equivalencies across the academic and vocational routes. We welcome the fact that the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) is in the process of writing a guide for admissions tutors to explain the vocational routes into HE.
17. We note the significant pool of young people identified in the workforce with level 3 qualifications, who are perceived as having missed out on HE. Considerable effort will need to be taken to incentivise these young people to participate and to engage employers and persuade them to support and encourage employees to take further qualifications.
18. We note that the National College for School Leadership has recently launched an initiative which aims to establish 'networked learning communities' between schools, FE colleges, HEIs and community groups. Widening participation should be a major debating point within such communities.

## **Question 2. How can we best link this proposed initiative with the range of existing widening participation activity and the Excellence Challenge initiative (paragraphs 16-20)?**

19. There is a risk attached to the current range of initiatives for widening participation in higher education that these may appear as discrete actions rather than a coherent strategy. This is a particular danger given the incremental way in which DfES initiatives, such as the Excellence Challenge, and the current HEFCE initiatives have grown over recent years. We suggest that clearly routing the

range of initiatives through local LSCs could help to bring greater coherence to activity for learning and skills sector providers.

20. In order to widen participation effectively, the existing Excellence Challenge partnerships need to be extended to embrace representation from work-based providers and employers if they are adequately to represent more vocational routes. The paper identifies no specific role for Sector Skills Councils or the Small Business Service which have particular responsibilities in relation to workforce development. Consideration needs to be given to achieving the effective engagement of these bodies. There is a danger that by working within the existing partnerships, the initiative will perpetuate the existing range of developments.
21. It will be vital that the partnerships work to change the aspirations and expectations of young people who want to pursue a vocational route as much as with the academically gifted. We suggest that additional resource should be focused particularly on the workplace strand, as this is where expertise is currently weakest. It is notable, for example, that none of the illustrative activities detailed in Annex C relate to work with those in work or employers. This aspect will require considerable attention if the initiative is to succeed in encouraging more young people to progress to higher education from the workplace.
22. In order to reach non-traditional learners, consideration should also be given to ensuring the active engagement of Youth Workers and the Connexions Service, who are likely to understand the needs, preferences and ambitions of young people.
23. We note HEFCE's proposal to provide additional funding in proportion to the number of students from neighbourhoods with low rates of participation in HE on the basis of a postcode formula. FE colleges, through the FEFC, were given funds to widen participation on a post-code-based formula. This was not particularly successful in attracting additional learners for two reasons:
  - a) those colleges which are in widening participation areas already had a large number of students for whom the uplift applied; there was not enough cash to be an incentive for them to look for further students from 'hard to reach' groups
  - b) those colleges where there were no local students eligible for the widening participation uplift did not find the uplift sufficient to warrant the investment in time and outreach required to attract and engage these learners.

24. This experience in FE suggests that HEFCE should ensure that funds available both for outreach and for supporting successful participation are sufficient to cover the costs of this work, if this approach is to make an impact<sup>3</sup>.

### **Question 3. How do you see the role of further education and training providers in the initiative (paragraphs 21-22)?**

25. As the paper confirms, FE colleges will have an important contribution to make to delivery of the HE targets, both in supplying students with qualifications for progression to HE and in delivery of higher education. FE colleges have a great deal of experience in developing new programmes for disaffected young people, developing widening participation strategies and strategies for retention and achievement, developing additional learning support programmes for young people and in working in partnership with other providers. There is a wealth of experience and evidence that can inform strategies to attract new learners into higher education.

26. Although the paper refers to the role of FE in delivering HE, as it makes clear, their role in this is primarily at the discretion of the HE partners. We believe that there needs to be a more strategic approach to the role of FE in delivery of HE. In particular, we are aware that to offer high quality HE, colleges need to have a sustained role and long-term horizon in order to manage the investment in staff skills and other resources. There may also need to be a minimum level of HE, or critical mass, to justify the investment needed to sustain quality provision. For example, this needs to merit investing in the additional capacity needed to handle QAA inspection and audit arrangements.

27. Current arrangements appear to lack strong levers to enable HEFCE to take a strategic approach to planning HE development in FE colleges. FE colleges themselves are dependent upon the approach of their HE partners, so may find it difficult to take a long-term approach. However, FE college delivery of HE provision could make a vital contribution to achievement of the targets. We strongly recommend that consideration should be given to establishing mechanisms, where these do not already exist, that bring HE, FE, LSC and HEFCE together on a regional basis to develop a long-term strategy for widening participation. There is good practice in some universities to draw on here, such as the collaborative FE/HE partnerships between Staffordshire University and a significant number of FE colleges

28. Although HEFCE prefers FE colleges to be in partnership arrangements with HEIs, many wish to remain directly funded. Feedback from providers also suggests that those with less than 100 full-time equivalent students sometimes

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<sup>3</sup> The additional costs of supporting disadvantaged learners have been explored in a range of research, including and LSDA commissioned report, *The Costs of Disadvantage*, JM Consulting, February 2001

opt to forego Development Fund support as they view the time and effort required to submit consortia bids for the HEFCE Development Fund as disproportionate to potential benefits. We are concerned too that some FE colleges that have engaged in consortia or franchise arrangements are treated as spare capacity for recruitment and lack adequate support for improving quality.

29. It will be important that support is given to the FE providers of HE level courses that are not involved in partnerships with HEIs. Many need support to build their infrastructure to ensure a higher quality HE experience for their students, and strong staff development for those teaching on HE courses. HE delivery teams in FE colleges also need to be integrated into HE knowledge and research communities.
30. We would add that it is limiting to view partnerships between HEIs and FE colleges solely in terms of franchise and consortia arrangements. Partnerships often go beyond this to encompass joint curriculum development and research work, plus associate college status.
31. The paper states that HEFCE was assigned responsibility for funding most categories of HE in FE colleges in 1998. It is important to qualify this. Although HEFCE took on the funding of HNDs and HNCs, all the non-prescribed higher education courses are currently funded through the LSC. There is a need to review these courses and how they contribute to the participation targets. Work is currently being carried out by QCA to assign these qualifications to an HE level (and determine whether they do conform to HE status). In addition, LSDA is running a research project for the LSC looking at what constitutes non-prescribed HE, who is doing it and what are their motivations.
32. There may be a need to develop provision of HE in FE colleges in line with the development of vocational excellence within the sector. Building on the CoVE initiative, we suggest that FE colleges would benefit from specific discipline or vocational specialisation in their delivery of HE. This could help to ensure that we exploit the momentum and potential of both CoVE and National Technology Institutes to raise the profile and range of vocational options.
33. Finally, we note that question 3 relates both to the role of colleges and of training providers although the document does not refer to training providers. The Green Paper for schools foresees a significant expansion of vocational options and of Modern Apprenticeships as a route to HE. For this to become a reality, HE providers will need to develop relationships with training providers and ensure that appropriate progression opportunities are available for learners on these routes.

#### **Question 4 Do you agree with the proposed aims and objectives of the initiative (paragraph 23)?**

Agree

34. We support the aims and objectives but would suggest that they could be supplemented in three areas. First, there is an over-emphasis on supplying HE with appropriate students. We suggest that the objectives should reflect the need for HEIs to review their current provision and see how it can be made more attractive to the young people that are not participating. A further objective might therefore include developing HE provision to make it more attractive to a range of potential learners.

35. Secondly, while strategies to keep young people in education may be successful, there are always likely to be young people who prefer to leave school at 16 or 17. For some young people, deciding to leave school at 16+ to experience the world of work, be self-sufficient or to travel, can be a positive decision. Many young people who enter advanced or higher level study later, are highly motivated and determined students. It is important therefore that sound mechanisms exist to enable re-entry at a later stage. A particular objective therefore, could be to ensure that full, part-time and work-based routes back into education and training are available, particularly for young adults who chose to delay entry to advanced or higher level education.

36. In order to be efficient, initiatives must be consonant with the aims and aspirations of young people. Detailed research by LSDA<sup>4</sup> on learner experiences has described the range of influences affecting young people's decisions about education as they progress from adolescence to adulthood. A further objective could be to ensure that the strategies for widening participation are founded on a secure analysis of young peoples' aspirations and ambitions, such as that offered in this work.

#### **Question 5. Do you agree with the proposed priorities for action, and principles for designing the initiative (paragraphs 24 and 25)?**

Agree

37. We broadly support the four proposed priorities for action. We recognise the value of focusing efforts in FE colleges and training providers that undertake significant work with students from disadvantaged areas, particularly where current attainment levels are low. However, we suggest that it would be most appropriate to collaborate with LSCs in administering extra funding, for example through the existing Standards Fund arrangements.

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<sup>4</sup> *Moving into FE: the voice of the learner*, P Hodgkinson and M Bloomer, FEDA, 1997 and *College life: the voice of the learner*, P Hodgkinson and M Bloomer, FEDA, 1999



38. We particularly welcome the priority given (24c) to encouraging demand for and raising completion rates of vocational courses, and supporting progression to HE from these courses. Increased demand for vocational courses will be achieved by creating appropriate products and incentives that meet the needs of a wide range of learners and which have clear value in terms of progression to HE and to employment.
39. We note an underlying implication in the wording of this priority, however, that A-Levels continue to be viewed as the 'normal' entry route for HE. Increased recognition of the vocational route and acceptance of vocational qualifications as equally valid will require a culture change among admissions staff within many HEIs, but is essential if learners are to be attracted to these courses. The terminology of 'appropriate qualifications' appears again in these stated priorities and we would repeat the need to consider how to give the widest possible interpretation whilst ensuring the right standards at entry.
40. We welcome the attention given in priority 24d to providing incentives for workplace learning and creating progression routes from the workplace into HE. However, it is unclear from the paper who the proposed incentives will be aimed at, whether employers, learners, or learning providers. A coherent pattern of incentives, which complement each other, will be important to success.
41. We note that research and evaluation is presented later as a key strand of the initiative. However, it would also be helpful to embed ongoing evaluation of the project as an underlying principle. There need to be clear indicators set from the outset against which success can be measured, and there also need to be strong mechanisms for sharing good practice across partnerships and providers. Also important will be the development of a reflective, research aware and research-based culture wherever HE is delivered, linking research and knowledge effectively to practice.
42. We welcome the assertion that what is envisaged is '*more of a campaign than a project*', suggesting a longer term and more sustained approach, and support the proposal that funding should offer long-term stability. However, we are not clear that the initiative as it is presented actually reflects this principle, and are concerned that the strands are more project-based, replicating the multi-level bidding model prevalent in much current policy.

## **Question 6. The four proposed strands of activity:**

**a) Support for HE/FE partnerships (paragraphs 30 - 46): *Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following proposals:***

**i) Do you agree that we should build upon the existing HE/FE regional widening participation partnerships?**

Agree

43. We agree that it is sensible to build upon the existing HE/FE regional widening participation partnerships, with the proviso articulated in our response to question 2 above, that they are extended to involve work-based providers and employers. LSDA facilitates regional networks for HE and FE providers which may offer a useful forum for developing regional proposals as outlined in paragraph 33 of the paper. It would be important to ensure representation from local LSCs in regional partnerships.

**ii) Do you agree that regional 'targets' should be established and monitored?**

Agree

44. Consideration should be given to developing regional targets in two ways. First, they could relate more clearly to employment sectors. More precisely focussed targets might enable regions to focus more clearly on appropriate activities within the work-based sectors and could link more effectively with CoVE developments in specific vocational sectors such as applied science for medical support staff and high technology engineering.

45. Secondly, targets should relate to the socio-economic background of participants, in order to measure the extent to which the social purpose of the 50% participation target is being addressed.

46. While we recognise that HE recruitment is national not regional, we believe that analysis needs to be carried out to ensure that there is adequate provision available for learners who wish to remain in their local area. We suggest this may become increasingly important as the socio-economic profile of HE changes and as increasing numbers of people study part-time whilst in employment.

**iii) Do you agree that we should allocate funds regionally, with weightings to reflect current participation levels, and invite strategic action plans from partnerships?**

Agree

47. We agree that strategic action plans should be invited, particularly as a mechanism for monitoring the effectiveness of initiatives to widen and increase participation. It would be helpful to clarify how funds will be allocated into a region, and to whom they will be given.

**iv) Do you agree that partnerships should propose their own mix of activity to meet the aims and objectives identified?**

Agree

48. We agree that it is essential that regional partnerships propose their own mix of activity, given their detailed knowledge of local needs, although this should not mean that they fail to build on existing good practice.

**v) Do you agree that a major area for investment should be support for HE/FE staff to work with schools, colleges and workplaces to raise aspirations and achievement in students from age 13?**

Strongly Agree

49. We agree that there is a need for investment to enable particular staff in HEIs and FE providers to work with schools, colleges and workplaces to raise aspirations and achievement from an early age. We would place particular emphasis on the need to work with young people in the workplace. It will be important to link these efforts with the developing CoVE programme, as the paper notes at paragraph 51.

50. We note that the paper does not refer to the role of the Connexions Service, Adult Advice and Guidance services, or New Deal mentors in this context. It is important that there is coherence across the support agencies to raise the aspirations of young people and ensure opportunities for entry to HE are discussed with potential adult returners.

**b) Funding for quality standards improvement (paragraphs 47 – 49): Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following proposals:**

**i) Do you agree we should build upon the existing LSC programme for improving quality standards?**

Strongly Agree

51. We agree that it is important to build on existing LSC mechanisms for quality improvement, especially as a key driver for raising participation lies in young people achieving level 3 qualifications. It would not be appropriate to set up a further set of arrangements for this particular initiative. It is important, however, to be clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the existing LSC programmes and to learn from these.

**ii) Do you agree we should target funds to providers that draw their students from lower socio-economic groups and poorer neighbourhoods, and which have lower rates of attainment and retention and entry into HE?**

Agree

52. While we accept the principle of targeting funds to providers that make a key contribution to the widening participation agenda, we suggest that the detail will need careful consideration. Issues need to be resolved, such as whether the real costs of activity that supports learners and overcomes barriers should be funded rather than adopting a post code approach. It will also be important to ensure that the funding is linked to quality aspects so those who are doing badly because they are of poor quality are not funded at the expense of those who are doing well because they do have quality delivery.

**iii) Do you agree that we should set out our priorities for funds in relation to our aims or objectives and ask providers to set out their proposed activities in development plans?**

Agree

53. We agree, but would caution that such an approach may result in 'bids' being submitted rather than development plans.

**c) Funding for workplace learning (paragraphs 50 - 54); Do you agree with our proposals that we should focus on targeted employment sectors?**

Agree

54. We agree that it is sensible to focus on targeted employment sectors. However, we are concerned that the focus should not be primarily upon those sectors where there is already a track record of HE/FE engagement. The work undertaken as background for the CoVE programme and the work of the National Skills Task Force point to a need to develop level 3 and 4 skills in many industry sectors where there is not a tradition of training at this level. This will be essential if they are to survive and contribute to the future UK economy. In order to give the initiative coherence with the CoVE programme, we suggest that the emphasis should be on skills priority areas.

55. However, there is a danger that some of the selected employment sectors may not be sufficiently attractive to young people. For example, there is a need for management trainees in hospitality and catering, but there is a shortage of people in the sector because the jobs are often poorly paid, have antisocial hours and do not offer good career progression. If this sector were targeted there would need to be a corresponding incentive drive by the employers themselves to encourage people into the industry.

**d) Do you agree with the proposed national programme of research and evaluation (paragraphs 55 - 57)?**

Strongly Agree

56. We support the proposal for research and evaluation to inform and monitor regional strategies to address barriers to participation. LSDA's work on stimulating demand for learning post-16 suggests that, although many initiatives have been tried in this field, good *impact* evaluation (as opposed to *process* evaluation) is in short supply. In a review of international evidence for LSDA, the authors write: "the lack of conclusive evaluation evidence means that it is difficult to draw any strong conclusions about the relative merits of the approaches adopted"<sup>5</sup>.

57. This underlines the importance of putting in place sound evaluation approaches to measure the effects of future policies and strategies on participation in HE. It will also be helpful to draw together existing research and evaluation evidence, preferably with an international perspective.

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<sup>5</sup> Hillage J and Aston J. Attracting new learners: a literature review. *Institute of Employment Studies for the Learning and Skills Development Agency. LSDA, 2001*

58. Work by LSDA on widening participation and stimulating demand can make a useful contribution to the body of evidence<sup>6</sup>. We would also draw attention to the programme of work on widening HE participation, conducted by Universities UK<sup>7</sup>, and research published by the Department for Education and Skills<sup>8</sup>.
59. It is important that the research agenda should address the perceptions and experience of the non-traditional HE student. Learner motivation is crucial and we need to establish how and if their motivations are different from those of the traditional HE learners. Widening participation policies should result in an increase in learners from more disadvantaged backgrounds and research will need to focus on the obstacles they face to succeeding in their studies.
60. It is important that this is an integrated programme of research and development, applied directly to the actions taken in the programme. For example, research-based evidence could be used initially in the design of the programme. Strands of the programme could involve structured development projects in which practitioners and evaluators work together to design and implement projects with measurable outcomes. Development projects of this kind are likely to throw up important new questions which a further wave of research should address.
61. In addition, as this is a new intervention programme where it is not always known in advance which approaches will work best, it may be possible to organise some of the research using experimental methods. This would involve deliberately designing a number of parallel but different interventions whose outcomes would be capable of being compared. The evidence produced would be more robust if measures of outcome were planned and initial data were collected before the intervention began.
62. There is accumulating evidence that the research that is most valid and useful in practice is often designed and conducted in a partnership of practitioners and researchers. We would recommend that practitioners from colleges, sixth forms and other provider organisations should collaborate for the research programme to achieve greatest impact. These practitioners might be drawn from the general teaching force, from the advice and guidance community or specifically from areas of FE colleges where HE courses are delivered. This latter group should be a particular target as they both teach and advise pre-university students and also have direct experience of the HE curriculum. They are particularly likely to be in touch with those learners that HEIs find difficult to reach.

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<sup>6</sup> For example: Taylor S and Cameron H. Attracting new learners: international evidence and practice. LSDA, March 2002; Howard U. Stimulating demand for learners: an ideas paper on attracting new learners. LSDA, 2001; Good practice in widening adult participation in FE colleges. Final report to the Learning and Skills Council (LSDA, unpublished, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Yorke M. Social class and participation. Universities UK, March 2002. See also related work under the title From elitism to inclusion.

<sup>8</sup> Connor H and others. Social class and higher education: issues affecting decision on participation by lower social class groups. DfEE, 2001, Research Report RR267.

63. It is also important to the quality of HE delivered in FE that teachers and other staff have access to research and new knowledge, have time to and are encouraged to engage with the research community in their field, and have the opportunity, through research or research-related activity, to deepen their own understanding and knowledge. Involving these practitioners in the research strand of this initiative would therefore be beneficial on a number of fronts.