

Supplement to 2009/05

Good practice

This report is for information and guidance

This is a supplement to the HEFCE good practice guide 'Supporting higher education in further education colleges: Policy practice and prospects' (HEFCE 2009/05). It is intended to support colleges in their strategic thinking and to help them prepare the submission of their higher education strategy in January 2010.

Supporting higher education in further education colleges

Writing higher education strategies

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Introduction

This is a supplement to the HEFCE good practice guide 'Supporting higher education in further education colleges: Policy practice and prospects' (HEFCE 2009/05). It is intended to support further education colleges (FECs) in their strategic thinking and to help them prepare their higher education (HE) strategy for submission in January 2010, as requested in 'Request for higher education strategies from further education colleges' (HEFCE 2009/13).

Context

In April 2009 'Request for higher education strategies from further education colleges' (HEFCE 2009/13) was sent to all colleges that have higher education provision funded by HEFCE. The submission deadline is 11 January 2010.

This request for strategies from all such colleges followed from the consultation on HEFCE policy on HE in FECs in 2006, 'Higher education in further education colleges: Consultation on HEFCE policy' (HEFCE 2006/48). HEFCE 2009/13 includes key extracts from HEFCE 2006/48, and sets out HEFCE's view of the distinctive role of HE in FECs.

In its consultation HEFCE noted that HE in FECs 'operates at a funding and administrative boundary, which has meant that neither HEFCE nor the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) have taken the strategic overview of the provision....' (paragraph 41). Further, that:

The core purpose of HEIs is to provide higher education and this is reflected in mission statements and other corporate policy commitments. But higher education is not the principal purpose of FECs, not even for those 'mixed economy' colleges that are significant providers of HE. Moreover, the curriculum mix and forms of delivery (full and part-time) vary with context and mission.
(paragraph 42)

In order to provide a clear understanding of what a college's higher education sets out to achieve, HEFCE proposed that all colleges in receipt of HEFCE funding should have a strategy for development and delivery of their HE.

Responses to the consultation indicated widespread support for the proposal (see 'Higher education in further education colleges: Outcomes of the consultation'. October 2007) and in 2007-08 a pilot was conducted which informed the decision of the HEFCE Board in December 2008 to request strategies from all FECs (B107/08); see Section 2.1.

These documents and others related to HE in FECs can be found in the dedicated section of the HEFCE web-site: www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/heinfe/.

Using the guide

The following sections of this good practice guide address: firstly, the experience of colleges during the pilot, then the guidance and indicative content for HE strategies set out in HEFCE 2009/13.

Attention is drawn (in boxed comments) to sections of 'Supporting higher education in further education colleges: Policy practice and prospects' HEFCE 2009/05 which provide contextual and supporting information. Where there has been a change or update affecting the content of the guide attention is drawn to this here.

The comments on practice and extracts from strategies in this guide have been provided by pilot colleges and colleges whose managers volunteered their strategies at seminars of the HE in FECs Expert Programme held in spring 2009 (see www.sheffield.ac.uk/heinfestratprog/index.html for details of the project). Contributions to this report from colleges or partnerships are boxed and shaded. When the example is from a participant in the pilot this is indicated.

Questions are posed in each section; these are designed to provoke consideration of key issues that were presented in HEFCE's 'Request for higher education strategies from further education colleges' (HEFCE 2009/13) and could be used with staff and managers in developing or revising college HE strategies.

Development and diversity

Extracts from, and comments on, the process of producing strategies submitted in the pilot should be read in the context of the HEFCE policy for HE in FECs (HEFCE 2006/48) and the expectation of growth that there was at that time (2007-08).

The guidance in HEFCE 2009/13 was circulated to colleges in April 2009 and the extracts included in this guide are from strategies written before this date. These extracts are in line with the guidance, but the good practice in this supplement should be received as emerging and developmental.

Examples have been selected to demonstrate the approach a range of colleges have taken in addressing the indicative content for an HE strategy given in HEFCE 2009/13. There is significant diversity of provision in colleges: the volume and range of provision; the funding stream and partnership arrangements; and the organisational infrastructure for the management and support of higher education. Colleges have differing strategic aims and set out different strategies for providing and developing higher education; this diversity is reflected in the examples.

1 Lessons from the pilot exercise

- 1.1 The pilot exercise
- 1.2 Guidance to participants in the pilot
- 1.3 Strategies submitted in the pilot
- 1.4 Benefits of participation

1.1 The pilot exercise

The pilot exercise in 2007 to 2008 was externally evaluated and the results, based on questionnaires and interviews, informed the decision by HEFCE to request strategies from all FECs in 'Request for higher education strategies from further education colleges', HEFCE 2009/13. In Section 1.3 the benefits of participation in the pilot are described, and four colleges offer a commentary on their participation in the pilot and how it shaped or altered their practice.

The report outlining the elements and stages of the evaluation of the pilot ('Higher education strategies from further education colleges: evaluation of the pilot exercise in 2007-08', June 2009,) is available on the HEFCE web-site: www.hefce.ac.uk under Learning & teaching/Higher education in further education colleges.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) for England issued an information bulletin summarising key findings and areas for development indicated by an appraisal of the pilot strategies, which was conducted in the main by the QAA on behalf of HEFCE. 'Higher education in further education colleges in England. Higher education strategies pilot 2007-08', Information bulletin, 2009, is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/infobulletins/HESTRAT_09.pdf.

1.2 Guidance to participants in the pilot

The pilot exercise was conducted to test the workability of the implementation of a requirement for FECs to submit HE strategies. Draft guidance was provided along with the criteria for appraisal of the strategies. The guidance was revised, taking account of feedback from institutions in the pilot, and the updated guidance is in HEFCE 2009/13. This supplement builds on that guidance.

In the pilot, strategies were appraised by a QAA project team on behalf of HEFCE and by regional teams against published criteria (see Annex E of 'Higher education strategies from further education colleges: evaluation of the pilot exercise in 2007-08'). Strategies requested from all colleges in April 2009 for January 2010 will **not** be subject to such an appraisal.

1.3 Strategies submitted in the pilot

In the pilot 36 colleges submitted individual strategies (10 within HEI-led partnerships). There were three partnership submissions: one a joint submission covering six colleges in a sub-region; and two by formal partnerships led by a higher education institution (HEI), where a submission for the partnership was accompanied by complementary college strategies.

The college strategies submitted (1 March 2008) were varied in format, length, scope and detail. This was to be expected as the guidance is deliberately not prescriptive. Most strategies appeared to have been written for the purpose of the pilot, but a minority were pre-existing documents; some were accompanied by supplementary documentation produced for other purposes.

Of the 36 colleges, the responses to the pilot in questionnaires or interviews indicated that 24 (67 per cent) previously had an HE strategy. Of those who had an HE strategy, 11 colleges (48 per cent) had a strategy that included non-prescribed higher education (NPHE); that is, only 31 per cent of all the colleges.

1.4 Benefits of participation

Colleges were generally positive about the benefits of participating in the pilot. They reported that the production or revision of a strategy encouraged a constructive assessment of their higher education provision and its strategic direction and development. The process of internal (sometimes external) consultation and approval of the strategy served to clarify college processes related to higher education, as well as raising its profile in the institution.

Some colleges found the process of producing a strategy acted as a catalyst to explicitly evaluate the current and future provision of higher education. Orpington College's senior management team (SMT) first established a strategic direction for HE provision as described below.

Orpington College

Comment on participation in the pilot

Orpington College already had an HE strategy of sorts, but it was very limited and just before being invited to take part in the HE in FECs strategy pilot a paper had been prepared for discussion at an SMT meeting. An appropriate strategy for the college was required but before it could be properly developed the college had to decide on a basic strategic direction. The paper suggested three possible directions. Firstly, the college could decide not to engage in HE delivery at all – existing provision is small and therefore it could be argued the time and effort expended in its delivery is disproportionate to the income. Secondly, the college could expand its HE provision – there are areas of real expertise and quality in the college that could be used to develop 'niche' provision and would provide extra income. Thirdly, the college could keep the provision at its present level – which would not attract the benefits of time/effort saving if abandoned or increased income if developed.

After some discussion it was decided to take the second option, but it was agreed that growth would only take place if it could be demonstrated that there was local demand, a sound business plan and that staffing and resources were in place in order to ensure quality of delivery. This discussion underpinned the development of the college's HE strategy.

Several colleges cited the synergy between preparing for the QAA's Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) and drafting the strategy. For West Herts College, the

participation in the pilot both encouraged evaluation of the HE offer and dovetailed with preparation for IQER.

West Herts College

Comment on participation in the pilot

West Herts College volunteered and was chosen to take part in the HEFCE pilot to develop an HE strategy in the context of a further education college. The timing of the pilot was excellent. It gave the college an opportunity to review and evaluate its HE offer and long-term strategy alongside the development of a self evaluation (SE) required for a developmental engagement as part of a QAA IQER due at about the same time: the SE for IQER and the draft HE Strategy were submitted within a week of each other in March 2008.

The need for a formalised HE strategy fitted well with the overall strategic direction of the college. The college has a long tradition of delivering HE in FE but had lost considerable ground in recent years due partly to external factors such as increasing competition, tuition fees and other economic drivers and partly a need to refocus on the core FE business. At the time the pilot was suggested, the college's senior management team was turning its attention to other parts of the business such as HE, Train to Gain, employer engagement etc. A strategic review of HE was already underway and had started from the basic question of whether the college still wanted to be in this market, and if so, how did HE fit into the overall strategic plan of the organisation? The need to develop a fairly comprehensive HE strategy allowed time and space to develop this thinking and to assess and evaluate the college's position in the HE market, the relative advantages and disadvantages of remaining there, and milestones that needed to be achieved to take forward this area of work.

The writing of the HE strategy and the self evaluation for IQER dovetailed very well, the one informing the other, and enabled the senior management team to take a hard look at where the college was with HE, identify strengths and areas for improvement and provided mutual benefit for both setting the strategic direction of the college with regard to its HE offer and the process of the IQER audit. It was time-consuming and tight deadlines had to be met but participation in the pilot was very worthwhile. It will help the college to continue to develop a sound, robust and deliverable HE strategy as it moves forward into exciting times ahead including a large scale rebuild programme and a focus on diversifying income allowing greater autonomy and the ability to be very responsive to the needs of all stakeholders in the local community it serves.

Others produced the strategy in the context of organisational change, including merger, as at Wiltshire College.

Wiltshire College

Comment on participation in the pilot

Wiltshire College is the product of two mergers. In 2000 Trowbridge and Chippenham, both general FE Colleges, merged with Lackham, a land based college. In 2008 Salisbury was included and the college became the sole FE college in Wiltshire excluding Swindon. Wiltshire does not have a university so the college also became the sole provider of HE in the county excluding Swindon. On merger in 2008 the college had significant HE provision, both directly and indirectly funded and non prescribed, totalling about 650 FTEs and it had inherited multiple partnership arrangements with university awarding institutions. The merger process and the publication of the HE in FECs consultation in 2006 (HEFCE publication 2006/48) had given the college management the opportunity to give strategic consideration to its HE. However these strategic considerations were not articulated sufficiently, nor related as closely to regional and local needs as they should have been. The college saw the opportunity of being involved in the HE in FECs strategies pilot as a good opportunity to more clearly describe its strategic intentions within the local and regional context. The college volunteered and was accepted to be included in the pilot.

City College Norwich participated in the pilot and used the process of drafting the strategy to underpin preparation for institutional review by its validating HEI for the collaborative aspects of its own institutional audit, and for IQER. Subsequently, the college has refined its management and governance structures and, in so doing, the profile of HE has been raised across the college.

City College Norwich

Comment on participation in the pilot

Following first publication of the college Strategy for the Development of Higher Education and the constructive feedback we received from the QAA/HEFCE appraisers, the college has taken further steps to reinforce its commitment to the development of higher education and to ensure that the college is well equipped to deal with the challenges we face as a college (and, indeed, those which are common to the sector).

The single most fundamental change that we have implemented and which demonstrates the key strategic priority that HE now is for the college, is the creation of a Governors' Higher Education Development Committee (GHEDC). This committee is chaired by our Chair of Governors and receives reports and papers from our Higher Education Committee via the Higher Education Quality Learning and Teaching Manager. This formal sub-committee of the corporation board is currently in the process of establishing and consolidating its knowledge base of higher education matters but will soon, with the authority of governors, progress to a more fundamental examination of the college's core strategy and operational plans for HE.

The college continues to examine and to fine tune its structure, procedures and processes for

HE and is establishing a senior academic committee with terms of reference defining it as the ultimate authority for academic affairs and awards as they affect HE in the college. The proposed title for this committee is 'Senate' and it will report directly to the GHEDC (ante). This senior committee, which will be appointed by and given authority by the corporation board, will have a specific focus on higher education and the college's QCA Awarding Organisation powers. Some further streamlining and clarification of college committees and QA reporting structure is planned and will result in both a clearer and more effective QA process.

The college has resolved to revise its strategy document in line with the feedback received from the appraisal team (this will include additional statistical and other data) and will additionally prepare individual action plans for specific sections of the strategy in order to ensure a) that they are implemented and monitored and b) that the strategic plan remains a live document and is and will be continuously updated.

Once the revised and updated strategic plan has been agreed at GHEDC it will become the live strategic plan and be submitted to HEFCE (March 2009/13). The college has a new institutional strategic plan (Delivering Tomorrow's People; Tomorrow's Workforce 2009-14) and the HE strategy is integrally linked to that overarching plan.

Not only has the development of the strategy influenced the way that HE is positioned within the committee and quality management systems of the college and has raised its profile amongst senior managers and governors but it has also affirmed HE as an important priority for heads of school, who under our revised strategic and operational mechanisms have a much more direct involvement in the development and QA of HE programmes. Two groups of staff – HE Programme Managers and HE Champions – now clearly provide the key operational and communication links between the central HE Quality Enhancement and Support team (HEQUEST) and the delivery school management teams.

This college has revised both its management and its governance to directly address quality assurance for HE. Most colleges do not have such distinct processes and procedures, particularly for governance; however, attention needs to be given to the processes for developing and agreeing the HE strategy which must be approved by the college corporation before submission in January 2010.

The experience of the colleges reported above highlights the developmental process of formulating, evaluating and updating the strategic direction and, thus, the HE strategy document.

Other comments and excerpts from pilot colleges' strategies are included in the following sections which address elements of the guidance provided in 2009/13.

2 HE strategies: purpose and process

- 2.1 Policy
- 2.2 The purpose of an HE strategy
- 2.3 Development of a college's higher education
- 2.4 The submission process
- 2.5 Developing an HE strategy
- 2.6 Structure and format of a strategy

Key points

- FECs are requested to submit an HE strategy to HEFCE by 11 January 2010; it must be signed off by the college corporation
- The strategy should cover the period 2009-10 to 2011-12. It is advisable, therefore, to submit a draft to corporation for discussion at the end of the 2008-09 academic year
- The strategy should cover all provision at and above level 4
- No further additional student numbers will be allocated for 2010-11
- The strategy should reflect the indicative content in Annex B of HEFCE 2009/13; if it is not a bespoke document, the content should be clearly mapped to that annex

2.1 Policy

The paper submitted to the HEFCE Board in December 2008 placed the proposal to request HE strategies from FECs in context.

Our strategy for HE in FECs seeks a more strategic approach from FE colleges and their HEI partners with a view to enhancing and strengthening the provision. Our view is that HE taught in FECs, although not a large proportion of all HE, is critically important. This is because of its role in opening up vocational progression routes into and within HE, in making HE more accessible to those with no previous experience of HE whether young people or adults, and in contributing to the development of higher level skills and the employability of graduates. While much of the college provision of HE is very successful, there is undoubtedly some which has not been planned as strategically as it might have been and is not well connected to progression opportunities. Our policy is designed to address this.

'HE in further education colleges: HE strategies', B107/08, paragraph 9

Recent policy developments for HE in FECs, such as the requirement for HE strategies and the new method of IQER, have in some respects aligned requirements and processes for

colleges more closely with those experienced by higher education institutions. HEIs submit corporate plans, which include their strategic priorities (annually updated in a corporate planning statement.¹) For colleges that are making an application for Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP) the criteria require the college to demonstrate 'the effectiveness of its present regulatory and quality assurance arrangements and its capacity to meet the expectations on academic standards and quality management as set out in the national Academic Infrastructure' (paragraph 5, 'Applications for the grant of Foundation Degree Awarding Powers. Guidance for applicant further education colleges in England, 1 May 2008', DIUS).

2.2 The purpose of an HE strategy

The purpose of an HE strategy as set out in HEFCE 2009/13 is for FECs to address a range of strategic and developmental issues.

An HE strategy has several uses:

- as a prerequisite for improving HE provision
- raising the profile of HE within the college and with important stakeholders
- as evidence for the Integrated Quality Enhancement and Review through which the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) reviews the management of standards and quality of HE in FECs
- supporting the development of widening participation strategic assessments
- as a resource for HEFCE institutional teams in understanding the provision of HE in FECs and, more specifically, to inform our dialogue with FECs about the development of their HE, for example in the context of funding related to any initiative or recruitment within the specified limit of the grant.

'Request for higher education strategies from further education colleges', HEFCE 2009/13, paragraph 17

The strategy should cover all higher education provided by the college, that is, all programmes at or above level 4 in the Qualifications and Curriculum Framework (QCF) or the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). Given the strategic importance of increasing higher-level skills in the workforce, HEFCE wishes to have information about professional and work-related higher-level learning (see paragraph 25 of HEFCE 2009/13) whatever the source of funding; thus, NPHE should be included.

¹ A corporate planning statement (CPS) is submitted to HEFCE in December as part of the documentation submitted for the annual accountability process now known as the 'single conversation'. The CPS provides HEFCE with the context in which to understand the other returns more fully and the progress towards delivery of the strategic plan and aims for the year ahead ('Single conversation' annual accountability returns 2008', HEFCE 2008/31).

Supporting higher education in further education colleges, HEFCE 2009/05

Section 2 of the guide examines higher level skills and Table 1 in that section sets out the levels. This includes 'prescribed higher education' funded by HEFCE as well as 'non-prescribed higher education' funded by the LSC.

Annex D of the guide includes definitions of prescribed and non-prescribed higher education.

The ways colleges aim for and monitor improvement and enhancement of the HE provision should be demonstrated in the strategy and the student experience. The particular character of that experience in the college should be at the core. The guidance provided in HEFCE 2009/13 considers enhancement in paragraph 21. While it may not be appropriate to have a discrete heading, how the strategy enhances students' experience and engagement with their learning should be made explicit in addressing such aspects as resources, teaching and learning, student support, an HE culture and staff development.

The HE strategy will form part of the evidence submitted by colleges for their IQER portfolio. IQER is concerned with all taught higher education programmes of study funded by HEFCE whether this funding is direct or indirect. The QAA provides detailed information and guidance regarding IQER in 'The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review' (www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/iqer/handbook08/).

Both the Developmental engagement and the Summative review stages of IQER are based on a college's self-evaluation. The purpose of the self-evaluation is to describe the responsibilities that the college has for the management of the student learning experience of its higher education provision, making reference to its agreements with awarding bodies, and the processes and procedures it has adopted for discharging these responsibilities. The self-evaluation also provides the opportunity for the college to reflect critically on the effectiveness of these processes and procedures.

'The Handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review', QAA 2008, paragraph 104

For both developmental engagement and summative review, the self-evaluation is a portfolio of documents. Indicative content is set out in the Handbook (at paragraphs 109 and 112 respectively) and in each case includes a 'higher education strategy (when this policy has been implemented by HEFCE)'.

During the 2007-08 pilot of HE strategies from FECs (see Section 1), the QAA provided HEFCE with support in appraising the strategies and the extent to which they addressed strategic themes. The appraisal process was not concerned with formal approval of the overall content of the strategy ('Higher education in further education colleges in England. Higher education strategies pilot 2007-08', QAA Information bulletin 2009).

IQER has been used by the QAA as the review process in colleges from 2007-08. Those colleges participating in the early part of the review cycle which had an HE strategy may have submitted it as part of the portfolio of evidence; from January 2010 this will be an expectation. The strategy will be part of the evidence submitted as the self-evaluation; it will not be subject to 'appraisal' nor 'approval'.

Supporting higher education in further education colleges, HEFCE 2009/05

Section 10 of the guide addresses quality assurance and enhancement and provides guidance on preparation for IQER.

2.3 Development of a college's higher education

Paragraph 21 of HEFCE 2009/13 provides guidance on the focus of the college strategy:

.... the strategy may be about maintaining the current provision or about growth, circumstances permitting. Alternatively, it may involve rationalisation of provision in certain areas and growth in others, while maintaining the overall volume. It may involve enhancement related to: continued professional development; scholarly activity; resourcing of staff, facilities, equipment and learning materials; curriculum development; relationships with employers; and recruitment and retention.

College HE strategies will form a resource for HEFCE institutional teams to support their understanding of HE in FECs in general and, more specifically, to inform dialogue with individual FECs about the development of their higher education – within funding constraints. Strategies will form part of the evidence provided in the context of funding related to any initiatives. This would include any bid for higher education centres as set out in 'A new "University Challenge": proposals for higher education centres', HEFCE 2009/07².

In the grant letter to HEFCE in January 2009 the Secretary of State, DIUS, followed up his letter of October 2008 restricting the allocation of additional student numbers (ASNs) to no more than 10,000 for 2009-10 by requiring HEFCE not to allocate any further ASNs for 2010-11. Further, HEFCE was requested to 'develop proposals to bear down on over-recruitment by institutions' (www.hefce.ac.uk/news/hefce/2009/grant/letter.htm). The Secretary of State indicated his intention to review the position later in 2009.

Thus, while the pilot was conducted in a policy context looking for college strategies to produce growth of HE in FECs, the current position suggests colleges should evaluate their

² The initial consultation on the setting up of HE centres was conducted prior to the current restriction on numbers. 2009/07 explains:

In July 2008 we launched a consultation on the approach we are taking to support the development of new higher education (HE) centres (HEFCE 2008/27). The consultation was an important part of the debate that the Government asked HEFCE to lead when it set out the policy framework in 'A new "University Challenge": unlocking Britain's talent'. We were asked to take decisions to support 20 new HE centres by 2014, subject to receiving high-quality proposals. We will also need to be confident that the resources are available for any capital development and that sufficient student numbers are available to ensure the viability of any proposed centre. (paragraph 11)

current provision and – in the short to medium term – look to optimise provision rather than to assume there can be growth based on the availability of ASNs. Nonetheless, the guidance indicates that:

It is permissible to include some things which are aspirational, while making clear that these are areas that will be explored further and developed during the period of the strategy, but which are less likely to be realised in their period. This may be because of uncertainty with external factors or because the strategic direction cannot be determined until exploratory work has been completed.
(paragraph 26, HEFCE 2009/13)

'Recurrent grants for 2009-10', HEFCE 2009/08, sets out provisional funding for the 130 HEIs and 124 FECs funded directly by HEFCE and the context for the funding. Final allocations will be announced in July 2009 and published in October.

2.4 The submission process

The completed strategy must be approved by the college corporation and submitted by e-mail to HEFCE by noon on 11 January 2010, accompanied by two forms.

The first form (which is at Annex C in HEFCE 2009/13) summarises the course offer of the college at level 4 and above. This should cover directly and indirectly funded provision as well as non-HEFCE funded provision (including LSC-funded students, international students, students funded by other public bodies such as the National Health Service (NHS) and the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), students funded by employers and privately funded³ students).

Colleges are asked to summarise trends; colleges are not, however, asked to submit detailed data. The information about context that colleges provide will be supplemented with data on student numbers, qualification aims and mode from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and the individualised learner record (ILR) for 2007-08.

The second form (which is at Annex D in HEFCE 2009/13) must be signed by the Principal/Chief Executive and give the date when the strategy received corporation approval. It should indicate where in the submitted documentation the strategy has addressed key elements:

- context
- overarching objectives
- rationale
- elaboration of individual objectives
- assessment of high-level risks.

The submission date allows for final approval by a corporation meeting in December.

³ 'Privately funded' covers any other students where the institution receives sufficient resource other than from HEFCE.

2.5 Developing an HE strategy

The strategy should be for the three years 2009-10 to 2011-12. Colleges are able to vary this in order to match other strategic planning cycles by extending it to five years.

Colleges develop – or revise – their HE strategy through a formal or informal process of consultation with a range of college staff, students, governors and stakeholders. Kingston Maurward College was part of the pilot.

Kingston Maurward College

Comment on participation in the pilot

In developing an HE strategy, we took a fresh look at the distinctive contribution that HE made to our overall provision. It provided the impetus for us to consult widely and governors, staff, students and employers had a series of meetings to discuss and establish the strategic direction we should take and the evidence base we needed to use to make informed decisions about future developments. This group continues to meet on a regular basis to review and refine the strategy which now forms an integral part of the whole college development plan.

Stockport College is developing a separate HE strategy and here outlines the approach and summary action plan.

Stockport College

Our Plan

At Stockport we have begun the process of producing a separate HE strategy. Currently our HE strategy is embedded in the overall college strategy. By the end of the process we will have a clear strategy for the development of HE which:

- is mapped against the college values, mission and corporate objectives (Stockport's HE is, like much HE in FE, vocational in nature and about 50 per cent part-time)
- is employer-facing to meet real identifiable needs in the region
- relates to other HE provision locally and regionally
- addresses academic standards and effectiveness of academic staff in HE.

What to do next?

1. Set up a cross-college HE Strategy Group (already operational).
2. Draw up an action plan to address issues indicated in HEFCE guidance (drafted).
3. Allocate actions and monitor response, involve relevant college departments and other stakeholder groups including our HE partners where appropriate.
4. Translate responses into strategy and send out for consultation to all relevant

- stakeholders.
5. Request approval from the Governors.
 6. Send to HEFCE.

There is no expectation by HEFCE of a formal re-submission of the strategy on a regular basis. However, the majority of the colleges in the pilot reported that they would conduct annual internal reviews. Good practice demonstrates regular monitoring and review of strategies internally for quality enhancement purposes and target setting – approaching the strategy as a working document supporting self-evaluation. As strategies will be part of the evidence for IQER, managers will wish to ensure they are up-to-date.

Wakefield College submitted a strategy in the pilot. The production of the college's HE strategy is embedded in college processes and an annual review cycle.

Wakefield College

Comment on production of college strategies

The Higher Education Strategy is one of several cross-college strategies that are developed as an integral part of the annual strategic planning process. The higher education strategy, along with other cross-college strategies, are used by the teaching academies and service areas to inform the development of their strategic priorities and operational plans, as well as the overarching college operational plan.

The process of developing the higher education strategy is led by the Director of Higher Education in consultation with the senior management team and service area managers and is supported through meetings of the Higher Education Strategy Group. The identification of aims, strategic objectives and approaches, and key performance targets starts in the autumn term and is completed by January. Further discussion and consideration of the higher education strategy and other cross-college strategies takes place in a series of strategic planning workshops and senior team meetings between January and the end of March. These processes contribute to the dissemination of the strategy, action planning and refining targets. Drafting of academy and service area operational plans is complete by the beginning of June. These plans set out details of how each area will contribute to achieving the cross-college strategic objectives and targets.

The production of the whole-college Strategic Plan is complete by July for approval by the board of governors.

As the cycle for confirming cross-college strategies is January to March in Wakefield college, the submission date for strategies of 11 January 2010 will mean that the strategy will not have been subject to ratification, and the refinement of objectives and targets for the next academic year (2010-11) and beyond will still be 'live' and subject to change in the light of further discussions with academy and service areas.

If college strategies relating to 2009-10 to 2011-12 are approved in the autumn by the corporation, they will be describing provision and strategy that is already operational⁴. It is advisable, therefore, to submit a draft for discussion at the end of the 2008-09 academic year.

2.6 Structure and format of a strategy

While HEFCE is clear about what is expected in the content of a strategy (see below) it is not prescriptive about the format. The guidance notes that a college may choose to provide any of the following:

- a bespoke document, adopting a structure based on the indicative content at Annex B
- an existing document for a whole-college strategy with, if relevant, documents prepared for other purposes
- an existing document with a supplement to cover any aspect of the indicative content not already covered.

(paragraph 36, HEFCE 2009/13)

Where a bespoke document is submitted, the guidance indicates that the length of the document should be appropriate to the range and diversity of the provision and the extent of planned changes. It is suggested (see paragraph 37) that documents should be under 10,000 words but at least 3,000, excluding annexes and templates. The strategy document should be carefully structured reflecting the indicative content in Annex B.

Where the college does not submit a bespoke document reflecting Annex B of HEFCE 2009/13, it is important that the mapping of content against the key elements (see template at Annex D of HEFCE 2009/13) is clear and comprehensive.

While an operational or implementation plan is not required by HEFCE, the guidance notes:

The strategy should give supporting information for each of the areas it covers. The purpose would be to demonstrate that the strategy is reasonable and has the potential to be realised. We would not expect to see an implementation or operational plan. We would, however, expect to see something that goes beyond a statement of objectives, providing a brief analysis of the approach that will be taken on each aspect. Where the college has targets these should be included, for example in relation to growth in student numbers, capital and other resource investment.

(paragraph 29, HEFCE 2009/13)

The strategy document may be underpinned by an operational or action plan with targets; key targets (for instance in relation to student numbers, capital and resource investment) should be included in the strategy (paragraph 29, HEFCE 2009/13).

Stockton Riverside college participated in the pilot. The manager, who had newly taken on the strategic lead for HE, approached the task of drafting the strategy by first formalising a description of HE activities into an operational document.

⁴ The summary of HE provision in a college, as provided in the template (see HEFCE 2009/13, Annex C) is for 2009-10.

Stockton Riverside College

Comment on participation in the pilot

Stockton Riverside College had a pre-existing HE Strategy, however on evaluation it was felt it was not fully aligned to the guidance provided for the pilot by HEFCE.

As the college had two partner HEIs plus HE funded by the LSC, it was decided a good approach to a revision would be to initially centralise information regarding HE in an operational plan that broadly utilised the sub headings suggested in the guidance. This proved an invaluable exercise as it focused attention on the area, and allowed an underpinning document to be developed that comprehensively outlined: links with other key institutional strategies; management and governance; current HE provision; three year targets; partnerships; curriculum responsiveness; learning resources; CPD; other agencies & risk management. Plans regarding how the college planned to address very topical issues (e.g. the ELQ ruling) were also included.

As the operational plan was developed, it became clear that there were some aspects the college needed to address further, and a report suggesting HE developmental priorities was submitted to the relevant members of the college's senior management team.

The final strategy led naturally from a combination of the operational plan and consultations regarding current plans, and future directions, with relevant managers cross college.

The reference to the, then imminent, impact of the equivalent or lower qualifications (ELQ) ruling is an example of how strategy will be subject to adjustment at an operational level in response to external events (see Section 3.8 on risk assessment and management).

Colleges can support and amplify their strategy document by reference to strategies or policies such as:

- widening participation (see Section 5)
- equality and diversity
- teaching, learning and assessment
- student support
- access agreement
- admissions policy.

Supporting material can be included as annexes.

Questions you may wish to consider

- Have you determined the time line and processes to ensure that consultation, approval by the relevant committees and sign-off by the governing body is complete in time for submission by 11 January 2010?

3 Content of the HE strategy

- 3.1 Indicative content
- 3.2 Description of the college
- 3.3 Statement of purpose
- 3.4 Aims and objectives
- 3.5 The context, rationale and planned changes
- 3.6 Provision of HE
- 3.7 Risk assessment and management

Key points

- Colleges should take account of HEFCE's view of the role of HE in FECs
- The strategy should include clear aims and objectives
- The HE strategy should have synergy with the college mission and wider strategic aims
- It should be clear how the strategy builds on strengths in FE and where there are progression routes into and through HE in the college
- There should be a rationale for development which takes account of local circumstances, is based on evidence and adds value

3.1 Indicative content

The expected content of HE strategies is set out in HEFCE 2009/13 in paragraphs 18 to 31 and summarised in Annex B. Table 1 provides a summary which can be used as a checklist.

Table 1 Indicative content for an HE strategy

Indicative content (see Annex B HEFCE 2009/13)	Guidance in HEFCE 2009/13	Section of this guide
Period covered by strategy	2009-10 to 2011-12, paragraph 18	2.5
A brief description of the college – type, location and size		3.2
A statement about why the college offers higher education, including how HE relates to the college's mission.	See HEFCE policy on HE in FECs, HEFCE 2006/48; Annex A includes extract. Paragraphs 14, 19, 22, 23	3.3

<p>The context for the college's HE provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local, sub-regional and regional economy and society • widening participation • niche provision. 	<p>Paragraphs 19, 22 Annex C Paragraphs 32-5 (Partnerships)</p>	<p>3.5</p>
<p>A description of planned changes to the provision and a statement of the objectives.</p>	<p>Paragraph 21</p>	<p>3.6</p>
<p>Rationale for the changes, for example in contributing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local, sub-regional and regional economy and society • widening participation <p>niche provision.</p>	<p>Paragraphs 27, 29</p>	<p>3.6</p>
<p>A statement about how the strategy meets identifiable needs and adds value.</p>	<p>Paragraphs 21, 26</p>	<p>3.4, 3.6</p>
<p>More specific information about the planned changes, or a brief statement about the existing position and how it is being taken forward unaltered, regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the management and governance of higher education • curriculum development • resourcing of higher education: staff, facilities, equipment and learning materials • continuous professional development and scholarly activity, which includes professional updating • recruitment, retention and progression into and through HE • relationship with employers • relationship with higher education institution partner(s) • involvement with other agencies and HE networks 	<p>Paragraph 30</p>	<p>3.6</p>
<p>Assessment and management of high-level risks.</p>	<p>Paragraph 31</p>	<p>3.7</p>

The following sections of this guide elaborate on this and provide examples from colleges. Annex B of HEFCE 2009/13 provides a list of elements that should be included in a strategy; it should not be seen as a series of sub-headings.

3.2 Description of the college

The strategy should provide a context for the reader by giving a brief description of the college including: type, location and size. This should include an indication of the proportion of provision which is HE⁵.

3.3 Statement of purpose

The document should include a statement about why the college offers higher education, including how HE relates to the college's mission. The college's HE strategy should follow from the college mission and wider strategic objectives. It should be clear how HE provision builds on strengths in further education and, therefore, where there might be progression into and through HE (paragraph 22, HEFCE 2009/13).

In some cases, a college's HE mission may be incorporated within the general college mission statement; in others, there may be an HE-specific mission complementing that of the college overall. It should be noted that where a college has to submit a widening participation strategic assessment (where it has over 100 directly funded student FTEs) this will have been submitted ahead of the strategy (by 30 June 2009). The widening participation strategic assessment had to include an 'overarching statement' that identifies the place of widening participation in the institution's mission and forward planning, consequently, these colleges will need to address the match between the documents (see Section 5).

Questions you may wish to consider

- Why does your college offer higher education, given that it is likely to be a small proportion of the college's business?
- Have your reasons for offering HE changed in recent years?

City College Norwich includes higher education in its college mission statement.

⁵ Annex B of HEFCE 2009/13 indicates that this should include a figure for the full-time equivalence of further education students. However, advice from HEFCE is that it is acceptable to indicate the proportion of HE provision as either a percentage of the headcount, or of income, or numbers of full- and part-time students. If FTEs are compared, it should be noted here that HEFCE and the LSC derive FTEs by different methodologies. HEFCE defines FTEs for part-time students in higher education with reference to the time taken to complete an equivalent full-time course, and the number of guided learning hours is irrelevant (paragraph 20, Annex A, 'HEIFSES08', HEFCE 2008/36). However the LSC calculation is based on guided learning hours (GLH); a learner studying a programme of 450 or more GLH counts as one FTE (regardless of how many hours above 450 are involved) and part-time FTE is calculated by dividing the planned GLH by 450 to determine the fraction (paragraph 104, 'LSC funding guidance 2008/09').

City College Norwich

The Strategic Development of Higher Education At City College Norwich 2008/09 to 2010/11, submitted in pilot

Mission Statement

City College Norwich is an inclusive, accessible college of further and higher education which provides high quality services to the range of diverse communities within the locality and the region which it serves.

In particular the college, often in collaboration with others, will:

- act as a catalyst in supporting economic development and regeneration in the region through providing excellent, relevant and industry-standard vocational education and training to meet existing and forecasted skills needs
- work collaboratively with other agencies, in particular local and county-wide schools, to ensure the widest range of learning opportunities are made available to all 14-19 learners across the county
- provide for the basic skills needs of the local population, at the college, in the community or in the workplace
- provide the primary vocational higher education provision for the region.

Stockton Riverside College participated in the pilot, as a member of the Teesside Higher Education Business Partnership. The college strategy for HE sets out a vision for HE provision accompanied by 10 aims, accompanying objectives with specified outcomes and identified responsibilities; the first aim is included below.

Stockton Riverside College

Higher Education Strategy 2008/9 – 2010/11, submitted in pilot

Vision

This strategy sets out the vision of Stockton Riverside College:

to grow sustainable, high quality, responsive higher education, with a clear focus on employability and widening participation, by placing employers at the heart of all developments.

The college is committed to developing its HE provision and has clear aims and objectives in relation to how this will be achieved over the three year timeframe August 2008 – July 2011.

Aim 1 – to provide a sound rationale for maintaining and developing HE provision

This will be achieved by:

- 1.1 Maintaining a long term college commitment to developing its HE provision

- 1.2 Undertaking an annual evaluation of HE provision in relation to overarching college strategic directions
- 1.3 Maintaining a focus on developing vocationally relevant programmes
- 1.4 Acting as a hub to facilitate local access to HE
- 1.5 Focusing on flexible short cycle provision which delivers the education and skills required by local and regional employers
- 1.6 Being responsive to national and local initiatives which address skills shortages

Outcome: Clarity about the college's rationale for HE provision

Responsibility: Principal, Senior Management Team (SMT), Strategic Lead for HE, Director of Curriculum Planning and Development, HE Co-ordinator, Directors of Faculties (DoFs) and Heads of School (HoSs)

3.4 Aims and objectives

Paragraph 21 of HEFCE 2009/13 indicates that an HE strategy should include clear aims and objectives.

The better-presented strategies provide clear aims and list specific objectives.

'Higher education strategies pilot 2007-08', QAA, Information bulletin 2009

At Cornwall College the HE strategy articulates with the Teaching, Training and Learning strategy as well as with the strategies of the partner HEI.

Cornwall College

Extract from HE Strategy 2008

Introduction

Higher education (HE) should be a transformational experience for the student and have broader aims than the gaining of a qualification. The opportunities for positive, personal change that it can and should produce must underpin every aspect of the design, and realisation of the HE experience, and this strategy should be viewed and implemented with that in mind.

This HE Strategy articulates with the overall Cornwall College Strategy and its Teaching, Training and Learning Strategy. It is informed by the values and mission of the college, the needs of its students and those of their actual and potential employers. It is also informed by the learning and teaching policies and strategies of its principal partner, the University of Plymouth (UoP), as well as developments in the wider external environment at local, regional and national level.

The Aim of the Strategy

To:

- work within partnerships to enhance the learning opportunities in the Peninsula
- provide students with the best possible educational experience delivered where and when it is most appropriate to the student need
- develop appropriate, stimulating and relevant curricula and pedagogies
- improve levels of learner support and retention
- develop graduates as life long learners
- develop delivery mechanisms that fit with the particular needs of regional learners
- enhance the physical and virtual learning environment
- meet the requirements of employers in the higher skills agenda
- enrich the student experience through continual quality enhancement and ownership of quality throughout the Corporation
- improve performance through rigorous review
- build on existing strengths in both further education (FE) and HE
- produce a relevant and strategically driven programme portfolio
- widen access to and participation in HE
- ensure appropriate levels of recruitment to HE
- employ appropriately qualified staff to teach HE in a further education institution (FEI)
- develop staff skills and scholarship
- support staff in developing programmes and pedagogies
- provide organisation, management and governance that enables HE to flourish and enhances the student experience.

At Wakefield College the core strategic aims of the HE strategy are set out and underpinned by strategic objectives, in turn linking with the strategies of other sectors of the college. For instance, the completion of a dedicated centre for higher education in the city centre is an objective of the property strategy. At Ruskin College each of the nine strategic aims of the college, which cover both FE and HE, is linked to one or more policy or strategy documents that are monitored and evaluated by the executive group. These include: Teaching and Learning Strategy, Curriculum Strategy, Learning and Support Handbook, Community and Residence Handbook, Quality Handbook, ILT Strategy, Institutional Equality Strategy, Financial Plan, Estates Strategy, Environmental Policy, Staff Development Policy, Staff Handbook.

Weymouth College identifies eight aims as the key drivers for HE development.

Weymouth College

Extract from the HE strategy 2008

1. Increase HE provision to reflect the needs of the community

To develop and expand the college's profile as a local provider of higher education that meets the needs and interests of the local community, whilst maintaining a national standing in areas of expertise

2. Develop a College HE framework

To develop a framework of courses at the college, to improve student options, choice and flexibility and to move towards individualised learning

3. Improve employer engagement

To enhance links with, and services to employers; including improving the flexibility of curriculum delivery to include bespoke continuing professional development, delivered as individual units

4. Increase progression

The routes into higher education, including but not limited to Access to HE, will be improved by means of the curriculum structure and electronic methods of delivery, to make them more attractive to prospective students access

5. Effectively manage partnerships

To develop strength as an independent institution through long term, mutually beneficial partnerships with higher education institutions

6. Improve learning and teaching

To enhance the variety and quality of learning and teaching delivered by the college. This will include research informed teaching, responsive tutorial support and a focus on flexible teaching methods including electronic delivery

7. Increase student achievement and progression

To improve the retention and achievement rates on the college's HE courses and to improve further the progression rates and /or uptake of relevant employment by students

8. Improve widening participation

To widen participation and ensure that the college's curriculum attracts those who otherwise would not have had access to higher education

3.5 The context, rationale and planned changes

The strategy should describe the context in which the college offers higher education and any planned changes to provision with objectives. Areas for development identified in the pilot by the QAA included a rationale.

Setting out aims, objectives, and a rationale for current provision and intended developments

A rationale for current provision is often largely descriptive or missing.

In some strategy statements the rationale for development needs to be explicit.

'Higher education strategies pilot 2007-08', QAA Information bulletin 2009

The context and rationale for current provision and for any proposed changes should address:

- local, sub-regional and regional economy and society
- widening participation
- niche provision.

Wigan and Leigh College

Extract from Higher Education Strategy 2008/9, submitted in pilot

Future developments

When the college is developing its Strategic Plan and agreeing strategic aims and objectives, it seeks to reflect and achieve local, regional and national priorities. All planning is undertaken in line with strategic partners, and indication of local demand is given through college membership of the Wigan Economic Partnership and through documents such as the Wigan Economic Development Plan. At sub-regional level, college membership of the Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance Lifelong Learning Network (GMSA) and documents such as the LSC Learning and Skills Assessment and the Greater Manchester Development Plan provide direction.

At regional level the North West Strategic Review of Skills Provision, the North West Learning and Skills Priorities and the North West Regional Development Plan underpin planning decisions. At national level documents such as the HEFCE Strategic Plan, the Leitch Implementation Plan, the HEFCE Four Cities Report, amongst others, are the key drivers of planning.

Drafting a description of the context and rationale can identify gaps in a college evidence base, as Wiltshire College found in the pilot.

Wiltshire College

Comment on participation in the pilot

The structure of the strategy was agreed by the college SMT and the author collected local and regional reference material, which included county Local Area Agreements, local economic strategies and regional skills statements. The process of collecting the reference material was interesting because it revealed that the college had not got a central source of this important research material. Many colleges have marketing departments which do publications and events but do not have a market research aspect which can inform their operation. Because of the experience of writing the strategy, and other similar experiences in other areas of the curriculum, the college recognised that this market research function must be formally represented within the structure.

The strategy was developed following the HEFCE guidance, and the reference material was

used to determine if the college was pursuing a locally relevant direction. For the county of Wiltshire the strategy direction proved entirely correct. Wiltshire is a low skill, rural based economy with significant outflow of young people taking up HE. They do not return because there are too few opportunities for young graduates in the county, and employers had found it hard to recruit highly qualified managers and leaders. The college and its awarding institutions' strategy had been to create vocational higher education opportunities in partnership with employers to help them grow for the benefit of the local community, offering full-time and part-time routes for young people and those already in the workplace. The college, until the writing of the strategy, had not been as aware how relevant this was to the community it serves as it is now. Partly as a result of this the college has set up a training network with significant Wiltshire employers, the RDA, the new unitary county authority, the county economic partnership and the college's university partners to encourage good dialogue between the parties and to be able to respond quickly to changing local needs. As this network develops it will move into enabling knowledge transfer opportunities, to economies of scale in shared curriculum development and training and education, and the potential to respond positively and quickly to other initiatives.

Colleges re-examining existing strategies may identify a lack of clarity in their previous approach.

In order to illustrate how colleges are re-evaluating their strategies in the light of the current guidance and changes in context some examples have been included of earlier strategies with a commentary provided by the college in italics. Here New College Stamford provides a commentary on the current strategy and accompanying goals, and illustrates how it will make them more specific.

New College Stamford

Extract from the HE Strategy 2008-10

New College Stamford is committed to the development of higher education as an integral part of lifelong learning.

In recognition of our position in this region where participation at HE level is significantly below the national average, we have a key role, in partnership with other organisations and providers, to raise aspirations and to provide a continuum of opportunity locally to meet individual aspirations and respond to local need.

We will work towards these goals by [*here followed 13 goals, of which two examples are selected*] including:

- promoting progression to higher education as a natural extension of academic learning or skills training
- building on the strengths of existing provision in schools and colleges to provide progression from a wide base of qualifications.

Comment by the college

The current strategy does not sufficiently justify the reason for currently having a comparatively small HE provision at the college. It needs to stress the particular geographical location of the college on the edge of an area with a tradition of very low progression to higher education. Thus under section 2 'We will work towards these goals by:' I will add:

- *Working with schools in the fens of South Lincolnshire and North Cambridgeshire to raise aspirations and reduce barriers to progression onto higher education by:*
 - *raising awareness of the opportunity to study locally and thus overcome concerns about moving away from home and incurring higher debt to those pupils who would not normally progress*
 - *providing more valuable bursaries to those pupils who attend those schools*
 - *forming compacts with those schools to provide additional support and guidance for those pupils who have concerns about progressing onto HE by providing taster events, exploratory interviews, a named contact at the college etc*
 - *providing subsidised transport where practicable.*

As opportunities for growth are diminishing, Cornwall College is planning to amend its HE strategy to take account of new directions and to build in annual review.

Cornwall College

Extract from the HE Strategy 2008-09

Recruitment and widening participation

A long sustained period of growth has led to the college being one of the largest HE providers in the FE sector. Furthermore, there does appear to be the opportunity to have further, sustainable growth in HE recruitment. Indeed, Phase 2 of CUC's EU funding provides growth to 1712 FTE by 2009/10. These numbers are included in a planned growth in (partner HEI) student number projections, and they are subject to negotiation. Nevertheless, an average of 10 per cent growth year on year for the next three years is a realistic target. Improved internal progression, a better recruitment process, new programmes in popular subject areas, increases in HE short courses/CPD and accreditation of in house training will support this level of growth.)

Comment by the college (on the underlined statement)

The maturity of the College, in terms of both experience of HE delivery over an extended period and the relationship with its partner HEI, as seen in the extract above, made this statement seem extremely logical just nine months ago, and the 10 per cent year-on-year planned growth realistic. This growth was envisaged as stemming from the relatively untapped but developing demand from families and businesses in Cornwall with little or no traditional uptake of HE. The 2006 Leitch Review and subsequent HEFCE policy seemed to

give a clear direction for growth in our speciality fields of employer engagement and work based HE, along with most other FECs. We are still in a more fortunate position than others, by dint of the in-built growth associated with EU plans for Cornwall as a county. However this growth is not now sustainable beyond 2009-2010, and the annual review of progress against the HE Strategy action plan will be more pressing than was perhaps expected, in order to rationalise the offer, whilst planning for both future sustainability and potential growth commencing again from 2012.

Cornwall College is a complex organisation with HE delivered from seven sites across the county. Although that HE is managed corporately by the Director and Deputy Director of HE, each individual head of site must also take responsibility for the HE that has developed, and any changes in funded student numbers associated with that development are fiercely guarded. Change in corporate strategy regarding HE is therefore necessarily a process of internal discussion at site level, then with HE directors, before ratification at corporate and governance level. Throughout these discussions a parallel conversation continues with the partner HEI, whose overall strategy is also affected by the overall cap on growth.

As the Minister said in the 2009 HEFCE grant letter in January “Now is the time for HE to show the value of this investment by reaching into local communities to offer practical help to individuals and businesses. That will mean thinking creatively about the needs of students, of graduates and of employers.” This is the strength of HE in FECs, together with the ability to “experiment; to act quickly and decisively; to learn from each other; and to use national, regional and local networks to find out what is happening and respond” (Denham, J. 2009 Grant letter to HEFCE). Perhaps we need to make our case with more vigour, and demonstrate that we are well placed to use available numbers both wisely and effectively.

The extract from the HE strategy for Craven College has been annotated.

Craven College

Extract from HE Strategy 2009-10

Rationale

Craven College has a track record of knowing what its businesses, learners and other stakeholders require, which includes higher education in its broadest sense. This strategy encompasses all delivery at levels 4 and above and addresses the key requirements and current failings of the college's higher level provision. This strategy seeks to minimise the effects of the structural realities of HE in FE within the higher education sector as skills needs and geography do not necessarily match HEFCE's supply process or HEIs' objectives.

Higher level vocational skills: one of the college's key strengths is vocational higher education, by providing niche courses which are employer driven for their existing workforce and entry into the workforce. Courses are delivered in ways that are convenient for the learners and their sponsors, and are effective. Excellent school links in Craven, Dales and beyond provide good progression routes and collaboration on 14 – 19 Diplomas.

Serving the hard to serve, rural and disparate areas: the college provides localised HE, there is no local HEI and no university is willing or able to engage with SMEs and micro businesses across all sectors in the way this college can and does within its locality.

Underperformance of provision: the college will be hampered if funding for further student numbers is not obtainable and there will be unmet demand from businesses, both for workforce development and for graduate entrants.

Comment by the college

This point to be expanded to include references to:

- *the college's successes in core activities at NQF levels 1 and 2*
- *historical restrictions on direct funding*
- *two distinct markets – local progression for full-time students*
- *workforce development*

Productive partnerships: the college is well placed to take the initiative and work productively to provide that engagement between employers, universities and funders to ensure higher level knowledge and skills development through innovation.

Comment by the college

The strategy will describe the nature of the relationships and advantages to the college's communities.

Colleges should describe the shape of their provision for 2009-10 by completing the form provided at Annex C of HEFCE 2009/13. They should indicate changes in the offer from 2007-08 and 2008-09, including trends in student numbers.

Colleges do not have to provide detailed data. The following contextual data will be available to HEFCE from HESA and the ILR for 2007-08:

- student numbers (FTE and headcount) for students that are directly and indirectly funded by HEFCE or non-HEFCE funded⁶
- qualification aim
- mode of study (full-time and part-time)
- percentage of HEFCE-funded students as a percentage of all provision, measured by FTE.

Questions you may wish to consider

- To what extent does your HE strategy build on local, regional and national initiatives (e.g. the development of higher level skills, HE centres, employer engagement)?

⁶ This includes: LSC-funded students; international students; students funded by other public bodies such as the NHS and Training and Development Agency for Schools; students funded by employers; and privately funded students.

- Does your college take into account other local HE curricula when planning changes?
- What are the special or unique features of the HE provision in the college?
- What effect will the reduction of additional student numbers and, therefore, potential for growth, have on the planned HE provision? How will the strategy address this?

3.6 Provision of HE

Colleges are asked to include in the strategy specific information about planned changes or make a statement about the existing provision and how it is being taken forward unaltered regarding:

- management and governance
- curriculum development
- resourcing
- CPD and scholarly activity
- recruitment, retention and progression
- relationships with employers
- relationships with HEI partners
- involvement with other agencies and networks.

The strategy should identify how the college provision meets identifiable needs and adds value. A strategic view of higher education will match provision to regional and local skills needs by working with employers and Sector Skills Councils. Regional Development Agencies, in their own strategies, focus on the shortage areas and levels, and their strategy documents are useful for colleges when reviewing HE programmes. Regular review is necessary because some higher education programmes, notably foundation degrees, may have a short life span as needs are filled and priorities change.

Supporting higher education in further education colleges, HEFCE 2009/05

Section 5.3 of the guide covers Researching the market and **Section 6.2** outlines Stages in developing a new programme.

The content of the strategy document can be supplemented by reference to relevant documentation such as:

- organisational structure charts
- quality assurance committees and reporting structures
- strategies for teaching, learning and assessment
- student support, recruitment, admission and retention strategies
- staff development policies.

These can be included as annexes.

Management and governance

The structures for management and quality assurance of higher education within FECs are varied; reflecting strategic decisions about the place of HE in the FEC as well as volume and the character of the HE offer. Some larger providers have separate monitoring and reporting systems for quality assurance, sometimes including a sub-committee of the corporation for higher education matters.

A range of models is described below, illustrating the diversity of approach.

Orpington College was a participant in the pilot. It has a small amount of HE provision (prescribed and non-prescribed) in specialist areas and this is embedded in curriculum areas and coordinated for the purposes of management and quality assurance by the Inclusion and Community Education Manager (the 'HE Manager' referred to in the extracts below). All staff teaching HE are also teaching on FE courses and the management of HE reflects the emphasis the college places on vocational niche provision in HE and progressing students from the FE courses.

Orpington College

Extracts from Higher Education Strategy 2008-2011, submitted in pilot

Management

Orpington College offers HE through prescribed provision, in partnerships with two higher education institutions (HEIs), and non-prescribed provision and in each case it is managed by the curriculum manager responsible for the curriculum area. This is in line with all provision offered at the college and ensures that the HE is developed coherently in conjunction with all levels of curricula in that area to assist progression. As it is the college's intention to gradually develop its HE provision, this will continue to be the case with all future HE development, with each curriculum area considering where it is possible to expand HE delivery into niche areas. The niche areas will include those where qualifications do not currently exist, those where local demand is not met or where there are sufficient learners from its own further education courses who wish to continue their studies at the college at HE level. It is not envisaged that every curriculum area will offer HE provision as there may be no demand in a particular area, but where specific curriculum areas are of extremely high quality, support will be given to identify appropriate progression routes that could be provided for learners. This is of particular importance in adult curriculum areas where learners are unlikely to have strong academic backgrounds and need a progression route suitable for their needs. A good example of current provision is the FD in Learning Support that provides a progression route for those completing a vocational certificate at FE level 3.

The development of all HE provision will involve employers – this will not only guarantee that provision meets their needs but will ensure that there is a demand for the programme. Provision will not be adopted by the college unless a good business case can be made to the Senior Management Team (SMT). However, it will not be sufficient to ensure provision is cost-effective. The SMT must also be satisfied that the quality of the proposed provision will

meet the quality standards of the college, awarding bodies, Ofsted and other quality assurance agencies and, in the case of prescribed provision, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). In the case of prescribed provision, the HE Manager (who holds a co-ordinating and quality role) will support and assist the relevant curriculum manager in the development of the programme, the validation process and the monitoring of the course....

Standards and Quality

... Orpington College's HE provision follows the same quality cycle as its FE provision but addresses the HE Academic Infrastructure rather than the Key Questions as laid out by the Common Inspection Framework. Each HE programme completes a quality log that addresses every area of HE provision, delivery and assessment. This log records attendance, retention and achievement data as well as lesson observation grades, external examiners' reports and learner feedback from student committees and evaluations. It records strengths and areas for improvement and has an action plan for implementing improvements with dates and responsibilities. The logs are reviewed regularly throughout the year at team meetings and are used as a basis for the quality review meeting where the course leader and curriculum manager meet with the Quality Manager, Vice Principal (Curriculum) and Principal in September to review the progress of the current courses.

It is the college's intention to refine the quality even further in the light of the Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER).....

Mid Kent College provides an example of larger dispersed provision with a more formalised and separated reporting structure.

Mid Kent College

Higher Education Strategy 2008/09 – 2010/11, submitted in pilot

Strategic management of higher education

Higher education within Mid Kent College is embedded in the curriculum areas, divided into three main directorates each having some higher education provision. The responsibility for quality of the delivery is vested within the curriculum but oversight of the HE curriculum and processes as a whole is devolved to the HE Director and the HE manager, taking a strategic and operational view respectively.

Reporting lines

- The HE Director is a member of the college's Senior Leadership Team and reports on higher education at six weekly intervals.
- A Higher Education Committee (HEC) comprising higher education representatives across the whole curriculum and representatives of the relevant HEIs will meet once a term to discuss issues relating to HE across the board.
- The Marketing sub-committee will meet once a month to ensure that marketing of HE

courses retains a high profile. The sub-committee reports back to the main HEC.

- A Programme Approval Panel will meet as and when needed to consider new programme proposals. The group will include representation from the appropriate HEI and it reports back to HEC.
- Minutes of the HEC will be sent to Academic Board for consideration.
- The HE strategy will be reviewed by the HE Director three times a year and submitted to the HEC annually.

The requirement for an HE strategy and the introduction of IQER, with its emphasis on the management of standards and quality, have focused attention on management and reporting lines. IQER has led some colleges to conclude that they need differentiated quality assurance systems for FE and for HE, especially if the college no longer has an academic board. Two examples of colleges detailing such changes within their HE strategy follow.

City of Bristol College

Extract from HE strategy 2009

Governance and management

The college has recently completed a realignment of its structures, driven by a number of funding and governmental imperatives. Within this it has recognised the importance of higher education and the need to sustain and develop this core part of the business. Higher education responsibilities have been made more explicit and have strengthened in changes to the faculties, management roles and operational responsibilities within the college.

HE provision is coordinated by a senior manager, the Head of Higher Education, who reports to the Deputy Principal. The curriculum is delivered through the six employer-focused college faculties. The Heads of Faculty are involved in the strategic planning of HE within the newly-formed Senior Leadership Forum. In addition each faculty has nominated a Curriculum Middle Manager to be responsible for the effective operation of the HE within the faculty. This may be their main role depending on the size of the faculty's HE provision. They are part of an HE Strand Group which meets formally twice a term and also involves members of the HE Unit, BDD, Finance, Learner Information Systems, Quality Improvement and Student Support and LRCs. The members of this group report back to their Faculty unit management meetings. This structure has been in place for over a year and is beginning to contribute to a clearer understanding and higher profile for HE within the college.

The Head of Higher Education leads a small HE Unit. This has developed over the last three years and fulfils a number of functions. Initially it essentially supported the maintenance of a range of partnerships with external agencies such as HEIs, UCAS, FDF, QAA, JISC and WVLLN. The HE Unit ensures that the profile of the college's HE provision is raised internally, progression opportunities are maximised, widening participation money is used in range of ways and course developments are identified and facilitated. The HE Unit tries to ensure that as the college builds up considerable experience in the design and delivery of HE in FE, best practice is shared across the range of provision. As a college there is awareness

that a risk of multi-partnership work is fragmentation and lack of coherence for staff and students, the HE Unit works hard to build greater coherence through a range of activities.

The management system as described by Newcastle College will be included in the HE strategy when it is complete.

Newcastle College

Management of Higher Education within the Newcastle College Corporation

Extract from developing HE Strategy 2009

HE Directorate

The Newcastle College Corporation (the institution) has made a significant investment in establishing the HE Directorate. This Directorate provides an infrastructure for all higher education provision development and delivery. The HE Directorate is accountable to the Executive Team and the Corporation. It is responsible for:

- reporting HE matters to the Corporation
- maintaining a strategic overview of higher education and supporting the Executive team and the Corporation in determining the strategic direction for higher education
- managing and co-ordinating the HE deliberative structures including HE Academic Board, HE Quality and Standards Sub-committee and the HE Assessment, Learning and Teaching Sub-committee
- overarching management of higher education policies, procedures and practice across all the Divisions of the Corporation including the audit function
- approval, monitoring and review of higher education
- the regulations relating to higher education through Academic Board and in partnership with the Assistant Principal Quality and Standards and the HE Quality and Standards Sub-committee
- management of assessment processes including Examination Boards
- monitoring of consistency and comparability in terms of the student learning experience and academic standards
- management of relationships with awarding bodies
- responsibility for widening participation strategic assessment and access agreement.

Comment by the College.

Establishing the HE Directorate:

- *has helped foster a collegiate approach to HE within the college*
- *has facilitated the sharing of good practice*
- *allows the college to take responsibility for its HE provision rather than merely reacting to the requirements of HEIs and awarding bodies*
- *provides consistency of approach to award development, ensuring an equitable approach to all HE students within the college via a common quality assurance system*

- *supports a common award curricula – comparability of programmes and structure through use of personal development planning and work-based learning modules and a common approach to independent study projects and research methods*
- *has reduced costs relating to HE development, approval and administration, e.g. Board of Examiners held at college level.*

Supporting higher education in further education colleges, HEFCE 2009/05

Section 3 of the guide addresses Management and planning

Questions you may wish to consider

- Has the college reviewed its management and reporting structures to ensure that it addresses the specific requirements of HEFCE (for instance for planning and for data returns) and for IQER?
- If the college no longer has an academic board, how will the strategy be agreed before presentation to the corporation for approval?

Curriculum development

There may be a need to modify the curriculum offer and to develop new provision to address strategic aims, widening participation, local demand – including for employer-led provision – niche provision and innovative curriculum delivery.

University Centre Yeovil

Extract from HE Strategy 2007-10

Aim

To provide a relevant, flexible, accessible and broad curriculum delivering high quality teaching and learning which meets the needs of increasingly diverse markets that meets government priorities

Objectives

- To provide programmes whose academic quality and standards meet
 - the requirements of the universities (as the awarding bodies)
 - professional and statutory bodies where appropriate
 - the principles and precepts for HE which are set out by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

- satisfy the emerging requirements of IQER
- Yeovil College quality assurance systems and processes
- To provide well-balanced, economically delivered educational programmes that are sufficiently vibrant and diverse
 - to meet the needs of the region
 - to make the best use of UCY and partnership resources.
- To facilitate engagement with employers to ensure
 - a high quality learning experience that meets the needs of students, the economy and society
 - the provision of business support systems that meet or exceed the best available
 - joint development of foundation degrees, or other appropriate HE provision, that supports employers' business development and growth
 - programmes contain employability skills and are responsive to employer requirements both in terms of content and delivery (whilst remaining economically viable to deliver) (Grant letter from DIUS to HEFCE Jan 08)

Develop new partnerships to support curriculum development in areas where current HEI partners do not have the expertise

City College Plymouth is basing its curriculum development on local, regional and national priorities using commissioned evidence.

City College Plymouth

Higher Education Strategy 2008-09 to 2010-11, submitted in pilot

HE provision: relationship to local, regional and national priorities and drivers

The college has recently commissioned a series of three independent reports into its provision of HE and the relationship of this to local, regional and national priorities and opportunities: 'Factors affecting demand for Foundation Degrees in the Plymouth travel to work area' (2005); 'A Vocational Higher Education Business Centre for Plymouth' (2008); and 'A vocational higher education centre for Plymouth' (2008). These analysed current provision, setting it in the context of local, regional and national drivers, priorities and opportunities, analysed business and other stakeholder views and made recommendations for future developments. The reports have informed college strategy and operation, and have examined the potential for new innovative vocational HE provision across the city (see Sections 5 and 10).

[Section 5 – Enhancement of provision and aims for development. Section 10 – Risk assessment and management.]

Supporting higher education in further education colleges, HEFCE 2009/05

Section 6 of the guide covers the development of higher education programmes

Questions you may wish to consider

- How frequently does your college review the HE curriculum and which criteria are used?
- If HE programmes run with very small numbers, does the college take steps to revise the focus and content of the programmes or replace them?
- Is there an evidence base which demonstrates market demand for current and new programmes?

Resourcing

The strategy should address the resourcing of higher education and its enhancement with respect to staff, facilities, equipment and learning materials (paragraph 21, HEFCE 2009/13). While some colleges have their HE provision integrated into the overall college staffing and physical resource structure, others separate provision to different degrees. Even where provision is integrated, consideration should be given to how resource is allocated to ensure students have an appropriate HE experience.

The HE student experience

In the pilot exercise the six categories for appraisal of a strategy included: 'the HE student experience'.

The HE student experience

Key findings

HE strategies typically address the provision of accommodation for HE programmes. Many statements mention planned or recently created HE centres and/or campus buildings as devices for fostering a distinctive HE culture among students.

The HE strategy usually addresses provision of staffing and learning resources, which may include accommodation, consumables, technologies, library and electronic media. Many statements cite flexible-mode and electronic study as important to the HE strategy.

Areas for development

Strategy statements that are less developed in the area of enhancing the student experience tend to rely on simple statements of intent without supporting evidence.

Traditional book and journal resources, and staffing levels, receive minor emphasis in the strategy statements.

'Higher education strategies pilot 2007-08', Information bulletin 2009

The HE student experience is not listed separately in the indicative content for the strategy in HEFCE 2009/13 but a high quality and appropriate HE experience should be addressed as an underpinning principle throughout the strategy.

Staffing and staff development, including continuous professional development and scholarly activity

Staffing and staff development continue to be a key issue for colleges with higher education provision. They address this in their HE strategies in different ways.

Bournville College

Extract from HE strategy 2007-09

Staff Development

The college acknowledges the need to employ staff with appropriate subject specialisms and qualifications in order to teach on HE programmes.

The college is committed to the ongoing training and development of its staff, both teaching and support staff, and will provide a wide range of specific development courses and workshops in addition to access to any of the college programmes.

The college encourages those staff engaged on higher level programmes to join in the staff development opportunities provided by partner HEIs, and will, where possible, provide development opportunities at the college.

The terms and conditions of employment for staff teaching on HE funded programmes will be kept under review. Currently those staff are entitled to count each hour of HE teaching as 1.5 hours in order to comply with HE partner requirements for scholarly activity.

Specific attention needs to be given to continuous professional development and scholarly activity. The definition of scholarly activity is a matter of debate within the sector, and the HEFCE guidance indicates that it includes professional updating.

New College Stamford

Extract from HE Strategy 2008-10

Strategy for staff teaching on HE programmes

Most teaching on HE programmes is carried out by lecturers who are employed on a full-time basis although part-time staff are used for teaching particular specialisms.

All lecturers are expected to have a first degree or equivalent professional qualification (or to be working towards one). When advertising positions, applicants with masters degrees are encouraged. Full-time positions are advertised internally. Existing staff who wish to upgrade their qualifications are allowed time by the college to undertake study and the college will support their fees.

All lecturers work at least partly on FE courses. They have the time, support and opportunities necessary to develop their teaching approach, scholarship and network with other HE tutors. As part of their contract, lecturers have time on their timetables for preparation and development of their teaching. They have 10 days a year of 'scholarly activity', eight days of which they can use at their discretion although they are encouraged to spend five of these days returning to 'industry' to up date their knowledge of current professional practice. Links have been formed with colleagues at our partner universities and staff attend programme groups and/or staff training, as available.

Blackpool & the Fylde College

Higher Education Strategy 2008 – 2011, submitted in pilot

The College is committed to supporting scholarly activity which is appropriately tailored to the nature of HE provision within a further education setting. Our approach will be that scholarship and research will be a clearly identified activity, with measurable targets and outputs which will be agreed annually with academic managers. Staff will be expected to demonstrate that their activities impact directly on the students, on the quality of the provision and on the level of engagement with their subjects and their industry sectors which would be expected of tutors in an HE School with a vocational emphasis. Scholarly and developmental activities will include:

- developing employer engagement including consultancy
- organising symposia and conferences at the college
- practice-based research (developing a body of work in their own field)
- writing papers
- development of pedagogy
- ensuring HE teaching is at the forefront of current practice.

The college has a section on scholarship and research within the HE section of the college web-site: www.blackpool.ac.uk/he/development/scholarship. This provides a definition of scholarly activity and its purpose at the college, and provides access to resources and support.

Blackpool & the Fylde College

What is scholarship and why is it important?

There have been various debates about what actually constitutes scholarly activity, and how scholarship is actually relevant to vocationally based higher education.

At Blackpool and the Fylde College, scholarship is about subject expertise to ensure the breadth and depth of lecturer knowledge and the quality and currency of teaching.

Scholarship is also about employer engagement, ensuring our curriculum is appropriate and relevant to the needs of industry.

In a nutshell, scholarship informs what we teach, who we teach and how we teach it.

Some colleges have research groups.

Plumpton College

Extract from HE Strategy 2009

Research

The development of scholarship and research is essential to sustain the future aspiration for the development of higher education at Plumpton College. Initial developments supported by both the college and university [University of Brighton] led to the establishment of the Plumpton Research Group in September 2005.

The aims of the Research Group are the growth of sustainable research which will underpin teaching and learning. To this end, the shorter-term objectives are:

- the development of student and staff-led research, both scientific and pedagogic, at departmental level
- the publication of articles and papers in local, specialist publications, course-specific or classroom-orientated
- the development of research pages on the college website for staff and student projects
- staff development in research-based activities
- to strengthen and develop the Plumpton Research Group
- the supervision of masters level projects.

Supporting higher education in further education colleges, HEFCE 2009/05

Section 9 addresses Staffing and staff development

Facilities, equipment and learning materials

Some colleges have accessed capital funding (directly or indirectly) to enhance the learning resources for higher education. A minority are involved in development of or bids for an HE centre in partnership under the 'New University Challenge' initiative.

City of Bristol College

Extracts from HE Strategy 2009

Student Experience

The college has been mindful since our last HE Strategic Review of the need to work towards providing an appropriate experience for those studying on a higher education course, albeit within a college environment – an HE student community. We aim to ensure that this experience is similar regardless of linked HEI. There has been a demonstrable commitment to the enhancement of learning resources, support and ICLT for all HE students utilising the funding opportunities available. We intend to continue to support in this way. There is also a student residence in the centre of Bristol and an accommodation office to support students.

We wished to ascertain the degree to which these aspirations were being realised, and a project post was created to explore the nature of our HE student experience through focus groups and interviews with many academic and student support staff. The college was also successful in winning a CETL scholarship with Somerset College to explore the part-time HE student experience. A range of other information supported our analysis of the nature of the CoBC student body and the quality of their experience. All students regularly complete end of module feedback forms which give an insight into the academic and wider student support. All courses have student representatives with minuted meetings, which are collated centrally. We have analysed the profile of each course by gender, disability, ethnicity, employment, age and postcode. The University of Plymouth students complete a SPQ (Student Perception Questionnaire) which provides very useful information relating to the overall student experience of students on Plymouth validated courses in Year 1. We expect faculty management to review the teams' responses to issues raised and to identify good practice at the programme and faculty level. This will be monitored by the HE Quality Board.

There were seen to be many attractions for studying HE in an FE environment. Notably the quality of support and teaching and in general the smaller class sizes. The convenience and hours of classes held were seen to be advantageous for students who often have a range of commitments. Some students have benefited from resources in their partner libraries, either electronically or through loans. However, some students clearly felt isolated from other

students studying at this level and many expressed a desire for spaces to study that were away from the noise and at times disruption of younger students. The college has moved quickly to respond to these findings.

Learning Resources

Quality higher education demands good levels of resourcing to aid learning in a variety of environments. This involves staff support within Learning Resource Centres (LRCs), the provision of appropriate books and journals, learning materials on Blackboard to support both generic study and subject specific knowledge and skills, up to date ICLT equipment and other aids to learning. There is clear commitment on the part of the college to the promotion of all these elements.

As part of both the external and internal validation processes HE teams are required to order appropriate resources. Over £145,000 has been spent on identified support for the growing HE provision between 2004 and 2009, with priority given to newly validated courses. A designated member of the LRC team supports the resourcing process and is expected to be part of ongoing programme committee meetings at HE level. Links with HEI partner LRC staff is seen as an invaluable part of the validation process and ongoing relationship with the HEI and, where working effectively, of benefit to the student learning experience. These links also provide opportunities for staff development for our own LRC staff. LRC managers are welcomed as part of the team supporting HE within the college and are part of the HE Strand management meeting, and are encouraged to attend and participate in appropriate conferences and collaborative events. The LRCs offer an extended range of student-focused sessions relating to for example, use of the LRCS, use of the partner university portals, plagiarism and supporting research. It is intended that all HE programmes extend their programme of activities linked to the LRCs; however, it is recognised that at the moment there is variable use of the opportunities.

Supporting higher education in further education colleges, HEFCE 2009/05

Section 2.5 addresses a higher education experience; **Section 2.6** using learning resource centres to develop higher level skills; **Section 2.7** supporting higher level skills through technology.

Questions you may wish to consider

- If your college is bidding for an HE centre and is unsuccessful, what alternatives are there for developing the accommodation and facilities?
- Which elements of resourcing are central to the success of HE provision?

Recruitment, retention and progression

The strategy should demonstrate how the college provision supports recruitment, retention and progression and widens participation of students. It should identify progression into and through higher education and demonstrate that it meets local and regional need and adds value.

Ruskin College

Higher Education strategy, submitted in pilot

Ruskin College has a clear strategy for the consolidation and development of its HE work, based on its successful track record since 1899 as a college for adult students. Progression from taster courses to in-house undergraduate and postgraduate courses has been embedded in our strategic plan, approved by the Governing Executive in November 2006, and commended by the Open University Validation Service (OUVS) in an institutional review of May 2007. At the heart of our strategy is the dual emphasis on progression alongside achievement of excellence in academic standards. This strength has been acknowledged by a recent Ofsted report which recognised that our students make progress rapidly and successfully to higher education programmes.

And

As a 'dual institution' offering both FE and HE programmes, this [progression opportunities from within FE] is an area of strength for Ruskin. We will consolidate our practice of promoting HE courses to students who take our short courses and the Ransackers programme for older learners. Tutors on short course provision will continue to provide learners with information about progression to HE courses run by Ruskin, and learners will continue to be effectively encouraged to become independent lifelong learners, as noted in the recent Ofsted report. We will develop our existing work with AimHigher through, for example, the provision of Higher Education Access Days and the employment of Student Ambassadors. We will develop our links, and formal agreements, with other FE colleges in the Oxfordshire area. A progression accord is in place, for example, with Abingdon & Witney College. Our existing programme of attendance and publicity at local and national events will be continued.

... We will continue to maintain and develop our existing work on widening participation. As our recent Ofsted report noted, we have very effective strategies in place for engaging students with low aspirations and poor prior achievement. Our effective diagnosis of – and outstanding support and guidance for – students with particular learning needs such as dyslexia has ensured effective progression and completion of HE courses. This will continue to be a feature of our offer.

City College Plymouth

Higher Education Strategy 2008-09 to 2010-11, submitted in pilot

Student progression and transition

The college is committed to facilitating progression through FE and into HE, raising and meeting aspirations. It is particularly committed to raising progression for those who would not normally access HE. Considerable provision is offered in 14 out of the 15 areas of Learning Sector Categories ranging from foundation level to National Qualification Framework level 4 and HE courses, offering significant opportunities for progression. HE complements the college's FE provision by raising aspirations, providing students with a sense of direction and providing appropriate progression opportunities; the provision of 'HE in FE' helping ensuring seamless progression.

Funding for improving retention was previously allocated as part of the widening participation funding stream; after consultation in 2008, HEFCE has introduced for 2009-10 a new targeted allocation to support 'teaching enhancement and student success'. It includes funding related to improving retention and to learning, teaching and assessment strategies (as well as teaching informed and enriched by research). Allocations to institutions for widening participation and for teaching enhancement and student success are identified in the provisional recurrent grants for 2009-10 published in March (HEFCE 2009/08).

Supporting higher education in further education colleges, HEFCE 2009/05

Section 8 of the guide addresses Supporting higher education students in further education.

Questions you may wish to consider

- Does the strategy demonstrate, with evidence, progression from FE level 3, or below, to HE in the college?
- Does the HE provision successfully provide routes into HE at level 6 or above, at the college or elsewhere?

Relationships with employers

The strategy should address employer responsiveness and employer engagement strategies in the light of the policy for developing higher level skills in the workforce (the Leitch agenda). Examples follow which demonstrate a range of approaches.

Blackburn College

Extract from HE Strategy 2009

Employer Responsive

AIM: Through innovative and flexible delivery we will work collaboratively with employers to enhance business growth and sustainability.

- To stimulate demand from employers, sector skills and professional bodies for higher level education and skills
- To work in consultation with employers in terms of demand, design, delivery and review
- To focus on strengthening links with employers and ensure that delivery is in line with identified needs and sector specific requirements
- To develop a Public Services Academy in conjunction with our major employer partners in the Borough, and with our local health economy, to materially contribute to the regeneration process of our area
- To develop an Engineering Academy in conjunction with major private and public sector partners
- To develop employability
- To become recognised as a Centre of Excellence in HE in FE

Attainment metrics

Establishment of Public Services academy
Establishment of Engineering academy
Establishment of a sector skills forum

Bournville College

Extract from HE Strategy 2007-09

Employer Engagement and Innovation

- The college seeks to increase the levels of employer engagement in the design and delivery of higher level programmes. The model of an employers' steering group for the DPSL, which meets four times a year and keeps the tutors up to date with current issues, is one which it is intended to replicate with other programmes where possible.
- The college maintains good working relationships with local employers and will actively promote higher level courses to training managers and current employed students.
- Former students from the Foundation degree in Early Years have agreed to provide placements and act as professional critical friends to the new Fd students in Early Childhood, which has strengthened the relationship with employers in the children's workforce.

The college delivers a variety of short courses to employers, which provide a taster of higher level programmes

Craven College

Extract from HE Strategy 2009-10

Future Potential – Employer Engagement

The college has an excellent track record of employer engagement and has developed multiple partnerships for the benefit of the businesses and learners. Employers have driven the development of Foundation degrees which have been and are planned for validation for a number of sectors including Health & Social Care, Venue & Events, Contemporary Design, Outdoor Activities, Sports Performance Coaching, Hospitality, Heritage Construction & Conservation Skills, Financial Services and further developments within the Yorkshire Rural Academy regarding Animal Welfare and Management and Garden Design. The Fd structure at Craven includes significant proportion of learning through and at work and development of skills (professional and transferable) as needed by employers. Developing HE represents a firm commitment from the college and is confirmation of the evidence that there are currently gaps in HE provision in its catchment area.

Comment by the college

We will begin this section by clarifying the external need, e.g. over 600 businesses served annually at all levels, and emphasise that local, flexible provision at higher levels is essential. Include the necessity for local progression routes to provide graduate entrants into specific sectors.

Supporting higher education in further education colleges, HEFCE 2009/05

Section 4.4 of the guide covers Working with employers

Questions you may wish to consider

- What proportion of HE students are in employment and working toward qualifications that will contribute to the 40 per cent target for employees with higher level skills?
- How does your college engage employers in curriculum development, assessment and delivery?

- How does it, or could it, forge strategic links with employers?
- Does the college have a mechanism for measuring the impact of its employer engagement strategies?

Relationships with HEI partners

Colleges should describe their relationship with their HEI partner(s). Prior to any award of Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP), colleges will have, at a minimum, a relationship with one or more HEIs for validation of their awards. The relationship may be limited or it may include indirect funding; it may be a single relationship or multiple; bi-lateral or an HEI/FEC partnership; and with varying degrees of formality.

A code of practice for funding partnerships was provided by HEFCE in 1999 and 2000 and published in 'Higher education in further education colleges. Indirectly funded partnerships: codes of practice for franchise and consortia arrangements', HEFCE 00/54. For 2009-10 colleges in HEFCE-funded consortia will be funded either directly or indirectly (franchise). The code of practice for indirect funding partnerships is currently being revised.

Colleges should also address relationships with national awarding bodies for professional (non-prescribed higher education) awards.

This guide covers the development and submission of strategies in partnership in Section 4.

Supporting higher education in further education colleges, HEFCE 2009/05

The range of partnerships and characteristics of effective partnership working are covered **Sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3** of the guide.

Relationships with HEIs may fall within broader regional (or in the case of some specialist colleges, national) partnerships including Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs).

Stockport College

Comment on partnership arrangements

Stockport currently has three key regional HEI partners – MMU, LJMU and UCLan. We are also part of a national network with TVU. We work very closely with our Lifelong Learning Network, the GMSA. The GMSA is an effective forum for regional planning of HE and for developing strong progression routes into HE. Much recent development has been in Fds in partnership with GMSA partner HEIs.

Other partnerships include the North West Regional Group for HE in FE, the Greater

Manchester HE in FE Forum and nationally we are active members of Mixed Economy Group, Action on Access. These partnerships are particularly valuable in terms of access to scholarly activity and research e.g. the work with MMU on the National Teaching Fellowship project on student retention. All our HEI partners offer staff development opportunities in some cases at the college.

York College

Extract from HE Strategy 2007-08

In addition to collaborative working with Higher York partners, York College will continue to engage with other HEIs to support the growth of HE in York, and which will contribute to the development of higher level skills for the workforce.

This will require the engagement of employers and Sector Skills Councils, through:

- consultations on the design and delivery of Foundation degrees;
- linking with Sector Brokerages and Centres of Vocational Excellence;
- securing a commitment from key employers and service users to support higher level skills development through financial assistance to cover tuition fees, and 'in-kind' support;
- the marketing and promotion of higher education opportunities on offer at York College targeted at employers and key stakeholders;
- the engagement of employer networks to inform market research relating to the demand for higher education programmes in terms of subject areas and mode of delivery.

The college position, currently, in the establishment of HEI partnerships can be described as 'best fit'. This 'best fit' is primarily based upon a curriculum team's relationship and understanding of the partner HEI's programme content and delivery and building a working relationship to deliver a quality product. Current relationships exist with the following HEIs;

University of Huddersfield
Leeds Metropolitan University
University of York
York St John University
Sheffield Hallam University

Discussions are being held with other HEIs, but in the short to medium term consolidation will need to take place to establish a more strategic approach to higher education partnerships.

Comment by the college

York College is in the process of producing the 09/10 HE strategy to meet the requirements of the funding council. Every effort will be made to ensure that the final document aligns with the information already contained within the higher education sections of the college strategic Plan. However, adjustments will be required to match the requirements of the funding council, with minimum duplication of information. Statistical data will be incorporated within the HE strategy to support the context section.

Particular attention will be given to the partnership work the college is actively engaged in, which includes the continuation and sustainability of the Higher York Lifelong Learning Network, and existing awarding bodies.

Plumpton College has a successful partnership with the University of Brighton which underpins its strategy.

Plumpton College

Extract from HE Strategy 2009

The success of this partnership can be attributed to a number of key factors:

- (i) the commitment of the University of Brighton to proactively support the development of HE in a partner college which offers an additional dimension to the existing university portfolio
- (ii) the willingness of the university to ensure progression routes using existing university provision and/or developing appropriate provision within the college
- (iii) the commitment of the college's staff to the development and integration of the university's Quality Assurance and Course Development Processes within the college and
- (iv) the development of a synergistic two-way partnership which remains responsive to the changes and developments within each of the individual institutions.

This paper outlines the proposed strategic development of HE at Plumpton College in partnership with the University of Brighton over the next five years to build on this highly successful relationship. The key strategy is the delivery of a broad portfolio of land-based and animal science courses from Foundation degree to masters degrees in partnership with the University of Brighton, supported by collaborative research activity between the university and the college.

Comment by the college

The Plumpton College HE strategy is in the process of development by a sub-group of the Plumpton Board which has the status of a School Board within the Faculty of Science and Engineering, University of Brighton.

The strategy group has agreed that the section on staffing and development should be supported by the full detailed research plan given in an annex. The section on relationships with HEIs goes on to discuss progression routes which have been established within the university. It also includes initial discussion of the strategic development of our academic portfolio through increased student exchange on modules at the two institutions and through the collaborative development of top-ups, further details being given in the action plan.

Questions you may wish to consider

- What are the purposes of the partnership(s) in which your college is engaged?
- Is there a formal partnership agreement?

Involvement with other agencies and networks

Colleges should describe their involvement with agencies and networks in higher education such as the Higher Education Academy, Foundation Degree Forward (fdf), Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC).

3.7 Risk assessment and management

The strategy should include an assessment of high-level risks and how they will be managed. This may be part of a college-wide risk strategy but should include HE-specific risks.

South Tyneside College

Higher Education Strategy 2008-2011, submitted in pilot

Risk Management

The college assesses all its policies and procedures at a corporate level and produces a Risk Register and action plan that is monitored by the governors (see [Risk Management Strategy](#)). The delivery and growth of HE are addressed here from a corporate perspective and include risks associated with the loss of staff and resources.

Stockton Riverside College has 10 strategic aims; aim 10 is 'to ensure a robust risk assessment and management process'. New 'strategic lead' roles were created in 2007-08 including the Strategic Lead for HE who is accountable for HE funding and a Strategic Lead for Risk Management, responsible for reviewing and updating risk management plans.

York College identifies 11 key risk factors in the HE strategy; each is linked to the overall college risk management assessment outcomes.

York College

Extract from HE Strategy 2007-08

Key risk factors

Risk	Brand Impact
Failure to be responsive to the changing expectations of national and local stakeholders including the government and employers (2.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure the college monitors closely the policy steers that impact upon HE activity and responds appropriately.• Continue close collaborative working with key stakeholders, including, Sector Skills Councils, FdF, funding bodies, HEI partners, Higher York LLN, employers, and students.
Failure to produce accurate management information and utilise it effectively (2.3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain, and continue to enhance, the management reporting systems to ensure that the HE activity offered by the college is managed and reviewed efficiently and effectively.
Problems arising from adverse local, regional or national publicity (2.8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to promote the benefits and qualities offered by the college for students who participate in HE at the college.• Respond appropriately to any adverse publicity that may impact on the reputation of the college.
Failure to achieve target learner success measures (3.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Target learner success measures set and monitored through Business Performance Management processes.• Report on outcomes to be communicated to the Higher Education Quality Group and SMT.
Failure to maintain/improve teaching quality and methods (3.5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing focus, through the Teaching Quality and Enhancement Action Plan, on quality improvement of teaching and learning.• Continued engagement and involvement of HE tutors in CPD and scholarly activity.• To pilot the introduction of a Scholarship Scheme for HE staff.
Failure to achieve planned learner enrolment targets (3.7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Targets agreed with CLs and recruitment monitored closely

	<p>throughout the year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning to take place on future planning and growth aspirations over the next three years.
Failure to maintain the financial viability of the College (4.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed planning to continue which links recruitment to income and contribution at course level.
Failure to collect all Work Based Learning income (4.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applicable.
Inability to recruit, retain and develop staff of the required experience, expertise and qualifications (5.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued engagement with HE tutors through the promotion of HE focused events and activities, including the acquisition of higher qualifications and credit.
Failure to maintain positive employee relations and good staff morale (5.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued involvement and development of HE staff through providing ongoing support and resources to release them to engage with HE developments and research.
Failure to ensure effective communication within the College (5.6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued production of Brand Briefings and circulation of HE related events and activities. • Continuation of internally managed HE related staff development and training events. • Promote the link with the Leeds Metropolitan University RUN Development Fora and Learning and Teaching events

University Centre Yeovil

Extract from HE Strategy 2007-10

Key strategic risks

The following are the key risks associated with the delivery of the plan:

- the strategy for employer engagement fails to ensure a higher level of skills and knowledge that meets the needs of students, the economy and society
- the strategy for employer engagement fails to secure sufficient funds and contributions from employers to ensure viability of programmes
- the developments in quality assurance procedures fail to retain the confidence of our HEI partners and HEFCE
- the supply of allocated numbers created does not match the demand from students.

Comment by the college

I will now alter this to reflect the constraint HEFCE is now applying to expansion of student numbers and the unknown effect of the current recession on possible part-time student numbers next year.

Wigan and Leigh College's strategy for 2008-09 included nine strategic aims and objectives, each drawn from the college strategic plan for 2006 to 2009. Risks were identified for each aim set out in the strategy. The second strategic aim was: 'To continue to develop greater employer responsiveness and to expand workforce development' and the following risks were identified at that time.

Wigan & Leigh College

Extract from Higher Education Strategy 2008/9

Risks with Employer Engagement

- Employer involvement must extend to include to include greater input in curriculum design, delivery and assessment. Employers are investing time and expect a return in the form of improved business performance.
- Some smaller businesses express concerns about the potential loss of employees, who gain more qualifications and even question the benefit of higher education which is not specifically targeted at the job requirements of the employee.
- Some employers, especially in engineering, are prepared to sponsor the student in terms of course fees and other expenses, but do not wish to become involved in meaningful engagement, since this can be time consuming.
- The college has responded to these, and other risks, by seeking to engage with key representatives of an industry, or sector, who can often provide a broader view of requirements, for example, the Food & Drink Manufacturers Forum have provided a senior representative for the HE Development Group.

Questions you may wish to consider

- Are the risks associated with providing HE identified in your college strategy?
- How does the college identify risks?
- What are the mechanisms for monitoring these risks and is it evident how risks will be managed?

4 Partnership strategies

4.1 Producing strategies in partnership

4.2 Security of indirect funding in partnerships

Key points

- Colleges in formal partnerships should submit an individual college strategy, although this may have been developed within a partnership strategic framework

4.1 Producing strategies in partnership

College strategies will be produced within the context of one or more partnerships. HEFCE recognises the diversity of partnership arrangements and the nature of the dialogue with partners in developing a college strategy (paragraphs 32 to 35 in HEFCE 2009/13).

Partnerships will include individual HEIs, other national awarding bodies and professional bodies and regional bodies and networks.

Some partnerships commit to working collaboratively to produce strategies within which individual institutional strategies sit. Three partnerships participated in the pilot; one partnership of six colleges working in a sub-region and with the LLN and two formal partnerships led by HEIs. As the pilot was intended to test the processes of submission and appraisal of strategies, there was no direction as to how partnership submissions should be structured or submitted. In the case of the two formal partnerships a similar approach was taken with the submission (by the HEI lead) of a partnership strategy along with individual strategies from each college.

The West London colleges submitted a single strategy and are now developing individual college strategies within this framework. Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College (EHWLC) provides a commentary on behalf of the partners.

West London Colleges

Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College

Comment on participation in the pilot

West London further education colleges make an important contribution to higher education, both as a source of progression to undergraduate study provided by HEIs, and by actually delivering HE and higher level qualifications in their own right.

All six colleges are members of the West London Lifelong Learning Network (WLLLN). There is a commitment from the six colleges and the LLN to adopt a strategic approach to the planning and development of HE and, in response to market opportunities and employer

needs, to support the growth of HE provision within the colleges. The HE in FE Working Group was formed in January 2007 as partners within the network recognised that such a sub-group would assist in supporting the development of higher education in the West London FECs and hence improve access to and progression through HE for vocational learners.

One of the first tasks of the HE in FE Working Group was to undertake research, which was supported by WLLLN, to identify areas of commonality and differences and make recommendations to further the strategic development of HE in FE. The research report was subsequently published in December 2007. The submission of a joint strategy to HEFCE's FECs' HE strategy pilot was an obvious progression from the collaborative work that has already started and recommendations from the report were incorporated in this sub-regional strategy.

Whilst acknowledging that each FEC has its own agenda and that colleges would have to submit individual HE strategies to HEFCE during autumn 2009 [now January 2010], the West London further education colleges, have agreed to continue to work together to further the aims of the LLN and the HE in FE Working Group and take responsibility on the monitoring of the implementation of the sub-regional strategy. As the HE in FE Working Group and LLN have senior members of the constituent FECs, the FECs are directly involved in implementing and monitoring the sub-regional strategy. Within each FEC, there is a clear management structure which has responsibility for implementing and monitoring the individual HE strategies. By ensuring the individual strategies are implemented, each FEC is working towards ensuring the sub-regional strategy is implemented.

EHWLC is currently in the process of developing its own HE strategy but there are a number of identified areas particularly with reference to staff development and CPD, marketing, and information, advice and guidance where collaboration with other colleges, and therefore linking to the sub-regional strategy, would be beneficial.

The Higher Education Business Partnership (HEBP) is the outcome of more than 15 years of collaborative working in the Tees Valley. The members are: Darlington College, Hartlepool College of Further Education, Middlesbrough College, Redcar and Cleveland College, Stockton Riverside College and the University of Teesside.

Teesside Higher Education Business Partnership (HEBP)

Comment on participation in the pilot

Creating a collaborative partnership strategy

We believe we have a mature partnership with a strong sense of commitment to the locality we collectively serve. We have always operated with a shared mission statement and a Memorandum of Understanding supported by an Operations Manual. However, we have had no shared and agreed strategy for partnership and, for the university, our collaborative provision strategy was dispersed across a range of strategies such as the academic strategy

and the inclusive participation strategy. For college partners, some had produced HE strategies whereas others had their HE plans embedded within other college strategic documents. At no time had we shared these documents among ourselves.

The suggestion was made to both the Vice-chancellor and the Principals that we could jointly create a strategy which would take the form of an agreed overarching strategy plus five college strategies which would fit together as 'the partnership strategy'. The Principals were anxious not to lose the uniqueness of each college in the process; we therefore agreed that the outcome would not be a template but rather the overarching strategy would be a framework which would guide, but not constrain, the individual college's higher education strategy. In effect, we agreed we were not seeking strategy 'clones' but were aiming for a 'family' feel to the six documents when read together. All felt comfortable with this general approach.

The process of agreeing and refining the overarching strategy proved to be very rewarding on several levels.

It brought the college HE managers and the University Partnership managers together in a very concentrated way around a focussed common task which quickly created a supportive but challenging team. Given the differences in the partner colleges, the process was most constructive. We had useful discussions on the genesis and development of the partnership and its evolving aims and were able to contextualise each college's development.

The task allowed for a questioning of some fundamentals of the partnership such as – was this purely a business relationship or did it have other purposes? Did we have a set of shared values and if so, what were they? How would each college seek to demonstrate its unique contribution to the partnership? Had we sufficiently considered partnership governance arrangements, as opposed to management and quality arrangements? The time committed in round table discussion was rewarded in that the work was completed with the full agreement and ownership of all partners. Discussions were open and we were all able to recognise good practice in the approach of others and incorporate that into our own plans. Above all, the sharing of details of planned student numbers, areas of expansion and new curriculum developments gave a real sense of openness and partnership.

Having shared college plans openly the next step was to extend the process within the university and all the Deans have shared their three year plans with the partner colleges so that planning has become fully strategic, collaborative and inclusive.

We have now worked with our initial strategies for over a year and are about to review them next month, beginning with the overarching partnership strategy. All partners feel this collective approach was very positive and has been a real driver for change. The trust and openness engendered through joint strategy development has given the partners confidence to seek to undertake a similar approach to the IQER developmental engagement stage. In many ways, the HEBP does more than 'talk the talk'!

The University of Hull Federation of Colleges was launched in September 2007. It emerged from a predecessor Association of Colleges which had cooperated for over nine years,

serving the Humber sub-region and parts of North and South Yorkshire. The Federation has a core membership of five college partners having most of their HE provision validated through the University of Hull. The members of the Federation include Doncaster College, East Riding College, Grimsby Institute of FE and HE, Selby College, Yorkshire Coast College, and the University of Hull. Yorkshire and Humber East Lifelong Learning Network (YHELLN) is represented at meetings with observer status until December 2009.

University of Hull Federation of Colleges

Comment on participation in the pilot

Partnership HE in FE Strategy development

Context

The Federation is accountable for the strategic relationship, including broad matters of academic provision, between itself and the university. It also has a responsibility to consider the appropriate embedding of the YHELLN good practice when that closes at the end of December 2009. This latter requirement has been embarked on, and consideration is being given to the broadening of Federation membership to meet the requirements of appropriate representation as a voice for HE across the sub-regions.

The Federation is designed to support collaborative working and dissemination of good practice for the delivery of HE in FE. Collaboration to complement and facilitate joint events in support of the student experience through shared quality assurance processes and procedures, collaborative development of new HE programmes is seen as being as relevant, as sharing of professional development opportunities for all staff engaged in delivery and the support of HE in FE. HE in FECs strategies pilot

The Federation of Colleges employed a collaborative approach in 2008 when developing the pilot Federation HE strategy and for working across the individual colleges on their own strategies, sharing draft versions, providing critical analysis and self reflection and identifying good practice. Unfortunately the constraints for producing the strategies limited the full referencing of the Federation strategy within the individual institutional strategies. Nevertheless, Federation partners agreed that the approach was very effective for both small and larger colleges.

Although there is not an explicit requirement in the new HEFCE Circular (2009/13) to share HE strategies, the partners have, without hesitation, decided to adopt a similar approach to that of the pilot exercise. The guidance is already being shared and discussed through Federation mechanisms. It is also likely that the two other colleges which are not formal members will also work closely with the Federation.

Institutional HE strategies are typically developed internally by a group led by an HE Manager. They are subsequently agreed through management and governance structures. The Federation HE strategy would be developed through the Management Group which includes HE Managers plus the university members with partnership responsibilities. This strategy is subsequently approved/endorsed by the Federation Board (members comprise college principals and the university PVC Learning and Teaching). From the Federation

strategy and the institutional HE in FE strategies underpinning action plans will be developed with appropriate identified priorities and target activities.

In the three cases of partnership submission in the pilot, one institution submitted on behalf of the partnership (whether it was a single strategy in the case of the West London Colleges, or a partnership strategy accompanied by individual college strategies in the case of the two HEI-led partnerships). After consideration of the evaluation report on the pilot process, HEFCE determined that colleges should submit individual strategies directly.

The degree to which a college works with one or more partners in developing and presenting its HE strategy will reflect the formality and range of the partnership. HEFCE expects the respective role and importance of partnership(s) to 'be evident' (HEFCE 2009/13 paragraph 34) but there is 'no presumption' (paragraph 35) that a college will share its strategy with HEI partners. However, colleges should include information about a partnership strategy where this exists. Where a group of colleges and an HEI jointly agree a partnership strategy – which may be conceived as overarching or underpinning as in the two HEI-led formal partnerships above – this can be attached as an annex.

Some colleges are working closely with a single HEI to deliver joint provision. Burnley College submitted a joint strategy with the University of Central Lancashire to the pilot.

Burnley College

Burnley College and University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) Higher Education Strategy, submitted in pilot

Introduction

This paper presents a strategy for higher education within Burnley delivered jointly by Burnley College and the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) for the period 2008/09. Its overriding purpose is to support the growth of high quality higher education provision in Burnley. It aims specifically to provide a direction and framework for the development of higher education programmes through the college in conjunction with its HE partner UCLan.

Other colleges have multiple HEI partners and form arrangements for particular purposes, perhaps reflecting a strategic decision to diversify their links.

Worcester College has worked in partnership to satisfy local opportunities over the past 50 years. It has a variety of partnerships involving both prescribed and non-prescribed HE courses designed to respond to both employer and market need. The drivers for forming partnership arrangements are student growth, curriculum development and the provision of FE/HE progression routes, and the partnerships are specific to particular provision. Worcester participated in the pilot and its 'Higher Education Strategic Plan 2008-2011' was written before the pilot; the impact of participation and of IQER are described below.

Worcester College of Technology

Comment on partnerships in the light of the pilot

The Worcester experience of multiple partnerships is rooted in the context of local need as described in the HE Strategy:

‘The College has successfully supported local industry by providing higher national provision for over 40 years. Some 15 years ago the college embarked on further strengthening progression opportunities by providing full time Higher National Diploma and Professional Diploma courses. In parallel over the last 8 years the College has been very successful in providing career progression opportunities with the Institute of Legal Executives (ILEX), Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT), the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and the Chartered Institute of Management (CMI).

Through our extensive partnership arrangements throughout the West Midlands the college is a provider of Initial Teacher Training with the Universities of Wolverhampton and Warwick. Professional qualifications with the Institute of Pensions & Payroll (IPP) the LLB Bachelor of Law (Hons) Degree, the Graduate Diploma in Legal Studies (CPE) in partnership with the University Of Staffordshire, Foundation Degree and Degree top-up with the universities of Worcester and Birmingham City’.

Since writing the strategy a further partner, the University of Aston, is now validating a suite of engineering Foundation degrees. This enables Worcester to meet its objectives with providing Fds in niche vocational areas, enable employed students to study these Fds on a part-time mode of study and, through an increased volume of activity, automatically widen participation opportunities. More recently still, the University of Glamorgan has approved the college as a provider and will validate a Fd in Popular Music Technologies. This partnership is based on the particular expertise of Glamorgan in this aspect of the industry.

Multiple HEI partnerships do pose their own set of challenges, not least the increased volume of collaborative visits and meetings, however, although each HEI will firmly promote their own procedures and systems this in itself is not a great difficulty for the staff in the college. FE colleges have always worked with a myriad of awarding bodies and professional institutions at FE and HE levels, each with their own particular set of processes and therefore college staff are used to working with the differing bureaucracies.

However, the strategic approach of multiple partnering, combined with the new QAA review methodology, has meant we have had to rethink the way we manage HE and related quality functions/processes.

The previous methodology of academic review which scrutinised a specific subject area suited FECs with multiple partnerships as the focus was on an individual curriculum area. The new IQER process of developmental engagement and summative review has added an

impetus to change the way that quality in HE is managed within the college. Whilst HE delivery staff are fundamentally not affected, at course team leader level and above the management processes have had to be substantially revised. A modelling exercise undertaken around the relationships between the Academic Infrastructure, the FHEQ, programme specifications and the codes of practice as allied to the new review requirements, has led to the creation of three new HE management functions. There is now one cross-college group for strategic development and quality and one cross-college group for academic standards/operations and quality; these are supported by a specific HE quality group in each academic faculty.

The overarching aim of all three new groupings is to promote and embed a new 'one team' culture to the delivery and management of HE in the college.

Participation in the strategies pilot was very useful to the college in helping formulate and clarify the direction of HE management within the college and alongside the IQER process is facilitating the development of a new HE culture within the college.

4.2 Security of indirect funding in partnerships

Colleges have been requested to submit a strategy covering the three year period 2009-10 to 2011-12; in doing so they will need to make assumptions about student numbers.

In the consultation on HE in FECs (HEFCE 2006/48), HEFCE noted an expectation that collaborative funding arrangements should be long-term and should provide FECs with security of funding and student numbers over an agreed period. Unless there were exceptional circumstances, that period should be at least three years. The proposal that under normal circumstances indirect funding agreements should provide member institutions with security of funding and numbers for at least three years received strong support, and HEIs are now asked to report whether they are providing the proposed security required for provision that is sub-contracted to colleges.

HEIs are required to submit, in December, documentation for the annual accountability process now known as the 'single conversation'⁷. The documents include an annual monitoring statement (AMS) which focuses on the use of special initiative funding. This return includes monitoring of indirect funding of higher education in FECs (Annex A of HEFCE 2008/31, paragraphs 46 and 47). HEIs are required to complete a template which includes a question (question 56 in 2008) relating to the provision of security of funding for three years for indirect funding agreements.

Security of funding will be addressed in the revised code of practice for indirect funding partnerships.

⁷ The documents are used to monitor the use of HEFCE funds; form a basis for discussion with institutions about their progress in key areas, their priorities for strategic development and their current and future performance; determine risk assessments; and identify trends across the sector ("Single conversation" annual accountability returns 2008', HEFCE 2008/31, paragraph 10). The documents include a corporate planning statement in which HEIs can provide HEFCE with a strategic update and identify progress towards delivery of the strategic plan and aims for the year ahead (paragraphs 20 to 23). See also Section 2.1.

5 Widening participation strategic assessment

5.1 Completing a widening participation strategic assessment

Key points

- Colleges with 100 or more directly funded FTEs are required to submit a widening participation strategic assessment by 30 June 2009
- WP targets at colleges with indirect funding will contribute to those of a partner HEI

5.1 Completing a widening participation strategic assessment

In May 2008 the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills wrote to HEFCE and to the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) asking for advice on how they could bring together HEIs' widening participation (WP) and fair access policies, including transparent admissions systems, into a single document.

HEFCE has requested HEIs and FECs with 100 or more directly funded FTEs to submit a widening participation strategic assessment by 30 June 2009 ('Request for widening participation strategic assessments', HEFCE 2009/01). In addition to the strategic assessment, an interim progress report will be submitted by HEIs in December 2009 with the annual reports which form part of the 'single conversation' (see Section 4.2). FECs will submit their interim progress report at the same time as HEIs using the same template. This template will be made available in the autumn, to HEIs as part of the 'single conversation' and to FECs separately.

An institution's access agreement will be integrated with the strategic assessment and there will be a single monitoring activity. However, while 124 FECs were directly funded by HEFCE in 2008-09 (and the same number for 2009-10), well under half currently have an access agreement.

To avoid placing a burden on colleges with very small-scale HE provision, only colleges with more than 100 FTE directly HEFCE-funded HE students are expected to submit a strategic assessment. For those FECs the level of detail in the strategic assessment should reflect and be proportionate to the scale of the provision. Guidance to colleges is offered in Annex A of HEFCE 2009/01, paragraphs 25 and 26.

Wakefield College has developed a college-wide widening participation strategy and this will facilitate the preparation of the WP strategic assessment return.

Wakefield College

Comment on WP strategic assessment

Widening participation in higher education is an integral part of the Higher Education Strategy and the wider college mission and strategic objectives. However, in order to further develop a whole-college perspective, as well as clear objectives and performance targets in relation to widening participation a college-wide Widening Participation Strategy has been developed. This will form the basis for responding to HEFCE's WP strategic assessment requirement. The strategy will identify aims and objectives. Specific targets and milestones which will be set as part of the wider college strategic planning process will be agreed annually by June. Evaluation of progress will be undertaken annually in the autumn term and will contribute to the reporting process required by HEFCE in relation to the college access agreement.

Although colleges with indirect funding are not required to produce an assessment their activities will, in all probability, be contributing to the stated WP activity of their partner HEIs and will thus be reported in the HEI's progress reports. Colleges should, therefore, be aware of the nature of the data required for the submission and the progress reports; they may wish to work with their partners on the drafting of the documentation.

Colchester Institute is a large provider of HE with 1,000 FTEs. As an indirectly funded provider it will not be required to complete a widening participation strategic assessment, however, it is working with its HEI partner (the University of Essex) on the strategic assessment which the university will submit.

Colchester Institute

Comment on WP strategic assessment

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

Colchester Institute recognises the role of HE in FE as a vehicle for widening participation in higher education and embraces this remit at both strategic and operational levels. The HE Strategy for 2008 -200-11 introduces this considered direction:

'The community of learners drawn to Colchester Institute is increasingly diverse as befits the College role as a provider of HE in FE. This strategy clearly recognises the need to expand our catchment, through increased flexibility and inclusivity, to meet the needs of learners who do not traditionally study HE programmes and those of employers both locally and regionally.'

The University has invited partner institutions to contribute to the widening participation strategic assessment and has been proactive in seeking mutually beneficial routes to monitor and enhance existing activity. For example, in response to the HEFCE Widening Participation Strategic Assessment exercise, the University of Essex has established a new Committee, the Education Outreach and Widening Participation Strategy Committee with terms of reference that include 'Responsibility for providing strategic direction and maintaining an overview of the University's education outreach *in its broadest sense*'. This will cover University initiatives concerning, for example, professional development, work placements, partnerships with local and regional schools (academies, national challenge programme etc) and monitoring of key performance indicators for report to the Council of the University. It is also intended that the work of this Committee and of the Partnership Planning Forum at which University partners are represented, will lead to the development of a 'WP Partners Group' that will provide a forum for the sharing of best practice concerning outreach, teaching and learning, and career development and professional leadership.

Supporting higher education in further education colleges, HEFCE 2009/05

Section 8.2 of the guide addresses the funding of widening participation and **Section 5.4** addresses access agreements and **Section 3.2** addresses funding.

Since the guide was published it has been confirmed that for 2009-10 overall funding related to widening participation (access, retention and disability) remains the same (with inflation) but the balance is different with a transfer of £30 million from improving retention to widening access and that there will be a targeted allocation to support teaching enhancement and student success within the widening participation funding. (See 'Recurrent grants for 2009-10', HEFCE 2009/08.)

Annex A

Membership of project team and acknowledgements

HEFCE commissioned this supplement to the good practice guide, 'Supporting higher education in further education colleges', HEFCE 2009/05, through Professor Gareth Parry at the University of Sheffield School of Education.

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Editor: Anne Thompson, University of Sheffield

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Other contributors

The project team convened a workshop on 1 May attended by contributors to the supplement and attendees at the HE in FECs Expert Programme seminars held in early 2009. The authors would like to thank the members of the group for the very helpful advice given on the format and content of the draft of the supplement.

The workshop was attended by:

Petra Billings, Plumpton College
Liz Boynton, Stockton Riverside College
Tessa Counsell, Cornwall College
Philip Davies, Bournemouth and Poole College
Carl Flint, Worcester College of Technology
Ross Kay, Weymouth College
Janis Kent, Orpington College
Helen Mathers, Blackburn College
John Rowe, Newcastle College
Roshani Swift, Blackburn College
Ruth Tucker, HEFCE
Clive Turner, City College Norwich

Annex B

List of institutions contributing examples of practice

The authors would like to thank all those individuals who made contributions.

Blackburn College
Blackpool & the Fylde College
Bournville College
Burnley College
City of Bristol College
City College Norwich
City College Plymouth
Colchester Institute
Cornwall College
Craven College
Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College
Hull University Federation of Colleges
Kingston Maurward College
Orpington College
Mid Kent College
Newcastle College
New College Stamford
Ruskin College
South Tyneside College
Stockton Riverside College
Stockport College
Teesside Higher Education Business Partnership
Wakefield College
Weymouth College
West Herts College
Wigan and Leigh College
Wiltshire College
Worcester College of Technology
University Centre Yeovil
York College

Annex C

List of abbreviations

This list does not include acronyms used for local and regional bodies in boxed examples

ASNs	Additional student numbers
CPD	Continuing professional development
Fd	Foundation degree
FDAP	Foundation degree awarding powers
fdf	Foundation Degree Forward
FEC	Further education college
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HE	Higher education
HEI	Higher education institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
IQER	Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review
ILR	Individualised learner record
LLN	Lifelong Learning Network
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
NHS	National Health Service
NPHE	Non-prescribed higher education
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
SMT	Senior management team
WP	Widening participation