

# Seminar report on progression agreements and accords

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Lifelong Learning Networks  
National Practitioner Forum

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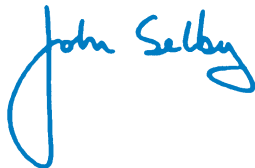
# Foreword

The papers in this publication address some of the issues that Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs) face when establishing network-wide progression agreements. They provide a glimpse of the complexities as well as the progress being made.

We start with some context for progression agreement development and the emerging approaches, as perceived by HEFCE. Then four LLNs set out their experience and reflect on the problems they have had to confront.

The papers began life as presentations to a lively workshop on progression agreements convened by the LLN National Forum in October 2007. They are published here as a way of continuing and informing the dialogue that has been under way for some time in LLNs about the best way to secure progression.

We are grateful to the authors for finding time from their busy lives actually delivering LLN objectives to contribute further to the debate.



## **John Selby**

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# Lifelong Learning Networks and agreements on progression – an introduction by HEFCE

**Kevin Whitston and Jennifer Allen, HEFCE**

Here we look at the context in which progression agreements have developed, and provide some reflections on the emerging approaches described in the papers presented by the four LLNs.

## Background

LLNs were established following the joint HEFCE and Learning and Skills Council Circular Letter in June 2004 (HEFCE 12/2004). It invited colleges and higher education (HE) institutions to work together to bring about ‘a step-change in vocational progression’. LLNs are set in a context where roughly half of those qualified at Level 3 in vocational programmes enter higher education, compared with almost 90 per cent of those on academic programmes. Progression for apprentices and adult learners on professional programmes is particularly problematic, with many learners facing an array of options more aptly described as ‘crazy-paving’ than a coherent pathway.

The key objective for LLNs was therefore to bring greater clarity, coherence and certainty to progression opportunities for learners on vocational programmes, and to do so in the context of a commitment to lifelong learning so that learners ‘can move between different kinds of vocational and academic programmes as their interests, needs and abilities develop’ (HEFCE 12/2004).

For this reason progression agreements based on shared understanding and judgement of staff in different kinds of institution emerged as a key area of work for LLNs. It is also arguably the most difficult area of work. Agreement at too high a level does little to influence decisions on the ground, while on the other hand agreements that are highly specific are difficult to apply more generally. Institutions compete as well as collaborate; the differences in their curriculum and entry requirements reflect this and will continue to do so. Some established vocational qualifications such as BTEC are easier for some institutions to accommodate than others.

When the HEFCE and Learning and Skills Council invited colleagues in further and higher education to work with us to improve opportunities for progression and to establish LLNs there was no ‘blueprint’ for what a LLN should look like. We aimed to develop LLNs as ‘demonstrators’ or ‘pilots’ that would build on local strengths, and which, across the country, would test different approaches to progression. Each LLN was developed in discussions involving staff at the partner institutions and at the funding councils. As the number of proposals grew, and the experience of establishing the first LLNs was absorbed, certain ‘core characteristics’ emerged more strongly. Although the LLNs went about their task in quite different ways all were concerned with

- establishing agreements among partners to guarantee progression (progression agreements)

- making changes to the curriculum to facilitate progression, including changes that had the support of employers and Sector Skills Councils to enable workplace learners to progress
- providing information, advice and guidance (IAG) to support learners to ensure that they can re-engage with learning over a lifetime.

The earliest LLNs were established in 2005. There are now 30 of them involving 120 HE institutions and over 300 further education (FE) colleges, providing close-to national coverage. Full details of LLNs – including an interim evaluation – can be found on the HEFCE web-site ([www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/lln](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/lln)).

### Developing progression agreements

LLNs were developed through an iterative process, strongly led by institutions themselves. In some respects, the process for the development of progression agreement policy and practice was very similar. As Sarah Hardman notes, Sussex Learning Network was one of the earliest LLNs and its original proposal, while centrally concerned with progression and a credit framework to secure it, ‘made no mention of progression agreements as such’. The first HEFCE LLN Update (January 2005) only encouraged LLNs ‘to consider the commitments partners will need to make to guarantee progression for vocational learners. For example, networks may seek to put in place arrangements for a ‘progression accord’, based on agreement for credit accumulation and transfer.’

However, the same update noted that almost all proposals under discussion at that stage ‘refer to some mechanism to facilitate progression’. One proposed ‘a progression accord with partners offering guaranteed progression to any award offered across the network that the learner is adequately prepared for and can benefit from’, but few were as explicit as this. More common was a commitment to a ‘progression and credit framework’ with a commitment to ‘exploration of a more comprehensive framework for credit to support progression between routes and institutions, probably mediated through disciplinary or skills networks’. Some proposals were rather weak or uncertain about this aspect, expressing a broad aim to review and articulate existing arrangements.

Discussions involving HEFCE regional teams, colleagues in FE and HE institutions, and policy teams at the funding councils continued to debate and clarify ideas around agreements on progression. The HEFCE June 2005 update drew attention to a report on credit from the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) which discussed the experience of working on credit transfer between community colleges and universities in North America.<sup>1</sup> HEPI described the development of a network of agreements – the cumulative result of a series of bilateral discussions – in California and British Columbia, and how these agreements, often programme-to-programme, were putting flesh on the bones of credit transfer. The update argued that ‘the arrangement adopted for progression into and through higher education’ was at the heart of any LLN and that ‘progression accords or agreements that put learners on vocational programmes on the same footing as students on academic programmes are the way these objectives will be met’ (spring 2005).

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<sup>1</sup> Bahram Bekhradnia October 2004, ‘Higher Education Policy Institute, Credit Accumulation and Transfer, and the Bologna Process: an Overview’

At the end of the following year progression agreements were starting to emerge from LLNs, reflecting common themes but also some differences in approach. In the February 2007 LLN update we highlighted some of the different approaches:

- For *MOVE-East of England LLN* progression agreements are highly specific, programme-to-programme agreements specifying a number of places for those offering given vocational qualifications.
- Agreements in *Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance* are also highly specific but without guaranteeing places (although an interview might be offered); they start from a group of related BTEC qualifications in a given sector, eg Construction, and set out to compile a progression table, recording programmes that learners can access and the conditions for entry.
- In *Sussex Learning Network* there is an ‘overarching progression accord’ populated by a (growing) number of progression agreements, with each agreement focusing on a specific area of the curriculum. A given agreement on progression from a foundation degree to honours degree will, therefore, specify a range of vocational qualifications, and identify the programmes and institution where an interview or a place is guaranteed, including conditions of entry (eg entry level).
- *Western Vocational LLN* starts by mapping generic skills and curriculum content in a range of qualifications, particularly BTEC National Diplomas. Transferable skills and content are then aligned to specific HE qualifications and, where there is considered to be a close match, the progression opportunities identified. The agreements focus upon the commitment to guarantee parity of consideration alongside A levels.

### **Making progress with progression**

We asked the LLN National Forum progression agreement workshop and the authors of these papers (which arose out of this workshop) to address some of the questions that have been generated in discussion across the networks. These included:

- How do agreements add clarity, coherence, certainty? What can the learner expect from a progression agreement? What do agreements add to what it says in the prospectus? Would these learners have accessed HE programmes anyway?
- How will LLNs guarantee progression for vocational learners? What does that mean in practice? Some LLNs have guaranteed an interview; what does this mean? Isn’t this just another hurdle for learners to clear?
- Are agreements ‘network-wide’? Can we reduce the degree of variation and unpredictability across the network area, in the offer made to vocational learners?
- How do we manage complexity where there are a very large number of programmes, and many different institutions with different entry requirements?

The authors of the following papers in this collection comment on such questions and raise a number of their own, often looking ahead to a subsequent phase in the development of agreements and issues of sustainability.

## Some reflections on the different approaches

MOVE-East of England LLN makes a challenging distinction between ‘progression routes’ and ‘accords’ (or agreements).<sup>2</sup> It states that LLNs should publicise progression routes – the range of possibilities and opportunities open to learners – and maximise takeup through the provision of IAG. Accords are different: they are a ‘practical demonstration’ of progression. And in the MOVE model, accords involve an unambiguous commitment on the part of higher education providers. Additional student numbers (ASNs) are deployed to secure guaranteed places for the ‘under-represented categories of learners’ that MOVE has targeted. There are no automatic places for individuals: applicants still have to satisfy course requirements, but the provision of guaranteed places constitutes what MOVE describes as a ‘localised credit agreement’. There are ‘softer’ elements to the accords: recommendations relating to support for learners as opposed to ‘requirements’. These are undoubtedly important, but for MOVE the emphasis on ‘the hard contractual end’ of the process is the key to securing real and lasting change.

For Sussex Learning Network, progression cannot be guaranteed as such. It depends on too many factors and therefore the nature of any ‘guarantee’ will vary. It might be a guarantee of an interview; in some specific cases a guaranteed place, but this is not general. Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance ‘guarantees’ too, are confined to interviews, and guarantees are not discussed by Western Vocational LLN. On the other hand, what all the LLNs consciously set out to achieve is ‘parity’ for vocational learners. Not in the old phrase ‘parity of esteem’ but in a much more rigorous way to secure agreement on the value of learning and therefore the opportunities that ought to be available to vocational learners. For Western Vocational LLN this means ‘the emphasis has been upon developing a credible evidence base [about skills and knowledge] rather than a polemical, value-driven argument to put in front of admissions tutors’. When the progression agreement framework in the Western Vocational LLN is complete, ‘it should give a vocational learner a range of opportunities that becomes much more comparable to those available to A-level learners’.

Why offer an interview, or a guaranteed interview? Not another hurdle according to the Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance but ‘an advantage if it gave learners the opportunity to display the skills they had acquired’.

There are some striking differences in approach. Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance focuses on sector-based approaches in the first phase, seeking to create progression agreements covering an occupational area such as construction; the process at MOVE is more closely aligned to the distribution of ASNs in respect of specific programmes. At Western Vocational LLN the first phase of activity focused on 16-19 year-olds and the BTEC National Diploma (with NVQ-based agreements in health). But here the emphasis is on the value of vocational skills and knowledge in their own right. Curriculum mapping aims to identify where ‘skills and knowledge acquired within one discipline can be applied elsewhere and afford the learner a realistic chance of successful study’. Interestingly the point of departure for Sussex Learning Network has been those ‘pathways between courses

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<sup>2</sup> The term progression accord was first used by HEFCE in its December 2005 Update; most LLNs now refer to ‘progression agreements’

and institutions where progression was problematic for vocational learners, as well as where progression was happening, but it was dependent on individuals rather than being embedded into organisational structures'. Sussex Learning Network is rightly cautious about claiming success for the LLN when applicants enter HE via vocational routes (there are many influences at work), but its 'problem-solving' approach does offer unique opportunities to establish at least one measure of progress.

In spite of the developments of LLNs since 2005, progression agreements that apply LLN-wide seem a long way off. MOVE argues that its agreements can be used across the region and that the evolution of bilateral accords into multilateral accords is evidence of this. Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance has started with specific programmes in specific sectors; Western Vocational LLN acknowledges that network-wide coverage is imperative, but is negotiating step by step. Sussex Learning Network agreements consist of a number of bilateral agreements between individual institutions, relating to individual courses. 'The aim is for each progression pathway to draw in all local institutions offering provision in that subject area, thus ensuring the 'network-wide' reach and relevance of each agreement'.

Does it matter that progression agreements are not network-wide? Clearly not if bilateral agreements are the way to securing more general agreement; network-wide agreements may be too difficult to achieve in one step. On the other hand, bilateral agreements that are not more widely applicable can increase the complexity for learners, which presents a risk for LLNs to manage. We have placed a great deal of emphasis on network-wide agreements for two reasons. First, the offer that higher education makes to vocational learners will not have the same clarity or coherence as that made to A-level learners until there is a wider consensus about the value of their learning outcomes. Secondly, a network-wide agreement is one that involves *all* the institutions in the network: even if a particular agreement incorporates specific entry requirements in some participating institutions it broadens the field of opportunity. All the papers here emphasise the importance of *process*; in the end, it is suggested, this may be more important than 'agreements'. This is almost certainly true but, as the papers also acknowledge: the requirement for agreement brings people to the point, requires decisions, and decisions – if they can be made – mean change is more likely to follow.

The changes now being negotiated by LLNs are certainly complex and difficult to communicate to learners, as well as staff, in different sorts of institution. Computer technology can help, and initiatives of this sort can be seen on the web-sites of most LLNs.

### **What next?**

Progression agreements (like LLNs) are work in progress, and LLNs are already considering how to build on first steps. The detail of the agreements that the LLNs contributing to this publication have made can be reviewed on their web-sites. Their authors would probably acknowledge that such agreements are only the first step, and that much remains to be done. But the papers here show that the first steps have been taken, and that the work which is under way is both important and interesting. The purpose of publishing these papers is to inform the FE and HE sectors about this work, to encourage LLNs to reflect on their own progress, measure what they have done against others, and learn from others to improve practice.





# Developing and implementing progression agreements in the Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance



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## Context

Greater Manchester comprises ten boroughs and is a vibrant area in terms of economic development. Apart from London, the south of the sub-region has witnessed the highest growth in total Gross Value Added (GVA) output over the past five years within the UK (Economic Development Plan).

In common with many urban areas in the UK this is an area of some stark contrasts. The previously mentioned economic growth can be contrasted with the high levels of deprivation in the community with its close link to achievement and progression in educational terms. The LLN has two of the largest higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UK as members and yet the wards in which they sit have the lowest HE participation rates in the sub-region. Relatively poor levels of educational achievement exist throughout the area of operation for the LLN. The majority of wards in the sub-region have below-average proportions of residents with Level 4/5 qualifications, falling to below half the national average across large parts of the conurbation (Aimhigher Greater Manchester Statistical Report 2006).

The sub-region boasts one of the highest student populations in Europe with 110,000 students registered at local universities in 2004-5 (HESA 2006). Local FE colleges make a significant contribution to the student population with some 3,300 HE students. The number of learners on HE qualifications delivered in FE is currently dominated by Higher Nationals (55 per cent) with Foundation Degrees only amounting to 19 per cent in 2004/5 (HESA 2006).

58.4 per cent of the entrants to higher education in the ten boroughs of the sub-region are to local universities. Applicants from FE were disproportionately represented due to patterns of post-16 provision locally (UCAS2005/6 entrants to HE). The total percentage of students entering local HEIs in 2005/06 with a qualification other than A-level was 18.04 per cent.

## History

The Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance (GMSA) is a partnership of six HEIs, 22 FE colleges, a University Centre for HE, the largest provider of work-based learning (delivering 6000 Apprenticeship frameworks) in the sub-region, the local Work-Based Learner Provider Network plus several other stakeholder organisations. The GMSA was established in advance of the announcement from HEFCE to form Lifelong Learning Networks, in order to develop an alliance that would be beneficial to learners, provider institutions and other stakeholders

such as employers and employer networks. The early work demonstrated the strengths of collaborative efforts in specific activities such as the joint work to develop the curriculum for a number of new Foundation Degrees. Initial success was shown by a successful bid for ASNs for collaborative delivery of Foundation Degrees across the Alliance.

In February 2006 the GMSA secured £5.7 million from HEFCE to implement the Greater Manchester Lifelong Learning Network (LLN), specifically tasked with improving the progression rates into and through higher education of learners following vocational programmes.

## **Mission of the GMSA**

**To be a vibrant and effective alliance of universities, colleges and other stakeholders, promoting progression into higher education by adding value through working in partnership.**

As a membership organisation it generates income through membership fees, a unique feature of an LLN. Although the membership fees are not significant by comparison to the level of HEFCE funding, the payment of fees is tangible evidence of the partner institutions making a commitment to indicate their willingness to take part in the Network.

Funding has been allocated to allow a key member of staff in each partner institution to have time dedicated to promoting the aims of the LLN. The recruitment of these Institutional Champions, who act as the named contact in each partner institution, has resulted in a fully functioning, proactive Institutional Champions Network in the LLN.

Sector Development Groups (SDGs) have been established in eight priority sectors for the sub-region; these are made up of members of the partner institutions plus other key stakeholders such as Aimhigher and the appropriate Sector Skills Councils. This approach ensures the LLN's emerging activities are aligned with national development in the area. SDGs have been allocated funding to support their work and this funding additionally allows one partner to act as the institutional lead to chair and steer the group.

## **Concept**

In the development phase of the LLN, prior to full funding, a Progression Agreement Scheme was developed through a collaborative working group. Extensive consultation in late 2005 produced full partnership agreement to the Scheme which detailed the concept of supporting progression for vocational learners and intended implementation plans for progression agreements (PAs).

It was always intended that PAs would form the backbone of the strategy of the GMSA to support lifelong learning and widen participation through the development of flexible HE pathways that are relevant and suited to the needs of vocational learners.

GMSA PAs were identified as formal agreements between providers relating to articulation arrangements that will enable the learner to transfer seamlessly from one provider to another. Agreements would normally be between several providers of initial learning (feder programmes) and several receiver institutions who will provide additional HE learning. Each agreement will provide a range of articulation arrangements and will clearly spell out the

progression options available to learners at, and through, all HE levels within a specific growth sector. The GMSA PAs primarily adopted a sector-focused approach, underpinned by research into employer/learner demand and provision with the intention that each PA within a specific sector will be grouped into a PA suite for that sector.

## **Models**

The initial implementation of the Scheme followed the sectoral approach and work was undertaken to identify opportunities for PA development based around available market research data. Learning and Skills Council (LSC) data provided insights into the local level 3 provision and fruitful opportunities were identified from this. HESA data was purchased to provide some understanding of the local HE provision. In both cases this was supplemented by information from partner institutions.

The basic model for the PAs identified feeder qualifications with required grade profiles of achievement linking to identified HE programmes from HND to degree with a minimum of a guaranteed interview. In many cases this was something which was not normally provided by the HEIs concerned. It was clear that this could be an advantage if it gave learners the opportunity to display the skills they had acquired. However there is also a cautionary note here in that by adding a requirement for an interview this could be viewed as an additional hurdle for the vocational learner. Consequently the 'added value' of a guaranteed interview needs to clearly define the purpose of the interview.

As a result of this work, sector-wide agreements were delivered in two sectors in the first round. In Built Environment two level 3 feeder programmes at seven colleges were provided with up to 30 HE options at three HEIs. This applied to 250 potential learners. In ICT a potential of 500 learners on three different level 3 programmes at 12 colleges were provided with options into six HE programmes at four receiver institutions. Both suites of agreements were signed by the appropriate people in each institution involved.

## **Implementation**

The implementation of the PAs followed some work to carefully explain the concept to partners. A 'quick guide' to agreements was produced and distributed and this was supplemented with information on the website which included frequently asked questions. Presentations were delivered to all established partner groups to reinforce the written materials and arrive at a common understanding.

The initial work was achieved in the work of the Sector Development Groups by negotiation with the appropriate partner institutions. However, it was apparent that more was required to publicise the benefits of the agreements to a wider constituency. Consequently, over the summer period, learners on the relevant programmes were contacted by letter to inform them of the existence of the agreements along with Connexions and IAG staff. Joint work was undertaken with Aimhigher to promote the agreements via a website, 'Pathways2HE', that allowed learners to search for their college, input their grades and explore the possibilities available to them in the agreements. Discussions were also held with all admissions staff to ensure that enquiries instigated via the website were dealt with appropriately in the provider institutions.

This tool requires some further development but a workable model is now in operation and will form the basis for expansion in the future.

## Analysis and next steps

The first phase of work on PAs has been highly effective in terms of ‘proof of concept’ but has drawn attention to where further development is required.

Firstly, it has illustrated the practical problems of how to manage the process of achieving completed/signed agreements. Using the original model agreement required 12 separate agreements to be signed by the relevant institutions, as the process develops. This was clearly creating an unnecessarily complex system. Consequently the original document has been amended so that one agreement is used to include a range of feeder provision with associated conditions for acceptance and a range of receiver programmes with their associated ‘promise’ to the applicant. This can now be illustrated in a tabular form and requires only one signature per institution. In the longer term the issue of signatories is also open to consideration by the partnership, in terms of how far delegated responsibility for this can be evoked.

Secondly, the launch of the Pathways tool has shown that PAs should be regarded as process documents that are not signed and complete but are added to as time goes on. When other partners who had not been signatories to the original documents saw the agreements they wanted to be included, and were. The notion that new provision can be added also allows further negotiations to take place to extend the range of both feeder and provider provision. As such, PAs are never completed and simply form the place where the results of on-going discussions are recorded. It is also very important to ensure in any publicised material that the opportunities shown there for learners are not the only options for progression open to them. It must be made evident that they can always apply to a wide range of opportunities in addition to those included in any progression agreement.

Thirdly, although sector-wide PAs have opened up opportunities for many learners they are not network-wide, in its truest sense, and do not provide similar opportunities beyond the original sector of study for level 3 learners. The next phase of work will involve, in the first instance, mapping all available BTEC National qualifications across the sectors in the partnership to as wide a range of HE opportunities as possible. This will, once completed, allow network-wide PA development that gives a learner a range of opportunities that become much more comparable to what an A-level learner could progress to. This process will then be followed by a similar exercise to map Apprenticeship frameworks and then the new 14-19 Diploma lines to an extensive range of HE opportunities.

Fourthly, and perhaps more contentiously, the developments so far have begun to produce some interesting observations by partners. The most interesting is that it is not the PA itself that is the real value but the process that lies behind the development. This is in terms of the increased understanding and collaboration that occur to arrive at agreements between partners from HE and FE. In some cases it has been argued that actually the need for the production of a PA can inhibit the depth of collaboration and co-operation because it is driven by the need to produce the agreement. However, it is recognised that there is a value to a signed document as evidence of the institutional commitment behind the agreement. Furthermore the existence of a signed document takes the agreement beyond the point in time and can even be extended to incorporate a time period beyond the current life of the LLN.

# An introduction to the theory and practice of MOVE progression accords

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## Background

MOVE is a regional Lifelong Learning Network (LLN) covering the six counties of the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) region. The LLN includes all 11 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and 33 Further Education Colleges (FECs) in the region. The MOVE business plan was commissioned by the Association of Universities in the East of England (AUEE) and involved the Association of Colleges in the Eastern Region (ACER) and EEDA as partners from an early stage. This collaborative beginning ensured a level of commitment from the start and has been a major factor in enabling us to think and act regionally and to develop relatively quickly. In particular, the pre-existing practice of collaborative working has enabled MOVE to gain the senior level support of all HEIs and FECs in the region to provide the institutional ‘sign-up’ to enable MOVE to implement its model of progression accords.

## The MOVE approach

MOVE progression accords identify specific vocational progression routes from both further education and the workplace to and through higher education. This includes the provision of guaranteed places on higher education programmes of study and other agreed collaborative activities designed to support and prepare learners for progression to higher education.

MOVE progression accords are designed to promote vocational progression opportunities and to encourage the engagement of employers in supporting progression to higher level learning in collaboration with MOVE and its partner institutions in the region. In signing the accord, partners are also committing to implementing an agreed set of ‘required’ activities designed to ensure that the accords are seen as a supported, collaborative process between the practitioners and the learners involved. There is also a list of optional ‘recommended’ activities. Our approach is predicated on the belief that this shared professional learning will help to effect behavioural and culture changes that will underpin the continuing success and

sustainability of the accords. It follows, therefore, that we regard the practice supporting the accords as a key indicator of success and the focus for monitoring and evaluation.

MOVE progression accords are designed to promote and enhance progression opportunities for the MOVE 'learner constituency'. This includes the following categories of learner:

- those with vocational qualifications at further education level 3
- those qualifying via work-based learning routes
- 'return to study' learners (waged and unwaged) seeking entry into vocational programmes either directly or through Access to HE provision.

The initial strategic approach MOVE has taken in developing progression accords has been to use ASNs and development funds as drivers to change progression practice at programme level. This has included the provision of guaranteed places allocated for specifically identified categories of learners (as opposed to identified individuals) on specifically identified HE programmes. This approach was designed to result in a formalising of activities to support progression for the benefit of learners and with the effect of generating trust between 'senders' (e.g. FE tutors) and 'receivers' of learners (e.g. HE tutors) as the practice underpinning high level institution to institution agreements. We considered that institutional level agreements alone might not result in the programme level trust or the 'buy in' which would bring about positive and sustainable change in professional practice supporting progression.

The next phase in the evolution of progression accord practice within the network has resulted in the development of a further range of progression accord models including Consortium Accords, Work-based Learning Accords, Open Accords and most recently the Diploma Accord. These new models have been developed as a response to emerging needs and have maintained the specific and concrete nature of the programme to programme accords in the new areas of practice. In all cases there has been recognition of the added value of progression accords, whether they represent new partnerships or the consolidation of existing inter-institutional agreements, as with some Consortium Accords.

We made an early and important distinction between the identification of progression routes and the signing and implementation of progression accords. It is clearly an important function of LLNs to identify and publicise all available progression routes between vocational qualifications, particularly from level 3 – 4, and to encourage the development of new ones where gaps are identified. This was, and remains, a key function of our IAG theme. We have been asked at various points in the development of our approach to consider the concept of 'network wide' accords. In our view, every signed bi-lateral MOVE progression accord is, by definition, capable of being generalised or rolled out across our network and region. By making each signed progression accord public on the MOVE website and through other formal and informal network events and activities, we are signalling the fact that each one demonstrates the appropriateness and viability, and therefore the generalisability, of the specific progression in question. Furthermore, our practice has demonstrated the evolution of bi-lateral accords into multi-lateral accords which hold the potential to evolve further into

network-wide accords. It should, however, be noted that network-wide accords in the context of a fully regional LLN is a very different prospect than for an LLN with a smaller geographical area and fewer partner organisations. We took the view, therefore, that all valid progression routes identified through our mapping processes were, and are, potentially network-wide, as any appropriate provider partnership can deliver them in response to an identified demand should they so wish. However, a route is not an accord, the former offering a model for progression and the latter demonstrating practical application of it between two or more partners. Clarity in the use of these terms is essential within and between LLNs. The key mission of LLNs – “a step change in vocational progression” – will only be achieved if we take practical and pro-active steps to ensure that students are actually recruited to routes through formal accords. We expect any development of network-wide accords to be an organic process that is a practical consequence of the dissemination and sharing of good practice in sectors or curriculum areas where commonality of approach, ‘network-wide’, has particular merit.

### **Guaranteed places and fair access to higher education**

The concept of guaranteed places has led to much discussion within and between LLNs. However, in our view the concept is neither complex nor contentious. Guarantees in progression accords are subject to an agreed level of attainment that is equivalent to the normal entry requirement of the receiving HEI and/or programme. MOVE progression accords comply with the Schwartz principles for fair admissions to HE.

*“The [Schwartz] Steering Group recognises that...Compact schemes and other measures that confer an advantage in the admissions process may be adopted if they can be objectively justified and it can be demonstrated that the scheme is proportionate to its aim. Raising aspirations and improving access to HE for those from disadvantaged or under-represented groups is generally a legitimate aim.”*

Admission to Higher Education Review, Final Report, September 2004

Conferring “advantage in the admissions process” as above through a progression accord does not mean a lowering of academic standards. MOVE’s specified learner constituency in this context represents categories of under-represented groups in higher education. As a consequence, the provision of guaranteed places for these categories of learner (as opposed to specified individuals) is justified, fair and legitimate.

### **MOVE progression accords seek to achieve the following objectives:**

- to widen access to higher education by enhancing vocational progression opportunities between further and higher education and the workplace
- to increase the number of learners from under-represented groups within the MOVE learner constituency progressing to higher education within the East of England region
- to encourage and support staff networking between employers and further and higher education institutions to develop demand led opportunities for higher level learning and skills
- to collaborate in meeting the needs of individual prospective, current and previous learners in relation to personal and career development, as well as the workforce development needs of employers

- to provide a channel through which information, advice and guidance, including changes in entry requirements, may be made available to lecturers, employers, prospective learners and their advisers, mentors or managers
- to facilitate the establishment of a transparent procedure for the recognition of credit in the context of progression to higher education through vocational routes, including work-based learning and previous experiential learning
- to provide opportunities for employers and further and higher education institutions to share best practice and collaborate in the curriculum design, development and delivery of vocational and work-based higher level learning
- to facilitate the exchange and development of institutional and departmental policies related to higher education progression including admissions policies and access agreements
- to promote and support future developmental initiatives between educational institutions and/or employers
- to help serve the lifelong learning needs of the East of England region.

### **Key features of MOVE progression accords:**

- Progression accords provide guaranteed places on specified higher education programmes of study for a given number of learners who meet higher education entry requirements
- The places guaranteed are for categories of learners who constitute under represented groups in higher education, consistent with the MOVE learner constituency. MOVE progression accords do not guarantee places for identified individual learners
- They are formal, detailed agreements between ‘senders’ and ‘receivers’ of learners progressing into and through higher education
- Senders may be FECs, companies providing work-based learning, employers’ representative bodies, or other providers
- Receivers will normally be either HEIs or FECs offering higher education courses
- They require ‘sign up’ at both programme to programme level (by programme tutors) and by senior institutional/organisational managers
- By providing guaranteed progression places, progression accords constitute localised credit agreements between ‘senders’ and ‘receivers’ of learners
- Progression accords importantly identify the specific activities that will be provided to support learners to encourage higher level learning progression and prepare learners better for the higher-level learning experience.

### **Types of MOVE Progression Accord**

#### **1. Provider to Provider Progression Accords**

Provider to Provider Accords are designed to formalise progression routes between providers of further and higher education and may be between:

- A further education programme (e.g. BTEC National Diploma) and a higher education programme (e.g. Foundation Degree) delivered in the same FEC – Internal progression



- A further education programme and a higher education programme delivered at different FEC or HEI – External progression
- A higher education programme delivered at an FEC or HEI and a higher level higher education programme delivered at the same institution – Internal progression
- A higher education programme delivered at an FEC or HEI and a higher level higher education programme delivered at a different institution – External progression
- Another education or training provider and an FEC or HEI.

## 2. Work-based Learning Progression Accords

Recognising the workplace as an equivalent site of learning

People learn in the context of their working practice, applying knowledge and skills to new problems, reflecting on their practice and experience to develop their professional capabilities. This learning is as valuable as learning that takes place in formal educational settings such as school, college or university. MOVE Work-based Learning Progression Accords therefore recognise the workplace as an equivalent site of learning. They facilitate and encourage the accreditation of previous and current work-based learning towards the achievement of higher education credit and qualifications. For both employers and employees, accrediting work-based learning provides a means to capitalise human assets, providing a marketable means of describing the experience, knowledge, skills and abilities that individuals and businesses possess or are able to deploy. This accord includes a Statement of Learning and Progression that identifies the previous qualifications and/or experience required to guarantee progression to a specified higher level programme.

MOVE Work-based Learning Progression Accords constitute an agreement between an employer/employer representative body and a higher education provider to:

- facilitate the recognition and accreditation of work-based learning, formalising progression routes to higher-level learning
- establish specifically tailored work-based learning opportunities to meet the identified professional development needs of employers and employees to provide demand led progression opportunities.

Work-based Learning Accords may be between:

- An employer and a FEC delivering higher education or an HEI
- An employer representative group and a FEC delivering higher education or an HEI
- Trades Union/Association and a FEC delivering higher education or an HEI.

## 3. Open Progression Accords

In some instances a provider of a higher education programme of study may wish to guarantee places for categories of learner who are not progressing through a vocational further education route and are not in employment or may not be identifiable with any specific category of employer. For example, adult learners who have creditable prior experience that could be recognised as meeting the entry requirements of a specified higher education programme. Where this is the case, there may not be an identifiable 'sender' institution, organisation or

employer of such learners. In such circumstances MOVE Open Progression Accords can be formulated to communicate the fact that guaranteed places are available. Open Progression Accords can also describe the mechanisms through which accreditation of prior experience relevant to the entry criteria of the higher education programme and how they operate. Open Accords also include a Statement of Learning and Progression that identifies the previous qualifications and/or experience required to guarantee progression to a specified higher level programme. Open Progression Accords can also describe the range of activities and/or events that the higher education institution will provide to support and prepare learners for progression to higher education.

Open Accords may be between:

- A category of learner not progressing from a previous education programme and a FEC delivering higher education or an HEI
- A category of learner progressing from non-specific employment and a FEC delivering higher education or an HEI.

#### 4. Consortium and Partnership Progression Accords

These accords have evolved out of the practice of Provider to Provider Accords. Where a number of programme level accords have been operating in the context of an existing consortium (typically an HEI with partner colleges) common approaches to supporting progression have emerged. Where the benefits of operating progression accords have been perceived or demonstrated, a consortium template has been developed to guide practice in establishing specific programme level accords and to identify a wider range of progression opportunities (with guaranteed places for specified categories of learner) for learners.

Typically, these accords will identify a specific range of higher education programmes in relation to which guaranteed places will be allocated for learners who successfully complete specifically identified further education programmes delivered by a partner college. In addition, this model of accord is applicable to a wider range of more informal partnership arrangements potentially including employers and employer representative bodies.

#### 5. Diploma Progression Accords

This model of accord has evolved as a consequence of the development of the Consortium and Partnership Accords and as a result of MOVE's work in establishing HEI recognition of the 14-19 Diploma in the East of England. It is a model that can be applied to any Diploma subject area. The 'senders' are identified as a sub-regional consortium delivering the Diploma including all partner institutions and the 'receivers' are higher education provider institutions. The Diploma Accord includes a Statement of Learning and Progression that identifies the Diploma components that are required to guarantee progression to a specified higher level programme. Like all MOVE Accords it is the range of supportive activities agreed and provided by both Diploma Consortium partners and higher education provider that will facilitate successful progression. As a consequence of this engagement at programme level both Diploma and higher education provider staff will develop enhanced awareness of the Diploma qualification and its role in enhancing progression opportunities.

## **Reflections on current practice and future development**

The approach we have taken to the development and implementation of MOVE accords has so far proved to be very successful. We started in January 2006 with a commitment to place approximately 120 ASNs in new progression accords for September of that year. Partly in recognition of this compressed timescale and partly because the MOVE team (three people, at the time) all had recent experience of FE/HE progression models, we took an early decision to develop the initial progression accord model 'in house' and to field trial it in the first intake rather than to develop a theoretical model through a process of extended consultation. We presented our provider to provider model to key senior institutional staff in the context of discussions about ASN distribution and received positive feedback as to its potential effectiveness. We made this practice-based approach very clear to our partners, noting that we expected to develop and extend the model through collaborative activity, monitoring and feedback. We received wide support for this approach which is clearly the major reason we were able to get accords set up and formalised relatively quickly. We now have more than 170 progression accords in place and, as outlined above, the model has been developed and extended to suit the range of contexts that we expected to emerge from a practice-based approach. The model has therefore shown itself to be both effective and robust and the principles we proposed – particularly that of guaranteed places – have not been challenged. Partners have accepted that we are trying to achieve real, qualitative and quantitative change in vocational progression through progression accords and have responded very positively. We initially saw progression accords as being placed on a continuum with 'soft' or general approaches to the way progression was managed and supported at one end and 'hard' or specific quasi-contractual agreements at the other. The MOVE model set out to address both ends simultaneously and we continue to see this as essential. In the long term the behavioural and cultural changes to the way vocational progression is conceptualised and practised by the staff concerned is undoubtedly more important than the pieces of paper that formalise it. This view is widely shared, both among the LLNs with significant experience of implementing progression accords and by those at the early stages of development, irrespective of the approach they have taken. However, we believe our approach, in emphasising the hard contractual end at the beginning of the change process and simultaneously supporting the development of more focused and appropriate professional practice was, and remains, the best way of achieving success. In our view, to approach the development of progression accords from the 'soft', general end of the continuum, with the expectation that specific agreements will develop from this, is more difficult and, most importantly, probably less likely to achieve real and lasting change.

# Sussex Learning Network – progression agreements



**Sarah Hardman** is Deputy Director at the Sussex Learning Network, where her remit includes responsibility for progression.

## 1. The context

The Sussex Learning Network (SLN) was amongst the first Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs) to be funded by HEFCE. It became operational in September 2005. The SLN is made up of a partnership of four higher education institutions (HEIs), together with one mixed economy group (MEG) college, and six other further education (FE) colleges. The SLN is diverse in terms of the specialism, size and culture of each of its partner institutions; of the HEIs for example, one is vocationally driven, one research intensive, one is small with recently awarded university status, and one a nationally focused institution. The universities are not in direct competition with each other and have a history of collaborating on a number of joint initiatives. The network also draws in the five sixth form colleges in Sussex, as well as local training providers and employer groups.

The SLN works across seven curriculum areas, shaped by the economic priorities and workforce development needs identified for Sussex. Activities range from mapping the curriculum, through curriculum and staff development, to the development of information, advice and guidance (IAG) resources and progression agreements. In each of the seven curriculum areas, curriculum leads are employed to work across the range of activities, including the development of progression agreements.

Across all activities the involvement of staff, students and employers is key. This is enabled via the curriculum groups, the student network which includes a website designed and managed by vocational learners, and the website.

## 2. The concept

Progression is a core focus of LLNs, and the SLN business case identified progression and a credit framework as an area of activity, although it made no mention of progression agreements as such.

The SLN has developed a progression accord to support vocational learners into and through higher education (HE). An essential element of the process and a key outcome is the closer working relationships developed between institutions, and between further and higher education, locally.

An existing progression accord, the Sussex Liaison and Progression Accord, operates between the three universities in Sussex, offering guaranteed consideration of applicants

from local schools and colleges that have signed up to the accord. In most cases this results in a standard conditional offer of a place. The SLN aimed to construct an accord that would be vocationally relevant, offering the same level of consideration to learners applying via less traditional routes, who might be coming from the workplace, perhaps looking to study part-time, and who might hold qualifications other than those cited in the local university and college prospectuses.

In particular, the SLN wanted to focus on pathways between courses and institutions where progression was problematic for vocational learners, as well as those where progression was happening, but was dependent on individuals rather than being embedded into organisational structures. The SLN also wanted to offer something additional to the existing progression accord, in terms of a focus on progression not only into, but also through higher education. In the medium term these two accords may well become one, particularly when the new 14-19 Diplomas become established.

### **3. The models**

#### **3.1 Progression via specific routes**

The model adopted by the SLN takes the form of an overarching document, the Sussex Vocational Progression Accord (SVPA), signed by 26 partners, including all the providers of further and higher education in Sussex. The SVPA signifies the commitment of signatories to working together to support the progression of vocational learners into and through higher education. It is a document with a three-year life span which extends to 2010 and well beyond the initial funding period of the SLN itself.

Beneath the overarching accord sit a number of subject specific progression agreements, one for each of seven areas of curriculum activity. These agreements are appendices to the accord. Each agreement focuses on a number of progression 'pathways' within the curriculum area, which have been identified either as problematic, or as not being embedded into organisational structures. In both cases, the premise is that a progression agreement, whereby the institutions concerned sign up to offering a guarantee relating to progression for certain groups of learners, would increase the opportunities and likelihood of these learners progressing.

Each of the subject-specific progression agreements, therefore, focusing on a range of progression pathways, consists of a number of bilateral agreements between individual institutions, and relating to individual courses. By November 2007, there were 183 of these bilateral agreements in existence, and more in development. In some cases these agreements are not between two HE or FE institutions, but, for example, between a local employer and a University.

The aim is for each progression pathway to draw in all local institutions offering provision in that subject area, thus ensuring the 'network-wide' reach and relevance of each agreement. Applicants will identify themselves as applying through the SVPA at the point of application, through a code that will be entered on applicants' UCAS forms, or on institutions' own application forms for direct applicants.

### 3.2 General improvements to aid progression

In addition to these very specific agreements, curriculum leads are also looking at the entrance requirements published by each of the providers locally, and will work with the management group set up to monitor the SVPA to improve the clarity and consistency of information provided to applicants whose qualifications or experience are not covered by the UCAS tariff. The aim here is to prevent a vocational applicant having to jump through an additional hoop; for example they may be asked to contact the institution to discuss their qualification, whereas an A-level student might be able to see from the institution's website or prospectus the grades they will require.

## 4. Taking the agreements forward and reflecting on emerging issues

### 4.1 The development process

The development of progression agreements in Sussex has surfaced a number of issues and challenges.

The mapping of the existing curriculum and identification of barriers to progression has, in a number of cases, highlighted gaps in provision which mean that progression in a linear sense may not currently be possible within Sussex. In the case of Community Practice, for example, one strand of work focuses on an area in which there is no consistently funded local provision at level 3 that would provide a vocational pathway into a foundation degree. This raises additional issues about the insecure nature of funding for level 3 provision in some areas, and the implications of this on levels of demand for higher education.

Leads in a number of curriculum areas have worked on the development of new provision, primarily at foundation degree level, to address identified gaps. In some cases it may be that demand is not sufficient locally to support the development of new provision, or that the most logical progression pathway for a learner takes them out of the SLN's area – particularly for those learners living on the borders of Sussex. In these cases a regional approach to progression would create a model that would make more sense to learners, and the SLN has been exploring opportunities for linkage with neighbouring LLNs to provide for this.

The development of progression agreements without the existence of sufficient additional student numbers (ASNs) to support an additional or enlarged intake creates problems in terms of capacity and potentially the inability to meet expectations. This is a particular issue in the case of progression from foundation degree to honours programmes. The SLN chose to use ASNs to sponsor new curriculum development or the extension of the existing provision, and this in turn has provided the basis for thinking about progression. Due in part to issues of timing, the SLN did not opt to attach ASNs to the development of progression agreements, which would have been one approach to addressing difficulties in terms of capacity.

A fundamental question for those developing progression agreements relates to the definition of 'guaranteed progression'. LLNs have discussed various interpretations of this, and the practicalities of implementing these. The SLN has taken the view that progression cannot be guaranteed, but will always be dependent on a range of factors, be they in

relation to successful completion of a work placement or course, a satisfactory reference, financial or other circumstances. The SLN progression agreements therefore offer guarantees relating to progression. These may be guarantees of an offer of a place (either conditional or unconditional), or of an interview. For learners satisfying the institution's requirements, a guaranteed offer guarantees the opportunity to progress.

Any issues of trust, competition and confidence that arose in the initial stages of development, particularly in terms of cross institutional working, were addressed on a subject-by-subject basis as each agreement was drawn up. The establishment of the SVPA Management Group (see below) with representation from all FE and HE partners, as the mechanism for sustaining the SLN's work on progression, has been useful in gaining the buy-in of individuals within the various partner institutions.

#### 4.2 Presenting progression to learners

A key challenge is the way in which agreements are translated to learners, so that the SLN is successful in achieving its aim of increasing opportunities. There is a risk with agreements that are not all-encompassing that learners may be unaware of the range of additional opportunities that do exist, but to which progression agreements are not attached. It is essential to ensure that learners' options are not inadvertently narrowed by the development of progression agreements that focus on specific pathways. This is something that the SLN will need to address via the materials that are produced, and effective signposting to other sources of information will be key. To address this, the SLN is developing a 'smart' online tool that allows the user to quickly narrow their search via a series of questions, so a learner will only be presented with the progression agreement that fits his or her interests and experience. The online tool will be promoted to learners via an extensive programme of presentations to schools, colleges, employer groups and advisory agencies, as well as on institutional websites and print materials, and internally via institutional intranets and newsletters.

The approach taken by the SLN means that each progression agreement is very different. There is no template being followed. In some curriculum areas there is a focus on certain levels (e.g. entry to HE; progression from foundation degree, etc); in others there is a focus on specific subjects within the curriculum area (e.g. land-based subjects within the Biosciences area). The diversity and specific nature of the agreements is a real strength, allowing the guarantees offered to be tailored appropriately and to make a real difference to learners. It is also a significant challenge, and again, clarity is essential in communicating this to learners and their advisers.

The emphasis on foundation degrees, and the focus on progression not only into but also through higher education, does create the potential for the devaluing of foundation degrees as a qualification in their own right. Alongside the promotion of opportunities for learners to 'top up' to honours level, it is important to make clear to learners and employers the value of the foundation degree as a stand-alone qualification, and the validity of stepping off the progression ladder at that point or indeed at the earlier certificate or diploma stage.

The clarity, consistency and accuracy of admissions criteria made available to learners and employers across the range of FE and HE partners remains a key issue to address.

Discrepancies in information produced by one institution, or by an institution and its partners, as well as a frequent lack of detail in relation to vocational qualifications, mean that in some cases progression may well be hindered. This might be due to the additional effort that a learner coming via a vocational pathway is required to put in to access the same level of information that a learner coming via a more ‘traditional’ academic pathway would find easily on the website, or in the prospectus. Equally, it might be that a learner coming via a vocational pathway is discouraged from applying, having formed the impression that the institution views them as different, and ‘non mainstream’. If the intention is to target ‘non traditional’ learners through this work, these issues must be addressed. Many of these learners are less likely to benefit from the support, and knowledge of the education system, available to those following the full-time academic route, to enable them to navigate unclear information at the enquiry stage, and will be the very learners likely to be discouraged by this situation. The fact that course staff may be sympathetic to non-traditional learners counts for little if the criteria for admission aren’t encouraging them to apply in the first instance.

#### 4.3 Making staff and intermediaries aware of progression

Just as the clear and consistent promotion of progression agreements to learners is essential, there will be an ongoing staff development need to ensure that staff within each of the institutions are able to implement the agreements effectively. This is particularly difficult with academic staff where responsibility for admissions often changes on an annual basis. Members of the SVPA management group (see below) will have a role to ensure that staff within their institution are equipped to implement the agreements effectively on an ongoing basis, and a series of staff development events will introduce staff to the agreements.

Promotion of the progression accords is supported by the work of the SLN Staff Development Officer who manages a team of IAG Officers, working to raise awareness of the web and paper-based IAG resources they have developed, as well as of progression agreements, through a programme of roadshows and presentations throughout the current academic year. The programme is aimed at colleagues in FE and HE, as well as intermediary agencies and employers.

#### 4.4 Mainstreaming progression

The sustainability of the progression agreements developed through the Sussex Learning Network is a real issue, and the failure to implement an effective mechanism to ensure this would have the potential to cause significant damage to the trust built up between the various institutions involved, particularly between FE and HE.

A management group with membership from FE and HE has been set up to oversee the implementation of the SVPA, and to ensure its sustainability. Members of the management group will also have an ongoing role to ensure effective implementation of the agreements within their institution.

The SLN is exploring the potential for mainstreaming the development of progression agreements, through extension of the model without the provision of additional resource.



The first example of this is in the areas of Engineering and Construction, where the SLN is working with academics within the relevant institutions locally to map and enhance progression opportunities.

#### 4.5 Tracking learners

The tracking of learners and gathering of evidence of the impact of the progression agreements present a real challenge, and one that is heightened by the tight timescales available within any short term funded initiative to produce evidence of impact.

The tracking of learners applying via the SVPA will be managed by a flagging system; applicants will self-identify at point of application, and institutions will flag SVPA learners on their internal student records systems. This will allow the progress of individual students to be tracked, and will enable a profile of SVPA learners to be developed via the data collected for the HESA return.

The impact of the wider work around entry requirements will be more complex to track. It would be impossible to determine whether an applicant coming via a vocational route has entered HE as a direct result of the SLN's work. However, the SLN is looking at ways of gauging the impact of this work via comparisons with previous years' data, with particular reference to the QVALENT2 (highest qualification on entry) and POSTCODE fields on the HESA return. The hope is that this will provide a useful indicator of % increase of applicants coming via vocational routes, and of successful applicants. This would only provide an indicator, however, as the SVPA is aimed at applicants who are either living, working or studying in Sussex, and so those working or studying, but not living, in Sussex, would not be identified via POSTCODE field tracking.

### 5. Concluding comments

In the next phase of development, the SLN will focus on the incorporation of a credit framework, and the accreditation of prior or experiential learning (APEL) gained through work. This will enable institutions to begin to look seriously at possibilities for learners and employers around building previous experience together with credit gained through continued professional development (CPD) into higher level qualifications. Joint working with the other LLNs in the South East has resulted in plans to extend the online model of progression agreements and the accompanying IAG across the region.

There are significant challenges to be faced in the development of progression agreements. However, the process has brought about a range of positive developments, many of which relate to closer and better working relationships between institutions. In particular, these improved relationships are between FE and HE, which, if capitalised on, offer the opportunity for significant improvements to delivery. In the longer term, these improvements will support learner progression without the need for the development of official progression agreements.

# WVLLN progression agreements, symposium October 2007



**Steve Dear** is Director of the WVLLN and is based at the University of Bath.

The purpose of this brief paper is to capture the key elements of the approach to vocational progression being developed by the Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network and to reflect upon key questions centred upon what more needs to be done, how may this be taken forward and what can be generalised from a growing body of experience developed across the Lifelong Learning Network Community? As such, this can only be a small contribution to the debate and purports to be nothing more than a sharing of our thinking which is subject to continuous review and development.

## 1. The context

The Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network (WVLLN) became fully operational in September 2006 after a six month set-up period. The network serves the northern half of the South West, the region having been divided to reflect not only its size, but also the demographic and industrial variations presented. In essence the network covers an arc embracing Bristol, Bath, Gloucestershire, and Swindon, reaching down to Salisbury in the South and across to Bridgewater in the West. The partnership includes all the higher education institutions (HEIs) in the region and, through these HEIs, the associated further education colleges. The partnership comprises:

- University of Bath
- Bath Spa University
- University of Bristol
- University of Gloucestershire
- The Open University (South West)
- University of the West of England
- Royal Agricultural College.

## 2. The approach and rationale

LLNs are charged with increasing progression opportunity for vocational learners and the focus of the original bid is upon structural and institutional responses such as progression agreements, progression ladders et al to create routes for the learner. An audit of existing arrangements revealed limited local provision which was predominantly informal and for

which there was inconclusive evidence of take-up. The review demonstrated that the area covered by the LLN is not characterised by highly specific relationships between level 3 providers and higher education (HE), upon which to build.

The creation of facilitative instruments is very positive, but a clear imperative was identified for network-wide agreements to shift away from an exclusive focus on vertical progression in order to promote lateral transferability and transition as a key driver for vocational take-up.

Learners following conventional A-level qualification routes are enabled towards a wide portfolio of HE study which may not have a direct correlation with the original subjects studied. Vocational learners, by contrast, tend to be channelled along their original specialisation and locked into that discipline area. Early enthusiasms, particularly those generated by the spread of vocationalism in schools at age fourteen, are often refined and refocused by the pursuit and completion of level 3 study. By failing to recognise the transferability of skills and subject expertise, we restrict potential progression options consequently inhibiting application to HE by vocational learners, contrary to the WVLLN strategy, which is to broaden the scope of real opportunity.

### Phase one

First year activity has focused broadly upon the 16-19 cohort whose currency for entry into HE is based predominantly upon qualifications. The objectives have been to value vocational skills and knowledge in their own right, not as A-level substitutes, but to emulate the clarity, common understandings and range of options afforded within the A-level picture. Extensive consultation and curriculum mapping has been undertaken to demonstrate that skills and knowledge acquired within one discipline can be applied elsewhere and afford the learner a realistic chance of successful study. The emphasis has been upon developing a credible evidence base rather than a polemical, value-driven argument to put in front of admissions tutors.

Progression agreements based around BTEC National Diploma (the most common free-standing vocational qualification) leading into the following LLN priority subject areas have been produced: Business, Creative Media, Engineering, Health and Social Care. Additionally NVQ-based agreements have been developed in Health and Social Care and in Early Years subject areas to reflect the preponderance of NVQ provision in these fields. The New Diplomas have been included where there is sufficient maturity of curriculum design to afford credible judgements. The WVLLN has also supported the Western Access Progression Agreement which specifically addresses progression from Access courses in the region. All agreements have been approved and supported by the WVLLN Management Board and all are expected to have completed institutional process and be 'signed off' by January 2008.

Initial feedback is very positive and the process of liaison, negotiation and mapping has clearly raised not only awareness, but a more comprehensive understanding of the strengths offered by vocational qualifications. In common with many LLNs, the process benefits are offering the most obvious initial gains however, the WVLLN is convinced that the commitment embodied in the signing of the agreements marks the step change in approach and gives a tangible point of reference independent of changing personnel.

## Phase two

A reading of Leitch and of the demographics confirms the critical importance of adults in the vocational labour market. All the strategic drivers determine that the skills development of the workforce depends upon facilitating and increasing significantly the progression of adults into HE level learning. The WVLLN believes that the concept of transferability and transition within and across occupational disciplines is as important for adults as for the 16 -19 cohort, potentially more so. Skills and knowledge development have commonly recognisable patterns in the workforce including the shift from operational to strategic, practical/operational to planning and design, alongside specialisation and depth of skill. However, working lives are extending while occupational stability and continuity is subject to increasing change, so that the progression/transition dynamic for adults is subject to a complex and relatively fluid set of pressures.

The transferability and portability of the skills and experience possessed by adults is forming the basis of the second phase of progression activity for the WVLLN. While the core focus in phase one was upon qualifications, the currency brought by adults centres much more upon experience. Consequently work is focusing upon common approaches to the accreditation of prior and experiential learning (APEL) to try and create easily recognisable and navigable structures and systems that are more accessible, efficient, transparent and supportable for both applicant and admissions tutor. Practical issues such as recency, authenticity and presentation of the learning gained through experience will be addressed to try and break away from the 'dumper truck' image of portfolio building, and the frequent cop-out that it is easier to repeat the whole course.

In essence the first stage is to attempt to make APEL a viable progression instrument for both parties in the transaction. The second stage will try and take a realistic approach to presenting clarity and a degree of coherence to partner institution requirements and the recognition of the transferability of experience.

### **3. What more needs to be done?**

In terms of the WVLLN, the response to this question may be addressed under two headings: the first focuses upon the practical, housekeeping and nurturing dimensions underpinning progression arrangements; the second seeks to make the potential opportunity created a reality.

#### **Housekeeping and maintenance**

The choice of language here seems to suggest a certain low priority, but that is far from the case. There is a requirement for a continued investment of time and energy to keep the agreements live at the institutional level. Ongoing support for admissions tutors and staff, as well as for staff in schools and colleges is essential. It is vital that we monitor the working of the agreements, make adjustments, implement clarifications, and acknowledge further dimensions to the inputs and outputs as experience of operation is gained.

The need for this ongoing work, which is best achieved through personal contact and intervention, is all the more acute because without it, there is an easy and familiar default position, that of the familiar A-level process, to which tutors can revert. Under the pressurised conditions of the applications season the relative unfamiliarity of vocational

qualifications and experience present an extra hurdle. The real embedding of the agreements demands an extended commitment to keep them at the forefront of the operational admissions agenda at both the 'sender' and the 'receiver' end.

### Support for the learner – making opportunity real

As has been implicitly acknowledged, the WVLLN view is that conventional institutional and cross-network facilitative mechanisms, while important, are unlikely to bring about significant change in isolation. Such arrangements are likely to assist those already considering progression and who, predominantly, are already within the ambit of the educational system. The question arises as to how we may engage a much wider community of vocational learners, especially adults and particularly a 'middle order' section of the working population, and their employers, who could benefit from higher level skills development, but who do not consider HE as being for them?

A cornerstone of our approach is to develop and test strategies to attract and engage adults. Typically they will have entered employment with level 2/3 (NVQ levels) qualifications and through experience and development be operating at a level where they are ready for higher level skills training through HE. An adult who has worked for ten to fifteen years is likely to have developed a spiky profile of skills embracing levels 2 and 3 and some level 4. Such adults and, crucially, their employers have a vested interest in the assumption of new responsibilities or the further development of particular attributes in their skills base.

The key issue is attracting the interest of such adults and developing their confidence and self perception so that they come to see themselves as potentially successful independent learners in HE. Logistics will compel most adult vocational learners to progress through part-time/flexible routes: the nature of such study requires that participants feel secure, and are adequately equipped and confident as independent learners in order to succeed. The barrier embodied in the perception that "HE is not for me", has to be challenged and broken down.

Providing guidance information, progression routes etc is a secondary stage. Once engaged, there are multiple sources of information advice and guidance to support further advancement which can be signposted. To replicate such information (a review in 2006 identified nearly 60 dedicated HE information websites in the South West alone) would be a waste of resources and bring additional confusion. If dynamic linkage is suitably structured, issues of updating and sustainability can be addressed.

Much time and effort is being put into getting input and insights from focus groups of potential learners, analysing the outcomes and translating these into potential prototype elements which can be trialled further. Elements which support reflection, decision making, sampling and taster units are all being explored in partnership with the Open University. It is time consuming, but it affords the opportunity to create a vehicle that subsumes a range of support and skills development embodied in an enabling curriculum, while shifting traditional bridging and transition strategies towards a more holistic approach to the learner. Crucially, the IT tool will be designed to support and carry preparation for the APEL process and publicise the opportunity created by the agreements.

#### **4. What is the way forward and what might be more widely generalised?**

These two questions have been merged deliberately because the responses to each are very much co-dependent. The combined efforts of HEFCE and of the LLN National Forum are already doing much to bring about the sharing of perspectives, experience and approaches. The diversity and range of the LLN base lends itself to co-testing and corroboration of strategies and to the potential to find a situation analogous to one's own. Careful review of the experience to date can at least alleviate the necessity to start from first base, and may allow an apparent blind alley to be re-navigated successfully.

A common recognition is that much of the work associated with vocational progression issues boils down to attitudinal change. The critical nature of the time frame has become a familiar mantra at meetings, but it is crucial to achieving long-term change. A related recognition, though perhaps just as obvious, is the growing awareness of the limitations of facilitative instruments such as agreements as an end in themselves. Without the wrap-around of long-term support, development, publicity and maintenance, their impact is lost. Some of the most recent aspects of vocational progression into and through HE are up against much entrenched practice: they can only benefit from a little TLC!

The WVLLN has explored transferability as an approach to progression which may be capable of wider application to either complement or extend specific inter-institutional arrangements. It is possible that agreements based around transferability may be able to survive local institutional change which can undermine very specific relationships and arrangements.

Overall perhaps, transferability contributes to the wider generalisation that it is essential to break out of deficit and compensatory models of action for vocational learners.

Recognition of the validity of vocational qualifications and experience in their own right is essential for their long-term acceptance and position in higher education. Progression agreements lie at the centre of a circle of concentric strategies which ultimately must penetrate and transform significant sections of the HE curriculum and pedagogy.

Genuinely integrated approaches are necessary to make vocational opportunity real, appropriate and relevant across the sector.

## Glossary and acronyms

**Access courses:** designed to prepare students who do not have standard entry qualifications for entry to higher education courses.

**Accreditation:** the approval of a higher education course by an authorised body.

**Aimhigher:** a national programme jointly funded by HEFCE and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills which aims to widen participation in higher education by raising the aspirations and developing the abilities of young people from under-represented communities.

**APEL:** Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning. Term used for the award of credit on the basis of demonstrated learning that has occurred at some time in the past.

**Apprenticeships:** allow people to learn on the job, while building up skills and gaining qualifications. Available at a variety of levels.

**ASNs:** additional student numbers.

**AUEE:** Association of Universities in the East of England.

**Connexions:** advice and guidance service for 13-19 year-olds in the UK.

**Consortium:** a general term for arrangements between two or more institutions (universities, higher education colleges or further education colleges) for joint activity.

**Diploma (14-19):** Offers 14-19 year-olds practical, hands-on experience as well as classroom learning, designed to help young people develop the knowledge and skills employers and universities want. Diplomas in five subject areas will be available in selected schools and colleges from September 2008.

**Edexcel:** a UK examining and awarding body.

**EEDA:** East of England Development Agency.

**FD:** Foundation Degree. Two-year HE qualification, one level below the Honours Degree.

**FTE:** full-time equivalent. A measure of student numbers.

**GVA:** gross value added.

**HESA:** Higher Education Statistics Agency.

**IAG:** Information, advice and guidance.

**Learner constituency:** the occupations and the vocational learners that will be the initial priority targets for the Lifelong Learning Network.

**Leitch Review of Skills:** an independent review of the UK's long-term skills needs done in 2006.

**Level 3:** the normal level of qualification required for entry to higher education.

**LLN:** Lifelong Learning Network.

**LLNAG:** Lifelong Learning Network Advisory Group. HEFCE internal group.

**LLN National Forum:** aims to enhance the profile of all LLNs, act as a network for sharing good practice, policy development and to encourage collaboration.

**MEG:** Mixed Economy Group of Colleges. The MEG is a group of FE colleges, across England, which offer higher education courses. They all have more than 500 HE students and account for about half of HE in FE colleges.

**NQF:** National Qualifications Framework. Sets out the levels against which a qualification can be recognised in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**Schwartz principles for fair admissions to HE:** the results of an independent review in 2004 by Professor Steven Schwartz, 'Fair Admissions To Higher Education: Recommendations For Good Practice'.

**SSC:** Sector Skills Council. Independent organisations led by employers that aim to help reduce skills gaps and shortages.

**Work-based learning:** learning delivered by a university, college or other training provider in the workplace, normally under the supervision of a person from the same company as well as a professional teacher from outside the company.

## Useful links

### HEFCE

- HEFCE LLN website: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/lln/progress/>

### LLN National Forum

- LLN National Forum website: <http://www.lifelonglearningnetworks.org.uk/>
- LLN National Forum progression agreement work strand:  
[http://www.lifelonglearningnetworks.org.uk/workstrand12/progression\\_agreementsaccords/](http://www.lifelonglearningnetworks.org.uk/workstrand12/progression_agreementsaccords/)

### LLNs involved in this publication

- MOVE – the lifelong learning network for the East of England:  
<http://www.move.ac.uk/>
- Sussex Learning Network: <http://www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk/>
- Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance: <http://www.gmsa.ac.uk/>
- Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network: <http://www.wvlln.ac.uk/>



# Progression Agreement

GMSA Progression Agreement Number:.....

**SUBJECT AREA:** .....

The information contained in this progression agreement will be made available to learners, providers and advisors through the Pathways to Higher Education website [www.pathways2he.co.uk](http://www.pathways2he.co.uk). The partners to this agreement wish to add clarity and transparency to progression routes for vocational learners, into higher education programmes. The partners involved want to encourage applications to higher education from as wide a range of applicants as possible. They expect this agreement to increase the numbers of applicants from these feeder courses making successful applications to the receiver programmes. The partners will monitor applications and admissions and review the agreement annually.

**This Progression Agreement is between:**

**Providing Institutions**

**and:**

**Receiving Institutions**

..... [Providing Institution 1]

..... [Receiving Institution 1]

..... [Providing Institution 2]

..... [Receiving Institution 2]

..... [Providing Institution n]

..... [Receiving Institution n]

Insert  
Institution  
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***This Progression Agreement is between:***

..... [*Providing Institution 1*] providing Learners on the  
..... [*Programme/Course/Award*]  
..... [*Programme/Course Leader Contact Details*]

..... [*Providing Institution 2*] providing Learners on the  
..... [*Programme/Course/Award*]  
..... [*Programme/Course Leader Contact Details*]

..... [*Providing Institution n*] providing Learners on the  
..... [*Programme/Course/Award*]  
..... [*Programme/Course Leader Contact Details*]

And:

..... [*Receiving Institution 1*] providing the  
..... [*Programme/Course/Award*]  
..... [*Programme/Course Leader Contact Details*]

..... [*Receiving Institution n*] providing the  
..... [*Programme/Course/Award*]  
..... [*Programme/Course Leader Contact Details*]

### Progression Table

The table below lists the programmes that students with (insert feeder qualifications) can access, the institutions offering these programmes, and any special conditions or requirements that have been set in respect of entry. It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive list. **The table identifies the principal progression opportunities that have been agreed across the network but the provision of appropriate information, advice and guidance will ensure that learners understand that there may be other options available to them.**

| HE Course | HE Provider | Feeder and Requirement | Conditions for entry | Offer |
|-----------|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------|
|           |             |                        |                      |       |
|           |             |                        |                      |       |
|           |             |                        |                      |       |
|           |             |                        |                      |       |
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|           |             |                        |                      |       |
|           |             |                        |                      |       |
|           |             |                        |                      |       |
|           |             |                        |                      |       |
|           |             |                        |                      |       |

This document will be updated on a regular basis as new programmes and institutions are added.

## **Principles of GMSA Progression Agreement**

GMSA partners recognise the value of the feeder qualifications identified in this agreement for progression to a range of programmes offered by higher education providers in the network. This is based upon agreement between staff at partner Greater Manchester institutions that there is a basis for successful progression and a good curriculum match between the feeder programmes and the higher education programmes identified in this agreement.

This agreement does not guarantee a place on a particular programme for any individual learner, GMSA progression agreements are not legally binding. In all cases the higher education provider will need to be satisfied that an individual applicant meets the programme's entry requirements, is suitably prepared and able to benefit from the programme. However, applicants successfully completing the feeder qualifications listed in this agreement at any of the partner institutions will be regarded as appropriately qualified and their application will be seriously considered by the higher education providers in the GMSA network.

## **Interviews**

Learners may be invited for an interview, where this is an additional benefit of the progression agreement it is indicated as such on the table. Arrangements for the interview will be communicated to the applicant in advance. **The purpose of offering the interview is.....(please specify)**

## **Further Learning (if applicable)**

In some cases discussions leading to this agreement identified a need for additional learning to supplement the existing qualifications held by the learner. In such cases the (specific feeder course) would require successful completion of (specify additional) available at ....., in order to progress to the specific higher education programme.

## **Applications**

Where applicants have been unsuccessful every effort will be made to offer alternatives at higher education providers across the Greater Manchester Lifelong Learning Network.

## **Termination of Agreement**

The Progression Agreement will be terminated if the course at the Providing or Receiving Institution is discontinued or redesigned and following discussions it is agreed an appropriate curriculum match no longer exists  
The agreement termination must be communicated to GMSA to enable records or promotional material to be amended.

**Signatories:**

Print Name: .....

Role: .....

Signed ..... Date.....

Duly authorised and signed on behalf of (*Name of Provider Institution*)

.....

Print Name: .....

Role: .....

Signed ..... Date.....

Duly authorised and signed on behalf of (*Name of Receiver Institution*)

.....

In partnership with the GMSA

Print Name: .....

Role: .....

Signed..... (*GMSA*) Date .....

Duly authorised and signed on behalf of the GMSA

[NOTE: Later signatories have been removed for brevity.]



## PROGRESSION ACCORD<sup>1</sup>

Between

**Certificate of Higher Education (Community Development), INSTITUTE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE**

and

**Community Development for Health, CAMBRIDGESHIRE PCT**

This Accord is between the *Certificate and Diploma of Higher Education (Community Development)* within the *Institute of Continuing Education of University of Cambridge* and *Community Development for Health* within the *Cambridgeshire PCT*. This Accord identifies specific vocational progression routes from Further Education (FE) to Higher Education (HE). This includes the provision of guaranteed HE places and other agreed collaborative activities designed to support progression between the identified programmes. The Accord aims to serve both institutions in their joint objective to promote vocational progression to HE and to encourage the development of progression opportunities in collaboration with MOVE, the Lifelong Learning Network for the East of England.

The Accord will commence on 1 September 2007 and will be collaboratively reviewed tri-annually by both parties.

### **The Accord seeks to achieve the following objectives:**

- to widen access to higher education by enhancing vocational progression opportunities within both Cambridgeshire PCT and University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education
- to increase the number of learners from under-represented groups within the MOVE learner constituency<sup>2</sup> progressing to higher education within the East of England region.
- to encourage and support staff networking between FE and HE institutions.
- to collaborate in meeting the needs of individual prospective, current and previous learners in relation to personal development and progression
- to provide a channel through which information, advice and guidance, including changes in entry requirements, may be made available to lecturers, prospective learners and their advisers
- to facilitate the establishment of a transparent procedure for the recognition of credit in the context of progression to higher education through vocational routes
- to share best practice and collaborate on curriculum design and development, particularly in relation to vocational programmes, where appropriate
- to exchange appropriate institutional and departmental policies including admissions policies
- to promote and support future developmental initiatives between the two institutions
- to help serve the lifelong learning needs of the East of England region

### The two Institutions agree the following:<sup>3</sup>

#### University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education will:

- guarantee a place for at least 10 learners on *Certificate and Diploma of Higher Education (Community Development)* who meet the programme's entry requirements and in the opinion of the Course Director are likely to benefit from the programme
- provide a positive and constructive interview or other admissions related experience for all *Cambridgeshire PCT* learners who in the opinion of the Course Director are likely to meet the entry requirements and benefit from the *Certificate and Diploma of Higher Education (Community Development)*
- ensure that a named member of *Certificate and Diploma of Higher Education (Community Development)* staff (the Academic Programme Manager)<sup>5</sup>, will work with the FE Recommending Tutor of *Community Development for Health*, to implement, monitor and evaluate the Progression Accord
- facilitate the registration of *Certificate and Diploma of Higher Education (Community Development)* learners with MOVE ePortfolio<sup>6</sup>
- play an active role in the relevant MOVE Employment Sector Progression Magnet as appropriate?

#### Recommended items

- recognise learners progressing from *Community Development for Health* as an under represented group in relation to University of Cambridge's OFFA Access Agreement<sup>8</sup> and identify any relevant bursaries and scholarships
- provide a range of information, advice and guidance services including programme team liaison and advice for learners and tutors<sup>9</sup>
- facilitate e-communication between existing undergraduate learners and FE learners through University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education virtual learning environment (VLE).
- provide feedback to the FE Course Directors on learner applications
- provide feedback to the FE Course Directors on the progression of FE learners whilst they are on the HE programme and on their subsequent first employment placement.
- share curriculum developments and, where appropriate, collaborate with specific reference to programme specific developments to enhance progression opportunities
- encourage and support staff exchanges and staff shadowing
- provide further opportunities for staff networking, the exchange of ideas, information and best practice
- publish the admission and progression arrangements on the University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education website
- publicise the relationship underpinning the Progression Accord as appropriate

#### Cambridgeshire PCT will:

##### Required items for MOVE Accord recognition

- recommend those FE learners from *Community Development for Health* that are likely to meet the *Certificate and Diploma of Higher Education (Community Development)* entry requirements and benefit from the programme of study

- ensure that a named member of *Community Development for Health* staff (the Course Director), will work with the HE Receiving Tutor of *Certificate and Diploma of Higher Education (Community Development)* to implement, monitor and evaluate the Progression Accord
- facilitate the registration of *Community Development for Health* learners with MOVE ePortfolio
- play an active role in the relevant MOVE Employment Sector Progression Magnet as appropriate

**Recommended items**

- provide references for learners that are detailed and comprehensive, ensuring updated references at the point of interview as appropriate
- alert the HE Receiving Tutor to the particular needs of individual FE learners, if appropriate
- provide feedback on the HE application process from the perspective of the Community Development for Health course and its learners
- keep the relevant Academic Programme Manager informed of relevant changes to the Community Development for Health with respect to progression
- share curriculum developments and, where appropriate, collaborate with specific reference to programme specific developments to enhance progression opportunities
- encourage and support staff exchanges and staff shadowing between FE and HE programmes
- provide further opportunities for staff networking, the exchange of ideas, information and best practice
- publish the admission and progression arrangements on the Cambridgeshire PCT website
- publicise the relationship underpinning the Progression Accord as appropriate

**Academic Programme Manager, Certificate and Diploma of Higher Education (Community Development) Institute of Continuing Education, University of Cambridge**

Name: Ms Lydia Romero

Signed



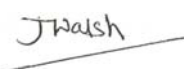
Role: Academic Programme Manager

Date: 24 May 2007

**Course Director, Community Development for Health, Cambridgeshire PCT**

Name: Ms Joan Walsh

Signed



Role: Nurse Specialist Community Development

Date : 2 May 2007

**Approved by University of Cambridge institute of Continuing Education Senior representative**

Name: Dr Susan Oosthuizen

Signed



Date : 24.5.2007

Role: Associate Director, Community Education & Outreach Division

**Approved by Cambridgeshire PCT Open College Network Centre Senior representative**

Name: Kate Parker

Signed

Date: 23/5/07

Role: Health Improvement Manager





## PROGRESSION ACCORD ANNUAL PROGRAMME GUIDE

*This guide is designed to provide indicative content with respect to good practice in relation to the implementation and development of MOVE Progression Accords. It is comprised of a range of indicative activities and events designed to support the progression of learners to higher education throughout the academic year. Institutions may well have their own annual plans, activities and events in place which may be appropriately substituted for the elements within this guide.*

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <p><b>July</b></p>             | <p>FE and HE Programme Managers/Tutors meet to confirm the annual plan and agree success criteria and number of learners to be offered a guaranteed place</p>   |
| <p><b>September</b></p>        | <p>FE Programme will be advised of professional, academic or other changes to the provision of HE programme.</p> <p>Where appropriate the HE <i>staff</i> and learners will contribute to the FE induction programme.</p> <p>The HE and FE programmes will exchange academic calendars.</p> <p>Relevant Cambridgeshire PCT <i>staff</i> inducted in relation to University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education's virtual learning environment (VLE) as appropriate</p> |
| <p><b>October</b></p>          | <p>FE tutors to conduct progression tutorials raising awareness of opportunities to progress to University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education HE programmes.</p> <p><i>Community Development for Health</i> learners inducted in relation to University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education's VLE as appropriate</p> <p>All <i>Community Development for Health</i> learners register on MOVE ePortfolio</p>   |
| <p><b>November onwards</b></p> | <p>Talks from University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education <i>staff</i> and learners to FE learners on information about the HE provision.</p> <p>Cambridgeshire PCT identifies prospective learners to receiving University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education.</p> <p>Cambridgeshire PCT tutors review MOVE ePortfolio entries</p>   |
| <p><b>December</b></p>         | <p>HE and FE Programme Managers/Tutors meet to assess progress to date.</p> <p>Learner numbers exchanged and potential interviewees identified.</p>   |

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <p><b>January-April</b></p> | <p>Discussion between <b>HE</b> and <b>FE</b> staff re individual learners as necessary</p> <p>Offer of University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education Study Skills development sessions to learners offered places, as appropriate.</p>  |
| <p><b>June-July</b></p>     | <p>"Keeping in touch" event delivered by University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education advising learners on specific preparation for Higher Education.</p> <p><b>FE</b> staff to be invited to update <b>HE</b> staff on <b>FE</b> developments.</p> <p><b>FE</b> Programme Managers/Tutors to advise <b>HE</b> Programme Manager of intended destinations of learners with particular reference to those offered a place.</p> <p><b>HE</b> and <b>FE</b> Programme Managers/Tutors meet to evaluate progress to date and write provisional annual report to inform next year's annual plan.</p> |
| <p><b>September</b></p>     | <p>Final Progression Accord Report to be completed by respective <b>FE</b> and <b>HE</b> programme managers once numbers of learners enrolled are known.</p> <p>Annual review of Progression Accord completed and new accord signed.</p>   |

**Notes:**

1. *This template is designed to both establish the agreements required to gain recognition as a MOVE Accord. Such recognition is a requirement for the allocation of MOVE Additional Student Numbers (ASNs) to eligible institutions. The template is also designed to provide recommended content as a good practice guide for collaborating HE and FE institutions. The list of recommended accord items is not exclusive and institutions are encouraged to contribute to the sharing of good practice associated with the development of progression agreements or accords.*  
*MOVE Progression Accords seek to comply with the Schwartz principles for fair admissions to HE.*  
*"The [Schwartz] Steering Group recognises that compact and related schemes do much good work in encouraging and supporting learners in progressing to higher education and supports the continuation of this work. Compact schemes and other measures that confer an advantage in the admissions process may be adopted if they can be objectively justified and it can be demonstrated that the scheme is proportionate to its aim. Raising aspirations and improving access to HE for those from disadvantaged or underrepresented groups is generally a legitimate aim." Admission to Higher education Review, Final Report, September 2004*
2. *The MOVE learner constituency includes the following categories of learner:*
  - *those with vocational qualifications at FE level 3*  
*those qualifying via work-based learning routes*
  - *mature (over 21) 'return to study' learners (waged and unwaged) seeking entry into vocational programmes either directly or through Access to HE provision*
3. *Existing Progression Accords or agreements between HE and FE institutions that meet the minimum requirements of a MOVE Accord may be formally recognised as such at MOVE Progression Boards. Progression Boards will formally recognise MOVE Accords and ASN Agreements within identified employment sectors, as appropriate, in accordance with the published criteria for allocating ASNs to eligible institutions*
4. *The Course Director is an identified member of staff from a specific FE programme at a specific FE Institution, who recommends learners for progression to a specific HE programme.*
5. *The Receiving Tutor is an identified member of staff from a specific HE programme at a specific HE Institution who acts as admissions officer in relation to progression from a specific FE programme to a specific HE programme.*
6. *MOVE ePortfolio is a registration and progression tracking system required in relation to the allocation of MOVE ASNs. It also operates as a regional personal (and career) development planning (POP) tool for lifelong learning (MOVE) learners. It is designed to support learners prior, during and post higher education. It is compatible with emerging national POP standards and is designed to work in parallel with other existing institutional POP systems.*
7. *Progression Magnets will include representatives from East of England FE and HE institutions, as well as other relevant employment sector stakeholders. Progression Magnets will seek to facilitate enhanced progression through vocational routes into higher education in specifically identified employment sectors by identifying appropriate sector developments and minimising barriers to vocational progression.*
8. *All higher education institutions (HEIs) wishing to charge tuition fees above 'standard fees' (£1,200 for 2006-07) are required to specify within an OFFA approved Access Agreement how they will use a proportion of the additional income accrued to support access to higher education for under represented groups. The MOVE learner constituency constitutes, by definition, groups that are under represented.*
9. *The attached Progression Accord Annual Programme is designed to provide indicative content with respect to good practice in relation to the implementation and development of MOVE Progression Accords. It is comprised of a range of indicative activities and events designed to support the progression of learners to higher education throughout the academic year. Institutions may well have their own annual plans, activities and events in place which may be appropriately substituted for the elements within this guide.*

## Introduction

The purpose of this agreement is to promote and develop progression into and through higher education for learners who live, work or study in Sussex.

The agreement draws on, and develops, existing agreements and admissions processes at the universities and colleges within the Sussex Learning Network.

This agreement focuses on those courses within the Sussex Learning Network’s Biosciences curriculum strand where it has been identified that such an agreement would make a significant difference to successful progression.

The agreement does not seek to illustrate the full range of progression routes that exist, but those to which a guarantee for Sussex learners has been attached. The agreement does not necessarily, therefore, cover the full range of provision within this area of the curriculum, and learners may wish to contact the universities and colleges listed to enquire about alternative progression routes.

## The agreement

This progression agreement applies to all learners studying or holding the following qualifications:

| Course                                | Provider                     | Code |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|------|
| FdSc Agriculture                      | Plumpton College             | 1    |
| FdSc Animal Science                   | Plumpton College             | 2    |
| FdSc Arboriculture                    | Plumpton College             | 3    |
| FdSc Biological Science               | City College Brighton & Hove | 4    |
| FdSc Bioscience                       | Plumpton College             | 5    |
| FdSc Countryside Management           | Plumpton College             | 6    |
| FdSc Equine Studies                   | Plumpton College             | 7    |
| FdSc Forestry and Woodland Management | Plumpton College             | 8    |
| FdA Garden Design                     | Plumpton College             | 9    |
| FdSc Horticulture                     | Plumpton College             | 10   |
| FdSc Veterinary Nursing               | Plumpton College             | 11   |
| FdA Wine Business                     | Plumpton College             | 12   |
| FdSc Wine Production                  | Plumpton College             | 13   |

Learners who have either satisfactorily gained, or are currently studying for and are predicted to gain, an award in one of the above, and who can provide a supporting, satisfactory reference will be guaranteed the offer of an interview to enter at level 6 on the related courses shown on the following table:

| From (code)         | Progression to (course)                     | Provider                     |
|---------------------|---|------------------------------|
| 2,4,5,7,11          | BSc (Hons) Equine Sports Performance        | Plumpton College             |
| 13                  | BSc (Hons) Viticulture and Oenology         | Plumpton College             |
| 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,11,13 | BSc (Hons) Biological Sciences              | University of Brighton       |
| 3,4,5,6,8,10        | BSc (Hons) Ecology & Biogeography           | University of Brighton       |
| 4,5,11              | BSc (Hons) Biomedical Sciences              |                              |
| 1,3,5,6,8,9,10      | BA Landscape Studies (2007)                 | CCE University of Sussex     |
| 1,3,5,6,8,9,10      | BA Archaeology and Landscape (2008 onwards) | CCE University of Sussex     |
| 2,3,4,5,6,8         | BSc (Hons) Life Sciences                    | Open University <sup>i</sup> |

### Notes

1. The satisfactory completion of a foundation degree will form the basis of a guaranteed interview or offer to each applicant.
2. The agreement covers applications for full-time and part-time study
3. The guarantee of an interview or offer is made subject to the following condition:
 

A satisfactory reference is received from the provider of the Foundation Degree and the applicant has successfully completed a relevant profile of modules
4. This progression agreement is reviewed annually, and the current status of the agreement can be checked by contacting the Admissions Office at the University to which the application will be made.

<sup>i</sup> Subject to agreement. Direct progression from FdSc Bioscience, depending on applicant's choice of modules at level 5, to any of the three study routes within the Open University's BSc (Hons) Life Sciences (molecular and physiological route; ecology and evolution route, or health route). Progression routes from other FdSc courses to be confirmed.



## **Progression Agreement**

### ***Transferable Progression into Business***

#### **Aim**

The overall objective of this agreement is to widen participation and facilitate the progression of vocational learners into higher education using established and recognised vocational qualifications. The agreement embodies the ethos which underpins the establishment of the Lifelong Learning Networks.

#### **Rationale**

Specifically this agreement seeks to increase opportunity for vocational learners through transferability of skills and knowledge gained through the study of vocational qualifications to parallel the opportunity created by 'A' level skill transferability.

Business has been identified as a priority area and a core subject skill area required by employers both in its own right and as a component within a range of other subjects.

The level 3 feeder routes encompass key BTEC qualifications which offer transferable skills for the study of Business. Additionally, the agreement recognises the directly related Specialised Diploma in Business.

This agreement reflects the principles of fair admissions and equality of opportunity set out by Schwartz and the QAA Code of practice.

## **Basis for Progression Agreement**

This offer is based on an understanding between staff at all participating institutions that there is a basis for successful progression and a considered curriculum match between Level 3 BTEC National Diplomas together with the Specialised Diploma in Business into Level 4 Business Programmes delivered and validated at the partner HEIs and FECs.

By signing this agreement the Parties agree to provide transparent and comprehensive acceptance of the transferability of those named Level 3 programmes to Business Programmes. Signatories will give parity of consideration to the application but the decision to accept or not will be based upon all aspects of the presenting profile e.g. the UCAS reference statement, work experience etc.

### **BTEC National Diplomas with skills mapping to Business:**

Health & Social Care, Creative Industries, Engineering, Construction, Public Services, Travel & Tourism, IT, Beauty Therapy Science and Hospitality & Catering.

## **Admission**

Institutional autonomy is fully acknowledged and therefore the admissions department within each of the receiving institutions has the final decision on all matters relating to the admission of students, based upon the full profile (including reference) presented by the applicant.

## ***Currency***

For the purposes of this initial agreement it is noted that the relevant qualification should normally have been awarded within the last 5 years.

The agreement is accompanied by Annexes consisting of supporting evidence including curriculum mapping, outcomes of tutor and learner consultation, progression routes and subject strand commentaries on the skills match.

## **The Agreement seeks to achieve the following objectives:**

- to broaden access to higher education through the provision of vocational progression opportunities utilising transferable skills between L3 and L4
- to increase the number of learners undertaking vocational qualifications having the opportunity to progress to higher education within the WVLLN.
- to develop a transparent procedure for learners progressing to higher education through these vocational routes
- to increase the numbers of people skilled to at least Level 4 in the priority subject

***The Parties agree the following:***

**Required items for WVLLN Progression Agreement recognition**

- guaranteed *parity of consideration of the applications from learners with the vocational qualifications specified in this agreement* who meet the programme's entry requirements for *Business*
- publication of the admission and progression arrangements on institutional and WVLLN websites

**Through the WVLLN, particularly the Progression Co-ordinators, the institutions will:**

- *work with the WVLLN on awareness raising and guidance for appropriate staff e.g. dissemination activities; easy look-up guide to skills compatibility; support for framing instructions to applicants*
- *work with the WVLLN to maintain the currency of the agreement and update as necessary*
- *work with the WVLLN to support the development of appropriate enabling curriculum functions where a specific need is identified*
- *collaborate with the Progression Co-ordinators to monitor the operation of the agreement e.g. through analysis of HESA data on applicants; through regular meetings with Admissions tutors; through Progression Co-ordinators acting as a feedback channel to Level Three tutors*

**Recommended items**

- through the WVLLN, provide general feedback on learner applications which will be of value to learners, teachers, IAG professionals
- support the identification and design of enabling curriculum units in response to need

**The Agreement will commence on [date] and will be collaboratively reviewed annually by all parties.**

**Approved by [name of HE Institution] Senior representative**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_

**Approved by [name of HE Institution] Senior representative**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_



# Analysis of Transparency of Progression to Level 4 Business from BTEC National Diplomas

## BTEC REVIEW by Subject Strand Co-ordinator for Business

### Method

A skills mapping exercise between Level 3 and Level 4 was conducted by the Progression Co-ordinators and validated by Subject Strand Co-ordinators. Evidence of curriculum/subject matching between BTEC National Diplomas and Level 4 Business is detailed below. (Generic skills are embedded within all BTEC National Diplomas preparing learners for HE Level Study).

| <p><b>RANGE OF NATIONAL DIPLOMAS MAPPED</b></p> <p>BTEC NATIONAL DIPLOMAS IN THE FOLLOWING SECTORS WERE REVIEWED FOR EVIDENCE OF CURRICULUM MATCHING</p>  | <p><b>NATIONAL DIPLOMAS WITH SIGNIFICANT SKILLS MATCH</b></p> <p>BTEC NATIONAL DIPLOMAS WHERE SUFFICIENT CURRICULUM MATCHING IS IN EVIDENCE FOR PROGRESSION TO LEVEL 4 BUSINESS</p>  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ART &amp; DESIGN</b></li> <li>• <b>BUSINESS</b></li> <li>• <b>CONSTRUCTION</b></li> <li>• <b>ENGINEERING</b></li> <li>• <b>HAIR &amp; BEAUTY</b></li> <li>• <b>HEALTH &amp; CARE</b></li> <li>• <b>HOSPITALITY AND CATERING</b></li> <li>• <b>IT AND COMPUTING</b></li> <li>• <b>LAND-BASED</b></li> <li>• <b>MEDIA, MUSIC &amp; PERFORMING ARTS</b></li> <li>• <b>PUBLIC SERVICES</b></li> <li>• <b>RETAIL</b></li> <li>• <b>SCIENCE</b></li> <li>• <b>SPORT</b></li> <li>• <b>TRAVEL AND TOURISM</b></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>BUSINESS</b></li> <li>• <b>CONSTRUCTION</b></li> <li>• <b>ENGINEERING</b></li> <li>• <b>HOSPITALITY &amp; CATERING</b></li> <li>• <b>IT &amp; COMPUTING</b></li> <li>• <b>LAND-BASED</b></li> <li>• <b>MEDIA, MUSIC &amp; PERFORMING ARTS</b></li> <li>• <b>PUBLIC SERVICES</b></li> <li>• <b>RETAIL</b></li> <li>• <b>TRAVEL AND TOURISM</b></li> </ul> |

**EVIDENCE OF CURRICULUM/SUBJECT MATCHING BETWEEN BTEC NATIONAL DIPLOMAS & LEVEL 4 BUSINESS**

| NAME OF BTEC NATIONAL DIPLOMA | TRANSFERABLE SUBJECT SKILLS MATCH TO LEVEL 4 BUSINESS  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| CONSTRUCTION                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ECONOMICS</b></li> <li>• <b>FINANCE</b></li> <li>• <b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b></li> </ul>   |
| ENGINEERING                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>BUSINESS SYSTEMS</b></li> <li>• <b>CUSTOMER CARE</b></li> <li>• <b>E-COMMERCE</b></li> <li>• <b>BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT</b></li> </ul>  |
| HOSPITALITY AND CATERING      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>APPLIED COSTINGS</b></li> <li>• <b>CUSTOMER CARE</b></li> <li>• <b>PROMOTION</b></li> <li>• <b>MARKETING</b></li> <li>• <b>E-COMMERCE</b></li> <li>• <b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b></li> <li>• <b>EVENT MANAGEMENT</b></li> <li>• <b>SMALL BUSINESS START-UP</b></li> <li>• <b>BUSINESS ENTERPRISE</b></li> <li>• <b>E-BUSINESS</b></li> <li>• <b>HUMAN RESOURCES</b></li> <li>• <b>LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISORY SKILLS</b></li> </ul> |
| IT AND COMPUTING              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>E-COMMERCE</b></li> <li>• <b>BUSINESS INFORMATION SYSTEMS</b></li> <li>• <b>CALCULATIONS</b></li> <li>• <b>MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS</b></li> <li>• <b>MARKETING</b></li> <li>• <b>RESOURCES</b></li> <li>• <b>DATABASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS</b></li> <li>• <b>BUSINESS IT</b></li> </ul>   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   |   |
| <p>LAND-BASED</p> <p>LAND-BASED CONT.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BUSINESS MANAGEMENT</li> <li>• BUSINESS PLANNING</li> <li>• CUSTOMER CARE</li> <li>• MANAGEMENT</li> <li>• CONTRACT MANAGEMENT</li> <li>• CONSUMER BUYING</li> <li>• EVENT MANAGEMENT</li> <li>• ENTERPRISE PLANNING</li> <li>• SMALL BUSINESS OPERATIONS</li> </ul> |
| <p>MEDIA, MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROMOTION</li> <li>• EVENT MANAGEMENT</li> <li>• DEVELOPING A SMALL BUSINESS</li> <li>• PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT</li> <li>• THE FREELANCE WORLD</li> <li>• ADVERTISING</li> <li>• MARKETING</li> <li>• PUBLIC RELATIONS</li> <li>• WORKING FREELANCE</li> </ul>         |
| <p>PUBLIC SERVICES</p>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FINANCE</li> <li>• RESOURCES</li> <li>• MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS</li> </ul>  |
| <p>RETAIL</p>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CUSTOMER SERVICE</li> <li>• HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT</li> <li>• MERCHANDISING &amp; PROMOTION</li> <li>• SELLING</li> <li>• CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR/ PROTECTION</li> <li>• MARKETING</li> <li>• FINANCE</li> </ul>  |
| <p>TRAVEL AND TOURISM</p>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MARKETING</li> <li>• EVENT MANAGEMENT</li> <li>• RETAIL</li> <li>• CUSTOMER SERVICE</li> </ul>   |

## **Additional Transferability potential**

The BTEC National Diploma in Beauty Therapy Sciences offers the following Business related units:

- Workplace practices within the Beauty Therapy Industry (Core unit)
- Organisational Practices and Procedures for a Beauty Therapy Business (Core unit)
- Developing a Beauty Therapy Business (specialist unit)
- Marketing and Retail in the Beauty Industry (specialist unit)

The BTEC National Diplomas in Sport (Performance and Excellence); Sport (Development, Coaching and Fitness): Sport (Outdoor Adventure) offer the following Business related units:

- Sport as a Business (specialist unit)
- Organising Sports Events (specialist unit)

The BTEC National Diplomas in Fashion & Clothing; Fine Art, Graphic Design; Photography; Textiles; Design Crafts; 3D Design; Multimedia; Design offer the following Business-related unit:

- Freelance Work (specialist unit)

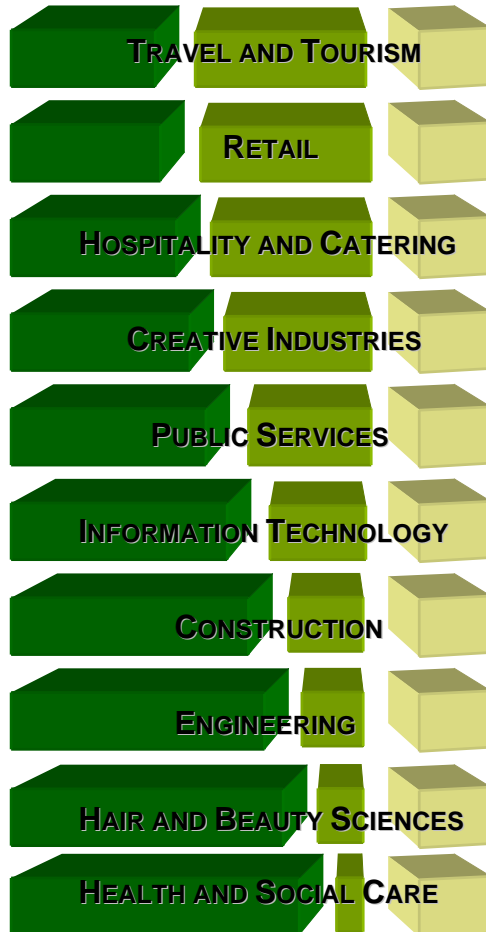
The BTEC National Diploma in Fashion & Clothing also offers the following Business-related units:

- Fashion Promotion (specialist unit)
- Fashion Marketing (specialist unit)

# PROGRESSION AGREEMENT: ARTICULATING TRANSFERABILITY

## LEVEL 3 QUALIFICATION

### BTEC NATIONAL DIPLOMA



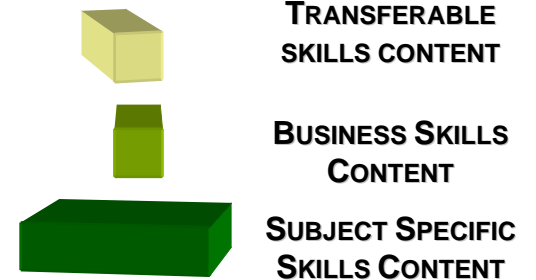
### A - LEVEL



## LEVEL 4 – 6 QUALIFICATION

### BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

#### KEY:





Lifelong Learning Networks  
National Practitioner Forum

HIGHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL *hefce* FOR ENGLAND