

**Construction Skills Higher Apprenticeship – Development of Foundation degrees to support the delivery of the Higher Apprenticeship framework**

**HEI and FEC Working Group Meeting – Construction Skills, London**

**17<sup>th</sup> January 2011**

**Meeting Notes**

**1. Attendees**

Jill Ward (Chair)	LLN National Forum (and Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin LLN)
Dave Halliwell	Newcastle-under-Lyme College
Julie Cowley	Glyndwr University
Brian Duffy	Leeds College of Building
Patrick Leavey	College of North West London
Eyo Inameti	College of North West London
Philip Akam	Hull College Group
Kevin Clancy	York College
Kevin Moran	Birmingham and Black Country LLN
Mark Anderson	New College Durham
Paul Kitchen	Walsall College
David Oloke	University of Wolverhampton
Nick Gooderson	Construction Skills
Aled Williams	CEBE/Salford University
David Cracknell	CIC/Construction Skills
Claire Newhouse	LLN National Forum
Graeme Hall	West London LLN
Adrian Anderson	UVAC

## **2. Welcome, Introduction and Rationale – Jill Ward, LLN National Forum**

Jill Ward outlined the background to the project, in particular referencing the LLN National Forum policy paper on Higher Apprenticeship, which emphasised the importance of social mobility and embedding seamless progression into and through Higher Apprenticeship. On the basis of the paper, the LLN National Forum had been contacted by Construction Skills. Construction Skills were supportive of the approach advocated and wanted to ensure Foundation degrees were available in their Higher Apprenticeship (in addition to HNDs) that recognised technical competence and that could be used to deliver through a predominately work-based learning approach their Higher Apprenticeship framework. What the construction industry wanted (particularly large companies), were Foundation degrees that were 'fit for purpose' based on work-based learning and the accreditation of both knowledge and technical competence. Large employers were asking for Foundation degrees to be included in the Higher Apprenticeship framework – the project was being driven by this employer need.

Through and with the support of several LLNs and Construction Skills, UVAC had been commissioned to undertake a programme of work to bring together and support the development and validation of Foundation degrees that could be used to deliver the Higher Apprenticeship framework. Validation would need to be achieved by July 2011 – attendees noted that this was possible. FEC with HEI partners were being invited to work together to identify, develop and have validated Foundation degrees that met this particular need. Approaches involving joint validation, which by their nature were complex and time consuming, were not being proposed, instead institutions could work together to jointly develop modules, work-based delivery models etc. that met the need and delivered the skills requirements of the Higher Apprenticeship framework. A separate Advisory Group had been established to support this development and the design and validation by HEI/FEC partnerships of Foundation degrees that met this particular need. The Advisory Group membership was designed to draw together a range of partners with an interest and expertise in this area. Membership and notes from the first meeting of the Advisory Group are attached.

Jill noted that the work being undertaken would act as an exemplar for developments in other sectors and with other Higher Apprenticeship frameworks.

## **3. Labour Market Intelligence and the Higher Apprenticeship – Nick Gooderson, Construction Skills**

Nick Gooderson summarised the key messages outlined in *ConstructionSkills Network 2010-2014* and more recent research. Points raised included:

- The next two years are challenging, but 2013-15 will see a recovery
- There are differences between the regions – as outlined in the report
- The industry needs to recruit 43,000 workers a year
- Trades in high demand include construction managers
- The industry takes on 25,000 apprentices a year, with 25% progressing to level 3, 2,000 – 2,500 progress to level 4 and above (though an HND/C and Higher Apprenticeship). There is a demand from large employers for Foundation degrees to form part of the Higher Apprenticeship (smaller employers tend to prefer

HNDs/HNCs) which are available. The Foundation degrees will be complementary to existing HND provision

- There are 84 Foundation degrees in construction. Construction Skills has an issue regarding their consistency and how they accredited competence. The CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) is fundamental in the industry and needs to be reflected in the Foundation degrees developed to deliver the Higher Apprenticeship
- The Foundation degrees developed and validated to deliver the Higher Apprenticeship needs to have a 'multi-role' with core and options. Initially focused on operations management, the Foundation degree must then cover contracting, civil engineering, heritage and other parts of the sector on the basis of research conducted.

#### **4. The Higher Apprenticeship Framework – David Cracknell, Construction Industry Council**

Although Construction Skills had issued guidance on Foundation degrees, recognition of Foundation degrees in the sector was pretty patchy. In particular professional bodies were 'unsure of where Foundation degrees fitted' and there was a potential need for a benchmarking statement.

The Foundation degree in Construction Operations Management (previously circulated) was aimed at those who wanted to validate and deliver Foundation degrees. This framework was seen by Construction Skills as a very useful start for those wanting to develop and validate Foundation degrees for the Higher Apprenticeship. It covered a broad area, site managers, supervisors, contracting and office based staff, but was a framework, rather than validated Foundation degree. The Foundation degree for the Higher Apprenticeship needed to be fairly broad, with core and optional modules validated separately, delivered predominately through work-based learning to individuals who were working in the industry. The Foundation degree framework sets out a series of principles which should be useful and guidance on how Foundation degrees could be recognised in the sector.

CSCS cards are a fundamental way of recognising competence and meet health and safety requirements in the sector. How the Foundation degree relates to CSCS through NOS will be fundamental. Construction Skills has undertaken considerable work in relating NOS to LMI and knowledge and competence requirements for specific roles in the sector. In the last few months work has been conducted looking at future skills at level 4. The imminent publication of the SASE (subsequently published 19 January) should provide guidance on the role of a single qualification in a Higher Apprenticeship framework and the recognition of knowledge and competence. The above information needs to be provided to HEIs and FECs on the Working Group.

The following points were raised:

- The viability of the Foundation degree within the higher apprenticeship framework must be demonstrated for the provider. Numbers of potential

learners, broken down by regions is needed, along with details of actual employer support – i.e. named employers interested in participating in and using Higher Apprenticeship. Institutions needed such information to justify the focus of resource on this development. UVAC to work with Construction Skills to provide to HEIs and FECs.

- A mapping of provision that was currently available would be very useful to ensure a 'reinvention of the wheel' did not occur.
- The 'curriculum match' between an NVQ and Foundation degree in the Higher Apprenticeship framework would be interesting, particularly the extent to which they both recognised the competence and knowledge requirements and how an NVQ could provide recognition for an individual who did not complete the full Higher Apprenticeship. There would also be funding issues associated with such an approach. Reference would need to be given to the SASE requirements re qualifications included in Higher Apprenticeship (this was published on 19 January).
- An input would be needed from the Chartered Institute of Building. The role of the Open University was also raised.
- FECs would want to discuss arrangements with their current HEI validating partners, this was essential for existing Foundation degrees. A list of HEIs interested in supporting the development of Foundation degrees for the Higher Apprenticeship would, however, be distributed.
- Progression into the Higher Apprenticeship would be fundamental – focus was needed on level 3 Apprentices and adults in the existing workforce. There was no reason why bridging courses at level 3 could not be incorporated as modules within the Foundation degrees developed and validated or through a 'year zero'. The validation of discrete modules would be the approach adopted, this would allow for the recognition of 'bite-sized' provision, maximum use of AP(E)L and support flexibility in delivery and learning at the pace that was in the best interests of the learner and their employer. Flexibility must be core to the design and delivery of Foundation degrees used to support delivery of the Higher Apprenticeship. The Higher Apprenticeship and Foundation degrees within the Higher Apprenticeship would be predominately work-based. A core focus of the project and the development of Foundation degrees within the Higher Apprenticeship framework would be to ensure progression to Honours degrees and professional qualifications. Foundation degrees would need once delivered to specify an honours top-up, during development process it could be stated that a top-up option was being developed. The Honours top-up would need to reflect the work-based delivery approach as developed through the Foundation degree

The importance in due course of marketing the Higher Apprenticeship as a progression route for level 3 Apprentices was raised. This activity needs to take place to ensure there is

awareness and therefore take up of the Higher Apprenticeship. The potential benefits of the Higher Apprenticeship and Foundation degree need to be defined and thereafter promoted to sector employers and employees.

The Working Group has a USP which should be utilised. A consortium of HEIs and FECs through the LLN National Forum and UVAC, working with Construction Skills to develop and validate provision to meet specific skills needs identified by employers as delivered through the Higher Apprenticeship. This USP should be promoted and championed. UVAC and the LLN National Forum should look at ensuring senior managers in institutions are aware of the potential and value of the work being undertaken. This was not just important to secure development support, but was also needed to ensure student numbers were available. Co-funding issues would also need to be considered. UVAC should write to senior individuals in institutions outlining the work that was being undertaken

Although Construction Skills could not promote individual qualifications e.g. foundation degrees it could promote the Higher Apprenticeship. In due course could Construction Skills promote the Higher Apprenticeship and institutions then identify the Foundation degrees developed and validated as a way of delivering the Higher Apprenticeship.