Capturing an HE ethos in college higher education practice

Jonathan Simmons and John Lea

Preface

This report explores the context in which further education colleges (FECs) in England have been responding to the opportunities and challenges of providing higher education (HE) programmes. Specifically, it explores the connection between two features which have been identified as vital in ensuring that such programmes can provide an enriching learning experience for students: first, that experience needs to be demonstrably higher, not just in terms of enabling students to achieve high level learning outcomes, but also that students should experience, what has been referred to as, an 'HE ethos'; and second, that this experience needs to be soundly underpinned by a culture of 'scholarship and research'.

The first section of the report provides a short contextualising summary of some of the main issues which relate to these two features of HE provision in FECs. This is followed in section two by a short contextualising discussion of the Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) process, which has been one of the main ways in which these features have been reviewed in terms of their quality, and then a summary discussion of the main findings of those IQER reports. Section three provides six cases studies of FECs in England - chosen to represent the diverse range of HE in FE provision - and discusses these in the context of the issues previously raised. The report concludes with an analysis of some of the ways in which FECs might be enabled to develop their HE provision in the light of the arguments raised throughout the report.

The report focuses specifically on FECs in England, but we hope that the arguments will resonate generally among other providers of college higher education in the UK, and particularly with those institutions that are considering expanding their HE provision and/or applying for either Foundation Degree awarding powers (FDAP) or full teaching degree awarding powers (TDAP) in the near future.

Throughout the report we have chosen to use the term 'college higher education' (CHE), except where the terms 'HE in FE' or 'HE in FECs' were more appropriate, or where we are quoting from a source which uses those terms. Some sources use the term 'college-based higher education' (CBHE); we have taken this term to be synonymous with CHE.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Further Education Colleges (FECs) throughout the UK have been delivering some form of higher education for over fifty years (Parry and Thompson, 2002). In the last twenty years this figure has been consistently around 8-10 per cent of all higher education, and is now possibly set to rise in the light of the present coalition government's marketisation of higher education (BIS, 2011). A lot of the provision has been sub-degree qualifications, such as the higher national diploma (HND), and, in the last ten years, a broad range of Foundation Degrees. But the provision has always been wide ranging, and serving an equally wide range of students (Parry et al, 2012). Indeed the institutions themselves are varied, including what are sometimes referred to as 'duals' or 'mixed economy colleges' some of whom have had both higher and further in their titles, or are affiliated with a university, which validates their academic awards. There have also been a variety of approaches to validation and quality assurance, including a college-validation model at one extreme and full partnerships with universities at the other.

In the case studies contained in section three, many of the managers working in FECs spoke candidly about what they considered to be the merits of the various partnership arrangements between FECs and universities, and in some cases of their aspirations for achieving their own Foundation Degree awarding powers (FDAP) and/or full teaching degree awarding powers (TDAP). On a number of scores therefore it is clear that there is not a 'one size fits all' approach which can be applied to this sector. Indeed, it is difficult to speak of college higher education (CHE) as a sector, sitting as it does between two reasonably well defined much larger sectors - further education (FE) and higher education (HE) - with their own differentiated policy and funding structures.

The profile of the HE students studying in FECs is also very varied, but previous data has also identified some uniquely defining characteristics, for example, that the students are: 'more likely to be over 25, more likely to study part-time, and more likely to come from areas with low rates of participation in HE than students in universities' (HEFCE 2006, p 9). The number of students also varies enormously from college to college, ranging from 2,000-3,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) students in a handful of colleges, to fewer than 50 in many more. In total, in 2010, the Association of Colleges recorded that 280 FECs were delivering some form of CHE, collectively having registered around 100,000 (FTE) students on higher education programmes. However, we should remember that these numbers are small compared with the total number of students studying FE in FE:

> The higher education component of colleges was a much smaller proportion (4%) of the nearly five million students taught in further education sector. It was a smaller fraction (2%) still of the more than seven million students studying in the larger further education system. (Parry et al 2012, 63)

Being higher and scholarly

This report addresses two dimensions of CHE practice, both of which have been considered concerns: the need to develop an HE ethos, and the need to develop a culture of research and scholarship (Jones, 2006; King and Widdowson, 2009; Greenwood, 2010). After a short summary of some of the ways those concerns have been expressed in policy documents and academic literature, we then apply our own analytical lenses to these debates (Lea and Simmons, 2012).

By definition, HE in FE is not HE in HE, which raises the question of the effect that this college-based setting has on the higher education it provides (Gale et al, 2011). Everyone who features in our case studies commented on the positive significance of this context, but very few spoke of the problems it raises, preferring instead to focus on how that context has been able to produce something distinctive, and particularly how it has contributed positively to expanding access to higher education (Turner et al, 2009). However, academic and policy literature has repeatedly expressed some concerns about the difficulties of nurturing an HE culture within a wider FE culture and sometimes how the latter might impinge unfavourably on the expansion of the former (for example, Young, 2002; Harwood and Harwood, 2004; Golding Lloyd and Griffiths, 2008; Bathmaker and Thomas, 2009; Turner et al, 2009; Lea and Simmons, 2012). For example, the small numbers of HE students found in many FECs might make it difficult for those students to outwardly experience a distinct HE environment (particularly if they have progressed from an FE course in the same institution); the teaching staff are very likely to be working to FE-style contracts and conditions (requiring in some cases over 850 class contact hours per year, making it difficult to commit meaningfully to wider scholarly activities); the majority of staff are likely to be combining some HE teaching with FE teaching (sometimes switching at short notice between them).

Over the years interviews with HE in FE teachers have also raised questions about the differences between the role of the HE and FE teacher:

> I don't like calling myself a lecturer. I have a problem in seeing myself as an imparter of knowledge which is to be received passively or with a degree of authority, as if I have a claim to it. (HE in FE teacher quoted by Young, 2002, p 277)

> I think you have to accept that here HE is a small proportion of what we do, so as an institution we are not or probably neither should we be [HE focused], we've got to get FE right, it's what we do… (HE in FE teacher, in Turner et al, 2009, p 364)

> The approach to HE delivery in FE is one of the learner coming first, their needs being assessed and worked upon to aid the transition from FE to HE. (HE in FE teacher quoted by King and Widdowson, 2012, p 11)

Even if some of these comments could be proven to be misconceived, placed alongside the other concerns, we need take seriously their possible effects on the culture of HE in FE.

A particularly troublesome area concerns the possible effects of the wider FE culture of performance management and how this might constrain the development of a thriving higher education culture. In part this is troublesome because of the divergent views on the effects of these developments. For some the terrors of performativity (Ball, 2003) have produced an audit culture of unwarranted compliance, typified by panoptican style surveillance. For others, this has been part of a long overdue professionalisation agenda, centred on accountability and aimed at ensuring that clearly defined objectives are being met (Lomas, 2003). This is not the place to discuss the merits of these divergent views; suffice it to say that universities have been subject to these developments as well. But regardless of these divergent views, the area is generally troublesome because of how they might impinge adversely on higher learning, teaching and research.

One example, which was mentioned on several occasions in our case studies, and has become a topic of debate in academic literature, is the appropriateness of using an Ofsted style approach to peer observation of teaching. Indeed, it has been argued that such an approach is not really founded on peer review, but is an assessment of competence by a senior colleague (Gosling, 2009; Nasta, 2011). Attempts are now being been made to consider how such an approach might be modified, not only to reconsider the top-down approach to the observation, but also to ensure that the process is centred on the steps

being taken to enhance a scholarly and more andragogic approach to learning, rather than a more strictly pedagogic management of learning. In higher education generally it is also not considered appropriate to grade peer review, implying as it does that the exercise is more an assessment than an evaluation; more a judgement rather than a dialogue or professional conversation (Gray, 2010; O'Leary, 2013).

On the question of research, and putting to one side the question of whether CHE staff are being given enough space and time to meaningfully engage in any form of scholarship, there is also the troublesome question of the purpose of those activities. While not wishing to imply that university academics routinely undertake research activities which have no connection with the objectives of the institutions in which they work, it is clear that in universities there is a general ethos of staff allegiance to their discipline, and where peer review in research cultures takes place largely outside one's employing institution, and within clearly defined academic 'tribes and territories' (Becher and Trowler, 2001). At present in the UK it is not at all clear that CHE staff have established even a foothold in those peer review cultures, nor whether such allegiance would not - at present at least - be considered to compromise their status as employees of corporations, where first and foremost they will be judged by their ability to meet targets laid down in strategic plans, and where research would be largely understood as the evaluation of the effectiveness in meeting those targets (Turner and Carpenter, 2012).

Finally, in the absence of a set of professional standards specifically aimed at CHE staff, currently practitioners must choose to engage with either the (old) Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) Standards framework, which are embedded in the variously named Diploma of Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) awards (for example, the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE (PCET)) and the Certificate in Education (Cert Ed)) or the Higher Education Academy (HEA) housed UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF). As employees of FECs - and regardless of the amount of HE teaching being undertaken - it is common for those CHE staff to have a DTLLS-related qualification. Indeed, many college principals have demanded it because such staff may be called upon to undertake FE work even if they are currently employed only to undertake HE work. Because of this, engagement with the UKPSF remains patchy, despite the best efforts of the HEA in promoting the framework. In comparing the two frameworks (Lea, 2011; Price, 2011), one might argue that they neatly reflect the cultural differences we are discussing here. For example, the UKPSF is much more a framework to enable staff to make their own judgements about enhancing their professional practice within a context of the scholarship of learning and teaching. The LLUK framework, on the other hand, is much more an agreed yardstick (that is a framework *of* standards rather than a framework *for* standards) to enable assessors to make a judgement as to whether someone is fit to practice in the sector (Lucas and Nasta, 2010). And it is also clear that research and scholarship underpin the UKPSF, whereas the terms are mentioned only as discrete statements within the LLUK framework.

The four lenses

In previous work on HE in FE we identified four lenses through which we might judge the effective development of an HE ethos in FECs, or what we referred to as 'HEness' (Lea and Simmons, 2012). The lenses all relate to the degree of autonomy required to effectively nurture a culture of HEness, that is, autonomy at institution level, curriculum level, and in relation to pedagogy and to research.

In summary, universities - generally speaking - through high degrees of autonomy have been able to embed significant cultures of collegiality when it comes to organisational practices (Elton, 2008); curricula which treat knowledge as highly contestable and largely divorced from outside stakeholder interests (what Bernstein referred to as insularity -

(Beck and Young 2005)); a pedagogy centred on uncertainty and what isn't known as much as what is; and a research culture which emphasises original contributions to knowledge in whatever direction that leads the researcher. Clearly, a number of developments over the past thirty years, particularly concerning an increased interest in the role of universities by the State, have curtailed a lot of this autonomy, but a central argument of that article was that, when compared with a typical FEC, all universities have a degree of autonomy which is qualitatively different.

Strictly speaking, HEness in FE, because it is higher education should be able to be judged directly through these lenses, but because it is happening within a wider culture of FE our concern was the way that this wider culture was constraining the development of that HEness. The research undertaken for this report has enabled us to look more precisely at the ways that CHE practitioners have been grappling with these, and in the light of that to recommend ways in which distinctive, and highly desirable, forms of HEness might be further nurtured.

CHE as a hybrid

While acknowledging that recent previous research did not find evidence of a distinct form of pedagogy in HE in FE (King and Widdowson, 2012), there are some good grounds for considering it a form of hybrid. The notion of a hybrid refers to the extent that HE in FE borrows from, and then fuses, aspects of the two wider sectors in which it has been immersed. An obvious example of that would be a desire to see students working more independently (HE style) but within a supportive tutorial culture (FE style); or put another way, teachers taking active responsibility in identifying independent learning needs and then providing support to meet them.

Our case studies found clear evidence of that, and interestingly not operating as a kind of deficit model (in recognising the non traditional profile of the typical CHE student), but as a fully-fledged pedagogical approach (Burkill et al, 2008; Lloyd and Griffiths, 2008; Griffiths and Lloyd, 2009). The opposing side of that is the extent to which the wider FE culture is able to view some forms of independent learning as a failure to manage the learning environment appropriately and we also found some evidence of CHE teachers feeling that their managers and other FE colleagues did not sufficiently recognise the need to take those pedagogical risks to enhance learning, and thereby felt somewhat constrained (Feather, 2010).

The term hybrid might also be particularly useful when looking at the development of a distinct CHE curriculum offer, and culture of research and scholarship. For, in recognising that many of the higher (often sub) degrees found in FECs are vocational in nature, (and are aimed particularly at traditionally underrepresented groups of students) these dimensions fit quite naturally into the wider culture of FE, particularly over the last twenty years, in furnishing local industry with a highly skilled workforce, running in parallel with an inclusive educational agenda (Foster, 2005). But, and importantly, these activities could be enhanced within a growing scholarly culture of knowledge-exchange, consultancy and work placement. This has the potential to be a rich research culture, but one which has to be adapted from the one most prevalent in universities (Feather, 2012), particularly those universities who aspire to be successful in the Research Excellence Framework (REF), which while valuing impact, in its definition of research would preclude most of the activities which FECs could excel in.

> [Impact]…excludes the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research…[and excludes]…Impacts on students, teaching or other activities within the submitting HEI. (REF, 2012, p 428)

Finally, it might also be useful to view the academic levels (4 and 5) of many of the CHE qualifications as hybrid in nature (Lea and Simmons, 2012). For they share many of the characteristics of levels 2 and 3 in needing to provide students with a grounding in the foundational knowledge of a discipline (and are therefore well suited to many FE based teachers who may well be switching between these levels, sometimes on a daily basis), but they are also aspirational levels in pointing students towards increased uncertainty and contestability with regards to that discipline knowledge. In the process they also prepare students for levels 6 and 7, which will increasingly expect them to be operating at the frontier of disciplinary knowledge, and thereby grappling with the unknown as much as the known.

Three typologies for CHE

In their work on undergraduates as researchers, Healey and Jenkins (2009) have used the work of Hodge et al (2008) to highlight how effective transitions might be made for students to help them negotiate higher levels of learning.

The developmental journey of the student

| Developmental level	Student traits
Reliance on external references [Foundations]	• Knowledge viewed as certain • Reliance on authorities as source of knowledge • Externally defined value system and identity • Act in relationships to acquire approval
At the crossroads [Intermediate learning]	• Evolving awareness of multiple perspectives and uncertainty • Evolving awareness of own values and identity and of limitations of dependent relationships
Self-authorship [Capstone]	• Awareness of knowledge as contextual • Development of internal belief system and sense of self-capacity to engage in authentic, interdependent relationships

Source: Based on Hodge et al (2008), in Healey and Jenkins (2009, p 38)

In this model we can see how students' learning might become increasingly independent, but also how this might be integrated into asking students to increasingly see their learning as forms of scholarly endeavour. This typology also depicts approaches to learning not as opposites but as transitional. Here, higher learning is not typified by the autonomous learner per se, but by the *process* through which forms of dependent learning are supported to *become* increasingly independent. And here the CHE teacher is ideally situated to facilitate this process.

This model also resonates with a host of other depictions of higher forms of learning. For example, the movement from surface learning to deep learning (Ramsden, 2003); the movement from pedagogy to andragogy (Knowles, 1980); Socratic forms of learning (Abbs, 1994); and the idea of student as producer (Neary and Winn, 2009). In each case fixed forms of knowledge, and the idea of the teacher as instructor, gives way to more contingent ways of viewing knowledge, and in the process demonstrates how students, through increased engagement with knowledge and its discovery or construction, can begin to take a more scholarly approach to their learning (Lea, 2012). For some this process has been

depicted as the means to enhance learning itself, that is, the more participatory the experience, the more is learnt (Brandes and Ginnis, 1996), but it might also be argued to be what lies at the very essence of higher education: 'At the higher level, the teacher is not there for the sake of the student, both have their justification in the service of scholarship' (von Humboldt 1810 [1970], quoted by Elton 2008, 225).

A number of authors have also seen the potential that the influential work of Ernest Boyer (1990) could make to HE in FE in the UK (for example, King and Widdowson, 2009; Feather, 2012; Lea and Simmons, 2012; Turner and Carpenter, 2012). For, in arguing that American higher education has been unhelpfully dominated by the pursuit of original research (what he refers to as the scholarship of discovery), at the expense of other forms of scholarship - notably the scholarships of integration, application, and teaching - he has also opened up new avenues for the CHE teacher in the UK. Most significantly we can see here the potential to promote forms of scholarly activity which are much more likely to be both congruent with existing practice, and offer the opportunity to enhance that practice in appropriate, but scholarly, ways.
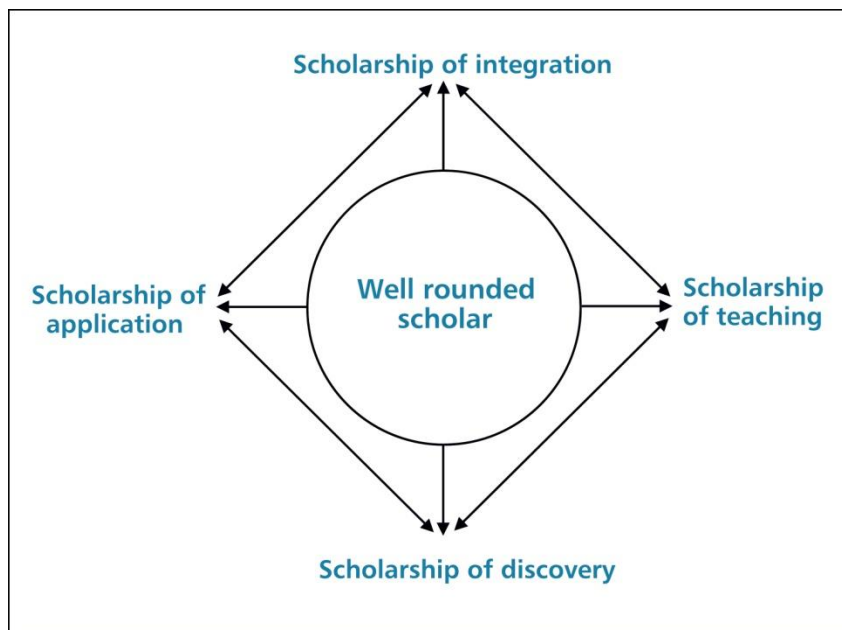
Source: Adapted from Boyer (1990)

In this depiction of Boyer's work the arrows indicate the multiple ways in which all four scholarships have the potential to complement each other, and without any one of them dominating the others. And, significantly in the context of HE in FE, we can see the enormous potential it offers to individuals and institutions. For example, in the context of the scholarship of integration, the central role of the curriculum can be fully acknowledged, emphasising not just how the production of new knowledge can contribute to a curriculum, but also how structuring existing knowledge in forms which are readily accessible to students can also be rendered as a scholarly activity. This might also be argued to be in keeping with the very idea of a university:

> It [a university] is a place of *teaching* universal knowledge. This implies that its object is, on the one hand, intellectual, not moral, and, on the other, that it is the diffusion and extension of *knowledge* rather than the advancement. If its object were scientific and philosophical discovery, I do not see why a University should have students… (Newman 1854 [1982], preface p xxxvii)

Furthermore, in the context of the scholarship of application, it invites the CHE teacher to measure their scholarly activity against a knowledge-exchange yardstick - emphasising the benefits of scholarly knowledge to industry and commerce and how forms of consultancy can be of mutual benefit to both parties. Finally, it also provides an opportunity (in many cases) to begin to showcase *existing* scholarly activity which relates to learning and teaching. That said, this Boyerian depiction is still adrift of REF definitions, indicating that there is still some work to be done if forms of scholarship are to be looked at in more horizontal and complementary ways, rather than in vertical and hierarchical ways:

> Scholarship for the REF is defined as the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases. (REF 2012, 48)

A reorientation here might also provide enormous scope not only to value more that scholarship which helps help enhance learning for students, but it might also aid to raise the profile generally of the scholarship of teaching in learning in all higher education institutions.

The final typology depicts two stereotypes of universities and FECs based on the constraints which might be experienced because of the socio-cultural contexts in which they operate:
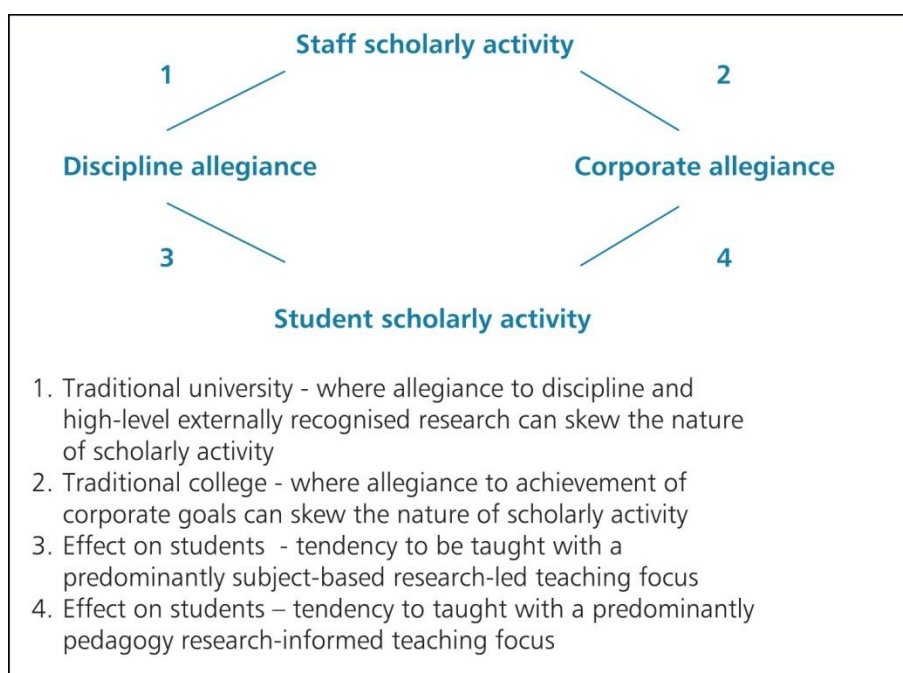
Source: Healey et al (forthcoming)

Healey et al (forthcoming) describe the four dimensions in this typology as one in which an original research agenda in a traditional university might easily skew wider notions of scholarship, specifically, skewing it away from a meaningful engagement with scholarship for students. But, equally, in a college context there might also be a different skewing, this time towards research being understood predominantly as the evaluation of effective practice. Whereas both stereotypes might be equally undesirable, it is also possible to see possibilities for CHE teachers here, in deliberately not pursuing an original research agenda, but instead looking at ways in which by evaluating their practice they can also generate rich scholarly activities, both for students and staff. And particularly, activities which invite staff to

use their professional knowledge to engage students in work-related projects; for staff and students to carry out enquiries that can benefit the local community; and to become involved in the evaluation of pedagogic effectiveness (Healey et al, forthcoming).

Taken together, these three typologies would appear to offer HE in FE significant opportunities to advance forms of scholarship and higher learning. Significantly, they offer the prospect of turning what might appear as a constraint (from typology 3) into an opportunity (from typology 2). For, in emphasising the mission of the typical FEC to furnish a skilled workforce it is perfectly possible to measure staff scholarly activity against that aim utilising a Boyer model of scholarship. Furthermore, in wishing to enhance the study skills of its students, many of whom may be non-traditional, Boyer's model values forms of pedagogic evaluation alongside original research. Indeed, this approach complements the work of the Higher Education Academy in seeking to raise the profile of the scholarship of teaching and learning, in tandem with the development of subject knowledge.

> The scholarly nature of subject inquiry and knowledge creation, and a scholarly approach to pedagogy, together represent a uniquely embedded feature of support for student learning in universities and colleges.
> (HEA, 2005, p 1)

Strictly speaking one might argue that the former has more to do with the ways that teaching might be led by subject research, and the latter by the ways that pedagogy itself might be informed by research. Either way the pedagogical implications of advancing knowledge are to the fore, and the CHE teacher is in a strong position not only to contribute to these forms of scholarship, but also, and at the same time, to help advance any avowed mission of the college in which they work, be that related to enhanced employability, and/or inclusion.

Furthermore, in considering the implications for higher forms of learning (from typology 1) there is an implied complementary relationship between staff scholarly activity and student scholarly activity, that is, an additional tandem relationship.
Here, developing staff scholarly activity divorced from developing student scholarly activity, not only detaches the two parts of the tandem, but it also denies an opportunity that the typical CHE teacher is in an excellent position to exploit.
While accepting that students might benefit hugely from being taught by research active teachers, it is not at all clear how this has been able to enhance learning and teaching (Hattie and Marsh, 1996). It is here where we see most clearly the constraints imposed on many academics (in needing to develop knowledge strictly within REF guidelines), which in turn has left little time to think about its pedagogical implications (indeed, whether they would have the time to teach at all). But, for the typical CHE teacher there is no reason to view this as a constraint, only an opportunity, to explore the ways in which the curriculum might be viewed as a site to develop scholarly forms of activity jointly with students; for example, in exploring ways in which staff and students might work together on projects which have connections with local industry and commerce; where staff and students disseminate their work locally with local industry and commerce; where students and staff work collectively on evaluating pedagogic practice; and where the development of research skills becomes a central focus within the classroom.

Conclusion

In this section we have been looking at the context in which CHE has become an accepted, and growing, part of the higher education landscape. But rather than dwelling on the policy implications of that, we have been considering some of the more strictly pedagogical implications of this growth. Specifically, the focus has been on the need to ensure that CHE is able to furnish an HE ethos for its HE students. Significantly, and as we have argued

before (Lea and Simmons, 2012), it is important that we move away from a focus on the outward appearance of this ethos (for example, in providing dedicated HE centres - important as they might be) and move more towards ensuring the means to capture more of the inner essence of HEness. To this end we have been exploring the nature of higher learning, and its connection with forms of scholarship. Indeed, that CHE provides lots of opportunities for the two dimensions to be integrated, serving in complementary ways students, staff and the institutions themselves.

In the next section we turn to an examination of the IQER process, and the results of that process, in terms of what has been reported to FECs with specific reference to the development of an HE ethos. But before we do that it is important to remind ourselves that existing QAA guidance for FECs already implies much of what we have been examining in this section. For example:

> The [UK Quality Code for Higher Education] Quality Code notes that 'Scholarship and research lie at the heart of higher education', while acknowledging that the precise nature of these scholarly activities is determined by subject differences as well as by differences in focus, level, scope and **provider context**…
>
> In the case of bachelor's and master's degrees, the presumption that subject knowledge is to be acquired and extended leads to an expectation that **teaching will be informed, if not led, by the research/scholarship interests of staff working in the field**. Consequently, for taught degree-awarding powers, the majority of staff are expected to be actively engaged in **scholarly activity (leading to scholarly output, for example) that informs their teaching and contributes to the development and enhancement of students' understanding of their subject**. Such activity does not necessarily mean doing original research but it does mean doing more than simply professional development. An applicant for taught degree-awarding powers is required to provide evidence of productive scholarly activity by its staff, demonstrating active involvement in the generation **or reformulation of academic knowledge and the dissemination of understanding** or ideas to both internal and external audiences.
> (QAA 2013a, pp 4-5, emphases added)

We have highlighted here some of the sections which open up the possibility of interpretation along the lines we have been exploring in this section - specifically, the importance of 'provider context' and how this offers significant scope for FECs to promote forms of scholarly activity more suited to the strategic position of FECs in the current policy context for post-compulsory education. Furthermore, Boyer's work provides a model in which terms like 'informed', 'reformulation' and 'dissemination' might be interpreted in scholarly ways, actively utilising the scholarships of teaching, integration, and application respectively. Importantly, and in addition, these activities might also be viewed in much more integrated and complementary ways.

To finish we have summarised the advice provided by QAA to colleges seeking FDAP or TDAP (see table over the page), specifically with reference to learning environments and scholarship and research. In all cases we propose that each box of the table could be interpreted in line with the arguments pursued in this section.

In the next section we examine how some of these areas have been reported on in the IQER process, and, in section three, how FECs have been responding to the challenges presented to them in developing their HE provision along these lines.

Differences between evidence required for Foundation Degree awarding powers (FDAP) and teaching degree awarding power applications (TDAP) in the UK:

	For FDAP	For TDAP
With reference to qualification level descriptors and nature of the expected student learning experience	A sound understanding of the principles in their field of study; Learned to apply those principles more widely; Learned to evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems; Their studies may well have had a vocational orientation…enabling them to perform effectively in their chosen field.; Qualities necessary for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.	Understanding of a complex body of knowledge, some of it at the current boundaries of an academic discipline…; Analytical techniques and problem-solving skills that can be applied in many types of employment; Evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements and to communicate them effectively; The qualities needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility, and decision-making in complex and unpredictable circumstances.
With reference to the statement that : 'Scholarship and research lie at the heart of higher education'	Scholarship in support of the Foundation Degree is likely to involve an employer-driven focus and a tightly structured approach to learning, reflecting the vocational orientation of the qualification; Keeping up with employer trends is an important form of professional development; Staff to have the necessary knowledge and understanding of current scholarly developments in their discipline area; To integrate academic and work-based learning and to ensure an appropriate balance between intellectual and practical skills.	Bachelor's and taught master's degrees may also have a vocational orientation …but they are also likely to have a greater subject focus and academic orientation, reflected in more open-ended enquiry and the development of students as independent learners; Teaching will be informed, if not led, by the research/scholarship interests of staff working in the field; The majority of staff are expected to be actively engaged in scholarly activity (leading to scholarly output, for example) that informs their teaching and contributes to the development and enhancement of students' understanding of their subject; Evidence of productive scholarly activity by its staff, demonstrating active involvement in the generation or reformulation of academic knowledge and the dissemination of understanding or ideas to both internal and external audiences.
Overall, with regard to research and scholarly activity	A close and professional understanding of current developments in research and scholarship in their subjects; Relevant 'knowledge and understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline area and that such knowledge and understanding directly inform and enhance their teaching'.	Responsibility for ensuring that staff maintain a close and professional understanding of current developments in research and scholarship in their subjects and that structured opportunities for them to do so are widely taken up; Relevant 'knowledge and understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline area and that such knowledge and understanding directly inform and enhance their teaching'.

Adapted from: QAA (2013a)

Section Two - Summary review of the IQER process and emergent themes

Introduction

Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) was piloted by QAA in 15 FECs in 2006-7 and introduced fully in January 2008. It provided a completely new approach to ensuring the quality of HE provision in FECs and replaced the previous methodologies. Before the introduction of IQER in January 2008, HE in FECs was subject to review methods designed specifically for higher education, under the auspices of first the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and then QAA: these were Subject Review and Academic Review (Davies and Simmons, 2012; Brown, 2004; QAA, 1997, 2000b, 2004, 2008a).

While Subject Review was not designed with HE in FECs in mind, Academic Review was introduced in 2002 as the subject-level review process used for directly funded higher education in further education colleges in England (Brown, 2000; Cook and Underwood, 2002).

Under Subject Review, FECs achieved lower average scores than post-1992 universities, which scored on average lower than pre-1992 universities. While some viewed this as evidence that the quality of HE in FECs was substantially lower than that in universities (QAA, 2000a) other commentators noted a number of factors which might qualify this conclusion. These included the fact that many of the failures were due to either colleges' lack of experience in managing the review process or weaknesses in the validating body, rather than to the quality of provision, and on re-inspection colleges gained respectable grades (Cook, 2003). Subject review was only applied to provision which was either consortium-funded or directly funded by HEFCE. Indirectly funded provision was reviewed through QAA's Institutional Audit, which covered a university's collaborative provision (QAA, 2006, 2008d). It was felt that indirectly funded provision was reviewed more leniently because it fell under the auspices of Institutional Audit, which was not a direct assessment of provision but an audit of the HEI's systems for assuring quality (Tysome, 2003, p 10).

Academic Review was similar to Subject Review in that it was based on peer review and a self-evaluation document, but differed in that it shifted away from an assessment and grading approach towards an audit and a mix of threshold and grading judgements (Brown 2000, p 328).

The main area of weakness which had been consistently identified in Academic Reviews of HE, but more particularly of HE in FECs, was: 'the assessment cycle, from initial design of assessment tasks to measuring outcomes and assuring sufficient rigour and integrity in the implementation and monitoring of assessment processes' (QAA, 2008b, p 2). This followed a pattern seen in the outcomes of the previous method of subject review, where reviewers frequently found scope for improvement in student assessment in FECs and HEIs (QAA 2003). This is significant because assessment was made the focus of developmental engagement in IQER.

IQER in practice

IQER was developed within the context of the concerns expressed above. It exhibited a number of characteristics which differentiated it from the previous quality assurance systems and made it more acceptable to FECs. These included the inclusion of a two-stage process in which the Developmental Engagement results were not made public, thus addressing the

concerns about FECs' lack of experience of HE quality assurance systems; the focus in the Developmental Engagement on assessment - which, as we have seen, was the key area of weakness; and the use of peers from FE as reviewers, which gave the system more authority, as the reviewers understood the system they were reviewing. This was a system designed specifically for HE in FECs, rather than a system taken from a different sector and superimposed upon it. Thus, the issue of unfair comparison was addressed. In design terms it maintained a balance between accountability and enhancement (Brown, 2000, p 330).

It is important to emphasise that IQER was designed specifically as the review method for HE in FECs. It focused on three core themes: academic standards, the quality of learning opportunities, and public information (QAA, 2008c). The method consisted of two related processes: a Developmental Engagement and a Summative Review. While the Developmental Engagement had a developmental and enhancement focus which was intended to help colleges develop their capacity to manage quality assurance, the Summative Review made judgements on the three core themes: judgements of confidence, limited confidence, or no confidence with reference to academic standards and learning opportunities, and judgements of reliance or no reliance with reference to public information:

> IQER is an evidence-based peer review of a college's management of the student learning experience and performance of its responsibilities for the academic standards and quality of its higher education provision. (QAA, 2008c, p 3)

The key point here was the emphasis on evidence and on peer review. A comparison of external quality assurance systems for HE and FE noted that HE relied on peer review while FE relied more on an inspectorial system (Underwood and Connell, 2000). This point might also be used to cement some of the cultural differences between universities and colleges raised in the previous section. QAA made a key distinction between systems for HE and those for HE in FECs:

> IQER is concerned with the way in which colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their agreements with awarding bodies. It is not concerned with how awarding bodies manage their responsibilities for collaborative agreements. QAA reviews the responsibilities of higher education institutions within these agreements through the process of Institutional Audit. (QAA, 2008c, p 9)

Briefly, the IQER process began with the FECs writing a self-evaluation document. Students were encouraged to produce a written submission, which was voluntary. Following a preparatory meeting, the review team would then visit the college: 'to allow reviewers to scrutinise evidence on site, meet college staff, students and other stakeholders and consider the extent of the college's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure' (QAA, 2008c, 24).

The Academic Infrastructure (now subsumed under the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)) referred to four elements of the QAA system: programme specifications, subject benchmark statements, the HE qualifications framework and 10 sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the precursor of the Quality Code). Universities continue to be required to produce a programme specification for each programme which outlines the overall intended learning outcomes for the whole programme, as well as an overview of the structure of the constituent modules or units. Subject benchmark statements have been produced by groups of academics for each main discipline; these specify what can be expected of a graduate in that discipline in terms of subject knowledge, expertise and generic skills. The qualifications framework specifies the structure and nomenclature of awards at different levels. The sections of QAA's *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* provided a set of precepts against which provision in universities could be judged; they covered such issues as assessment, work-based learning and external

examining, and, like all the component parts of this infrastructure, are now subsumed in the new overarching Quality Code (QAA 2012a). Following a visit, the review team produced a provisional judgement on the core themes, which was communicated confidentially to the college and its awarding bodies. The final published report: 'sets out the provisional judgements, good practice and recommendations and actions by the college as described above, together with contextual information and supporting evidence' (QAA, 2008c, p 26).

IQER reports list examples of good practice and provide recommendations which come under three headings: essential, advisable and desirable. These key terms were defined by QAA as follows:

> Good practice is practice that the IQER team regards as making a particularly positive contribution to the college's management of the student learning experience of higher education in the context of that college; and which is worthy of wider dissemination within and/or beyond the college. (QAA, 2008c, p 56)

> Essential recommendations refer to important matters that reviewers believe are currently putting quality and/or standards at risk and which require urgent corrective action. (QAA, 2008c, p 55)

> Advisable recommendations refer to matters that reviewers believe have the potential to put quality and/or standards at risk and require preventative corrective action. (QAA, 2008c, p 52)

> Desirable recommendations refer to matters which reviewers believe have the potential to enhance quality, build capacity and/or further secure standards. (QAA, 2008c, p 54)

Thus the first two recommendations were concerned with quality assurance while the third was concerned with quality enhancement.

The IQER process formally concluded in 2012 and was replaced by an interim process referred to as the Review of College Higher Education (RCHE) (QAA 2012b). Those colleges which did not undergo IQER in the period 2006-7 to 2011-12 but received student numbers from HEFCE for 2012-13 are being reviewed under a method entitled Initial Review. All other HE, whatever its location, will be reviewed under the new Higher Education Review (HER) which comes into operation in 2013-14.

> Higher Education Review is a flexible, risk-based method which applies the greatest scrutiny where it is most needed. Providers with a strong track record in managing quality and standards are reviewed less frequently and less intensively than providers without such a strong record. (QAA, 2013b, p 1)

Judgements are made on:

> The setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards (or the academic standards set by degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations)

- the quality of students' learning opportunities
- information about higher education provision
- the enhancement of students' learning opportunities.

> The judgement on the setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards will be expressed as one of the following: **meets UK expectations**, **requires**

improvement to meet UK expectations or **does not meet UK expectations**. The judgements on learning opportunities, information and enhancement will each be expressed as one of the following: **commended**, **meets UK expectations**, **requires improvement to meet UK expectations** or **does not meet UK expectations**. The judgements 'requires improvement to meet UK expectations' and 'does not meet UK expectations' are considered to be unsatisfactory and, therefore, there will be more intensive follow-up action to complete the review. (QAA, 2013b, p 3, emphases in the original)

HE ethos in IQER reports

Under IQER the good practice items which referred to HE ethos tended to link that ethos to staff development, the management of learning resources and organisational functions such as an HE forum, or the creation of a dedicated Faculty of Higher Education:

> The variety and extent of staff development supports the advanced professional development of staff, which contributes significantly to the maintenance and enhancement of the higher education ethos and quality of the provision.
> (The College of West Anglia, April 2010)

> The College's strategy to establish an ethos, through its management of learning resources, ensures students have an appropriate higher education learning experience. (West Nottinghamshire College, December 2010)

> The HE Forum, [which] encourages a strong higher education ethos and facilitates and encourages the sharing of good practice across the College.
> (Tameside College, January 2010)

> The creation of a dedicated Faculty of Higher Education, with a very high percentage of staff who teach solely on higher education programmes, has embedded a positive and enthusiastic higher education ethos and identity and demonstrates the College's commitment to the standards and quality of its higher education provision.
> (City College Plymouth, March 2011)

Ethos has also been positively reported on in a more recent review under RCHE which links it to staff scholarship:

> The way in which the College has developed a distinct identity and ethos for its higher education provision, including the emphasis on staff scholarship and research. (Doncaster College, May 2013)

Where desirable recommendations were made they referred either to the need to develop such a culture or linked its development to the higher education teaching observation policy:

> Develop a higher education ethos and culture within the College, including the provision of a dedicated higher education study area.
> (Bracknell and Wokingham College, Nov 2010)

> Ensure the higher education teaching observation policy is embedded throughout the College and that consideration is given to moving this fully to the new higher education peer review process, to facilitate the dissemination of best practice and further nurture a higher education ethos and culture among staff.
> (Sheffield College, July 2010)

Scholarly activity in IQER reports

Under IQER the good practice items which referred specifically to scholarly activity tended to emphasise three aspects: its purpose, the commitment of the college and staff and the development of systems and procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of scholarly activity.

Examples of the purposes considered to be good practice included:

> The development of a culture of research and scholarly activity that clearly supports the enhancement of learning opportunities. (City of Sunderland College, June 2011)

> A focused and comprehensive approach to staff development, including an extensive programme of development events and active College support for research and scholarly activity; together these contribute to ensuring that the teaching staff profile is well matched to the needs and expectations of higher education. (Newcastle College, October 2009)

> The College's arrangements for staff development and its promotion of scholarly activity enable staff to be fully aware of appropriate academic standards. (Weston College, October 2011)

> Staff development systems support the achievement of higher qualifications and encourage scholarly activity. (Canterbury College, January 2010)

> There is a comprehensive approach to research and scholarly activity that enhances the currency of the curriculum and teaching. (Plumpton College, November 2011)

> Staff development and engagement in scholarly activity is highly effective and has a direct impact on the quality of teaching and learning. (The Henley College, October 2011)

Good practice in terms of commitment was described as strategic, comprehensive, focused (see Newcastle above), and included a range of activities. For example:

> The strategic commitment to staff development and scholarly activity in order to enhance the student learning experience. (Havering College of Further and Higher Education, March 2010)

> There is a comprehensive approach to research and scholarly activity that enhances the currency of the curriculum and teaching. (Plumpton College, November 2011)

> Staff carry out a range of professional updating, research and scholarly activity with commitment and enthusiasm and the support of the College. (City of Bristol College, June 2010)

Good practice in terms of systems included recording scholarly activity for approving the allocation of funds, support through teaching remission for staff, and the organisation of an annual higher education conference. For example:

Encouragement and support for, and recording of, individual scholarly activity…are effective in enhancing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities provided. (Warwickshire College, February 2011)

The opportunities for staff to undertake research and the rigorous approval and funding process of the Research Committee encourage professional updating and scholarly activity. (Moulton College, January 2011)

The support provided through teaching remission for staff to undertake scholarly activity and subject updating ensures currency of provision.
(City College Brighton and Hove, November 2011)

The support and encouragement provided for scholarly activity, subject updating and sharing good practice through the organisation of an annual higher education conference. (New College Nottingham, May 2012)

Where desirable recommendations were made they referred to the need to develop a more strategic approach or policy, to improve the monitoring and evaluation systems, to share good practice, to make processes more transparent and to improve attendance at staff development events:

Consider a central, coherent process for enhancing staff development activities, with the College taking a more strategic overview of higher education staff development so that scholarly activity has a high priority.
(Bicton College, May 2011)

Continue to promote scholarly activity among the higher education teaching staff and ensure more systematic monitoring of the impact of staff development generally. (Northampton College, November 2011)

Develop a more transparent process for the approval of scholarly activity applications and ensure that they are reviewed at the Higher Education Committee, in line with its terms of reference, to encourage scholarly activity, share best practice and enable the range and impact of such activities to be monitored.
(Weymouth College, June 2011)

Increase the take-up of staff development activities specific to higher education and encourage staff engagement in scholarly activity.
(Itchen College, September 2010)

Take steps to maximise the attendance of all staff at higher education staff development events. (Richmond upon Thames College, March 2009)

The desirable recommendations included recommendations to ensure that all staff teaching higher education engage with an appropriate level of scholarly activity:

Develop and implement a strategy to ensure that all staff teaching higher education engage with an appropriate level of scholarly activity.
(Richmond upon Thames College, March 2009)

Other recommendations suggested that monitoring be made more systematic, particularly with regard to recording activity and its impact (for example, Weymouth College, June 2011). Plans were recommended to be realistic (Hackney Community College, April 2010), comprehensive, and coherent, and there was a recommendation to:

Introduce a comprehensive staff development policy for its higher education provision that includes consideration of research and scholarly activity. (Tresham College, January 2011)

Desirable recommendations concerning the purposes of scholarly activity included maintaining and developing staff subject currency, maintaining and assuring academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities:

Enhance the directed scholarly activity of staff to maintain and develop their subject currency. (City and Islington College, May 2007)

Ensure that records are kept of all professional/industrial updating and scholarly activity and evaluate the impact of activities on the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities provided. (Gateshead College, Sept 2010)

In the cases where the recommendations were advisable, that is could 'put quality and/or standards at risk and require preventative corrective action' (QAA, 2008c, p 52) the language was not dissimilar to that used in the desirable recommendations. It required colleges to develop their strategy towards higher education staff development, paying particular attention to opportunities for scholarly activity, but emphasised the need to implement the strategy and to develop a more extensive and systematic approach which should be related to other systems such as the staff performance reviews process:

Develop a more extensive and systematic approach to staff development and scholarly activity for higher education staff. (West Suffolk College, March 2012)

Develop and implement a strategy to enable all staff teaching on higher education courses to engage with an appropriate level of scholarly activity and ensure that this is monitored and planned to inform the staff performance reviews process. (Carlisle College, October 2009)

Develop its strategy towards higher education staff development, paying particular attention to opportunities for scholarly activity. (Askham Bryan College, May 2009)

Conclusion

It is clear from this survey of IQER report summaries that FECs have been commended on a number of occasions for the ways in which they are developing an ethos of HE, and, related to that, a culture of scholarship and research, and where there are recommendations that the message is consistent with the good practice seen elsewhere.

We have identified the following key emergent themes from our review.

- The purpose of staff engaging in scholarly activity should be focused on the enhancement of the quality of students' learning opportunities and impact on the quality of teaching and learning, the maintenance and assurance of academic standards, the maintenance and development of the currency of the curriculum and of staff's subject currency.
- Staff development for HE must be distinct from that for FE; it must have variety and be broad enough to meet the needs of the curriculum and focused enough to match the staff profile to the needs and expectations of HE. And, ideally, it should be comprehensive enough to ensure that events are well attended.

- In organisational terms the approach to staff development and scholarly activity must be based on a written and approved strategy and policy and be backed up by central systems which involve a rigorous approval process, provide sufficient support such as teaching remissions, and systematically record, monitor and evaluate the impact of the activity.
- There needs to be a range of meetings which bring staff together for a variety of purposes: for example, an HE Forum for sharing good practice, an annual HE conference, HE Boards of Study and so on.
- There is significant value in designated HE areas such as study areas, particular classrooms, up to and including a separate HE centre.
- As far as possible colleges should ensure that the quality assurance procedures are related clearly to the HE regulatory framework and have specific HE criteria associated with them, including teaching observations.

There is much here to be positive about, and in combination with our analysis in the previous section, there are good prospects for CHE in general, in being able to further embed an HE ethos and culture of scholarship and research. That said, we need to guard against encroachments on the aspects of autonomy which could compromise and undermine that growth, and nurture the unique contribution that CHE is making within an increasingly marketised HE landscape. Chief among these unique contributions seems to be a commitment to serving local communities - including students and local employers - and forms of scholarship which are more suited to that provider context. In the next section we look at some examples of how FECs have been responding to this context of their HE provision.

Section three - College higher education case studies and discussion of findings

Introduction

This section contains six case studies of FECs in England who are providing some form of HE. The colleges were chosen to represent a range of provision, including: small and high numbers of students; long history and shorter history of HE provision; those offering higher and lower HE academic level qualifications; those with strong and more autonomous links with universities; and those which have varying aspirations for FDAP and TDAP status.

Each case study was compiled by asking the same questions to a number of people involved in HE provision in each college. This included at least one HE manager in each college, at least one HE teacher, and, where appropriate, a representative from a partner university. The questions asked of each group are contained in the appendix. These were asked as headline questions in interview contexts, followed up by exploration of the answers given each time. Key themes were then identified and written up following the same narrative format, including a table of key statistics for each college. Each case study was limited to around 1,000 words.

In every case anonymity was assured to the participants in the interests of free and frank discussion. Where we felt that a college might be easily identifiable from the case study or the accompanying statistics, we modified the text accordingly taking care not to distort the actual nature of their HE provision. In all cases the participants were shown the drafts of the case studies they featured in, to provide them with an opportunity to modify or amend the final versions.

All the colleges that feature in the case studies are FECs from across England, and each was randomly given its fictitious name, and they are reproduced in the following pages in (Greek) alphabetical order.

At the end of the case studies we offer our own analysis of them in the light of the themes raised in sections one and two.

Alpha College

No of HE students (FTE)	800
No of FE students (FTE)	30,000 (head count)
Length of time HE has been delivered	25 years
Number of directly funded programmes	Approx 40
Number of indirectly funded programmes	4
Subject areas offered	Horticulture, Business, Art and Design, Engineering, Equine, Animal, Applied Management, Computing, Early Years, Care, Counselling
No of validating/collaborative partners	5
Dedicated HE centre	No

Alpha College has been running HE courses for over twenty years, mainly Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) and Higher National Certificates (HNCs), but more recently Foundation Degrees and full honours degrees. The HE provision is around 10 per cent of the total for the College, in a wide range of subject areas including Business, Art and Design, and Engineering. The College has aspirations to gain TDAP in the future. The College is a member of the Mixed Economy Group of colleges and the 157 Group of colleges.

Currently, its HE programmes are validated by five universities, each chosen because of their expertise in the various areas of HE within the College. The nature of the partnership varies enormously from university to university, the HE manager describing the best relationship as 'hands-off' enabling the College to develop and implement its own quality assurance procedures and processes (approved by the partner). At the other extreme, one of the universities requires numerous quality assurance checks that the college felt they did not manage effectively causing additional and unnecessary burden. The College produces its own internal quality reports, which guide enhancement activities, but noted that typically the university partners do not show a great deal of interest in these.

The College aims to provide an enabling learning environment for all of its students, with the HE provision being one option for FE students who wish to continue their studies at the College. Overall, each academic level is recognised as being a stepping-stone to more autonomous forms of learning. The College has, at present, no dedicated HE centre. The main priority is to provide appropriate study space to enable students to undertake the higher level of learning required on HE programmes.

On the subject of scholarly activity staff were encouraged to engage in forms of subject updating and continuing professional development (CPD) which would enhance their ability to teach their subjects. Staff were also encouraged to undertake higher qualifications, and keep links with local, relevant, industries. Having a precise definition of scholarly activity was not considered helpful, after all most universities do not seem to have one. Each year staff are required to compile a log of their scholarly activity which is shared among colleagues. All teaching staff are employed on similar contracts and full-time staff (with no additional management responsibilities) are currently expected to teach 828 hours per year; level 6 teachers do get extra preparation time to recognise the additional research required to facilitate students meeting the need to demonstrate some learning 'at the forefront of their discipline'.

In addition the College holds three HE conferences per year, and those new to HE teaching are expected to attend a HE teaching practice course in addition to undertaking a teaching qualification if they have not already done so. The College is an HEA subscriber institution and the HE teaching course is mapped against the UKPSF.

The last QAA IQER reported that the IT strategy needed enhancing, and that retention and achievement data had been collated in an inappropriate format. Promptness of student feedback was also identified as a weakness, although it was above the national (National Student Survey (NSS)) average. The College scholarly activity was considered impressive, as was the peer review process. On the latter the College has adapted their lesson observation process for HE. The graded observations are mapped against the UKPSF and recognise the importance of student engagement in their studies, including the encouragement of wider reading.

The HE teacher commented how important it was that students who continued from FE to HE within the College saw and felt a different learning environment. As someone who spent almost as much time teaching on FE programmes as HE programmes she felt that the main difference between the two learning environments was a real sense that one could work with the HE students, rather than have to manage their learning - that the environment felt more adult and trusting. That environment however also continued to nurture the kind of support, which had been offered on the FE programmes, and this benefited a number of the HE students. She felt that the College was beginning to embed a real HE ethos, but this takes time, particularly when the wider FE culture tends to emphasise class-contact and delivery as the key measure of successful teaching, whereas a lot of effective HE learning is not face-to-face.

The HE teacher had recently returned from her first international conference, as a participant, but her scholarly activity to date had mainly been related to enhancing skills within the classroom. She recognised the significance of the wider FE culture within the College, but did not see the lack of time to undertake scholarly activity as the real issue; rather, one needs to be realistic, and work to ensure that the scholarly activity complements the demands of the job. She also felt that many people in FE do undertake forms of scholarly activity but are not accustomed to having it recognised as such.

Beta College

No of HE students (FTE)	100
No of FE students (FTE)	5,000
Length of time HE has been delivered	1 year
Number of directly funded programmes	0
Number of indirectly funded programmes	8
Subject areas offered	Business, Computing, Engineering, Construction, Music, Media, Performing Arts, Teacher Training (DTLLS)
No of validating/collaborative partners	1
Dedicated HE centre	No

Beta College is a large general FEC with a small but recently expanded HE provision, which is mainly focused on HNC level 4 provision. Currently there are fewer than 100 full-time equivalent (FTE) HE students on campus. The College doesn't have any degree awarding powers, with no plans in this direction for the near future. It has one strong partnership with a local university, which it has had for a number of years. The College wishes to see many of its FE students progress to its HE programmes. While recognising that many such students will want to transfer to other HE providers it also takes seriously its duty in responding to local student needs, particularly those who would not wish to, or be able to, move away from the area.

The College sees its HE provision as very much a response to local need - giving local students access to HE (particularly those identified as 'hard to reach'), and providing local industries with a highly skilled workforce. In this regard the College does not see itself in competition with universities, but seeks to offer complementary courses, well suited to particular types of students and responding to particular employer needs. In this regard its HE provision is better defined and branded when compared with a lot of its FE provision, where competition with other FECs for funding streams has resulted in forms of fine-tuning over minor differences in demonstrating how it will meet national targets.

The university partnership lead spoke of the wide-ranging FE partnerships across the curriculum (HNC/D, Foundation Degree and degree level), including a long established teacher education (initial teacher education (ITE) and CPD) post-compulsory network which includes a large number of colleges. This partnership also has a record of UK and European funded project work. The University considers its partnerships with all FECs to be true partnerships, including co-teaching in partner colleges by University staff, joint scholarly activity across the partner consortium with partnership colleagues presenting at University conferences, and funded master's opportunities for partner staff. Furthermore if any review were to reveal challenges to a partner the University would use this as a development opportunity with additional peer support from the wider consortium community.

The University provides a range of staff development activities, including an associate tutors programme aimed at those new to HE teaching, which includes an assessing and examining workshop. This programme of activities also enables participants to achieve master's level credit and an associate fellowship with the HEA. The last IQER review was seen as disproportionate given the number of students engaged in HE work, but the College was pleased with the way that its management of HE provision was viewed, but recognised the need to enhance the observation of teaching to reflect more of an HE learning context.

HE teaching staff are valued for their subject expertise, their professional networks, and their engagement with local industry. The College recognises the need to expand the scholarly activities of its HE staff and sees this as growing from these existing networks in the form of more consultancy and involvement in creative industry-related projects. It was also felt to be important that the scholarly activity should enhance teaching and learning wherever possible.

The HE teacher is an experienced FE vocational teacher who had just recently begun undertaking HE teaching. He was relishing the opportunity to allow students to begin to explore their own ways of learning, and encouraging them to search for their own answers, as opposed to the more traditional processing of FE students' knowledge, by ensuring that they had met certain learning targets (important as they are at that level). He felt that one of the clear strengths of expanding the HE provision is that many of the students who previously would have had to have moved away from the area to progress to HE level work, would now (increasingly) be able to stay local - which he felt many would prefer.

In terms of scholarly activity the HE teacher was very keen to undertake a master's qualification, and particularly to be given the opportunity to explore learning and teaching issues, specifically exploring the various barriers to learning and how they might be overcome. He saw this as a good example of how research can be of immediate benefit to the College. He would also like the opportunity to begin to explore more how to make work-based learning more effective, and to explore in more detail employer perceptions of education and training, but he was aware that some of these issues might be quite sensitive. He felt that one barrier in his own learning is the predominance of the wider FE culture, which meant that some of the demands of creating an effective HE learning environment and the benefits of developing a scholarly profile were not generally understood in the College.

Gamma College

No of HE students (FTE)	3,000
No of FE students (FTE)	14,000
Length of time HE has been delivered	13 years
Number of directly funded programmes	207
Number of indirectly funded programmes	6
Subject areas offered	Construction, Leadership, Management, Civil Engineering, Manufacturing, Leisure and Tourism, Sport Studies, Engineering, Social/Family/Community Work, Caring Skills, Science, Life Sciences, Chemistry, Environmental Protection/Conservation, Energy Economics/Management/ Conservation, Hospitality/Catering, Teaching/Training, Personal Health/Fitness/Appearance, Hair/Personal Care Services, Art Studies, Art Techniques/Practical Art, Fashion/Textiles/Clothing, Design (Non-industrial), Communication/Media, Moving Image/Photography/Media Production, Theatre and Dramatic Arts, Music Studies, Music Performance, Music Technology/Production, Dance, Business, Computer Science, Aviation, Marketing/PR, Retail
No of validating/collaborative partners	4
Dedicated HE centre	No

Gamma College is a large provider of HE in FE with around 3,000 FTE HE students. It has FDAP and aspires to full TDAP, having accumulated over 13 years of experience of teaching at levels 6 and 7. It has had partnership arrangements with four universities, with varied experiences. The aspiration for TDAP is in part driven by a pragmatic desire to be more in control of their HE provision, and to be able to respond quickly to local employer needs when validating courses.

The HE provision is very much driven by local employer needs, with a desire to seamlessly feed local students from the FE to HE provision, while recognising that it was right that some students would leave to take up HE offers elsewhere. Some 30-40 per cent of the FE students routinely proceed to the College's HE provision. The College had a good range of advanced equipment, studio provision, and general facilities to resource their vocationally oriented HE provision. At present the College does not have a dedicated HE centre. There is, however, separate HE space in the library and separate HE social space. Although the College is close to a number of universities, the students tend to use the College facilities.

Due to the high numbers of HE students some staff are employed exclusively to undertake HE work, but there is no preferred model for staff recruitment, and most staff will be undertaking a range of FE and HE teaching in any particular academic year. This is seen as a strength particularly in wishing to see as many students as possible seamlessly move from FE to HE courses.

The College holds up to three annual staff HE conferences and regular research seminars, which give staff the chance to develop their ideas and disseminate the results of their scholarly activity. The College actively uses a Boyer model of scholarship, seeing all scholarly activity as horizontally equivalent rather than vertically differentiated. At present there are plans for the College to seek to accredit their own CPD framework with the HEA. The College actively uses the resources of the HEA.

The HE teacher has over 20 years of experience of teaching, and regularly combines FE teaching with HE teaching each academic year. She sees the key difference between HE and FE revolving around the trust and responsibility given to the HE students, who are routinely given the independent right to use all the necessary equipment and resources for their studies. This was encouraged pedagogically by students being expected to self-direct their studies more. The HE students quickly recognise this change in pedagogic ethos and generally respond well, particularly to the emphasis placed on dialogue, as opposed to forms of didacticism. She suggested that it would be good to see some of these cultural characteristics extended more beyond the classroom, for example, the library being opened for longer, with more research space being provided.

The HE teacher is an active member of her research and scholarly activity cluster, regularly attending, and sometimes giving, seminar talks. Staff development had mainly been devoted to enhancing teaching, but provision also existed to enable staff to research their subject. Time and money were obvious constraints, but, although all the HE teachers were on FE contracts (teaching around 860 hrs per year), she felt this was not a real constraint, because most staff recognised the context in which they were working, and it was right that scholarly activity should revolve around enhancing pedagogical effectiveness and supporting students to succeed. That said, some more protected time for scholarly activity would be welcome. And it would be nice to see student research and staff research coming together more.

The HE teacher felt that the HE environment at the College was distinct from the FE environment, but also distinct from a typical university HE environment, and that this uniqueness was a perfect fit for the type of HE work being undertaken, where the emphasis was on widening opportunities combined with vocational relevance. That said, the HE ethos definitely benefited from the continuation of the pastoral care nurtured in the FE environment, and the vocational relevance was definitely being enhanced by the emphasis on the kinds of academic writing and dissertation skills one would normally expect to see in a traditional university student. She felt that more of this distinct ethos could be captured and enhanced by a more relevant peer review process, specifically one which moved away from an Ofsted style graded teaching observation process, which emphasised more traditional classroom activities.

Delta College

No of HE students (FTE)	470
No of FE students (FTE)	4,274 (non partner delivered activity only)
Length of time HE has been delivered	7
Number of directly funded programmes	29
Number of indirectly funded programmes	0
Subject areas offered	Business Management, Children's and Young People's Services, Computing, Criminal Justice, Education Studies, Engineering, Hair and Salon Management, Interactive Media, International Spa Therapies, Music, Performing Arts, Sport Teacher Training (PGCE FE)
No of validating/collaborative partners	3
Dedicated HE centre	Yes

Delta College has developed its HE provision within the last seven years. It currently has 470 FTE students which is small in relation to its FE provision. Originally it had five partners with patchy provision and no clear strategy, but has since shifted some of its provision to directly funded numbers through the bidding process and focused its partnerships on two university partners. It operates in an area with low HE participation. The College first developed Foundation Degrees in the field of education and care, which were aimed mainly at progression from college to university. Although the College and the University are close geographically, there's a wide cultural divide between them. The College offers the benefits of small cohorts, familiarity, supportive environment, and a flexible timetable to suit part-time work and family commitments. Many students go onto a final year at university, but they also do 'top-ups' at the College.

Discussion of the issue of familiarity vs challenge for internal progressers revealed a range of ways in which FE is differentiated from HE provision. Students make a formal application but not through UCAS; every student is interviewed and applicants attend events about HE at the College, which covers what is expected of them.
Many courses have mandatory summer schools which include workshops on what studying at HE means, subject specific taster sessions, and the Learning Resource Centre (LRC) do a 'books and buffet' event. Students get pre-course readings with a research-based task based on articles to do before term starts. Some staff teach both HE and FE and therefore will be known to many progressing students, but recently more staff have been employed teaching only on HE programmes.

To encourage student research skills there are sessions on how to make use of books and journals, plagiarism and citation, working with the LRC, tutorial sessions and study workshops. The HE study skills coach works with students, and staff come in and deliver sessions on areas of their own expertise such as academic posters. The College has been making increased use of external speakers, with a minimum expectation of three per year and many programmes have many more. The HE rooms are styled differently and there is a separate HE area. The College is planning a new HE building next year as part of a general campus development.

The principal partner university is highly visible at the College with tutors visiting to do guest lectures, students visiting the University and a range of cross fertilisation activities which benefits both staff and students and identifies the courses as HE and therefore different.

Team teaching with someone from the University helps level 3 progressers view familiar staff from their FE experience in a different light. Programme leaders from the University attend staff student committees and students are encouraged to consider them as part of the team. The University also organises joint activities with students from the University and other partner colleges. There is a strong commitment from University staff at all levels to these partnerships with the aim of producing a collective shared experience.

Staff development revolves around a number of events. The College has an annual HE day which is mandatory for all of those involved in HE and there are always HE workshops whenever there are cross-college events. Working groups have been developed to address issues that affect everyone, such as personal development, work-related learning, employers' showcases, and a level 6 practitioners group. The College is also planning new staff development activities focused on research ethics when running level 6 top-ups. The University organises a Collaborative Conference for all partners, at which the Vice-Chancellor always speaks, as well as a teaching and learning conference at which the College's Head of HE always delivers a workshop. The University sends out information about external speakers but there is very little take up by College staff due to logistical difficulties. The College is planning to take students to some of these lectures next year. All respondents felt that there was a real partnership between the College and the University with links at all levels including the executive staff and functions, such as the Learning Resources Centre.

University staff undertake teaching observations in the College as part of the University's peer observation process. The College has graded observations which are Ofsted driven, but has additional criteria and ideas of good practice for observing HE. The College introduced a new system of organising observation through curriculum managers last year. Now this has bedded in, they have written explicit criteria and expectations for HE observations; where curriculum managers are not HE experienced, they will do a joint observation with an HE practitioner. The College system has always had an HE practitioner as an observer. The College developed its system by sending a team to observe University observations in tutorials, seminars, lectures and workshops and from this distilled elements for their HE observation system. The HE observations contribute to the College's overall grade profile for Ofsted inspection.

The University's view on scholarly activity is that it approves accredited lecturers and what scholarly activity they had already undertaken at the time of validation.
They would expect to see some subject research, but more particularly evidence of curriculum development which they view as the most significant scholarly activity in this context. Many staff have delivered papers at the University's teaching and learning conference and some plan to join University research clusters. The College is considering establishing its own research cluster, which could encourage staff to put in joint bids with University staff. The University has an HEA accredited programme and some partners have joined this. The College has supported postgraduate qualifications where it is of strategic significance; for example, going for a level 6 top-up. The College pays for conferences where staff are delivering a paper. They used to have a bidding system for staff to get two weeks off for research which had to be linked to enhancement of teaching and learning. This had very little take-up even though the bid required was very short. Now HE staff development needs have been built into the appraisal process, and what staff would prefer is a reduction in hours throughout the year, where they can focus on activities such as maintaining their currency and knowledge, finding readings for students, and working with the LRC to identify materials, ideas and articles. This is monitored via curriculum managers. The College has a policy on scholarly activity which requires it to have an impact on student learning. A key driver has been the link between scholarship and learning and teaching in the Quality Code.

Epsilon College

No of HE students (FTE)	500
No of FE students (FTE)	3,000
Length of time HE has been delivered	30 years
Number of directly funded programmes	2
Number of indirectly funded programmes	23
Subject areas offered	Animal Science, Bioscience, Business Child Development and Education, Computing, Creative Digital Media, Drama and Performance Arts, Early Years Care and Education, Engineering, Events Management, Health Care Practice, Illustration Arts, Law, Outdoor Education, Psychology and Sociology, Science, Sport and Exercise, Sustainable Construction, Three Dimensional Design, Tourism and Hospitality Management, Yacht Operations
No of validating/collaborative partners	1
Dedicated HE centre	Yes

Epsilon College is a medium-sized FE college which has been running HE courses for the last 30 years, mainly in art and design and catering. Currently it has about 500 FTE students across a range of subject areas. The College does not have any degree awarding powers and has no plans in this direction for the near future. It has one partnership with a regional university which it has had for a number of years. As this university cannot offer all the programmes they need, they plan to partner with other institutions for specific subjects in the future. About 40 per cent of the College's HE students progress internally and about 75 per cent of its Foundation Degree graduates progress to a top-up degree. It has responded to the identified gap in HE provision locally and serves students who are unable to, or do not wish to, move away from the area.

The College sees its HE provision as a response to local needs which provides local industries with a skilled workforce. It has begun to develop full and top-up programmes at level 6. The College re-located to a site outside of town following a poor Ofsted inspection and since then the Ofsted grades have increased to 'outstanding'. It has a dedicated HE centre which has contributed significantly to the development of a distinct HE identity. The head of HE had been able to build a team and draw in colleagues from across the College. But staff who teach HE are located in units which comprise both FE and HE so the Head of HE does not have specific line management responsibilities. Very few staff teach exclusively HE (approximately 10); the majority teach on both FE and HE and the College philosophy supports this as such staff can inspire level 3 students to progress to higher levels. The College has about 25 degrees, with about seven staff working on each. HE leads are located in each curriculum unit and they receive remission and additional pay to support the Head of HE with quality assurance and enhancement. This role was established in 2011 as a result of their IQER which highlighted the need for roles to discharge responsibilities related to, for example, NSS, standardisation, and plans for staff development.

The new site not only offered opportunities for further development but also a new approach to HE in which a separate identity for HE was championed. One of the main sources of

argument in support for this separation was the need to be compliant with the University's regulatory framework. Also, permissible variations for HE to the FE quality assurance processes were developed prior to the centre being opened. Another key shift in developing an HE ethos was the challenge made to the view that, financially, FE supported HE. The Head of HE was able to show that the funding model contributed substantially to the College finances. This, combined with the support from IQER, the new build, the staff enthusiasm, the efforts of the local authority, regional reports on low HE participation, and the need to raise aspirations all helped to make HE more distinctive and brought the separate silos of HE in the College into a more coherent whole.

The partner university has four liaison posts and every programme has an academic liaison post which supports staff forming an identity, meeting the University programme team, and helps with discussions of progression. The partner university has also provided significant support through its Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). The CETL played a significant role in promoting and supporting scholarly activity and research. Initially there was a lack of recognition of the value of these activities by senior managers but by working more closely with senior management teams it prompted a shift in attitude and increased support. The CETL acted as a catalyst and gave staff time to engage in research and scholarly activity but it was not strategic or operationally driven. Subsequent to the demise of the CETL, the Head of HE has recently established funds to support scholarly activity including time, equipment and conference attendance.

The College has a definition and policy on scholarly activity. This is used to support a more strategic investment in, for example, postgraduate qualifications where the College wants to grow a subject or develop sufficient staff resource, particularly where they are developing level 6 provision which involves supervision of research. The Head of HE thought that scholarship was not as important as professional practice for Foundation Degrees which he characterised as applied vocationally-based qualifications, but level 6 courses require research and academic practice. Topics which are supported are likely to relate to key performance areas such as teaching enhancement, and retention. Further support for investment in scholarly activity comes from *Chapter B3: Learning and teaching* of the Quality Code which states that teaching must be informed by scholarship.

When discussing what differentiates HE from FE, a significant aspect related to the university validation process. Staff who had been through the validation process were more likely than those working on HND provision to see the range of issues that related to HE (but were not an issue for FE). Some examples included different types of assessment, not reading drafts, formal hand in dates and deadlines, particularly compared with BTEC practice. In particular the Head of HE expressed the view that HE cannot be taught from a textbook, with the exception of some skilled trades, and that HE learning needs to revolve around research practices.

Staff development in the College has changed over the years. Early on it focused on staff briefings on IQER, the Academic Infrastructure, and the rules of HE. Following IQER it has moved to sharing good practice within the College and now it is beginning to focus on how to share with and learn from other institutions. The Head of HE organises briefings to staff three times a year. For the future they would like to support early career staff in publishing, mentoring and encouraging internal dissemination of scholarly activities. They would value a means of developing a similar collaborative community which could support colleagues in presenting their work in various different forums - local, regional and national. They have sponsored a science conference recently where students and staff presented their work to current students, applicants, and employers.

One significant example of change concerns lesson observation. Originally the system had been the same as FE. Around 2009 HE staff began to complain about the fact that they were

being observed by staff with little experience, and pedagogic qualifications, in HE. In 2010 a new system was developed which involved a discussion beforehand (developed from an HEA project), talking to students, and criteria mapped to IQER and linked into the UKPSF. It was also agreed that the peer observer had to be from a cognate discipline. It had been difficult to persuade the senior management team that it should be *peer* observation rather than 'top down'. These observations do not form part of their Ofsted grading profile; HE staff are graded but this is not reported as part of that profile.

Zeta College

No of HE students (FTE)	750
No of FE students (FTE)	5,050
Length of time HE has been delivered	6 years
Number of directly funded programmes	10
Number of indirectly funded programmes	22
Subject areas offered	Animal and Equine, Computing, Business, Care, Contemporary Art and Professional Studies, Counselling, Early Years, Education, Film and Media, Graphic Design, Inclusive Practice, Music, Musical Theatre, Performing Arts, Photography in Practice, Public and Environmental Health, Sports, Uniformed Services, Tourism
No of validating/collaborative partners	2
Dedicated HE centre	Yes

Zeta College is a medium-sized FE college. In the last six years it has expanded its HE numbers from 300 FTE students, studying on 10 Foundation Degrees and one honours degree to 750 FTE on 21 Foundation Degrees and nine honours degrees.
It has an HE centre which houses a creative arts programmes and a whole floor of the main site devoted to the other HE programmes. The Head of HE measures the quality of the provision by the fact that the College has 50 per cent internal progression: in such a competitive market students would not progress if they did not think the HE provision was of a high quality.

Six years ago there was an HE management team comprising staff across the College. Now there are two key committees, one operational and one quality and standards. They have a governor with a specific remit for HE and within the last two years the Head of HE has become a member of the corporate management team. He works closely with faculty heads over timetabling and staffing and in structural terms is more senior than faculty heads. Originally the Head of HE was seconded to the post in addition to his existing role as Head of Faculty. Six years ago the Head of HE had one secretary and two curriculum managers; now he has a deputy director, a curriculum manager, an assistant director (quality), an academic registrar, a HE student officer, a finance officer, an admissions officer, and a graduate intern student engagement officer. This also includes a bespoke HE librarian, who runs a mandatory programme about referencing, plagiarism, searching for material, and making use of library. While staff used to teach both FE and HE six years ago, now they have a substantial number of staff who teach only HE and they now recruit staff with higher degrees and experience of teaching at HE level.

The College has a written policy and procedure for scholarship which is mandatory for all HE staff. There is remission for this which depends on the volume of HE work being undertaken. A member of the HE directorate manages the staff activity. Its development was stimulated by the publication of HEFCE's good practice guidance. The IQER demonstrated that students were aware of the scholarly activity that staff were engaged in, including higher study, which impressed the reviewers. Currently staff are registered on PhD and master's programmes, are involved in work placements, and are shadowing University staff. While it is relatively easy to administer for staff who teach only HE it has been more difficult for staff

teaching both FE and HE. This has now been improved by scholarly activity being planned from the start of the year. The key focus for scholarly activity has always been the impact on the student experience. Future developments include a protected pool of money which staff can bid into for specific projects, and the newly appointed assistant director has already put in bids for research funds.

In speaking to teaching staff the main differences identified between teaching HE and FE were the ways questioning is used; the development of higher level skills of thinking and analysis; not spoon feeding the students and placing more emphasis on their personal development; and nurturing students' confidence to become more independent and able to sustain an argument. FE was identified as being more about set things that the students have to cover; HE was about higher level skills and autonomy. In terms of questioning, the aim was to get an informed response, not just an opinion, supported by data or academic theory. Thus, whereas FE is looking for specific terminology, HE is looking for reasoning and argument and how to draw conclusions. From their experience the biggest culture shock for progressing students was getting used to fixed deadlines for submission of assessments. However, the HE programmes have taken some of the best student support mechanisms from FE and used them in HE.

In terms of support for staff the teachers said that over the years these mechanisms had improved. With more staff teaching just HE, an HE community between staff across departments had developed. Initially staff development concerned getting to know University systems and procedures, but now there is more emphasis on exploring ways to improve teaching and learning. A key change has been the shift to long thin modules aimed at improving improve deeper learning. One of the teachers was currently doing a master's in education and would welcome further support to present research papers leading to publication. The other teacher valued working with colleagues from other subject areas and felt that more staff should undertake a teaching qualification in order to have a wider range of ideas and techniques to draw on in their teaching. She would value having a larger teaching space so as to be able to bring different courses together for specific activities to develop dynamic debates and help students to feel part of a larger HE culture. Her own scholarly activity had mainly focused on establishing more links with industry, branding and marketing the course. She would like to undertake a master's and possibly a research project on new technologies. On a broader level she would like to develop an incubation centre for the College's graduates.

Currently, the College is actively preparing for the new Higher Education Review by auditing and evaluating against each chapter of the Quality Code. They welcome the development of a quality review process that covers all of HE irrespective of location as they feel that they can now hold their own with universities. A key priority for the future will be to invest in activities over and above teaching and learning in order to make the College distinctive. They would welcome further support from QAA to include consultancy to help the College improve particular procedures and they would like to get more involved in subject networks such as those developed through the HEA's Learning and Teaching Support Network.

Discussion of the case studies

For us, one of the most striking features of the case studies was the variation in perception and experience of partnership relationships with universities. In two cases the partnership was considered strong, born of long established links, with active involvement of the university in the life and the development of the college. At the other extreme two of the colleges spoke positively of their aspiration to validate and quality assure their own programmes, which they felt better equipped to undertake.

On the basis of this, one is left wondering whether there is any sound case for promoting a particular model of partnership, or whether it would be wiser to recognise the value in allowing a range of partnership arrangements to grow organically within local contexts, and simply see this as one dimension of an increasingly marketised HE environment. That said, the new HER process should be in a good position to test the robustness of the quality of those local arrangements.

In the past one might argue that IQER focused more on what a college was providing, whereas collaborative provision Institutional Audit focused more on what a university was providing.

The case studies also provided some evidence that there is no clear picture of a typical HE in FE teacher. Whereas, increasingly it would appear, some teachers were being taken on exclusively to undertake HE work, the norm is for teachers to be undertaking some combination of HE work alongside FE work, but with no set pattern. Indeed, in follow up questions, it was clear that for each individual their teaching ratio might change from year to year, and even from term to term. But it was also clear that this was seen, generally, as a good thing; for example, as a way to help nurture the transition from FE to HE, particularly for those students who have been referred to as 'first generation' HE students (Thomas and Quinn, 2007). There is evidence here that FECs view this straddling of HE and FE as a strategy for widening educational opportunities.

This context also provided some evidence that there is a distinct hybrid pedagogy in CHE, which recognises the value of the nurturing of learner support which typifies many FECs, combined with a desire to see this as a springboard to encouraging more autonomous forms of learning. The teachers we spoke to were quick to vocalise this dimension to their work. It was also noticeable to us that the teachers saw themselves very much as HE in FE teachers, that is, not FE teachers, but also not strictly HE teachers, but something clearly distinct, and they valued this in their work. In follow up discussions one teacher spoke eloquently about the pride she felt in occupying that space between the worlds of FE and HE.

Some of the HE managers were also able to articulate a clear vision for the development of their HE provision, and the desire not to try to mimic traditional university provision. The HE in FE on offer was not only tied to a desire to work with 'hard to reach' local students, but also to offer HE which was tied explicitly to local employer needs, and raising the employability of those students in that local context. That said, some of the managers spoke of their desire to see some of their FE students transfer to universities around the UK, but equally to take pride in the fact that they were also able to offer higher education to students who were not in a position to make that sort of move.

We also found evidence in the case studies of a unified articulation, between managers and teachers, that scholarship and research should be developed and nurtured within an avowed HE in FE context. With no belittling of the value of the types of original research undertaken by university academics, we saw a clear pattern of engagement in scholarly activities

needing to recognise the 'provider context'. And within that context the need to recognise the value of any scholarly activity in strengthening links with employers, and its ability to enhance the curriculum offer to students, including the enhancement of learning and teaching.

We found strong empirical evidence here that the scholarship of learning and teaching is valued more highly than the scholarship of discovery (to use Boyer's (1990) terms), not necessarily generally, but certainly within the specific provider context.

In terms of support for scholarly activity we found strong evidence in the case studies of emerging cultures, for example, the formation of research clusters, seminars and internal conferences, where colleagues were encouraged to share the results of their activities. We also found evidence of an increased awareness by senior managers of the importance of these cultures, and how the IQER process had been an important lever in that respect. Some teachers spoke of the need to protect the space to develop these cultures, but equally they were keen to speak of the opportunities rather than the constraints, recognising the predominantly FE context in which they were working, and importantly the specific HE in FE context.

What was very clear to us was a general recognition of the need to move away from the reliance on an Ofsted driven observation of teaching regime. To some extent this might be read as a call to move away from a system of grading, reflecting perhaps a wider disquiet in FE generally that the process is too rooted in validating competence to teach (O'Leary, 2013). But more importantly in a CHE context, it provided evidence to us of a desire to see the process as one more of *peer* review, and providing a context to encourage peers to experiment pedagogically, rather than simply provide a judgement of how learning was being managed. Put this way we saw clear evidence of a desire to see peer review itself as a scholarly activity.

Conclusion

In this discussion of some of the key points to have emerged from the case studies we were able to discern a number of threads running throughout the three sections of this report. In the final section we spell out those threads, and in the light of those we identify a number of recommendations.

Section four - Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion

From our case studies we found evidence to confirm that CHE is creating a unique context for HE. Although the provision overall is wide-ranging, its *emphasis* on vocational programmes which meet the needs of local and regional employers, which attract under-represented groups of students, and which support and challenge those students, is something to celebrate. These FECs were justly proud of their achievements, confirming to us that supporting these endeavours does not require a benchmark comparison with high status universities in the UK.

A key argument from section one was that we should concentrate more attention on identifying the core and substantive characteristics of HE (what makes HE higher), rather than focusing on some of the more formal and outward markers of HE (for example, HE centres and degree ceremonies, important as they might be) and support colleges in enhancing those characteristics. And our case studies were able to highlight some of the distinctive ways in which colleges are developing these forms of HEness, for example, encouraging students to work independently, but within a supportive learning environment. In some cases local students were being encouraged to progress to universities, sometimes at a distance from their homes, but this was matched by a strong desire to provide local students, particularly those with no family background in HE (first generation HE students), with a safe, nurturing environment in which to develop forms of independent learning, and subsequently apply, with confidence, to locally based employers.

However, the colleges' pride in their achievements was tinged with some uncertainty and reservation. It is only within the last few years that a system designed specifically for the CHE context has been developed and implemented (IQER). But the system was developed against a background of criticism and poor results when being judged by traditional university standards. Nevertheless IQER does seem to have contributed significantly to the rise in self-confidence such that the HE managers in our case studies were viewing the introduction of a single quality review system positively and with an eagerness to be judged against the same criteria as any institution delivering HE in whatever context.

The focus throughout this report has been on HE in FECs, and in that context we must acknowledge how aspects of the wider FE culture may have influenced the development of its HE provision. As we outlined in section one, that wider culture has been depicted as one overly concerned with forms of managerialism and compliance. And in our own previous work we also have acknowledged how this culture can work against developing an effective HE ethos (but also how these elements are clearly at work in universities). But we were encouraged in compiling the case studies by how much the HE in FE teachers were highlighting some of the more positive aspects of that wider FE culture, while at the same time working constructively on adapting some of the more unhelpful aspects; for example, by insisting that forms of scholarship should enhance the learning of their students, should directly serve outside stakeholders, and thereby demonstrably enhance the status and reputation of their college, we saw evidence that these forms of accountability do not have to be experienced as constraints on academic freedom.

Also, although the Ofsted-driven regimes of teaching observations were often seen as unhelpful in the context of HE in FE, we saw clear evidence of a desire to adapt existing systems rather than just rally against them. In that context we also saw clear evidence that HE in FE teachers wanted to be allowed to experiment more pedagogically, and see teaching observations as part of a *peer* review and enhancement process, rather than strictly an assurance process. Some colleges in our case studies also spoke positively of

their (perhaps sometimes fleeting) engagements with the HEA. And given the evidence that the UKPSF was designed more as a collegial tool for HE teachers to monitor their own CPD, rather than a managerial tool to measure fitness to practice, there is clearly a case here to encourage CHE teachers to engage more with that framework. Indeed in the current post-Lingfield (2012) space that FECs now occupy, there is an opportunity for CHE managers and teachers to begin the process of developing their own ITE/CPD frameworks benchmarked against the UKPSF, rather than the old LLUK framework, which - because they were employees of FECs - had been a requirement for most CHE teachers to engage with.

From the HE managers we saw evidence that the IQER process had helped enormously in giving them confidence to articulate clearly to their senior management teams the need to develop systems and procedures more attuned to an HE ethos, which was different from those used in the FE part of the college.

They also talked about the impact of IQER after the reviews and how college senior management teams had realised the different approach to leadership and operations expected when enhancing this provision. Several HE managers talked about the ways in which HE staff development had changed over the years. At the start it had focused mainly on briefings about such topics as the Academic Infrastructure, regulations, and being avowedly compliant. But after IQER it moved more towards sharing good practice, and a growing confidence in providing a rationale as to why their provision was developing in particular ways.

As we demonstrated in section one, there has been a long running debate in academic literature about scholarly activity in CHE, particularly concerning the difficulties in developing cultures of scholarship and research. We have echoed some of the concerns in our own previous work, but we were encouraged by our review of IQER reports in section two and in the evidence presented in our case studies in section three of how CHE is actively developing its own distinctive scholarly ethos despite these concerns. Once again, that ethos appears to reflect the mission of FECs to serve local students and local employers, resulting in an ethos which respects the need to demonstrate how scholarly activity will enhance the learning of the students within the college in which the scholarly activity is taking place, and to enhance the knowledge-exchange process with local employers.

In compiling the case studies we were particularly struck by the accord with which both teachers and managers spoke on the subject of scholarly activity, both recognising in equal measure the constraints and opportunities presented by the CHE context. And we also saw evidence of a growing confidence in not wishing to emulate the type of research being undertaken by many university academics, but to stay more focused on producing scholarly outputs which will have more immediate and local impacts. Indeed, while recognising the merits of a REF requirement that scholarly activity relating to learning and teaching should have impact beyond the immediate institution in which it was pursued, we could see how this might need to be placed second to a CHE measure of impact *within* the institution in which the scholarly activity took place. However, in the absence of a wider network of dissemination of scholarly activities within CHE, and a corresponding mirror of wider peer review found in the university sector, it is easy to see how this might be viewed in equal measure as both a weakness and a strength. Clearly, this area is in need of further investigation.

One of the dilemmas that faced HE managers in supporting staff scholarly activity was the issue of conference attendance. All managers had funds to support attendance where a member of staff was presenting a paper at a conference. However, some of the teachers talked about the value of a member of staff attending a conference to hear university staff present papers and subsequently realise that they could do that. This was considered a

good way for CHE staff to gain confidence in their own abilities but was difficult to justify when their own internal guidance only supported staff who were presenting a paper. Most of the case study colleges had both internal conferences where staff presented their work to peers and in some cases presented at university events. But all felt that there needed to be a greater variety of opportunities for external presentation of staff scholarly activity.

The dilemma in the previous paragraph also has much deeper implications and was highlighted by a comment made by one HE manager on why colleges are always being asked for definitions of scholarly activity while universities are not. One answer surely lies in the fact that the wider process of peer review found in universities means that most academics are quickly socialised into understanding what counts and what doesn't in terms of scholarly activity, and the pecking order concerning the status of various outputs within the relevant discipline. Also, that this, largely, happens beyond the walls of any individual institution, in which case an institution-based definition is not likely to be a productive exercise. Another answer surely lies in the fact that as some FECs begin actively seeking degree awarding status, this will require documented evidence of scholarly activity, often among staff who will not be used to documenting such activities, and who might therefore benefit from having a checklist of appropriate activities. On the latter we saw evidence that HE in FE staff are becoming much more confident about laying claim to a variety of scholarly activity, and on the former that it is perhaps too early to judge the merits of colleges developing their own scholarly ethos strictly within the confines of their own walls, or whether wider forms of CHE-based peer review would be more beneficial in the long run.

One thing which was strikingly clear and has been raised on many occasions in the past is the usefulness of the work of Boyer in the context of CHE. For, not only did he clearly articulate the dimensions to four distinct types of scholarship - of discovery, of integration, of application, and of teaching and learning - but he also raised questions about the status of those, and of the unhelpfulness of a strict division of labour being applied to them. Originally developed as a critique of the American university system many authors have recognised the value of this critique in promoting a distinct approach to scholarly activity in CHE in the UK. And we saw evidence in the IQER reviews and the case studies of colleges working with these wider notions of scholarships, albeit without explicit reference to the work of Boyer in many cases.

Based on the well-grounded assumption that CHE in the UK is unlikely to make significant headway on developing a distinct 'scholarship of discovery' in the foreseeable future, and that the scholarships of application and of teaching and learning already have something of a foothold particularly in some colleges, it is worth dwelling for a moment on the scholarship of integration, and particularly on forms of scholarship which relate to the development of the curriculum. For, not only are many CHE teachers ideally suited to integrate knowledge and understanding from commerce and industry into the curriculum, but they are also well-placed to design curricula which are driven more by the learning needs of students, than strictly by its knowledge content. And while recognising the value of HE students being taught by people who are research-active, it is not at all clear that those people will be best suited to order research knowledge into a coherent and stimulating curriculum for students. And here our case studies provided us with evidence that CHE teachers are highly motivated by these dimensions of their professional practice.

On the basis that these dimensions to professional practice will be able to grow into distinct forms of scholarly activity there are grounds for optimism in seeing CHE teachers taking a more active role in developing HE curricula, be that in partnership with universities, or autonomously should their colleges be successful in seeking FDAP or TDAP. In our previous work we cautioned about such growth when there was a danger that forms of vocationalism might privilege the development of skills above the *higher* need to engage students with the contestability of knowledge claims. And while remaining cautious in our optimism we saw

some evidence of CHE teachers being well equipped to grapple with these epistemological dimensions to higher learning. Indeed, one might argue that academic drift has traditionally been just as much an issue as vocational drift throughout higher education (Griffioen and de Jong, 2012). For example, in the UK we saw this in the debates which ensued when the polytechnics revalidated their degree programmes after exiting the Council for National Academic Awards system in the wake of the reforms of 1992 (which dismantled the so-called binary-divide) (DfE, 1992). It is difficult to objectively judge the evidence of drift in either direction, in part because much of that evidence has been coloured by some of the more entrenched attitudes to the wider question of academic vs vocational education (Scott, 2012). These debates continue and were recently reinvigorated by the recommendation that FECs offering advanced vocational learning should be allowed to apply for the title of 'polytechnic' (IPPR, 2013).

Finally, we found no strong evidence of a preferred model for the validation and quality assurance of HE programmes in CHE. It is well known that some colleges have strong and productive links with universities and wish to continue to work in partnership, and that others have had very mixed fortunes, often switching between universities and having several different partnerships at the same time for different programmes. And some have come to the conclusion that not only would they be better off validating their own awards but they also consider their own quality assurance procedures to be more effective and robust than their university partners'. Although there is evidence here that existing arrangements are just as likely to have been forged by reactions to local experience rather than by a considered rational assessment of the situation, it may also reflect a wider and deeper appreciation of the diverse nature of CHE. For example, those colleges who wish to respond quickly to local employer needs may well find that a particular form of partnership will be more effective, whereas others may feel that membership of a wide consortium of FECs (possibly with one validating university, or in the future, a college with FDAP/TDAP) may provide distinct benefits in terms of curriculum development.

And in an increasingly marketised HE environment it is perhaps unwise to be even suggesting that a generic cost-benefit analysis on models of partnership would reveal anything useful to any particular FEC.

Recommendations

To finish, we offer the following tentative recommendations for possible follow up work on some of the issues that have been raised throughout this report:

1   CHE response to HER in comparison with their experience of IQER
Generally speaking, from our evidence, the college experience of the IQER process was positive, particularly in enabling colleges to have confidence in identifying their HE offer to students as distinct from their FE offer. Generally speaking again, colleges were also positive about the new HER process. However, particularly with the prospect of the CHE market growing, there is a case for investigating any variability in the experience of this diverse range of colleges in response to the HER process.

2   Tensions between collaboration and competition in the new regulatory environment
Given the variety in validation and partnership models throughout CHE, and the prospect of colleges being able to renegotiate their relationships with universities - which in some cases may result in the termination of a partnership - there may be a need to monitor whether this will always be able to best meet the needs of students. For example, in some areas of the country colleges may find themselves actively competing with local universities for students, while in other areas there may be more collaborative and complementary arrangements.

3   Colleges with small numbers
Although there are some colleges with student numbers which are similar to some universities (in particular subject areas, rather than overall), there are many more colleges with fewer than 100 FTE students, and who may not wish to expand much beyond that. There is a case here for investigating their experience of developing cultures of HEness and of scholarship, and the ways in which they are able to respond to developing the appropriate infrastructure and quality assurance procedures, particularly if the CHE market in general expands.

4   Academic and vocational drift
Whereas some concerns have been expressed about the handling of the knowledge component in some of the more overtly vocational sub-degree programmes (Young, 2007), there is also a need to ensure that programmes don't respond in ways which might undermine the distinctive scholarly ethos we found on some of the HE programmes in FECs, particularly in the links which were being nurtured with local employers. There is a case for investigating some of the causes and consequences of both academic and vocational drift in CHE.

5   Measures of impact for scholarly activity
It is unlikely in the foreseeable future that colleges will make much headway in competing with universities on the production of original research. Indeed, from the evidence in this report, colleges may not wish to even contemplate that, preferring instead to engage in a wide range of scholarship more suited to their context. That said, there is a case for investigating whether those forms of scholarship may benefit from a wider discussion about the merits of forming appropriate impact measures.

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Appendix

Headline interview questions
(used for the compilation of the case studies in section three)

HE manager

1   Could you describe your college context for HE (or provide one)?
2   How would you characterise the HE culture and its environment at your college?
3   How would you characterise your partnerships (past and present) with any HEI(s)?
4   What sorts of staff development events do you put on?
5   What strengths and weaknesses came out of your last QAA review (IQER)?
6   How do you define scholarly activity (personally and/or as a college)?
7   What activities/resources/ materials would you find useful in enhancing your
     HE ethos?
8   Do you have any documents, which might be useful to us in compiling a case study
     of HE in FE, centred on your college experience?

HE teacher

1   How would you characterise the HE culture and its environment at your college?
2   How would you characterise your partnerships (past and present) with any HEI(s)?
3   What sorts of staff development events have you attended (and found useful)?
4   What was your experience of the last QAA review/IQER?
5   What do you understand by scholarly activity, and what opportunities and barriers
     have presented themselves to you in developing a scholarly profile for yourself?
6   What would you say characterises the HE in FE teaching and learning environment
     at your college?
7   If you teach FE as well as HE in FE, are there any noticeable differences for you?
8   What sorts of things do you think might enhance the HE culture at your college?

HEI representative (when relevant)

1   Could you describe the context of your FE partnership(s) (or provide a description)?
2   How would you characterise the HE culture and its environment at this particular
     college, and do you think it varies noticeably from college to college?
3   What sorts of staff development events do you put on for your partner(s)?
4   What strengths and weaknesses came out of their latest QAA review/IQER, which
     you think you could act on as the HEI partner?
5   Do you define scholarly activity for your partners, and do you have that definition?
6   What development activities do you think would be most useful to the FEC to
     develop their HE culture?
7   As the HE partner what do you think are the key benefits of having such a
     partnership with this particular college?
8   Do you have any documents, which might be useful to us in compiling a case study
     on the nature of an HE/FE partnership?