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Report

Additional student places and funds 2001-02

Outcome of bids

Additional student places and funds 2001-02: Outcome of bids

To	Heads of all higher education institutions and further education sector colleges funded by the HEFCE
Of interest to those responsible for	Strategic planning, funding, access, quality assurance, curriculum development
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Executive summary

Purpose

1. This document announces the outcome of bids for additional student places and funds for 2001-02.

Key points

2. Each year we allocate additional funded student places in response to competitive bids. The framework for allocating these extra places is designed to enable institutions to respond to changes in student demand, to employment and regional needs, and to national priorities, as well as giving students the opportunity to study at the institution of their choice.
3. Within that framework, we invited bids that would support a number of key objectives, including widening access, rewarding high quality learning and teaching, improving employability, and providing vocationally oriented programmes below degree level. We particularly encouraged collaborative bids. This year, for the first time, we invited bids for foundation degrees and to support Graduate Apprenticeships (GAs).
4. We invited bids from all higher education institutions (HEIs) and further education sector colleges (FECs) that we fund directly. We received 205 bids, of which 136 were from HEIs and 69 from FECs. They sought a total of 38,276 additional places: 18,239 at degree level and above, and 20,037 at foundation and sub-degree level. Of the total, 18,128 were for

full-time and 20,148 for part-time places. All student numbers in this report are expressed as headcounts unless otherwise stated.

5. We have allocated for 2001-02 a total of 16,767 new places in the competition: 7,162 at degree level and above and 9,605 at foundation and sub-degree level. Full-time places were 6,253 of the total, and the remaining 10,514 were for part-time programmes. In addition, we expect growth of 5,360 full-time and 3,738 part-time places that are phased allocations from previous competitions. In total, the allocations for 2001-02 will increase higher education provision by 11,613 full-time and 14,252 part-time places. A further 4,731 full-time and 3,542 part-time places allocated in the 2001-02 competition have been phased into future years.

6. Annex A gives details of the allocations to institutions for 2001-02.

Action required

7. No action is required: this report is for information.

Criteria and procedure

8. We established the overall framework for allocating additional funded student places in October 1997, following consultation with institutions. This was to enable institutions to:

- respond strategically to changes in student demand and to changes in their environment
- respond to regional needs and develop innovative approaches to delivering higher education (HE)
- respond to national priorities of expanding vocationally oriented provision below degree level and widening access to HE
- give students the opportunity to undertake high quality study at institutions of their choice.

9. Each year, within the framework, we set particular objectives for the competition for additional places. For 2001-02 we invited bids, in HEFCE 00/39, that would support the key objectives of:

- making places available to all those capable of benefiting from higher education
- supporting expansion of high quality learning and teaching
- improving employability
- increasing the focus on vocationally oriented programmes below degree level
- widening access to HE for full-time and part-time study
- providing higher education through FECs (or partnerships with FECs) to serve communities and students without access to HEIs.

10. For 2001-2, we invited institutions to bid for sub-degree, degree and postgraduate places and, for the first time, for the delivery of foundation degrees and places to support GAs.

11. Institutions were previously invited to submit proposals to develop prototype foundation degrees in the foundation degree prospectus (HEFCE 00/27). As stated in that prospectus, good quality bids which nevertheless were not successful in attracting funding could be transferred, at the request of the bidding institutions, to the competition for additional student numbers (ASNs). In addition, institutions were able to bid for foundation degrees direct to the ASN competition. Details of allocations to develop prototype foundation degrees were announced on 28 November 2000.

12. We set generic criteria that each bid had to address. In addition, bids had to address one or more specific priorities concerning high quality or widening access. The criteria and priorities are described in Annex B. All foundation degree bids had to address the core

features and criteria described in the foundation degree prospectus. These are summarised in Annex C.

13. We specified that we would allocate all places according to the relative merits of the bids, based on how well they addressed the relevant criteria and priorities. We especially encouraged collaborative bids to support regional developments and to widen access.

14. Where institutions had received additional places for 2000-01, we took into account their success in recruiting to those places when we considered bids for 2001-02. This was by means of a monitoring exercise in September and the data in the statistics surveys¹ returned by institutions in November and December 2000.

15. As in previous years, an advisory group assessed the bids. The group included members who had previously assessed the prototype foundation degrees, to ensure consistency in the marking of all foundation degree bids. The group also included an observer from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) to advise on quality and other issues in FECs. Annex D shows the membership of the group.

16. The advisory group also received commentaries on each bidding institution from the HEFCE's regional consultants. Where relevant, these included information on the regional priorities for widening participation and promoting economic development, and on regional and sub-regional skills shortages, as identified in the economic development strategies and skills priorities of the Regional Development Agencies. The commentaries also provided data on relevant existing national, regional and sub-regional provision by subject area, and at all levels and modes of study, and on institutions' partnership arrangements where relevant. For bids from HEIs, the commentaries included information from the Higher Education Statistics Agency First Destination Survey, and performance indicators for non-continuation rates and for participation from under-represented neighbourhoods. For bids from FECs, they included information on in-year retention rates. Additional information was provided to the group from external bodies, including the Quality Assurance Agency, Edexcel and the FEFC.

The competition

Additional places available

17. The Government's plans for growth in HE assume an additional 30,000 FTE students in 2001-02. Institutions will be able to achieve this growth through the additional places that we have already made available for 2001-02 and through the new allocations made in the 2001-02 competition.

18. In December 2000 institutions' data returns showed that overall recruitment had increased compared with the previous year, but also that a significant number of institutions had not been able to deliver the additional numbers allocated to them. We have given these institutions another opportunity to recruit the additional students in 2001-02. In addition, last year we phased some allocations over two years. As a result, the additional places already

¹ Higher Education Students Early Statistics Survey 2000-01 (HESES2000) and Higher Education in Further Education: Students Survey 2000-01 (HEIFES2000).

committed for 2001-02 are 9,573 FTEs from the places unfilled from the 2000-01 ASN and University for Industry (Ufi) competitions, and 10,167 FTEs from planned phasing into 2001-02, prototype foundation degrees, and other additional places. This makes a total of 19,740 FTE places. Thus for institutions to achieve the Government's target for growth we needed to allocate just over 10,000 FTE places in the 2001-02 ASN competition.

19. For the 2001-02 competition we received 136 bids from HEIs and 69 bids from FECs. The bids sought 38,276 places at a total cost to the HEFCE of £82 million. The places sought were distributed as shown in Table 1.

20. These figures include 522 places to support GAs.

Table 1 Additional student numbers sought 2001-02

	Below degree	Foundation degree	Degree	Postgraduate	Total headcount	Total FTEs
Full-time	4,484	2,055	10,435	1,154	18,128	18,128
Part-time	9,187	4,311	4,078	2,572	20,148	8,704
Total	13,671	6,366	14,513	3,726	38,276	26,832

Subject mix

21. A chart showing the subjects for which institutions sought growth is at Annex E. Overall, there was a good distribution of numbers across science and humanities subjects. The most popular subject area was business and administrative studies. Education (other than initial teacher training), engineering and technology, and librarianship and information science were the next in popularity. Together these areas accounted for 48 per cent of the numbers sought. The advisory group decided that they did not need to introduce any subject weightings to the allocations to reflect a distribution different from that shown across the bids.

Assessment and selection of bids for 2001-02

22. The advisory group adopted the same assessment process as last year, assessing bids on the extent to which they met the requirements described in Annex B or Annex C, as relevant.

23. Bids for foundation degrees originally made in response to HEFCE 00/27 had already been assessed by the foundation degree assessment panel. Bids for foundation degrees that were made directly to the ASN competition were assessed by advisory group members who had also been members of the foundation degree assessment panel.

24. All bids were scored on how well they met both generic and specific priorities, using a matrix as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Matrix for scoring bids

		Scores on specific priorities		
		80% and higher	60 - 79%	Below 60%
Scores on generic criteria	80% and higher	1a	1b	1c
	60 - 79%	2a	2b	2c
	Below 60%	3a	3b	3c

25. To ensure that only bids of high quality were supported, the advisory group decided in principle to recommend additional places only for bids whose scores placed them within matrix boxes 1a, 1b, 2a or 2b.

26. The funding and numbers available meant that we could support only around 40 per cent of the places sought. The advisory group therefore had to make a further selection from those bids that in principle were of sufficient merit, using the following rules and algorithms:

- a. The group excluded bids from institutions that had received an allocation of additional places in 2000-01 but where the overall growth of full-time and part-time students fell short by more than 20 per cent of the expected growth.
- b. Bids scoring 1a were awarded all the places sought.
- c. Bids scoring 1b or 2a were awarded 75 per cent of places sought.
- d. Bids for sub-degree, degree or postgraduate places which scored 2b were awarded 50 per cent of places sought, where they demonstrated a good fit with the institution's academic strategy.
- e. Foundation degree bids scoring 2b were considered individually, taking into account their fit with the institutions' planned developments, the number of places sought and evidence about quality, to ensure that any allocation would be sufficient to deliver new provision.
- f. Where there were weaker elements within an otherwise strong bid, the group decided to limit allocations to the areas of strength.
- g. The group decided that allocations should not exceed 5 per cent of an institution's total existing FTE students in any one year.
- h. The group decided not to award allocations of fewer than 10 places.

27. In summary, the resulting allocation of additional student places is shown in Table 2. This does not include allocations that have been phased to come on stream in 2002-03 or 2003-04.

Table 2 Additional student numbers allocated 2001-02

Mode	Below degree	Foundation degree	Degree	Postgraduate	Total headcount	Total FTE
Full-time	1,379	461	3,943	470	6,253	6,185
Part-time	6,446	1,319	1,329	1,420	10,514	4,600
Total	7,825	1,780	5,272	1,890	16,767	10,785

28. Of the total new places allocated, 15,581 were awarded to 110 bids from HEIs, and 1,186 were awarded to 37 bids from FECs. The places allocated to HEIs include those that they intend to franchise to FECs. Allocations for foundation degrees, which were in addition to the prototype foundation degrees previously announced, were made to 21 institutions.

29. This year, for the first time, we invited institutions to tell us if they wanted their additional provision to be phased, and to state whether the phasing should be over two or three years. Where they requested phasing, the additional allocations for 2002-03 and beyond will be conditional upon institutions recruiting successfully in 2001-02 and achieving the overall growth in places that we have funded.

30. Together with the places that were phased from previous years, the allocations for 2001-02 will enable HE provision overall to increase by 11,613 full-time and 14,252 part-time places, a total of 25,865 FTEs. In addition, 10,000 places are available for allocation by the University for Industry, and a further 8,273 places have been phased to come on stream in 2002-03 or 2003-04.

31. We wrote to institutions on 14 February to offer them provisional allocations. Annex A gives details of the final allocations of funded places that institutions have accepted for 2001-02.

Review of the competition for 2001-02

32. Fewer bids were received this year than last (205 compared with 314) which may reflect a more realistic view taken by institutions about the recruitment they are likely to achieve. However, the advisory group thought that the bids were generally of a higher quality than in previous years.

33. The outcome of the 2001-02 competition was generally very well received by institutions. A number of requests for changes to price groups and to phasing were made where the allocations were lower than the numbers sought. Some institutions requested allocations to be deferred for new provision, in particular for foundation degrees, where the amount of work involved in establishing programmes was likely to jeopardise recruitment in 2001-02. Wherever feasible, we agreed to these requests. In addition, we considered individually the representations made by 12 institutions about the outcome of their bids.

Scoring

34. The advisory group marked bids against each criterion and against each specific priority addressed. The group did not weight the scores between the criteria and priorities, but agreed, in selecting bids to support, that it would consider in principle only those bids which scored at least 60 per cent of the available marks for both the generic criteria and specific priorities. In practice, the overall scores of most successful bids were substantially higher.

Generic criteria

35. The advisory group was pleased to find that the bids generally fitted very well with institutions' strategies for development, and supported the priorities stated in their corporate plans. Most of them also showed how they would contribute to strategies for HE, either nationally or regionally. Some 44 per cent of the bids scored 87.5 per cent or more of the available marks under the strategy for HE criterion, whereas only around 25 per cent of the bids scored similarly high marks under the criteria for employability, quality and student demand. Bids were less strong in providing evidence of student demand than in addressing the other criteria: only 22 per cent achieved very high scores, and 18 per cent did not address student demand satisfactorily.

Specific priorities

36. Institutions could select the specific priorities that they wished to address, and the assessment process ensured that there was no benefit from addressing two or more priorities rather than only one. Overall, 17 per cent of the allocations were for bids that addressed only the high quality priority, 48 per cent were for bids addressing one or more of the widening access priorities alone, and 35 per cent went to institutions that addressed both the high quality and widening access priorities.

37. Bids were most successful in addressing the priorities to widen access by increasing the range of HE options within a region, and by helping to meet skills shortages, where the evidence provided was generally clear and directly relevant to the bid. Bids that were based upon existing high quality in learning and teaching scored a lower proportion of very high marks than those that addressed any of the widening access priorities. This was because some institutions chose to seek places for a range of courses, not all of which were in areas of demonstrated high quality. Their bids would have been more persuasive had they focused on areas of strength.

Foundation degrees

38. The places allocated to 20 institutions for foundation degrees cover 35 different programmes and involve 57 partner colleges. Fifteen of the institutions intend to offer foundation degree programmes in 2001-02 and the remainder will start in 2002-03. Details of all the foundation degree programmes being supported in 2001-02, including those being developed as prototypes, are published in HEFCE 01/40.

Collaborative bids

39. The invitation to bid for places for 2001-02 encouraged collaborative proposals, particularly in terms of widening access. Forty-four of the bids that we received were collaborative and involved a total of 192 institutions. These ranged from partnerships between two or three institutions, typically in a franchising arrangement, to major consortia bids with a broader aim to improve regional provision, and in one case to develop specific provision nationally across 32 institutions.

40. The collaborative bids had only a marginally better success rate than the single bids (74 per cent of collaborative bids were successful, compared with 71 per cent of single bids). The advisory group thought that this was partly due to the difficulties of co-ordinating institutional strategies and of addressing the varying quality of provision by different partners. For the next ASN competition, the group will provide further guidance and examples of good practice to help institutions wishing to bid collaboratively.

Monitoring

41. Our aim is to ensure that additional places provided for 2001-02 and beyond secure the planned growth in places for students. We have set student number targets for institutions, which were included in the letters announcing their recurrent grant for the academic year 2001-02.

42. The allocation of funds for teaching is informed by the data we collect annually from institutions. We will continue to audit these data selectively in this and future funding exercises. The student places and funds allocated to successful bids will be subject to the conditions of grant set down in the funding agreement between the Council and each institution.