



UNIVERSITY VOCATIONAL AWARDS COUNCIL

Learner Progression into Higher Education

A report by the University Vocational Awards Council
Carried out by Bob Faithorn
Sponsored by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

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Foreword

Over the past 25 years successive UK governments, concerned at unfavourable comparisons in productivity with international competitors and at the UK's poor training record and skill deficiencies, have given high priority to improvements in vocational and technical education and training.

While the vocational curriculum for 14-19 year olds has been strengthened and a potential vocational ladder spanning compulsory and post-compulsory education has been attempted, the educational system remains peculiarly resistant to change. Vocational and work-based routes to further education and training are regarded as a low prestige option, while vocational programmes are not seen as providing clear pathways into higher education and employment. Full-time education, studying for formal academic qualifications like A Level or courses offering general education with some vocational content such as GNVQ, is preferred by many young people, a preference reinforced by the perceptions of many parents and schools that A Levels are the standard against which universities and colleges measure all other qualifications for entry to HE.

The development of the Framework for Achievement incorporating a reform of vocational qualifications and a credit framework for further, adult and 14-19 education, together with the recent introduction of Foundation Degrees primarily intended as work-based qualifications, offer the best opportunity so far for establishing an F/HE structure which is more responsive to the needs of learners, providers and employers and which can establish clear vocational progression routes to and through HE.

The Framework for Achievement, when introduced, will be able to build on widening participation initiatives developed over several years between FE Colleges, Mixed Economy Colleges and HE institutions. This study sets out to explore some of these initiatives in order to identify barriers to progression between F/HE and how far and by what means these barriers have been overcome. We would strongly recommend that the findings are widely disseminated to schools, other HEIs and government agencies so that the lessons can be learnt and incorporated into policy.

UVAC is most grateful for the financial support and advice of QCA and the co-operation of participating institutions in the completion of this project, which forms part of the ongoing work UVAC is undertaking to support smoother vocational progression from QCA level 3 to level 4 and build stronger links between further and higher education to develop the UK workforce.



Professor Simon Roodhouse
Chief Executive
University Vocational Awards Council

1. Project Aim

The aim of this project is to scope key issues concerning learner progression through the vocational qualifications system with reference to the Higher Education context.

In framing the project, the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) has sought to establish in consultation with a selected group of HEIs and MEG colleges:

- Those vocational qualifications which are most effective in assisting progression from level 3 qualifications to level 4 courses.
- The barriers to such progression and how these barriers had been overcome.

The scope of the study is limited to England.

2. Methodology

2.1 In consultation with QCA, UVAC produced a briefing paper on the Framework for Achievement and its implications for HE. The paper was circulated to all HEIs and the Mixed Economy Group of FE Colleges (MEG) with an invitation to work with UVAC to develop case studies demonstrating current vocational progression routes into HE.

2.2 The institutions selected were chosen on the basis of their geographical location and size and the type of institution they represented. The co-operating institutions are:

University of Bolton
 University of Derby
 University of Gloucestershire
 University of Hull
 Leeds Metropolitan University
 London South Bank University
 University of Teesside
 University of Winchester
 University of Wolverhampton

Bradford College
 New College, Durham
 Warwickshire College, Leamington Spa
 Wigan and Leigh College

In addition contributions have been received from:

The University of the Arts
 The University of East London
 Liverpool John Moore's University
 The University of Roehampton.

2.3 UVAC worked with the co-operating institutions to identify on a case study basis:

- the vocational qualifications used as entry by the learner
- the learning environment the learner is progressing from (e.g. further education, employment)
- the approach to admissions adopted by the HEI
- the course and/or qualification the learner is entering at the HEI
- the use of credit in progression
- the use of APEL in progression
- barriers to progression and ways in which such barriers could be overcome or minimised and potential opportunities for maximising progression
- the extent to which use of credit would improve progression.

2.4 The research was undertaken in the period between December 2004 and February 2005 and involved:

- a review of literature with particular reference to progression routes from level 3 to level 4, barriers to such progression and innovative approaches to overcoming them.
- collection of data from participating institutions relating to the vocational qualifications of learners entering level 4/stage 1 undergraduate programmes in the academic years 2003-04 and 2004-05, the level 4/HE programmes on which vocational learners enrolled and the subject areas studied by such learners.
- semi-structured interviews with senior managers and/or widening participation staff in participating institutions to establish the widening participation strategy adopted by each institution, how their strategy was structured, delivered and validated, the incidence of formal and informal links with schools, colleges and universities in the region and sub-region, links with employers, perceived barriers to progression from level 3 to level 4 and the ways in which institutions had overcome these barriers, reactions to the Framework of Achievement proposals and the use of credit as a facilitator of progression.

3. Statistical Information

3.1 Securing data on vocational learners proved problematic in several respects. Three of the participating institutions were unable to complete returns within the time available. Complete data for the current year proved difficult to obtain. Some institutions with a January entry cohort were still processing data, others had yet to complete HESA returns. As a result 10 institutions completed returns for 2003-04 but only six submitted returns for 2004-05 and then with advice that they might be incomplete. In addition, separating vocational learners from other categories of level 4 entrants presented some difficulties, for example how to classify mixed GCE A/SCE Higher and GNVQ/GSVQ level 3 entrants which at one institution amounted to 1295 learners. The issue of whether students with HND/C qualifications have been correctly attributed to level 4/stage 1 remains unresolved. The incidence of substantial numbers of students with previous HE experience/qualifications moving sideways rather than progressing upwards at level 4 has been noted in more extensive studies than the present project. It may therefore be the case that learners entering level 4 programmes on the basis of HND/C qualifications are accurately represented in the returns, and on this assumption they have been counted. Advanced apprentices are not registered on the return though they may be counted among NVQ level 3 entrants.

3.2 Notwithstanding the imperfections of the data, some broad if tentative conclusions can be drawn from the return. In most cases vocational learners constitute between 25% and 35% of level 4 entrants in the institutions surveyed. Individual institutions may stand outside this band. In one institution only 17.5% of entrants are classified as vocational; on another a 46% vocational intake is largely accounted for by NVQ, AVCE and GNVQ entrants who constitute almost 90% of vocational entrants. Another university by contrast appears to have a negligible intake of vocational learners but this is exceptional and may be explained by the fact that many vocational learners study at linked FE institutions. On balance, however, vocational learners as a proportion of total entrants to level 4 in the participating institutions appears rather smaller than might have been expected.

3.3 If the vocational route is, in volume, subordinate to the 'A' level/ 'academic' route, it is nevertheless clear that the majority of vocational learners – between 60% and 70% – opt for Honours Degree-level study at the point of entry to level 4 with HND/C and Foundation Degrees proving much less popular. Of course students selecting these courses may opt to progress to Honours Degree study at a later stage preferring to progress incrementally on the basis of their developing expertise and confidence.

3.4 Subjects favoured by vocational entrants fall into a clear pattern. Among the universities surveyed, Subjects Allied to Medicine, Business Studies, Computer Science and Engineering are consistently popular with Art and Design enjoying substantial support where it is offered. With the smaller institutions where the HE portfolio is necessarily more focused, subject choice reflects the more limited range and is concentrated on Business Studies, Computer Science, Engineering and Technology and Art and Design in three colleges. Education, Art and Design and Business Studies feature strongly in a fourth, while Agriculture and Land Based Studies feature prominently in the fifth college.

4. Widening Participation

4.1 Structures

4.1.1 All participating universities have developed widening participation strategies, currently under review as part of their representations to the Office of Fair Access (OFFA). MEG Colleges have not developed widening participation strategies in the same way, perhaps because their role as local colleges providing both FE and HE represents in structural form a widening participation commitment and agenda. Certainly all are engaged in the widening participation process.

4.1.2 The way in which widening participation policies are structured and implemented in the participating universities varies. Several universities (A1, A6, A8)¹, having been engaged in widening participation before current policies were formulated, mainstream strategies across their institutions. Others (A2, A5) have adopted a more centralised model. At Leeds Metropolitan University, an Access and Life Long Learning Centre, developed from a former CATS unit and now redesignated the Access Institute has co-ordinated the implementation of widening participation across the institution and beyond. In the University of Derby, a partnership office has been designated with a remit to progress work with FE and other partners, incorporating existing curriculum partnership work to focus specifically on the progression opportunities from FE to HE within the region, including the development of Foundation Degrees and work-based learning opportunities. The office will support central departments and academic schools as well as being the first point of contact for operation and development issues from partner schools and colleges. London South Bank University offers a variant of these two alternative approaches. While claiming an involvement in widening participation for over 100 years, the institution adopts a broad mainstream approach to widening participation while at the same time designating a unit of 11 staff, responsible for providing widening participation within the local communities.

4.1.3 Whether adopting a centralised or dispersed model of widening participation management, all universities have felt the need for a co-ordination group to ensure that the widening participation strategy is understood and implemented within their institutions. At the University of Wolverhampton corporate oversight of strategy is exercised through the Academic Board and its committees and complementary management structures. Additionally a School and College Liaison Services co-ordinates outreach activity and partnership relations while central services – HR, Estates, Learning Centre and Student Support Services – are also involved. The University of Hull uses a widening participation liaison group with representatives from the university's Schools and Corporate Communications group which has particular responsibility for student recruitment and schools and college liaison, as the co-ordinating device. At the University of Winchester where widening participation issues are viewed 'holistically' and addressed by integrating them across all schools and

departments, representatives of these schools and departments have nevertheless now come together on a newly formed working group that will report to the Learning and Teaching Committee and Academic Planning Committee on widening participation matters.

4.2 Partnerships and Networks

4.2.1 All institutions participating in the present study have, as part of their respective widening participation strategies, engaged in partnerships with schools, colleges and universities in their region in order to improve cross-sector links and establish effective progression routes into HE.

4.2.2 Institutions which have engaged in widening participation activities over many years have long established partnerships with colleges and schools. The funding available from Aim Higher and Partnerships for Progression has been used to extend and strengthen pre-existing arrangements rather than initiate new associations. The University of Wolverhampton works in collaboration with 15 partner colleges in its region to provide for students to stay close to home before progressing to HE. The recent appointment of a schools and colleges liaison officer has enabled those links to be consolidated. Leeds Metropolitan University located in the leading city in its region, surrounded by former textile towns within 20 miles one from another and with long-standing links with FE colleges in the area, has proposed itself as a Regional University linked with strategic and regional partners to provide a regional hub for the development of Foundation Degrees and work based learning opportunities. Such a collaborative college/university enterprise will have the capacity to deliver bespoke programmes flexibly and swiftly within particular localities. The University of Hull, the only HE provider sited within a 40-mile radius of its city location, has established itself as a regional hub for school and FE college partners in a rural and relatively isolated environment. The University of Gloucestershire, linked with FE colleges in the surrounding rural area with partner universities 40 and 50 miles away, has the potential to develop in a similar way.

4.2.3 However, in some cases a plethora of partnerships has complicated the regional picture. One northern university has established over a period of 15 years a formal partnership with seven FE colleges and sixth form providers. An HE Business partnership has expanded these links. An association of universities in the region adds to the network. An embryonic Life Long Learning Network, bringing together other universities and their FE partners across the region, has added a further collaborative tier. As one senior manager observed: 'We seem to attend a series of meetings where the same faces appear around the table, wondering which agenda we should be addressing.'

¹ References in brackets relate to institutional profiles and case studies in Appendix A.

4.2.4 Lifelong Learning Network proposals have met with varying responses within the regions represented by the project participants. One region is close to submitting proposals, in another, early discussions have not attracted the older universities, in at least two cases little movement has yet occurred while in a fifth case the university has made no significant moves within the region to respond to the proposal. It is clear from the extent of engagement between individual universities and their network of partner colleges and schools, that the partnership idea is fully endorsed. However, the particular circumstances of geographical proximity, strategic priority and inter-university relations may go some way to explain the different regional responses to the Lifelong Learning Network proposals.

4.2.5 The position of MEG colleges reveals a different dimension to regional collaboration. MEG colleges have long-established links with FE colleges and have also sought to establish partnerships with schools in their area. However, at the level of sixth form engagement, colleges and schools often see themselves as competitors rather than partners, particularly where colleges include a substantial 'A' level unit as part of their proposals. Differential funding adds a financial edge to the rivalry.

4.2.6 For their HE provision MEG colleges are in varying degrees dependent on local universities for validation of their degree programmes. Frequently partnerships are close and effective, but in some cases colleges feel marginalised when a local university declines to validate proposals which may compete with their own programmes. Alternatively where a local university lacks the academic expertise to validate a college's proposal the college has to look further afield. Thus Wigan & Leigh College has links with Huddersfield University for its education provision and with Sunderland University for the validation of its supported learning provision in Business Studies, Computer Studies and a Foundation degree course in Network Computing. Warwickshire College, because of the nature of its portfolio is linked with Harper Adams University College in Telford, with the University of Central England in Birmingham as well as the more locally based universities of Coventry and Warwick. At sub regional level the regional university as outlined in the Appendix (A5) may provide an appropriate partnership model for the delivery of programmes locally.

5. Barriers to Progression

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 In 2003 the University of the Arts, concerned at their inability to attract students from lower socio-economic groups to its diploma and degree programmes, commissioned a piece of research looking at attitudes towards and knowledge about higher education in art and design in general and about the University of the Arts, London in particular. The main conclusions of the study made uncomfortable reading.

- Young people thought that the University of the Arts was a good place to study but were reluctant to apply since they had been told by 'everyone', including teachers, careers advisers and the university's own staff working on outreach projects that 'you can't get it' and that the work was too hard for them. Prospective students confessed that 'It's hard to be confident when everyone is telling you that you are not good enough.'
- Applicants from poorer backgrounds had greater difficulty in accessing information, advice and guidance on courses and careers in Art and Design and on the application process itself.
- Young people from working class backgrounds were unwilling to study art and design because they did not see the creative industries as a safe vocational option and preferred to opt for subjects vocationally less risky or even for the more 'academic' route.
- Art teachers and careers advisers felt ill-informed about courses and the creative industries. Schools and FE teachers portrayed the institute as inaccessible while careers advisers opined that the college's strategy of promoting itself as prestigious and internationally recognised discouraged learners from disadvantaged backgrounds from applying.
- Interviews for many students were difficult and unnerving. Among staff there was a widely held view that applicants lacking confidence at interview and in talking about their work were unlikely to succeed at the college.
- Pre-entry guidance was limited and uncoordinated with little quantifiable impact on widening participation.
- The role of Student Services in widening participation at the University was ill-defined.²

5.1.2 A review of the issues raised in the report was of particular significance in the context of the University of the Arts but the general conclusions have wider implications. The quality of advice and guidance, student perceptions of the vocational route, cultural factors including the lack of confidence and self-esteem of working class learners, the transition from school/FE college to HE, entry arrangements, and financial considerations all represent potential barriers to progression from level 3 to level 4 and above. For students following work-based learning approaches, part-time or in company time, perceptions of employers about Higher Education also need to be considered.

5.2 Advice and Guidance

5.2.1 Universities and colleges recognise the importance of effective advice and guidance systems and services and constantly strive to improve their provision. Several have incorporated student services into their widening participation strategy. They are also aware of the extent to which information available in schools may be out of date, inaccurate and inclined towards the academic rather than the vocational route. While acknowledging the need to update their information services on a regular basis, several institutions have expressed concern at the inability of their local Connexions Service to offer adequate careers guidance to young people because of their preoccupation with the socially excluded. However, project experience has varied across the regions. One university felt that the quality of Connexions information was quite good. Another reported that the ignorance of HE in their local office had prompted the university to offer staff training sessions after which an improved working relationship developed with the service.

5.2.2 In the absence of effective advice, guidance and information the university remains for many 'an alien environment'. For those resident in socially isolated working class communities with little experience or tradition of post school education, low self esteem and a lack of self confidence proves a cultural and personal barrier to progression in HE. As one Midlands worker put it, 'HE is not for our communities.' There is a need therefore to make universities part of young people's landscape or as one young visitor put it, rather more graphically: 'Everyone says your university is **** but now we've been here it's not bad!'

² J McManus: 'It's been so difficult for me to get here': the role of pre-entry guidance in widening participation in art, design and communication Higher Education (London Institute 2003); Inter-institutional compacts to widen participation in higher education in the arts in the UK. (Research presentation to the Association for Institutional Research Forum, Boston, USA, June 2004 (University of the Arts 2004).

5.3 Employers and Employees

5.3.1 A study of vocational HE commissioned by the University of Hull (HESTER 2004) (A4) observed that, while all sector employers were familiar with training qualifications and pathways up to and including level 3, opinions varied on the benefits of engaging with local education and training establishments for higher level skills and development of their workforce. While most employers surveyed had some dealings with local colleges, only a small proportion had contact with universities. Most employers wanted to see higher education courses become more practical and 'hands on,' more flexible, able to accommodate shift patterns, work related, in-house and with as much funding as possible. There was a general perception that higher education courses lacked relevance, were not up to date and that lecturers were out of touch with the realities of the work place.

5.3.2 Employees' views broadly reflected those of their employers. They recognised that their employer would need to see the business case for any training that they requested and that employers were likely to prioritise training to meet immediate needs or statutory requirements. A frequent reaction from employees in all sectors was that they could not see themselves in higher education or following a higher level course: it was 'not for them'. In several cases this judgement was based on their own assessment of their written language skills, and on the assumption that the courses would be classroom based and not active, practical or relevant to their job. Employees gave little evidence that they understood progression pathways from level 3 to higher level qualifications. The best informed employees came from the care sector which demonstrated the most systematic approach to the development and qualifications of managers, driven by Care standards, and had moved some way towards creating a 'development culture' in its sector. In addition, employees working in companies where they had personal knowledge of fellow workers who had followed higher level study found sources of information as well as role models. The study also found that employees preferred to study on a day release basis or failing this on an evening and Saturday. Few employees expressed enthusiasm for e-learning and/or distance learning but preferred peer and tutor support with face to face contact.³

5.3.3 Many of the conclusions of this study reflect the experience of universities participating in the present project. Level 3 vocational awards associated with the workplace are seen as an end in themselves rather than as a route to HE and that view is supported by many working class families without knowledge and experience of HE, and in one college (A10) by some FE lecturers who saw the future of their level 3 students in the workplace rather than in continued study. Many employers are concerned that if they support employees' further training, when the training is complete they will move for better wages. One university was aware of such a 'poaching cycle' within the circle of small motor sport companies ringing the city, though as one employer lost a valued member of staff so he would frequently recruit on the rebound, staff who had been trained by a competitor. The prevailing view was, however, that 'if you train you retain.' Problems of training are however more acute with SMEs for, under market pressure, staff development and training is the first item to be cut back. Several institutions reported employees registering as part-time students on a level 4 course and requesting that no contact should be made with their employer (A2, A5, A7, A10).

5.3.4 Lack of employer awareness of HE in the study also reflects project institutions' experience, particularly the perception of HE as out of touch, impractical and unresponsive to employer needs. The perception that university lecturers lack experience of the workplace has some validity insofar as work-based learning staff teams require personnel with skills and experience rather different from that of many of their academic colleagues. Participating universities are aware of employers' difficulties in understanding the rationale for the Foundation Degree development and also their concern that Foundation Degrees are too long to be accessed in one sequence. There is a demand for smaller units of 30 to 60 credits which could accumulate into an FD qualification in time. It is also several universities' experience that local employers find it difficult to appreciate the extent to which institutions are able to offer bespoke training programmes at a time and in a place of the employers' choice, on a modular distance learning basis. Many of the project institutions have taken steps to counter what has emerged as a real barrier to progression.

³ The HESTER Project: The Humber Higher Education Skills and Training Research Project (June 2004).

6. Overcoming Barriers to Progression

6.1 Progression from school and college to HE

6.1.1 With the assistance of funding from Aim Higher, Partnerships for Progression, HEFCE, LSC and other available funding sources, participating universities have over the past four years sought to put in place a comprehensive array of initiatives directed at learners in school, college and the community to create progression pathways into HE for those from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds, to improve the gender and ethnic balance in their institutions and improve facilities for those with learning and physical disabilities. Several institutions have employed the concept of the student life cycle as a useful organising device to develop widening participation activities from aspiration raising in primary schools through to the provision of learning opportunities for those in the third age.

6.1.2 Activities for young people have included campus visits – open days, subject tasters, master classes, and the employment of student ambassadors and student mentors to support their school or college studies. For post-16 and pre-entry learners the initiatives multiply – curriculum enrichment sessions, GCSE revision sessions, assistance with applications to university and with interviews where appropriate, summer schools and work experience weeks. In one institution a Passport Scheme, operating in partnership with 15 FE colleges and sixth form colleges in the region, generated a university place for local students achieving the required standards and encouraged transfer to HE for students who traditionally had not entered HE including those following more vocational programmes and first generation university applicants.

6.1.3 At London South Bank University alone (A6) initiatives during an academic year included open days and evenings for some 3,000 visitors, taster sessions for 'A' level/GNVQ students to give them the opportunity to sample university life and experience different styles of teaching and learning, visits to local schools and colleges to promote the university, the production of a schools and colleges magazine to communicate new initiatives, achievements and student stories or profiles, summer schools for 15-16-year-old learners from inner city schools, organised around the theme of Professional Studies for Work in Cities with project work supplemented by study support, web research sessions, careers interviews, discussions with employers, sports activities and school events, progression route planning and curriculum matching for progression from FE to HE, sports mentoring, Adult Learning weeks, a Fast Track summer programme offering 300 places to students intending to progress to university and providing an opportunity to develop the skills necessary to succeed in HE, a generic Foundation programme to help students identify the gaps in their knowledge and provide a learning programme – key skills of numeracy, IT, study and communication plus subject options – to enable them to go on to study a degree of their choice, an On Track one week course to enable students from local colleges to manage their own learning and an Associate Student Scheme. This scheme offers up to 800

places per year for students from local colleges intending to progress to the university and includes use of the Library, Learning Resource Centre, Student Advice and Guidance Services, Student Union, sports and refectory and café facilities. Not every institution surveyed has proceeded at this pace but all have moved a considerable way to manage more effectively the promotion, progression and realisation of widening participation strategies for the communities they have sought to attract into HE.

6.1.4 In the case of the University of the Arts, one of the constituent colleges of the University, the London College of Fashion, piloted a Compact Agreement between the college and a cluster of eight partner FE colleges across the London area, offering individual advice on the preparation of portfolios of work, a workshop on interview technique and guidance with their applications. Students were then invited to guaranteed interviews at the University before the main phase of the University's recruitment process. Students accepted were selected on the merits of their work rather than competing directly with the main body of applicants. Encouraged by the apparent success of the pilot, the university obtained a grant from the London Learning Skills Council to extend the Compact Scheme across the remaining constituent colleges of the University.⁴

6.2 Progression from Employment to HE

6.2.1 Initiatives to improve progression routes from employment have proved more difficult to establish not least because institutions have to deal with several employment sectors rather than the single Education sector, a range of companies large and small and with a number of interested agencies – professional bodies, RDAs and SSCs. However, most institutions have engaged in mutually beneficial relations with the public, private and voluntary sectors at managerial level while experience in training and development linked to craft skills is available through FE partner colleges. Partner institutions have links with, among others, local authority and health service employers, British Aerospace, Nissan, Sony, British Airways, Sunday Times, HSBC, Deutsche Bank, major building societies, the armed forces, police training organisations, Land Rover and Tesco, together with many SMEs. Institutions have been most successful when they have taken learning opportunities to employers and closely aligned these with the business priorities of the companies concerned.

6.2.2 One of the most successful initiatives has been the Learning through Work Scheme offered by several universities and by one of the project participants, the University of Derby. Building on the groundwork of the University's Regional Enterprise Development Scheme (RED) which made contact with a range of employers in the region, the Learning through Work Scheme, designed for employed or self-employed adult learners who wish to develop their skills and experience to improve their career prospects, offers study for a range

⁴ Inter Institutional Compacts to Widen Participation in the Arts in the UK, *op cit.*

of qualifications using online technology. Each student negotiates a unique learning plan set out in an online contract specifying what they are required to do in order to achieve their desired qualification. While the scheme attracts aspirant managers whose job experience and responsibilities frequently outstrip their formal qualifications, its remarkable growth in four years has attracted company teams willing to undertake accredited training programmes and individuals wishing to complete study programmes at a range of levels from level 3 to doctorates. The Scheme's attraction lies in the flexibility it allows the learner in terms of the pace, place and timing of their learning and in its adaptability to the needs of the workplace. As one student, a professional development adviser in an Acute NHS Trust Hospital observes:

'It was so easy to fit in because it wasn't something I'd got to do above and beyond my normal working day. My boss had asked me to write a five-year placement strategy for example which in effect was my dissertation. And I looked at the evaluation system as the research element of the final module (of my degree). I wasn't under pressure. It's been fun.'

6.2.3 The scheme has been important not only for the way it has encouraged learners to secure recognition for and extend their knowledge and skills developed in the workplace but also because it has demonstrated that the university can offer learning at a time and place and on a level and in a format which is useful to employer and employee and accredit it. Its online facility has led to news of students' success travelling far and the Scheme now draws learners from across the UK.

6.2.4 Foundation Degrees are the other major innovation in employment based learning. Launched in 2000 as a new work focused HE qualification intended to attract both young people seeking a work related HE qualification and mature learners wanting to improve their work-based technical and professional skills, Foundation Degrees have taken longer than anticipated to gain acceptance. They have experienced considerable competition from long established and accepted HND/C provision and internal scepticism or ignorance from some employers. Those Foundation Degrees that have focused particularly on the public sector – health and social care, early years education, classroom assistants – or niche markets in the private and voluntary sector, have enjoyed most success.

6.2.5 Several of the participating universities and colleges have developed Foundation degrees in Health and Social Care and attracted substantial numbers – some 270 in one instance. Others have already begun to build progression routes from Advanced Apprenticeships through Foundation Degrees to Honours degrees. For example, students who have completed a national Diploma in Veterinary Nursing followed by NVQ2 and 3 can progress to a Foundation Degree in Veterinary Nursing and Practice Management at Warwickshire College. At Teesside University, NVQ2 and 3 qualifications in Health and Social

Care together with a University Certificate in Professional Development will secure access to a Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care. Ancillary workers in the Health Service can, through a staged sequence of study with professional body support, achieve the status of senior practitioner in the Health Service. The University of Bolton has worked with a training provider to establish progression routes from Apprenticeships, through advanced Apprenticeships to Foundation Degrees in Engineering, Construction and Retail Management. New College Durham has in consultation with Nissan Motor Manufacturing Ltd and the Automotive Sector Strategic Alliance designed a staged progression of programmes specifically to meet the employers' needs and enabling learners to move from a first Diploma in Operating and Maintenance Engineering through NVQ2, National Certificates/Diplomas in Mechanical Engineering and Electronic/Electrical Engineering, NVQ3 in Engineering Systems Maintenance to HNC/D in Electrical/Electronic and Mechanical Engineering and on to a Foundation Degree in Maintenance Engineering. All learners are Apprentices and the programme is designed to support their employment development (A1, A7, A10).

6.2.6 Other opportunist initiatives with employers are exemplified by an institution which used ESF money to deliver units of its undergraduate programmes to SMEs in the region, free of charge, in the workplace at a time of the SME's choosing. Employees were able to secure credit for units successfully completed and subsequently enrol on further units at the university in order to extend or complete their preferred training programme. Some 10% of employees were recruited to university courses on this basis and a working relationship established with many of the SMEs. An enterprising MEG institution was able to use the economic regeneration problems of a neighbouring borough to make contact with the chair of the steering group charged with its resolution and through him with a range of SMEs who were his clients. Another institution was able to work with Trades Union learner representatives in a sceptical company to persuade management to endorse workers' training opportunities. The trades union intervention was seen as positive by employers and following an initial focus on basic skills the company is now engaged in upskilling its workforce.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The proportion of vocationally qualified learners progressing into Higher Education is substantially smaller than other main student categories principally 'A' levels. From the survey of project participants between a quarter and a third of entrants to level 4 programmes hold vocational qualifications but that proportion does not take into account those learners holding both 'A' level and vocational qualifications

7.2 Information relating to the progression of learners from level 3 to level 4 is currently inadequate. The classification employed by HESA of recording the highest entry qualification effectively conceals those learners holding a combination of 'A' level and vocational qualifications. Advanced Apprenticeships have not hitherto been recorded as identifiable qualifications.

7.3 Project participants have expressed concern at the poor quality of information, advice and guidance readily available to learners in school, colleges and the workplace and in the absence of such information the potential for uninformed judgements about academic, vocational and work-based routes to Further and Higher Education.

7.4 Admissions decisions in participating institutions are either delegated to departments or determined centrally with reference to departments for particular purposes. There are considerable advantages in operating a central system where decisions can be made consistently by a dedicated team of staff fully conversant with the range of vocational qualifications at level 3 and learner achievements which are acceptable for entry.

7.5 Universities and colleges engaged in this study have developed a range of initiatives to widen participation in Further and Higher Education for underrepresented social groups in education, the workplace and the community. They have raised the aspiration of learners, taken steps to develop progression routes and eased the transition into HE, they have extended their student services, library and learning resources, recreational and sports facilities to accommodate potential students. They have engaged outreach staff to bring further and higher education to communities which are socially, economically, ethnically or geographically isolated. They have promoted learning opportunities to employers and demonstrated a capacity to deliver relevant learning services into the workplace and to create through accreditation a series of incremental steps to higher qualifications.

7.6 Project institutions' initiatives in work-based learning confirm the existence of a substantial potential market for education and training in the workplace.

7.7 There is a general acknowledgement that students from under-represented social groups are more expensive to educate and that this burden falls disproportionately on those institutions committed to widening participation. It is clear that widening participation activities are currently undertaken by highly committed and

experienced staff most of whom are employed on short-term contracts and forced to look for alternative employment in anticipation that such contracts might not be renewed.

7.8 Among the project institutions, most of which operate modular credit based systems (MEG colleges do so only in part), there is wide support for the Framework of Achievement in principle. At a level of detail there is apprehension among the MEG institutions about how the system will operate at regional and local level, how colleges will negotiate with awarding bodies and where the locus of control within the Framework will lie.

7.9 Many of the issues outlined above might usefully be addressed if not resolved within the context of the proposed first Framework of Achievement.

- The credit rating of units that accumulate to earn a qualification at a prescribed level would facilitate an incremental approach to learner achievement.
- The Framework would facilitate the recognition of learner achievement in employment, community based activities and a range of less formal contexts.
- The Framework requires that progression routes to a range of qualifications to HE and to employment are identified and the implications of learner choice of units to obtain a qualification (the rules of combination) are clearly articulated. The opportunity and the need for information, advice and guidance will necessarily become an integral part of the Framework specification.

8. Recommendations

8.1 The recording of data relating to learner achievement at level 3 and to measuring flows from level 3 to level 4 should be improved in order to capture full information on the achievement and progression of all vocational learners including advanced apprentices.

8.2 Access to information, advice and guidance on education and training for schools, colleges and the workplace should be improved and equal prominence accorded to vocational, work-based and academic education.

8.3 Universities, colleges and employers should work together with SSCs and RDAs as appropriate to:

- improve mutual understanding of vocational routes to and through Further and Higher Education;
- promote good practice in work-based learning and progression to higher level knowledge and skills;
- identify funding sources to incentivise employers supporting education and training at level 3 and beyond and educational institutions to customise their provision for work-based learning.

8.4 Efforts should be made to improve HE admissions tutors knowledge and understanding of vocational and work-based qualifications and their status as entry qualifications to Higher Education.

8.5 The production of a credit transcript as an accessible record of learner achievement in terms of credits and level would clarify and simplify the process of admission to Higher Education.

8.6 The relationship between the UCAS Tariff System and the FfA proposals should be clarified.

8.7 There should be appropriate and sustainable funding arrangements to support learner progression.

8.8 Universities, colleges and employers should support the development of the Framework for Achievement as an organising structure to recognise post-14 learner achievement and resolve issues relating to vocational progression, work-based incremental learning and access to Higher Education.

8.9 Further work needs to be undertaken to develop progression

routes into HE linked to transition and induction programmes which can be accredited. Public providers need to make qualifications more acceptable to work-based learners by offering them in manageable sized units which can be credited towards an award. They should also develop more intermediate awards, for example university/college foundation and/or certificate awards to act as 'steppingstones' to a more substantial qualification.

8.10 QCA should give urgent consideration to engaging Higher Education more fully in discussion of issues relating to the establishment and extension of the Framework for Achievement.

Appendix A: Institutional Case Studies

Appendix A1 The University of Bolton

This former Institute of Higher Education, recently designated a university and located in a former cotton town, now a flourishing manufacturing, commercial and cultural centre, has a long-standing and successful record of increasing access, widening participation and encouraging progression to its certificate, diploma and degree programmes.

Its student population of some 8,000 is one of the most socially inclusive of any HE institution in the country, predominantly local with a significant representation of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (25%), of ethnic minorities (16%) and mature students (51%). Twenty two per cent of mature students are drawn from low participation neighbourhoods with no previous experience of HE while 41% of young full-time undergraduate entrants come from social classes IIIm-v. The challenge for the university is therefore 'not one of encouraging more disadvantaged students to learn here but of ensuring that such students successfully complete their intended programme.'

A strategic imperative for the institution is therefore to advance as a new generation civic university with a commitment to inclusion and aspiration, to providing access to and through HE to all types of learner in all types of setting and at all stages of their lives and to accommodating those 'disaffected' learners who in the past might have been categorised as following a non-academic educational and career path.

In the furtherance of its widening participation priorities, the university has created a Student Centre to integrate the provision of all student support services – recruitment, admissions, induction, on-programme support, financial and welfare guidance, careers guidance, special needs provision, accommodation – in a student life cycle model.

From this base it has established a series of links with local schools, local colleges, local ethnic communities and local community groups, developed pre-entry, outreach and guidance work through the creation of community summer schools offered on campus and in collaboration with local schools, colleges, community education and Life Long Learning services. The project won a regional award as the best public sector Provider Scheme for breaking down barriers to education and subsequently similar summer school activity has been undertaken with a particular focus on ethnic minority participants.

Summer schools have also been held for talented and gifted pupils and student volunteer and teaching associates have been trained to operate in schools. Master classes and curriculum enrichment initiatives, vocational access initiatives and compact links, mentoring and HE familiarisation sessions have all been developed as a means of encouraging closer links between schools, colleges and the university.

Partnership links have been established between the university and nine FE colleges in the region and further afield where the attraction of a distance learning association for specific purposes is responsible, and between universities within the region. In this connection the university

has paid particular attention to the development of vocational progression routes from schools and colleges into Foundation Degrees and Professional Apprenticeship programmes.

The university has developed some ten Foundation Degrees to date with a further six still in the development stage. Most are offered on a full and part-time basis and some in conjunction with neighbouring FE colleges. Health and Social Care has proved the most successful recruiter to date with some 286 students on course (177 in year 1, 109 in year 2) drawn mainly from hospital and health care trust personnel in the North and West regions. Early Childhood Studies offered part-time by four local FE colleges has recruited 68 students, all female with a preponderance of LEA employees, registered child-minders and private day care nursery staff. A Foundation Degree in Textiles, offered part-time by distance learning has attracted students locally and from as far afield as Inverness, Belfast and Taunton, all employees of textile companies.

For the Professional Apprenticeship routes, the university is working with a training provider 'Skills Solutions' to establish progression routes from Modern Apprenticeships to Advanced Apprenticeships at NVQ3 through to Foundation Degrees or NVQ4 certification. Routes are available in Engineering, Construction and Service Sector Management, and further developments are planned. On the basis of these initiatives, the university is well placed to extend these progression routes and other widening participation initiatives in the light of the Framework for Achievement developments and the authority conferred by the institution's new university title.

Case study Engineering: a second chance

Victoria Coenen showed great academic promise at school, achieving eight A grades and one C grade in her GCSE examinations. She progressed to the sixth form and studied English Literature, Art and General Studies at 'A' level because, she said, they were her best subjects – and so it proved. It was only when she attended an open day at her local Institution of Higher Education that she realised that if she was to enjoy a successful career she needed to study more vocationally focused subjects. So in 1994 she enrolled on a Foundation Engineering course at her local HE institution. 'I had made the wrong choice of subjects at 'A' level,' she recalled, 'so I did Foundation year Maths and Physics from basics to 'A' level and found that I excelled in these subjects. We had the benefit of small class sizes, personal contact with tutors, access to very good technical facilities and excellent technical support.'

Having successfully completed her Foundation course, Vicky continued her studies with a three-year full-time Bachelor of Engineering degree course in Auto Engineering from which she graduated with a good Honours classification. In the final year of the degree she chose to specialise in the properties of composite materials which provided a

focus for her subsequent research degree. Vicky's doctoral research focused on the properties of carbon fibre laminate materials of the type used in the nose cones of Formula One racing cars. She joined an institute research group investigating the unique properties of auxetic fibre structures which actually became fatter when stretched. By adopting such a structure for the carbon fibre laminate Vicky increased its energy absorption by some 25% which can contribute to the production of safer racing cars.

Victoria Coenen is in the opinion of her Director of Studies an outstanding researcher. She produced six studies in refereed journals from her research work. In 2001 she participated in an international conference on composite engineering in Tenerife. She now works as a design engineer for Hurel Hispano, an aerospace materials manufacturer in Burnley.

Appendix A2 The University of Derby

Formed from successive mergers of two colleges of education, a technical college and a college of art and design, the institution, located on two adjacent sites three miles from the city centre, achieved university status in 1992. Six years later the university became one of only two English higher education institutions to merge with a general purpose FE college. That college is itself in the process of relocation to a regenerated town centre site in the north of the county, which will complement the main university site some 30 miles to the south. Taken together these sites accommodate a unique institution in the region with the capacity to offer seamless post compulsory education from levels 1 to 8 of the qualifications framework.

A total F/HE population of some 19,000 students full and part-time, includes a higher proportion of non-traditional students and an above average proportion of students from lower socio-economic groups and low participation neighbourhoods. Sixty five per cent of students in 2003-04 received full or part-time fee remission. The student population is predominantly mature, local – over 50% of HE students and most FE students live within a 50-mile radius of the university – and includes some 18% ethnic minorities.

Students entering the university do so with a wide range of qualifications. This student diversity informs the university widening participation strategy, which is not regarded merely as an initiative to target specific and changing groups of individuals but rather as an ongoing approach to the development and delivery of educational provision to benefit all students whatever their background. While there is an understandable focus on supporting non-traditional learners, many of the initiatives benefit all students. The strategy is not only about widening participation but increasing participation.

A significant FE presence within the university necessarily encourages a focus on partnerships with FE colleges and schools in the region with many of the attendant initiatives shared across the partnership. FE partnerships derive from the collaborative developments that have

continued to flourish since the university's initiative to establish an FE regional network across the county in the 1990s in order to extend the breadth and scope of opportunities available to local communities, reduce duplication of provision and minimise unproductive and uneconomical competition. These partnerships have latterly been extended in the north east of the county and across the former coalfield area.

The university school Compact Scheme, linked with nearly 40 schools across the region provides a full range of activities for years 9-13 – information sessions, parents' evenings, HE awareness raising days, workshops covering study skills, attainment raising, personal effectiveness, interview preparation, summer schools, curriculum tasters, compact welcome days as part of university induction, advice and guidance at all levels. In 2003-04 345 compact applications were received from which some 120 students (35%) enrolled. Of these 40% registered on vocational diplomas and degrees. The relocation of its northern campus will enable the university to become the first choice for all levels of post compulsory education and training for rural communities.

The university aspires to be the leading provider of Foundation Degrees in the region and in extending its existing Foundation Degree portfolio is drawing on the expertise of its Regional Enterprise Development Centre (RED) and its established Learning through Work Scheme in order to involve employers and employers' organisations more directly in the identification of development opportunities and in the degree development itself.

The Learning through Work Scheme is a key feature of the university's widening participation strategy. It offers tailor-made modules or courses for company teams and departments and online learning opportunities for individuals enabling them to update skills or gain qualifications in their own time and at their own pace. The scheme, validated in December 2000, makes use of Learn Direct's Managed Learning Environment (MLE) for supporting work-based learning. Most Learning through Work students are engaged in programmes of negotiated learning supported by MLE. However, the scheme is also used independently to facilitate negotiated learning opportunities within the university. The scheme has proved very successful. From an initial recruitment of 40 learners, the scheme has grown in three years to include some 500 learners in 2003-04. Students are drawn from across England from Cumbria in the north, to East Anglia and the London fringes. Learners range from 18 years to over 30 years with the majority in the over-30 category. Some 60% of learners are engaged in undergraduate work and women significantly outnumber men particularly at postgraduate level. Recent commissions include a Foundation Degree in motor sport and in leadership and management for the Royal Air Force. Using the Learning through Work course framework it is proposed to develop components at levels 3 and 4 as bridging to and tasters of Foundation Degrees and other HE provision, thus augmenting the existing F/HE progression routes. Through further developing its capacity for outreach work both with young people, through its collaboration with schools and colleges and with adults through its community institutions and its engagement with employers, the university aims to be perceived as the community university for its region.

Case study ALSTOM

International engineering firm ALSTOM Power is negotiating with the local university for a second cohort of employees to receive a tailored Learning through Work programme.

Twelve people from ALSTOM's Technology Centre in Leicester undertook the first programme. The cohort attended the university one day a week for ten weeks, completing assignments for a University Certificate of Achievement. Several members went on to do a work-based project for further degree credits.

"I think that those who did the Learning through Work programme almost immediately began to think in a new way about their work, and started to take things further," says Martin Hughes, Head of the Mechanical Integrity Group.

Together with his colleague Steve Moss, a department manager, Martin worked on putting together the programme with the university. It was conceived as a modular programme, split into a thermal course and a structural course.

Martin explains: *"We started off with a wish list of knowledge and skills. The university then worked this into a curriculum which could be broken down into a series of lectures, practical sessions and assignments. It was important to us that people not only came out with relevant knowledge but with the credits they could put towards another degree or MSc."*

ALSTOM Power has sites across Europe and the UK and works for organisations including Rolls-Royce, General Electric Aircraft Engines and the European Space Agency. Their Leicester site, which deals mostly with the design, development and testing of gas turbines and air engines, is the base for 330 employees.

Steve Moss adds: *"We don't want our engineers to work in a narrow domain. For the most successful product, people need an appreciation of each area – it's no good to have someone just pushing the buttons and getting the answers out without understanding what they mean. They need the underlying knowledge to interpret results and be creative in making adjustments."*

"In the design engineering environment you're only as good as your staff. Training is key in keeping our competitive edge."

Case study Lorraine Testro

Lorraine Testro is just one of more than a thousand people currently studying for a university qualification through the Learn Direct Learning through Work programme. Studying at the local university, Lorraine is currently working towards a Certificate in Higher Education developing learning in a community setting.

Lorraine is employed by a local charity as a full-time operations manager and fits her work around looking after her family. Leaving school at 16 Lorraine felt that higher education was not an option until she discovered Learning through Work. She says: *"I don't live in an area where people normally went to university – I didn't really get the opportunity to go."*

As an adult Lorraine took some IT and education courses which encouraged her interest in learning. She says: *"In the past I looked at giving up work and studying full time – I just couldn't afford to do it."*

"At the back of my mind was the idea that one day I was going to get a degree, but I don't think that I'd have got any further without Learning through Work because of the demands of my job and family on my time."

Lorraine's career was progressing well, but she increasingly found that her qualifications were not reflecting her work experience and responsibilities.

Learning through Work offered Lorraine the flexibility to study for university qualifications, whilst juggling home and work life. The programme is designed to offer tailored courses designed for the needs of individuals, incorporating skills and knowledge that are required at work.

For Lorraine Learning through Work was also very cost effective. She benefited from her initial studies being eligible for fee waiver support through the local university ESF project, available to small and medium companies in her region.

The programme's flexibility is key. Learners can start their course at any point in the academic year. They can access the course materials and tutor support at any time, from work or from home. Support is available online, and also via face to face and telephone contact with tutors. Lorraine explains the advantages of the online programme. *"The Internet's absolutely brilliant, because it saves you so much time. You can access it from home and get more or less everything that you want off it."*

The course structures are just as flexible. Lorraine says: *"You develop a programme around your needs. I've even changed part of my programme because my job has changed. Things do change for people, so I think it's important that you can do that."*

Initially Lorraine had reservations about the online focus of the course as she describes herself as *"the type of person who likes learning in a classroom."*

However she has found that the quality of support offered works for her, both in terms of the online materials – *“I used the website to get ideas and a flavour of other people’s courses and I’ve found the dialogue box really useful.”* – and the personal contact – *“My tutor is really supportive. She really understands the situation that I’m in, with family and everything else.”* She has also found that work colleagues have supported and encouraged her. She sums up: *“If you ask for help, it’ll be there.”*

The skills and knowledge Lorraine has gained during modules covering community learning, IT tutoring and project planning have all been put into practice at work benefiting her employer and the community it supports. She explains: *“I’m learning new things and I can encourage others to do the courses.”*

The chance to study at university has also had a real impact on her personally: *“I probably would have done nothing if I hadn’t done this. Getting a degree was always something that was above me. I think it’s been good for me to realise what my skills are and to show myself that I can do it.”*

Appendix A3 The University of Gloucestershire

The university of some 10,000 students located in an elegant and cultured town and a historic and commercial city within 10 miles has its origins in a church foundation in 1847. Since then it has evolved through successive mergers with Schools of Art and Science and four local authority colleges to form a College of Arts and Technology which through further mergers and adjustments became a College of Higher Education in 1990. The College was given powers to award undergraduate and postgraduate taught degrees in 1992, research degrees in 1998 and was accorded full university status in 2001.

The institution consisting of areas of middle class prosperity and of inner city deprivation has a mission to create a high quality community university the major HE institution in its sub region, vocational in direction with strong links with local communities and providing an inclusive and widening participation development agenda.

The opening of the city campus in 2002 as an outreach centre to engage inner city ethnic deprivation is a manifestation of its widening participation strategy. Its immediate objective is to develop market intelligence concerning barriers to progression in its sub region, expand its Compact Scheme to 30 partners and develop imaginative routes into Higher Education by working with partners and community interests locally.

The university has developed links with six Further Education colleges in the region and sees Foundation Degrees as a vehicle for community development. So far the take-up has been modest regionally and locally but as an urban university in a predominantly rural area without competition or partnership within a 40-mile radius the opportunity exists to develop as a sub regional hub for widening participation within the area.

Appendix A4 The University of Hull

The institution, an older university foundation, is situated in a vibrant riverside city with a strong maritime tradition. Its main campus is located in the university district within two miles of the city centre. A smaller coastal campus is located in a former college of education 40 miles to the north. Though the city is a major European port, its region is predominantly rural and includes isolated communities in difficult terrain. Areas of social deprivation and low participation rates characterise both inner city and rural areas.

A student population of some 20,000 including some 8,300 part-time students is concentrated on the main city campus. Local students constitute 30% of its intake and over 40% of undergraduates are drawn from its region.

Initially the university appears as a rather conventional establishment, offering a range of departmentally based single subject degrees albeit in a modular format. However as the predominant provider of higher education in its region and without a competing university sited within a 40-mile radius, the university is conscious of its responsibilities to local and regional learners and has developed, in partnership with FE colleges, into the hub of a learning network which reaches out across and beyond the region.

Through its Widening Participation committee which enjoys broad representation from across the university, from its Centre for Life Long Learning and the Learning Partnership Office, part of the Institute of Learning, the university delivers its widening participation strategy both within the university, across the city and beyond into the region as a whole.

This strategy seeks to promote explicit recognition of its widening participation ambitions across the university, raise the region's educational aspirations and increase recruitment from low participation areas and ensure that students from underrepresented groups are able to benefit fully from university programmes.

Activities relating to pre-16 aspiration raising have included science fun days for year 7 pupils, activity days for 4,000 year 9 pupils, children's university taster days – campus based introduction to HE for children with little or no history of HE within their families, summer school and mentoring for young people in public care, Maths booster sessions with local schools and work with gifted and talented pupils from Excellence in Cities areas.

For post-16 learners' confidence-building open days, subject-based target recruitment days, sixth form conferences on Politics and on Citizenship, and a Gateway programme for city students to enable them to investigate progression routes to HE, are all directed at increasing local students' participation in HE.

However, the Centre for Life Long Learning working, where appropriate, with the university's associate college network has co-ordinated provision for adult learners across the region with courses delivered in 23 centres and some 120 locations. The provision includes university Foundation Awards (60 credits), modules for selected university undergraduate programmes, City and Guilds senior awards, a range of accredited vocational programmes flexibly delivered to meet the needs of the workplace, in response to demands for higher level skills development from employers and employees and courses delivered in collaboration with the Transport and General Workers Union Education Department – principally for shop stewards and health and safety representatives.

The majority of these programmes offer a stepped progression towards full and part-time undergraduate programmes.

In preparing for the development of Foundation Degrees, the university and partner colleges sought funding support from HEFCE and LSC respectively to set up related projects – a Curriculum and Partnership Development Project (CUPID) and a Higher Education Skills and Training Research Project (HESTER) to conduct, inter alia, a market analysis of the social care, business, media and communications, construction, agriculture, food manufacture and motor vehicle sectors and an identification of the barriers to learning progression to inform the development of vocational pathways, the nature and content of Foundation Degrees, and the construction of progression routes relating particularly to work based learning and assessment practice. A Foundation degree framework for the development of Foundation Degrees across the Associate College partnership is now in use.

The projects, admirable in their depth of analysis, had side benefits in terms of changing delivery practice for vocational elements of the pre-16 curriculum, supporting the university's increased engagement in work based learning and engagement with vocational pathways through collaborative programmes delivered in associate colleges, ensuring a more effective articulation of final Honours years with vocational Foundation Degrees and facilitating joint staff development activities with partner colleges to share good practice in relation to admissions, mentoring, virtual learning environments and work based learning. The CUPID report (July 2004) lists no less than 72 Foundation Degrees in place or in development at eight partnership colleges across the region. The university offers a further three such degrees.

Case study Recruitment and Retention in Modern Engineering

The Recruitment and Retention in Modern Engineering Project arose out of a desire to recruit more students from non-traditional backgrounds on to Engineering and related courses. A key barrier to such students taking up Engineering courses was identified as the requirement for students to possess 'A' level Mathematics. The Department of Engineering has introduced two new courses, Product Innovation (PI) and Information and Computer Control Technology (ICCT) that do not require 'A' level Mathematics, a further two courses are in the development phase.

The key areas of the Widening Participation Group project were to:

- monitor and review UCAS applications and progress of students on Engineering courses.
- hold a workshop for Engineering students (in particular those on PI and ICCT courses) to gain feedback on recruitment, induction and retention issues.
- identify and classify issues relating to progression in the simultaneous learning of non-traditional entrants with traditional entrants.

A special one-day workshop was held to gain feedback on induction and retention issues. Seventeen students attended. Some of them were registered on the PI course. The key findings of the day were:

- In general traditional and non-traditional 'Engineering' students had the same concerns and experiences and mixed reasonably well together.
- Many students felt that their teachers at school/college had been ill informed.
- Some students felt that there was a hierarchy of subjects both within the university and the Department of Engineering and that based on this a 'class system' operated within the student body.
- Students indicated that although their needs were satisfied, especially during the induction process, some students would have liked more detailed course information at an earlier stage.
- Surprisingly the use of computers in the delivery of courses was not universally popular.
- The preference of students to undertake practical aspects of their courses such as design, workshop experience which was often expressed with the phrase 'making things real'.

Of 10 students accepted on the PI course, four progressed to the second year, two are repeating the first year, two have left the course to seek employment, one transferred to the Business School and one transferred to the second year of a course at another university.

Appendix A5 Leeds Metropolitan University

Leeds Metropolitan University, in its current configuration, results from a merger with Harrogate College in 1998. Previously as Leeds Polytechnic, it had merged with City of Leeds and Carnegie College in 1976. The polytechnic was itself the product of the merger of four colleges, one of which had already developed a distinguished reputation in the first half of the 20th century, numbering world famous artists Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore among its alumni. The polytechnic became an independent Higher Education Corporation in 1989 and acquired the university title and power to award its own degrees in 1992.

Leeds Metropolitan is one of the largest universities in the country with over 41,000 students and some 3,000 staff. Some ex-students are engaged in degree level study, a further Y study at sub-degree level, while the number of students engaged in Further Education constitute the largest number of FE students currently located within an HEI. A majority of all students – 64% are over 21.

The university is located in two contrasting learning environments in Leeds, the traditional setting of one campus in the world famous sporting area of Headingley and the other intertwined with business, health, civic and entertainment quarters of the city. The university thus lies at the heart of a large and prosperous metropolitan area of substantial social, economic and ethnic diversity which provides the commercial and cultural centre for its region. A third campus in the spa town of Harrogate leads the way in breaking down the barriers between business, further and higher education, while smaller local opportunities to study are being developed in Ripon, the Yorkshire Dales and elsewhere in the county.

The university mission as expressed in its first decade, has been 'to engage in teaching and research of high quality and of value to society, which will enable the greatest number and widest variety of people to develop the capability to shape their future and to contribute to the development of their organisations and communities.' In the furtherance of this mission Leeds Metropolitan draws on a long tradition of opening up access to Life Long Learning in the county and is continuously pioneering partnerships, offering students both quality and flexibility in their studies. The university sees its future as based on that same spirit but aiming even higher to realise the vision of becoming 'a world class regional university with worldwide horizons using all our talents to the full.' The university is currently realigning all aspects of its life to reflect and realise that vision. At the core of the new corporate plan and all the realignment is the intention to draw out the very best of the university's heritage and to give it contemporary expression as pioneering and student centred.

Widening participation lies at the heart of this vision and a Widening Participation Task Group representing Faculties, Schools and Centre Divisions plays a key role in the development, monitoring and implementation of the university's widening participation strategy. The Academic Registrar and the head of the university's Centre for Access and Life Long Learning (now the Access Institute) are members of the committee. The former is responsible for ensuring that each School's widening participation strategy, including its admissions policy and practice, come within the annual process of course monitoring and review in the university's general systems for quality control and

assurance. The Head of the Access Institute is responsible for co-ordinating the strategic development and operational integration of the widening participation strategy.

The university's widening participation policy relates the wider access for underrepresented groups to the wider process of life long learning. Widening participation activities include aspiration and attainment raising for students from years 9-13 in schools and FE colleges, for children in care and their carers, revision and master classes, challenge and focus days, the provision of a progression module directed at first year 'A' level students to raise their awareness of HE, investigate progression routes into HE and enable them to make informal choices for the future, summer schools for Asian girls and Afro-Caribbean boys, transition summer schools and induction programmes and mentoring. Progression agreements, early application schemes and a schedule of supporting activities with partner FE colleges form an integral part of the widening participation plan. Agreements have been reached with four colleges in the first instance. A further nine agreements are at various stages of development. The university is playing a leading role in projects across the region to audit the opportunities for a take up of progression from Advanced Apprenticeships to HE, in particular Foundation Degrees. A voluntary agency partnership an offshoot of the progression pathway between an inner city college's Access to Social Work course and the Diploma in Social Work in the School of Health and Community Care, has combined the provision and assessment of student work experience by the agency with the accreditation of volunteer agency workers experience towards a university Certificate in health and Community Care. The National Voluntary Agency body has referred other agencies to the project as an innovative model of good practice.

On the Life Long Learning side, the university offers a series of part-time programmes of Continuing Professional Development and work related learning on and off campus for employees of both large and small organisations in the public and private sectors within the city and region. A more ambitious project linking the university's strategic and regional partner colleges, seeks to provide bespoke training and development programmes accessible to employers, in-house training and development, personal and career planning to integrate training and education received from employers with any additional programmes of study needed to secure a higher qualification including Foundation Degrees. These developments are part of a wider concept of a Regional University which is outlined in the accompanying case study.

Case study Emma Tankard

"Although I did start to study for my 'A' levels at a local college, I wasn't sure if it was what I wanted. I needed to feel more independent and also wanted to earn some money, while developing a career."

So Emma went to a careers event that was organised by the local Service Careers. She was interested in the training opportunities that were being offered by VLT (now LITT Ltd) but didn't pursue it. Then she saw a job advertised at City Careers for an office junior with Lupton Fawcett, a local law firm. Emma applied and was successful.

It was after starting the job that she found out that VLT was the

training provider that Lupton Fawcett worked with for its apprentice training. So she decided to take the Foundation Modern Apprenticeship framework. It took a while to get the level 2 qualification but Emma then followed it with the Advanced Apprenticeship and managed to complete this in eight months, along with the Technical Certificate. During her training, Emma moved jobs to join DLA, a much larger law firm, also with offices in the city.

"Because of what I had learned during my apprenticeship, I decided that I wanted to get a law degree to further my career. I found out that the university offered a part-time law degree (LLB (Hons) Law), which could be studied on two evenings over four years. I spoke to and e-mailed the course administrator, Mavis Sweeney, on a number of occasions, and she was interested in me because I had been able to prove that I could work and study at the same time in gaining my Apprenticeship. She asked me to make an official application once I had completed my NVQ3. So that is what I did, and I was amazed when I was accepted. I also looked at completing an 'A' level in Law on a fast-track route at a local college, but Mavis convinced me that it would not necessarily help me as much of the 'A' level syllabus would be covered again in the first year of the degree course, so I'm starting university this autumn (2004)."

DLA will be offering Emma two days study leave for each exam that she takes. The company also normally pays course fees for employees with over two years service but, because Emma has not worked there for that time, she will be taking advantage of the new grants available for part-time students to cover the cost of the fees.

Case study The concept of a Regional University

Title

Celebration of a Regional University – a case study of good practice in progression and widening participation

Vision

The concept of the Regional University rests on Leeds Metropolitan University as the hub in a network of educational institutions working in partnership and to support sustainable regional and economic growth through the sharing and exchange of specialist expertise. In a rapidly changing context, the University will act as a single point of contact whereby all partners can make the best use of resources to meet the development needs of individuals and employers.

This concept is clearly closely aligned with our mission to become a world class regional university, using all our talents to the full. Leeds Metropolitan University is the obvious partner to offer high quality flexible learning opportunities to the widest possible range of people in the region. Sometimes it will be more appropriate for these to be provided through one of our strategic partners rather than directly by the university. Regardless of location or mode of delivery, the important thing is for Leeds Met to establish itself as the 'one-stop-shop' that can offer access to a high quality experience for students at all levels. We aim to develop structures and processes to underpin the Regional University concept, along with targeted staff development programmes to support its implementation.

HEFCE places strong emphasis on increased partnership working, through focusing growth in funded student numbers on Foundation Degrees and explicitly encouraging regional collaboration in bids for additional funding. We have responded successfully through our most recent additional student number bids in conjunction with FE Colleges in the region. Many college principals, in considering their development of Foundation Degrees, are making very important decisions in reviewing who they would like as validating or franchising partners. The opportunity to partner a high quality regional university is very attractive. The marketing advantage of progression arrangements through a university partner is not to be underestimated.

So we have reflected on government policy, the HEFCE response, the rapidly changing market from 2006/07 and the implications for delivery of Leeds Met's vision. Our conclusion is that it is advantageous for all stakeholders to develop strategic alliances with regional FE Colleges and thus to provide progression opportunities into our own refreshed curriculum.

Progress

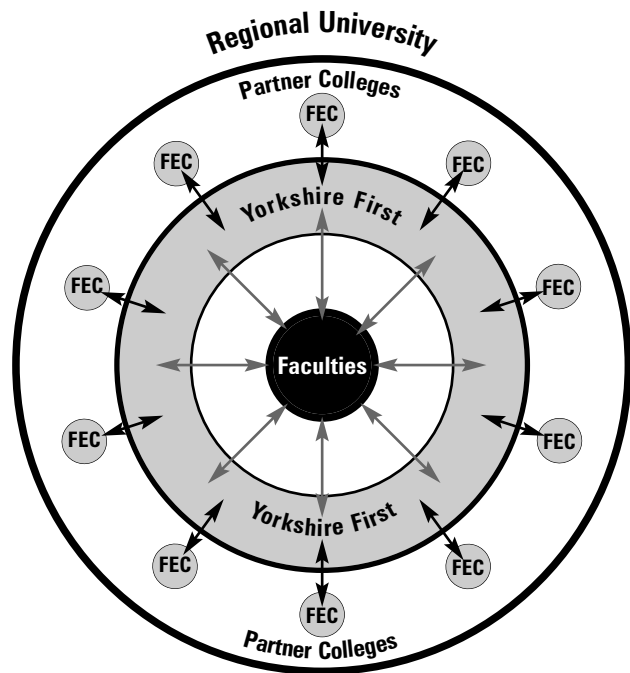
In late 2004, Leeds Metropolitan University signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Park Lane College in Leeds. Through this partnership we have validated nine Foundation Degrees on which students are already enrolled. Park Lane is by far the largest FE College in Leeds, with over 40,000 students, and there are significant opportunities for further collaboration. We have also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bradford College which commits both our institutions to a strategic alliance while allowing each to continue to develop its existing relationship with the University of Bradford. Discussions are also continuing with other FE Colleges in Leeds and the wider region, and we are confident that a number of these will develop into strategic alliances for 2005/06.

In summary therefore we are seeking to deliver our vision and also our reputation as a pioneering university which is an exciting place to work and learn. This cannot happen without a high level of reflection on and analysis of the effectiveness of our partnerships and external relationships in the past. This is not always a comfortable experience. It has however enabled the University to identify a number of principles that provide the basis for positive developments with our partners.

Principles

The University has identified a number of principles to guide development of academic provision with our regional partners. These are broadly as follows:

- Developments should be designed through a top-down model based on confirmed 'grass roots' need, and offer a single point of contact to the individual student;
- Developments must offer high quality flexible learning opportunities for the greatest number of people in the region;
- Developments should be timely and responsive to student needs and facilitated through streamlined, quality assured processes.
- Developments should promote sustainable higher education provision and offer 'value for money';
- Developments should accommodate the needs of all stakeholders, taking account of different perspectives;
- Relationships should be developed in a spirit of equality and transparency.



Regional University

The design and development of the Regional University will place many demands on the University and its staff if we are to offer the range, type and quality of service expected by our partners. Although not yet defined, relationships with partner colleges are expected to fall into two distinct types:

- Strategic alliances
- Regional partnerships

Strategic Alliances

The University will work with the college across a wide range of activities to meet regional and economic demand, including a shared vision of the future, direct funding arrangements, planning within an overall academic portfolio, running summer schools, providing 'top-up' progression routes for students etc.

Regional Partnerships

Regional Partner Colleges will benefit from reciprocal arrangements with the strategic alliance partners, co-ordinated through the University, and have a working agreement to provide services that the University wished to offer.

Single Collaborative Relationships

Some institutions just want a single collaborative relationship for a particular area of provision. These can be accommodated through the development of individual programmes and can be gradually introduced to other opportunities as they become relevant.

Employer relationships – employers can benefit through the model in terms of accreditation of in-house programmes and provision from other providers. The Regional University offers employers a one-stop shop for a variety of training and education needs. In addition customised and integrated programmes can be developed.

Making it happen

The University Corporate Plan identifies Yorkshire First Foundation as the ‘Lead Faculty’ to take these initiatives forward and to maximise the development of provision. The Lead Faculty role in the Regional University provides the single point of contact by bringing together employers, students, FE Colleges, other stakeholders and University needs. From analysis of past and current partner relationships, we have identified that the Lead Faculty needs to offer a number of services if partnerships are to be equal and cost effective.

Role of the Lead Faculty

The Lead Faculty will need to be able to offer a range of services; these may include:

- A visible centre that can offer additional support to non-traditional learners;
- Facilitating summer schools and encouraging a culture of open access and widening participation;
- Simplified progression arrangements for students from schools and FE colleges in the region;
- A focus for the quality assurance of provision in FE colleges;
- A regional staff development centre for FE staff who want to teach in higher education;
- Provision of articulation and accreditation of private provider training, in-house staff development programmes;
- Provision of specialist expertise for in-house staff development programmes and ensuring appropriate links to other faculty resources;
- Managing indirectly funded collaborative arrangements (where the student numbers belong to the University) and also directly funded arrangements (where the numbers belong to the college and the University effectively approves, validates and quality assures the provision);
- Provision of a marketing and recruitment service through co-ordination and referral of employer requests for training and facilitating enrolment of individuals on personal / career development planning initiatives.

Each of these areas will evolve and need to be evaluated in terms of significance, risk, cost and impact of the proposed service. It may be that delivery of foundation degrees and other provision is placed solely with the FE colleges, drawing on their strengths and expertise, enabling the Faculty to concentrate on activity that supports the partner colleges and their links with the University.

Framework for Development – the model

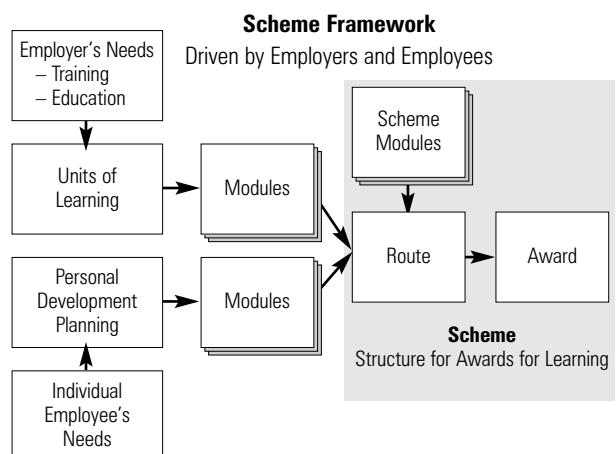
The University has developed a Scheme framework to enable the approval, management, design and delivery of HE provision in partner colleges, reflecting its vision, policy and principles. Programmes of study within the Scheme framework enable individuals to progress at an appropriate rate through levels of learning with appropriate credit and recognition given to the learning achieved.

Role of Lead Faculty



Employer-led Developments

Research shows that employers are far more interested in small chunks of learning, often tailored to their particular business objectives, than in entire qualifications. The diagram below shows how employers can request – or even design – workshops/master classes which may be ‘stand-alone’ or part of a planned programme of workforce development. Individuals may attend a single workshop or a planned number of workshops and then exit. Alternatively, they can choose to seek certification and award – but this choice rests with the individual, not the employer. This model enables both employers and individuals to determine the level of development that is required and plan appropriate learning experiences.



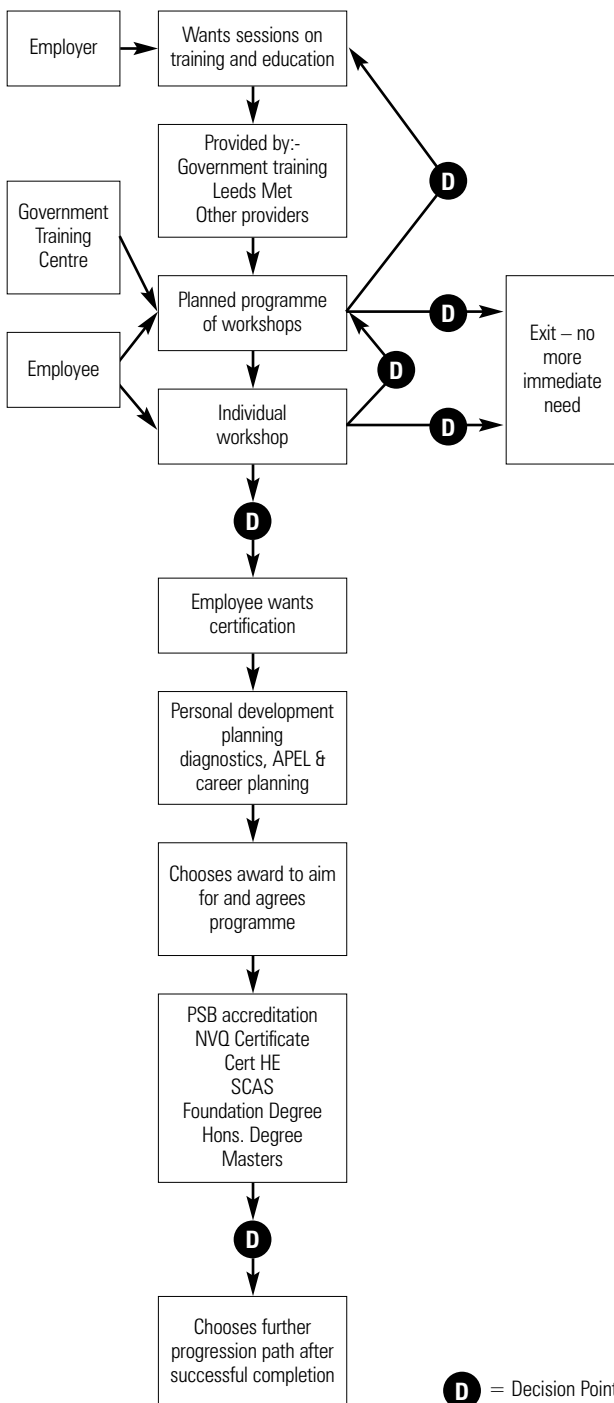
Achieving an award

Awards and credit can be achieved at a variety of levels depending on the learning outcomes that can be demonstrated or will be demonstrated. Management of the learning experience is through the Personal Development Planning element and a learning agreement negotiated with the individual student. Awards can be made at each level and can vary in size to ensure early achievement of certification. This provides encouragement to the learner and facilitates progression to higher levels of learning.

Evaluation

The Regional University is still in its embryonic stage but there are already positive indicators of success in terms of the response from partners and the opening up of innovative provision that will encourage progression as part of the planned learning experience. It will be difficult to get national statistics which facilitate the support of such initiatives. For example, progression statistics for successful Modern Apprenticeship entrants to higher levels cannot be tracked since there is not a register of successful candidates. This will need to be addressed through local information systems.

Workshops and Certification



However there are positive indicators of the framework as a means of increasing participation and increasing progression:

- Colleges and employers like the bottom up build approach ie taking units of learning and building them into coherent awards. The framework facilitates this by reason of the shared vision and the structures that have been developed;
- The admissions criteria have become more eclectic and substantive work has been completed on accreditation processes, both to streamline them but also to ensure greater comparability and parity in operational terms. This will increase transparency and accessibility to the learner;
- All members of the Regional University have been actively encouraged to work with other national bodies and frameworks included sector skills and sector qualification strategies. SSC frameworks are used in the construction of foundation degree programmes and workshops;
- The model emphasises the role of the educational providers in determining a ‘fit for purpose’ process to accredit learning in the work place, other providers and in-house programmes led by employers. The model is also employer led since employers can request whole awards or individual workshops that can be assigned level, volume and if assessed credit;
- The framework is providing an impetus for standardisation and a consequent saving of resources that can be used to establish distance learning and e-learning opportunities;
- The framework identifies processes that ensure that the wider diversity of students progressing at different levels within the college or university environment and is structured to ensure that progression is a key element in award design. This will ensure that programmes can run smoothly.

There have been many benefits to the University, colleges, students and employers in the developments to date. Many of these are intangible but some, eg. sharing of physical resources and development time, are already proving advantageous. In the next phase, the University will collect data that will provide evidence of the tangible and intangible benefits of these developments.

Appendix A6 London South Bank University

The university's origins lie in a 19th century Polytechnic Institute established to provide instruction in the practical aspects of commerce and trade for the poor of the district. By the middle of the 20th century the institution was able to offer external degrees of London University together with a wide range of sub degree provision. In 1970 the old polytechnic was transformed into one of the new polytechnics and incorporated teacher training and a School of Building. In 1992 the polytechnic became a university.

The university is situated in the southern part of the metropolitan area and has remained close to its origins. Its main campus reflects a commitment to opportunity and access and much of its development in recent years has reflected national policies to give more opportunity to mature students, working class students and students from ethnic minorities.

The student population of some 17,000 students is very diverse. Many current students are drawn from the local communities within the immediate vicinity of the university. These are areas of particular deprivation, unemployment and social need and of great ethnic diversity. Many of the students are from families with no experience of higher education. Few progress directly to HE at the age of 18 and many progress only after a break from formal education. More than 50% are mature with nearly 90% over the age of 20 and about 60% over the age of 25. A third of young entrants to degree courses come from socio-economic groups IIIm-V. The proportion of ethnic minority students entering the university in 2000-01 was in excess of 45%. Widening participation in this environment necessarily involves encouraging participation in HE by all, but particularly the disadvantaged, the underachievers and the socially excluded and complementing this policy with a commitment to integrate and mainstream diversity and equality into the university's corporate strategy to create an inclusive environment where differences are celebrated and all are valued and respected irrespective of race, gender, creed and kind.

Widening participation priorities include creating, reviving and extending external links, creating 'stepping stones' from school or college to university and improving retention rates of students on course. Collaborative partnerships have been established with local FE colleges and schools as well as with the Careers Services, Education Business Alliances and Education and Health Action Zones and with neighbouring universities all of whom show a commitment to promoting educational progression. Activities co-ordinated by a Widening Participation Unit have included the provision of open days and evenings, taster sessions comprising a day of lectures, seminars and practical work co-ordinated with neighbouring universities to present school pupils with the experience of university life. In addition

the production of a school and colleges magazine mailed to heads of sixth forms, career advisers and heads of access was used as a vehicle to communicate new initiatives, achievements and interesting student stories and profiles. The creation of learning communities – partnerships between the university, local schools, colleges and community organisations – enabled people to learn about the educational opportunities open to them and give students the chance to work in the local community. They also provided for students the opportunity to work as mentors, student ambassador, community ambassadors and sports ambassadors. In these capacities students were able to work in local schools, cultural centres, charities, housing projects and in local sports clubs respectively, and promote higher education in all of these locations.

A particular innovation in 2004 was the Leap Learning Festival organised by the university with the help of the HE Active Communities Fund. The day-long celebration of careers open to young people within their area attracted over 500 14-19 year olds who attended innovative workshops designed to give first-hand experience of careers in the media, in catering, health and business. The Festival was supported by many local and national enterprises and will be repeated in 2005.

Among initiatives designed to provide a staged transition into HE are the Fast Track summer programme, offering 300 places to students intending to progress to their local university and providing opportunities to develop the skills needed in HE including numeracy and study skills; and a generic Foundation Programme to help students identify gaps in their knowledge and provide a learning programme to bring them to a level that will enable them to study a degree of their choice. The emphasis is on key skills – numeracy, IT, study and communication skills – developed in the context of their chosen subject. On Track for HE, a one week course, enables students from local colleges to manage their own learning and become efficient in a modern university setting where an Associate Student Scheme offers up to 800 places annually to students from local colleges and entitles them to use library facilities (including borrowing books), the Learning Resources Centre, Student Advice and Guidance Services, the Students Union, sports, refectory and café facilities.

The university has acknowledged that as part of its current recruitment strategy it is targeting particular groups in its locality – those from lower socio-economic groups and those without the aspiration to enter HE. Its work with particular schools to target these groups and raise their aspirations and with FE colleges to provide a staged progression to HE is complemented by its intention to develop new curriculum provision with local employers for those hitherto unlikely to progress to HE. Within an undergraduate portfolio which is predominantly vocational, the development of some ten Foundation Degrees in the areas of Education, Business, Computing, Engineering and Sport provide a further incremental step more attuned to many of their students' aspirations to 'become what you want to be.'

Appendix A7 The University of Teesside

A former Polytechnic accorded university status in 1992, the institution is situated in the heart of an industrial conurbation on a single large but compact site, currently undergoing a substantial and continuing modernisation and new build.

The university currently has some 19,000 students, 45% of whom are full-time. Undergraduate students are currently divided between those of mature years and those under 21 years. Part-time students are overwhelmingly mature.

The university has a major catchment market in areas in which participation in HE falls significantly below the national average. Neighbouring boroughs each contain wards which rank in the top ten for concentration of deprivation in the UK. In developing its widening participation strategy the university has had to acknowledge the particular characteristics of its immediate environment in terms of educational attainment, particularly in post compulsory education, economic development, levels of deprivation and socio-demographic structure. Twenty two per cent of its full-time degree students are from low participation neighbourhoods, 25% of mature students have had no prior experience of higher education.

In framing its widening participation policies, the university has built on partnerships of long-standing – a consortium of nine FE colleges in the immediate vicinity and the wider region, extended to encompass sixth form colleges and the HE Business Partnership with a particular focus on the delivery of HE in FE through indirectly funded provision. The consortium is an important provider of flexible learning opportunities and forms an integral part of the university's strategy for community-based and outreach work and the provision of higher education opportunities which extend and complement university expertise.

The partnership has been important in the development of localised provision particularly for sub degree work through HNC/D programmes but also through enabling level 1 units to be offered in colleges providing local learning opportunities for study before transfer to university. Other partnerships have involved WEA, regional open college networks, local authorities and a wide range of employers. An 11-18 Schools Liaison group was established to further develop partnerships with local schools. Strong links have also been established with other universities in the region and with their FE partners and together these partnerships have formed the basis for the regional Life Long Learning network.

These partnerships have been employed to establish widening participation activities for young people and for adult learners. The Meteor Scheme involves primary and secondary schools within the urban environment of the university and areas further afield with high concentrations of rural deprivation, and low participation and progression rates. Pupils at primary level work with university mentors on a weekly basis and participate in taster and summer school programmes. At secondary level pupils participate on the basis of teacher identified needs. Out of school homework clubs are offered

through the Meteor Cybercafe located at the entrance to the university campus and specific activities are supported by parental involvement. A Meteor Plus programme is targeted at underachieving boys who have the potential to proceed to higher education but who lack the motivation or family support and activities involve vacation support through the Cybercafe, workshop support on examination technique and mentoring through student mentors to work alongside learning support mentors for three months of the school year. Other activities involving widening participation and gifted and talented pupils for underrepresented groups in the age range 13-16 and 16-19 include motivational visits to the university, HE parents evenings, campus visits, revision and examination preparation sessions, ICT activities, careers conventions and visiting speakers.

For adult learners, part-time open days, educational advice and guidance on and off campus, community based tasters and short courses are designed to develop familiarity with university study and introduce students to the campus. Other activities involve the Adult Learners course programme delivered on campus and in outreach locations in partnership with local colleges and the community and voluntary sector.

The summer college programme has become a significant aspect of the university's widening participation strategy. Offered both at the university and at partner colleges throughout the region, the programme encompasses not only open college accredited courses but also short higher education courses. The programme gives students the opportunity to taste university life through undertaking a range of short units and to provide them with the necessary skills to succeed in their chosen area of study. Other initiatives include the development of a suite of programmes leading to the university Certificate in Professional Development to encourage under-represented groups to sample university programmes without the commitment to a full award; a local Learning Scheme to provide opportunities for pre HE and level 4 work to be delivered in the community in a wide range of subject areas; and the development in partnership with local colleges of stepped progression routes from tasters to FE and HE modules and supported transition to full HE qualifications.

Linked progression routes also provide an opportunity for work-based learners to move up the skills escalator. For example the School of Health and Social Care provides a route via NVQ2 and 3 in Social Care to a University Certificate in Professional Development and beyond to a Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care. Ancillary workers in the Health Service can, through a staged sequence of study with professional body support, aspire to the level of senior practitioner within the service.

Building on the success of work-based learning programmes in partnership with local and regional employers, opportunities for individual and bespoke study are offered through the Negotiated Learning Scheme. Building on skills and knowledge gained at work, the scheme offers a personalised study programme to develop learning and professional development beyond level 3 qualifications to higher academic and vocational qualifications.

Case study

Anticipated Qualification: BSc (Hons) in Engineering Studies.

Job: Maintenance Technician at 3M UK (plc). Responsible for maintenance and repair of manufacturing equipment. Currently on a six-month assignment as a Process Engineer within the same area of the plant. This current role is responsible for the overall efficiency of equipment – machine outputs, waste levels etc. and delivering cost saving projects prioritised by the plant management team.

Reason for joining the scheme: I wanted to do an engineering degree that I could choose my own relevant modules for. This is beneficial for me in that I can now learn more about managing engineering projects and upgrades, as well as the standard technical modules more normally associated with an engineering degree.

Areas of learning: The degree allowed me to claim credit for areas of major experience and learning. I was also able to transfer my previous qualifications into university credit.

I claimed 120 credits at level 1 for my HNC in Engineering, and 48 credits at level 2 for my HND modules.

My areas of learning were for a project in which I designed and built a new ultrasonic welding system for the production machinery at 3M (24 credits at level 2), software programming (12 credits at level 2) and the design of a manually operated safety device conforming to EN574:1996 (12 credits at level 2).

Where am I now?: I now currently have 120 credits at level 1 and 108 credits at level 2. This leaves me needing 12 credits to complete my second year and 120 credits to complete my third year. I am currently studying two core modules: Individual Programme Planning at level 2 (10 credits) and Research Methods at level 3 (20 credits).

Appendix A8 The University of Winchester

The institution is an Anglican foundation recently designated a university sector college, centrally located in southern England in a small bustling cathedral city with a strong historical and cultural tradition. The university has a well-established reputation in humanities, social science, performing arts, business management and teacher education. The university is one of the largest providers of primary initial teacher education in the country.

The university has a student population of some 6,000, 50% of which are full-time. Approximately half of the students are local – resident within 60 miles of the college. Some 13% are drawn from low participation neighbourhoods and 25% from social classes IIIm-V. Thirty five per cent are first generation HE students.

The university hopes to increase its student population but faces significant competition from well established universities in the region, offering in some cases more practically orientated courses. Accordingly as part of its widening participation strategy the institution seeks to include more students with little family background in HE and develop its portfolio with more vocational courses while maintaining its reputation for quality provision. A second campus in a commercial and industrial town 20 miles north of its main campus offers a centre for part-time study for those who wish to combine full and part-time employment with the development of new skills and qualifications offered in flexible modes.

The university sees the issues of access, participation and retention as more appropriately managed by integrating them across the institution, within all schools and departments. At the same time it has established a widening participation task force to oversee this development.

The implementation of the institution's widening participation strategy has involved the establishment of collaborative partnerships with FE colleges within its immediate vicinity, with a wider consortium of universities and some 22 associated FE colleges in the sub-region; compact agreements with the FE colleges and school sixth forms; a familiar pattern of outreach and aspiration raising activities including taster sessions, return to learning courses, summer schools, transition to HE sessions designed to increase the participation of reluctant recruits to HE. Collaboration arrangements with employers – many SMEs in the college's main location, larger companies in the commercial centres further afield – have assisted the development of a portfolio of Foundation Degree courses including Creative Industries, Early Childhood Studies, Community Development, Social Care and Public Services Information Management which reflect the overall university programme priorities but with a more directly work-related orientation.

Appendix A9 The University of Wolverhampton

A Higher Education College of some seventy years standing, a former Polytechnic designated a university in 1992, this institution describes itself as a large teaching intensive university that excels in widening participation. Its mission to be a first class regional university, dedicated to high quality provision, is realised through close working with regional, public, private and voluntary sector employers to deliver a flexible and innovative initial and post qualifying education with a strong vocational emphasis underpinned by applied research.

The regional profile of the university is underlined by the characteristics of the student body. Of the 23,000 students registered with the university, some 70% are located within its region and 66% of its 19,000 undergraduates reside at home. Its region includes several areas of social deprivation and significant educational underachievement. Forty six per cent of students are young full-time undergraduates from social classes III m to V while 21% of its full-time undergraduates come from low participation neighbourhoods. The university has a very high proportion of ethnic minorities in its first year student population (23% in 2001-02). Widening participation is a necessary strategy to enable the university to realise its ambition of supporting cultural diversity and equality of opportunity in all its activities.

Widening participation is not seen by the university as a separate set of initiatives but is mainstreamed throughout all its activities. Thus the university is the lead institution in the Aim Higher: Partnerships for Progression for the region and leader of the sub-regional group. In this capacity it works with schools and colleges to raise the aspirations and attainment of post-14 school pupils, with colleges, regional providers and local employers to increase employer participation and upskilling opportunities in F/HE and with local communities to inform and advise them of, and support them on, progression routes into HE.

Through its schools and colleges liaison service the university is linked with some 18 FE partner colleges, has a close associate college relationship with some 10 institutions and provides a range of activities with local schools and colleges. These include campus-based short programmes involving university staff, extension activities after school, at weekends and in school holidays, GCSE revision sessions, themed summer schools, work experience weeks, the provision of European

and community languages and sign language tuition for schools. Staff and students of the university participate in many of these activities through a student ambassador/mentor scheme and a staff volunteer programme which assigns them to school projects.

In the furtherance of its widening participation agenda the university increasingly recruits students from communities and backgrounds that do not prepare them for higher education. This presents challenges for the curriculum, for learning and teaching materials, for personal support and support for student learning which are acknowledged and addressed. The university is committed to provide the necessary resources to ensure that widening participation students successfully achieve their academic objectives. Thus school sixth forms are able to access vocational modules at the university, a pilot project with a local sixth form college offers university modules in science as part of their studies. Bridging courses and induction programmes ease the transition from schools and colleges to the university. The university Estates strategy has ensured that new buildings are open, accessible and provide dedicated social learning spaces and access to IT facilities and services. Learning centres on the main university campuses are open seven days a week and the city centre campus provides a community resource accessible to the public with membership rights extended free of charge to teachers at the university's partner schools. A major investment in electronic resources and materials and an extension of library information services as part of the university's 'Learn Anywhere, Work Anywhere' policy and a Learning Centre Direct Service, introduced to support part-time and distance learning students offers 24 hour access to information and services.

A recent external audit of the university's widening participation strategy concluded that the institution's long engagement with and solutions to the challenges arising from the demands and needs of a diverse student population provided lessons for the higher education sector as a whole particularly with respect to its work with regional partners and agencies, its embedding of widening participation in mainstream institutional activities, its management of the students' learning experience and its co-ordination of support for their different communities.

Appendix A10

The Mixed Economy Colleges: Bradford College, New College Durham, Warwickshire College, Wigan & Leigh College

The mixed economy group of colleges (MEG) featured in this study are located in the heart of the communities they serve. Three – Bradford College, New College Durham and Wigan & Leigh College – are situated in or near city or town centres, the fourth – Warwickshire College – on five sites, three in town centres and two on rural sites which more effectively serve their curricular needs.

All of the colleges include within their catchment, areas of social deprivation and low participation in post-16 education, but Bradford College, located in the centre of a city undergoing a period of investment and renewal after the decline of its traditional industries, faces a bigger challenge. Every ward within the city ring road and some beyond are designated as areas of social deprivation. Moreover, the city, a centre of diverse cultures has a population 25% of which is drawn from ethnic minorities. That proportion is reflected in the student body of the college. In three of the MEG colleges, the higher education element constitutes a modest proportion of total student numbers. Between 800 and 1,000 FTEs follow HE courses in each institution. However, Bradford College with 13,000 FTEs, close to 4,000 of them in HE, is one of the largest MEG institutions in the country on a scale with the smaller universities and is therefore able to offer a wider range of learning opportunities to its students.

MEG institutions are very aware of the benefits of F/HE integration within a single institution. College curricula are overwhelmingly vocational, institutional staff share long experience of working in collaboration with local employers, employers' organisations, professional bodies, industry training boards and the like in the development, promotion and implementation of a range of certificate and diploma courses and HE qualifications at HNC/D, Diploma, Foundation and Honours degree levels. The colleges are able to offer a staged vocational progression for those learners who wish to develop higher level skills and competencies.

Many of the progression issues that confront schools, colleges and universities are avoided by the integration of F/HE learning. Common teaching across F/HE programmes enhance central services including advice, guidance and counselling, expanded learning resource facilities – one college includes a sixth form centre and a rugby league academy where talented and committed sports people over 16 years old can combine rugby training and coaching with academic study – all strengthens students' sense of commitment to their local college. While 'A' level and AVCE students wishing to progress to HE in most cases transfer to local or regional universities, NC/D, GNVQ, NVQ and Advanced Apprentice students remain in substantial numbers within their college with the opportunity to progress to vocational HE programmes within the institution.

The HE programmes within the MEG institutions tend to share a common focus though each college has its own specialisms. HE courses in Engineering, Business Management, Computing, Health and Social Care and Education are offered at all institutions. Distinctive programmes include Travel and Tourism and Multi-skilled Systems Maintenance Engineering (both centres of vocational excellence) at New College Durham, Engineering (civil, construction, mechanical, electrical, electronic and telephonic) at Wigan & Leigh College while the rural campuses of Warwickshire College are the location for the volume specialism, land based studies – veterinary, equine,

horticultural, agricultural – and sports and leisure. All of the HE curricula situated within these MEG institutions enjoy close relations with local employers and employers' bodies and are engaged in work based and work related learning. Thus the Travel and Tourism COVE, one of only seven nationally, is a key focal point for local partners from the travel and tourism sector and works with the Sector Skills Council and Impact Research in the regional Tourism Skills Alliance to develop a Regional Workforce development plan in a region which is a big draw for tourists. New employer links are being created with the opening of a new city based Tourism Skills Centre, and a new city centre. Regional developments include a casino, conference centre, pub management project, coastal regeneration and a World Heritage site. Similarly the centre for multi-skilled systems maintenance engineering providing specialist training and education for skilled technicians has been developed in association with Nissan and the Automotive Sector strategic alliance.

The success of Engineering, particularly mechanical and electrical, at Wigan & Leigh College is almost wholly attributable to the demands of British Aerospace Systems located in a neighbouring town. The local university provides the full-time courses for employees; the college is the sole provider of part-time courses.

Warwickshire College's specialisms in veterinary nursing and equine studies (COVE since 2002) is a product of its rural location and an increasing demand for horse related activities, farming, animal care, environmental conservation organisations, rural tourism and recreation and is strongly supported by local employers, many of them SMEs. The courses supply a developing local and regional market. A second strength in the field of Engineering is stimulated by the presence of the Land Rover group in Coventry and of the automotive chain that has developed in close proximity.

Bradford College which has COVEs in the areas of Applied Science, Beauty and Complementary Therapies and Gas Technology offers some 50 Honours Degrees across the fields of Art and Design, Business, Applied Science, Engineering, Applied Social Studies and Applied Human Studies and is a major provider of primary and secondary ITT and offers a range of HNC/D courses. Its degrees, some in collaboration with Bradford University and Leeds Metropolitan University, have also explored niche markets in animatronics, ophthalmic dispensing, complementary therapies and cosmetic science. It also offers Foundation Degrees in Community Health, Health and Social Care, Health Related Exercise and Fitness, Early Years Education, Metallurgy and Materials, Engineering Technology and Managing and Supporting Learning. Its expanded portfolio reflects not only the size of its HE student body but also the local shift away from basic industry and towards an increased reliance on public sector employment and SMEs.

Well established and strong links with employers have enabled the other MEG colleges to develop between them some 20 Foundation Degrees and 15 Honours Degrees while continuing to offer a range of HNC/D courses. Progression from FE to HE is therefore well established though at Honours degree level the reliance on validating universities has not always been straightforward. Colleges' perceptions that universities on occasion consign them to the margins of development have led them sometimes to seek a partner university outside their region. Relations with neighbouring school sixth forms can occasionally prove difficult since colleges unlike universities may be perceived as competitors rather than partners. Nevertheless, all colleges are in the process of developing progression routes and strengthening partnership arrangements with schools, colleges and universities as well as maintaining and increasing their local community links as the local provider of post-school education.

Case study **COVE – Multi-skilled Systems Maintenance Engineering**

Start date: June 2003

Funding end date: May 2006

The Centre for Vocational Excellence provides specialist training and education for multi-skilled maintenance technicians with the emphasis on facilities systems engineering. Programmes provided by the COVE offer sufficient breadth to include both mechanical and electrical/electronic vocational training.

The COVE builds upon existing curriculum links with the Automotive Sector Strategic Alliance (ASSA) and Nissan Motor Manufacturing (UK) Ltd and has resulted in the design of a programme of learning specifically to meet the needs of employers.

The focus of the COVE is to produce and enhance highly skilled and qualified systems maintenance technicians. The content of the programme is spread over a five-year period. During this time the learners study for the following qualifications:

- First Diploma in Operations and Maintenance Engineering
- Performing Engineering Operations NVQ Level 2
- Key skills
- National Certificate/Diploma in Mechanical Engineering
- National Diploma in Electrical/Electronic Engineering
- Engineered Systems Maintenance NVQ Level 3
- Higher National Certificate/Diploma in Electrical/Electronic Engineering
- Higher National Certificate/Diploma in Mechanical Engineering
- Foundation Degree in Maintenance Engineering

In addition to the above, all learners undertake additional practical engineering training to supplement their NVQ qualifications.

The training is designed to ensure a broad based programme of learning which can specifically focus on facilities systems maintenance technicians and dye maintenance technicians. However, the programme is flexible to allow all learners to follow variations of the same programme. ASSA, Nissan and the college have developed the systems maintenance NVQ level 3.

As all learners are Modern Apprentices, the programme is focused to support their employment. This programme is unique for a highly focused manufacturing industry in which development towards competence can take up to 10 years.

Appendix B

University of Salford: the use of AP(E)L for Entry onto our pilot Foundation Degree in community governance

The University of Salford welcomes adult learners and has developed Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) to provide an alternative entry route and opportunities for individuals to progress on the Foundation Degree in Community Governance.

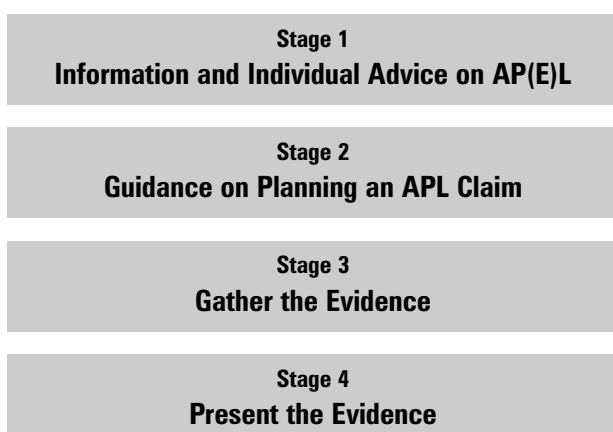
Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is designed to encourage learners to recognise their skills, reflect on their learning from paid and voluntary work. It can give value to their experience by helping them to recognise what they have learnt, develop their progression in learning or change direction and break through into a new career. As well as having value in its own right, their learning could form the basis of their application for a place on the Foundation Degree in Community Governance. It could save valuable time by leading to credit towards part of the programme and the learner would then complete the remainder of the course before achieving the final qualification.

AP(E)L is beneficial to the programme team, as it widens participation and enables them to identify learners' needs before entry to the programme. Referrals can then be organised to ensure that the Education Development Unit provides appropriate academic support to complement the guidance that is available within the School of AEMS.

We have developed a policy, a process and practices that help the learner put together a claim for entry or credit by matching their current and prior learning against specific requirements of the programme. We will provide individual advice and guidance designed to support and help them to take responsibility for preparing their application for entry or credit and identifying appropriate evidence to support their claim. They would use a variety of both direct evidence including other certificated learning, reports or minutes, extracts from their appraisal documents and particular pieces of work they have completed e.g. plans or projects they have contributed to in the workplace. Indirect evidence would include references or testimonies from employers or someone who has worked on a project with them.

Access Development within the Education Development Unit is responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of AP(E)L at the University of Salford. We provide the information, advice and guidance that the learner may require.

The chart below summarises the APL process



Case study

This is the story of Jackie Crowe who used Accreditation of Prior Learning (APEL) to enrol and succeed on one of Salford University's innovative Degree Schemes. The Foundation Degree in Community Governance, while continuing with her job.

"Starting my career late after leaving school with a few CSEs, obtaining an NVQ Level 2 in Business Administration and having a family, I started work with Salford City Council's Education Department as a Clerk Typist in 1994. In 1996 I was appointed as Clerical Assistant in the Authority's Development Services Directorate working in the Central Administrative Team.

"After several years in the post, having learned my job inside out I felt I was ready for a new challenge. Without further qualifications promotion was not a possibility and approval was given for me to find a suitable qualification course. After researching other courses I heard of the Foundation Degree in Community Governance.

"This course appealed to me as you had the opportunity to top up the course to a full Degree and the assignments were work-based so they had more relevance to my working practices. Due to a lack of qualifications I had to submit an accreditation of Prior Learning (APEL) to meet the entry to meet the entry criteria. The APEL was to show that skills learnt to date in my career were sufficient to study at degree level. The APEL was approved and I successfully enrolled on the Foundation Degree in Community Governance in September 2001.

"A senior position was created on my section where knowledge of best value and performance management skills were a requirement. The knowledge gained throughout the research for my assignments proved extremely helpful in the interview and I was successful.

"As a direct result of studying towards this qualification my role within Development Services has changed dramatically. It has gone from a pure administrative/clerical function to project management, creating and implementing solutions and being the Directorate's 'Champion' on initiatives such as E-government and Web Content.

"I feel a great sense of achievement, as this course has not only provided me with the opportunity to broaden my knowledge and transferable skills it has given me confidence. The grades attained to date for each assignment clearly show that I am more than capable of studying at this level with seven Distinctions, six Merits and one Pass. I wish I had started studying years ago, but then I wouldn't have had the opportunity to study for the Foundation Degree in Community Governance."

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