



New Vocational Initiatives

UNIVERSITY VOCATIONAL AWARDS COUNCIL

Proceedings of the
University Vocational Awards Council
Annual Conference,
at St Williams College, York, 2001

Edited by Professor Simon Roodhouse

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Introduction

The second University Vocational Awards Council conference set out to investigate the new vocational initiatives in higher education, in particular the issues concerned with the interactions between the existing national education and training systems and new schemes, such as Graduate Apprenticeships and Foundation Degrees.

For example, the national training system, which includes national occupational standards of competence and NVQs, is expected to relate to the emerging Foundation Degrees and Graduate Apprenticeships, yet the funding arrangements for these new models lag behind.

It is also the case that higher education is being expected to increase the number of students participating over the next ten years to 50% of 18–30 year olds and at the same time enhance graduate employability. The market for school leavers is saturated as has been indicated by UCAS. It is therefore increasingly necessary to consider the workplace as a key market for future growth in higher education. This will require a greater integration of the training systems, curriculum change, academic qualifications, flexible learning delivery and an increased emphasis on accreditation of prior learning and experience.

It will also begin to place greater emphasis on a demand driven education and training system as opposed to the present predominantly supply side model.

The strategic issues surrounding the new vocational initiatives were explored through a national overview provided by Professor Floud the Chair of Universities UK. A panel of experts, which included a representative from the DFES, RDA, Edexcel, and NCNTO, undertook a closer examination of the operational implications of the delivering the new agenda including the employers' perspective.

The key issues to emerge were:

- The need for rationalisation of initiatives at institutional, regional and national levels.
- The problems of the funding streams and the restrictive nature of the associated criteria.
- The need for simple translation processes between HE and the NVQ system.
- The need to involve employers and engage with employers' groups.
- The need to capture best practice and disseminate it through staff development.
- A recognition that negotiated learning provides new opportunities for higher education.
- There is a lack of understanding of the difference between foundation degrees and higher national diplomas.

These issues are explored from an individual perspective in the following selected papers presented at the conference and in the summary of the discussions at the close of these proceedings.

The proceedings are a modest contribution to debates in higher education concerning the New Vocational Initiatives. The University Vocational Awards Council will continue to support the further and higher education sectors in achieving the 50% participation of 19-30 year olds in higher education by 2010 through its work.

Professor Simon Roodhouse
September 2002

The new vocational initiatives – a national overview and higher education’s contribution

Professor Roderick Floud

Introduction

The correct place to start a review of the scene is the place of higher education in the economy and society. The sector is among the UK’s biggest employers – about 300,000 people and the biggest educators – nearly 2 million students currently in the system. UK universities punch well above their weight in research and provide consultancy to thousands of businesses, large and small.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, said in 2001, “universities have a major role to play in generating ideas and providing high level skills crucial for productivity and growth”.

HE’s Contribution

- UK graduates rated their HE courses much higher compared with other European graduates (CHERI for HEFCE 2001)
- 84% of students believe the money they are spending on their education is a good investment (MORI 2001)
- Only 8% of young (and 15% of mature) entrants do not continue in HE after the first year (HEFCE 2000)
- UK graduates aged between 30 and 44 earn 76% more than non-graduates (OECD 2001)
- ‘The Wider Benefits of Higher Education’ (Institute of Education for HEFCE 2001)

UK students questioned in a recent study were more satisfied with their higher education than any of their peers from other European countries and Japan. Retention rates are among the best in the world and the Education Select Committee in Parliament noted: “this is a matter in which the Higher Education sector should take considerable pride”.

Graduates do well, and are amongst the highest earners in the world relative to non-graduates. The wider benefits of higher education include skills improvement, physical and mental health, community involvement and a tendency towards egalitarian and democratic beliefs.

The attack on vocational higher education

According to some commentators many of the higher education courses are “vacuous Mickey Mouse degrees”.

This attack on vocational higher education has its roots in a “more means worse” argument articulated by Kingsley Amis in the 1960s: more students means worse higher education. Those making these criticisms use precious little evidence for their arguments; the evidence found by UUK points to the opposite. For example figures released from the Careers Service Unit (CSU) in November 2001 showed that 7% of media studies graduates are in full-time employment within six months of graduation. This figure is some 8% higher than the national average of 68 per cent. This does not mean as many people have assumed that the other 30% are unemployed. Far from it, around 20 per cent are undertaking further study and some 6% are not available for work – because they have families or had decided to travel as many people do. The actual figure of those believed to be unemployed is at an all-time low of 5.5%. We also know that this initial unemployment figure is transitory and stabilises at just over 2% after three years, this is half of the employment rate of the workforce as a whole.

Courses, contrary to what some say, are popular and produce employable graduates, but there is a “catch 22” here. When the former Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead, had to admit that media studies graduates have found employment, he immediately changed his ground and attacked the subject for not having intellectual rigour. So how does higher education win? Universities have to demonstrate that degrees can both be rigorous and challenging and also lead directly to employment.

The higher education system that is preparing people for the world of work, is also responding to the demands of lifelong learning to keep pace with the increasing rate of change in the labour market. It should not be forgotten that higher education has always encouraged people to grow and learn, to improve skills and spark curiosity. This has not changed – and it is that which means graduates will become a highly educated population and significantly contribute to this country's success in the new millennium. **Higher education is, and must remain, a contribution to a civilised and cultured society.**

This applies to all validated degrees. It includes the old established vocational degrees, degrees in response to employers' needs, Innovative degrees and the new vocational learning, which makes up higher education today.

There are traditional degree courses that provide our country with teachers, lawyers, doctors, social workers and health professionals. It is noticeable that within these degrees vocational elements are increasingly important.

The Manchester University law degree now provides practical experience in a law advice shop where students working alongside practising solicitors provide legal advice to the local community. At Cardiff University optometry students gain invaluable experience by working in one of the only university run public eye clinics in the United Kingdom. There are degrees that respond to the expressed needs of employers – more courses than ever before have been successfully developed in response to and in conjunction with employers throughout business and industries. These range from Bournemouth University's retail management degree which has a 100% employment rate for its graduates for the last seven years; to the computing for real-time systems degree at the University of the West of England. This course is a two-plus-two course design and secures student sponsorship from Hewlett-Packard.

A good example of an innovative approach and a favourite of the well-known detractors is the surface science and technology degree at Plymouth University. This course has succeeded in packaging together rigorous academic disciplines that include oceanic science, materials technology and business studies. These underpin its intellectual validity. The course is designed to engage with and appeal to young people who often do not see higher education as relevant to them. However, this course connects with their interests and sparks imagination. It was launched in response to demands by local employers, enjoys sponsorship from industry and has been franchised in Hawaii and Western Australia.

The Department for Education and Skills (DFES) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) have awarded funds to a range of Higher and Further Education institutions to develop graduate apprenticeships, and foundation degrees and in particular an example of a successful approach to introducing a graduate apprenticeship can be found at Kingston University. The University graduate apprenticeship scheme has already proved its worth for Mandeep Jamal who became involved in the first stage of the scheme while studying Aerospace Engineering. During his six-week stint at the Surrey-based firm Britax aircraft interiors, he played a major role in developing a new seating design that has now been patented by the company. It has secured him immediate employment at Britax on his graduation.

In discussing vocational higher education there is one other criticism that needs to be addressed which is the charge that no subject can be suitable for degree level study if it does not have a body of literature and its own methods of investigation in place. The experience of the research community shows that many of the new research discoveries have been made at the boundaries of the traditional subject. In the past new subjects have grown up this way and eventually we have taught them under their new subject headings to undergraduates. Today the whole process is telescoped with the speed of change; research areas translate rapidly into knowledge-based industries, which lead higher education to provide undergraduate programmes and to staff them at graduate level.

Non-vocational higher education?

According to one recent report, by Industry in Education, universities pay only lip service to the development of personal interactive skills that employers are particularly looking for. This is an old refrain and should be carefully interpreted in the context of employer needs and the criticisms of the preparedness of graduates to work.

It is fair to say that higher education provides a range of opportunities for students to develop the work-related skills and knowledge. Certainly there is a need to integrate these opportunities into a more structured approach in some programmes. There is also a need to look to provide more support for students to reflect on their experience. For that reason the development of progress files is seen as a constructive contribution.

But any degree programme can include work placements, work-related projects, simulated exercises and case studies. It should also be noted that students engage in voluntary activities outside the formal programmes of study with the student union or within their local communities and elsewhere. By the time they graduate, all students – whatever their subject – will have become independent learners, developed a range of generic skills and be able to make a significant contribution in their chosen field of work.

Even a degree related to a particular occupation, which provides a more specific preparation, also needs to impart generic skills since specialised knowledge or techniques are quickly superseded. **Is there then such a thing as non-vocational higher education study?** It should be recognised that the majority of students are working or have worked before entering university, which seems to further undermine any old fashioned notions of simply “reading for a degree”. More can be achieved however and employers could offer increased numbers and better quality work placements and related activities. In partnership we could facilitate more workplace learning and build accreditation for it. However, the distinction between vocational and non-vocational higher education is blurring.

What do graduates do?

Percentage of graduates working in an occupation who studied a closely related subject

Occupation	% of graduates from closely related subject
Nursing & Health	89-92
Teaching (Education)	80
Science	49
Engineering	48
IT	<40
Others	

[From 'What do graduates do?' 2002, CSU]

This table is derived from data in a CIS report on what do graduates do, which was published in November 2001.

It is often repeated that employers are more concerned with transferable skills and work experience than a degree discipline. Around 40% of all graduate vacancies do not specify a particular subject or vocational degree. When this is disaggregated, it shows that, excluding the office occupations it is likely to be well over 40% of graduate vacancies, which do not require a specific subject degree. Apart from nursing and health, teaching, science, engineering and IT the proportion of graduates working in an occupation related to their degree subject after six months is less than 40%. Even in the fields of business and finance only 37% of graduates working there have accountancy, business and management studies, or mathematics degrees.

Major challenges

It is clear that higher education institutions make a significant contribution to the economy and society, but there are challenges ahead, in particular social exclusion and responsiveness to labour markets, both of which are intimately linked.

Social Inclusion

- 45% of SEGs I-IIIIn & 17% of IIIIm-V enter HE (HEFCE 2000)
- The predicted maximum number of students likely to take A Levels (a third of 18 year olds) was reached by 1994 (Dearing 1995)
- Low rates of successful completion of broad vocational qualifications eg GNVQs (DfEE 1999)
- 12% of those entering HE have broad vocational qualifications (UCAS 1999)
- More 18-21 year olds will be in SEGs IIIIm-V (HEFCE 2001)?

Universities have made great strides in achieving a gender balance, increasing the number of mature students and reflecting broadly the ethnic mix of our communities in higher education. However, inclusion in higher education has yet to fully embrace lower income groups. While 45% associate economic groups I to IIIIn enter higher education, only 17% of groups IIIIm, IV and V do so. If the target of 50% of 18 – 30 year olds participating in higher education by 2010 is to be achieved, it will be necessary to bring in people from these groups, because a saturation point has been reached with the traditional segments of society.

Estelle Morris, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, in her recent speech on higher education at the London Guildhall University, acknowledged that a large part of the solution to widening participation will be concerned with raising the levels of retention and attainment in schools and colleges. However, higher education tutors have an important role to play, by building an initial response to curriculum 2000 and being willing to recognise a broad range of pre-entry qualifications in order to expand entry.

The recent Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) paper on supply and demand in higher education suggests that even to stand still it will be necessary to widen participation in the remainder of this decade as the younger population will be made up predominantly of eight socio-economic groups IIIIm, IV, and V. It should not be forgotten that there are approximately 1,000,018 – 30 year olds who have level 3 qualifications but have not entered higher education, and the opportunity to attract them is available. So this time, expansion really must mean social inclusion. It is no longer only a moral imperative and a political choice it is now also a practical and logistical necessity.

There is a key role for work based learning in this process, both as a route into higher education and as a form of higher education study. Some of the foundation degrees are filling this role, and, of course some part-time postgraduate courses for professionals have incorporated work based learning. Developing and running such courses involves a great deal of work; negotiating and collaborating with employers; appointing and training mentors; establishing work-based methods of inquiry and problem-solving. This is a major change, and needs to be met.

Responsiveness to labour markets

The figures for graduate employment are impressive; as mentioned earlier, the Careers Service Unit (CSU) figures on graduate first destinations shows that the employer rate for this group remains at an all-time low of 5.5%, down from 9.2% in 1995. Labour market forecasts indicate that between 1999 and 2010 there will be a growth of 1.73 million jobs in occupations that typically recruit graduates.

Graduate Employment

- In 1999-2000, 94% of UK graduates were employed or studying six months after graduation (HEFCE 2001)
- 3 years after graduation, this increases to 97 or 98% (Moving On, IES 1999)
- The majority of UK HEIs have employment rates 6 months after graduation of between 90% and 95% (HEFCE 2001)
- In retailing and transport, graduate employment doubled between 1988-98
- On the other hand, the proportion of graduates in positions below associate professional level also grew (15% & 6% respectively) (NIESR 2001)

Research shows that even when graduates take up a post that doesn't immediately utilise all the skills and knowledge, many of them develop their job and roles within organisations, so that before long they contribute at a higher level. Some employers have encouraged this by upgrading previously non-graduate jobs to take advantage of the greater supply of graduates. In retailing and telecoms, for example, changes such as the spread a project working have required higher levels of information processing, communication and other generic skills. Graduates can provide these higher level skills. As we move towards the 50% participation target the challenge ahead is to ensure that the graduates of 2010 are fully utilised in the employment market, regardless of their social and cultural background. It is also important to recognise the likely growth of the service industries, notably retailing, computers services, telecoms and railways, that will require graduates with relevant practical work experience. Graduates with full-time education and without such work experience, prior to entering higher education or while studying, may initially struggle to compete in such a marketplace with those graduates with a background of on-the-job training.

Meeting the sector skills and productivity challenge

'Meeting the sector skills and productivity challenge'

- Fewer Sector Skills Councils than NTOs
- Responding to sectors rather than industries
- Strong links with education & training providers
- Sector Skills Development Agency

The Department for Education and Skills document, "Meeting the Sector Skills and productivity challenge", aims to engage more employers in the planning and delivery of learning and skills. Sector Skills Councils are to replace the existing National Training organisations. These plan to achieve a step change in performance and a faster rise in productivity and international competitiveness.

There will be fewer Sector Skills Councils than NTOs, and providers of education and training will be expected to deliver broader skills, rather than those of a specific industry.

This framework is designed to address changing employment patterns and aims to make it easier for people to move between areas of employment. Consequently the Sector Skills Councils are intended to forge strong links between

employers and educators to influence the young and more mature learners who are not yet a part of the workforce. It is their intention to seek to increase the employability of students and promote work placement opportunities as well as lifelong learning to employers in the sector. It is important in these circumstances that Higher Education institutions engage more systematically with this learning and skills agenda and influence it. However, business must also accept higher education's role and expertise in these matters. More can be done particularly as higher education will, as participation widens, become one of the main customers for Sector Skills Councils, Learning and Skills Councils, and further education.

In this paper I have sought to describe the national context for the vocational work in higher education and draw out some of the key challenges, not all the detail has been covered but it is an attempt to provide a helpful framework for the new vocational initiatives.

A new vocational initiative, foundation degrees

Is it desirable for foundation degrees and HNDs to co-exist?

Paul Sokoloff, Edexcel foundation

Introduction

Foundation degrees, introduced by the DFES in 2001 as a solution to the intermediate skills gap in the UK labour force and to encourage greater participation in higher education, are challenging curriculum planners, managers, and awarding bodies such as Edexcel, which has traditionally provided the recognised qualification for this market.

The qualification context a decade ago was for the new GNVQ, which the then Department for Education and Science intended would sweep away all before it including the BTEC National certificates and diplomas. Today these qualifications remain strong and it is the GNVQ that has all but disappeared, having been absorbed into the vocational A level and GCSE qualifications. The question then is, is this debate around whether HNDs will be replaced by foundation degrees necessary?

Are Higher National diplomas already a spent force? The trend in registrations over the past four years for HND qualifications shows an increase from 46,227 in 1996 to 46,607 in 1999. Figures for 2000 are yet to be finalised but indicate that at least 49,261 registrations will be achieved. There is a similar profile for Higher National certificates with steady growth over the past four years, from 28,515 in 1996 to 31,721 in 1999; an 11% growth. This evidence suggests that HNC/Ds continue to be popular.

In 1999 over 78,000 new students registered for a higher national qualification. This figure indicates a large market at this level, particularly when compared to the generous funding allocated for foundation degree students. Growth is not, however, spread across all sectors. Business and engineering are in decline, media is growing slightly and IT related subjects showing the strongest growth. It is interesting however to note which institutions continue to offer higher national qualifications. Numbers have fallen in HEIs from 38,099 in 1996 to 33,753 last year; a decline of over 11 per cent. This evidence suggests HNC/Ds continue to be popular particularly in the further education sector.

In non-HEIs, predominantly Further Education Colleges, numbers have risen over the same period from 37,921 to 43,924, a growth of 15.8%. These figures represent directly funded students and exclude any franchise provision, so it is challenging to consider the future consequences of HNC/C in a predominantly further education rather than higher education environment. So where does this leave the debate? As soon as the foundation degree initiative was announced, the death knell for HNC/D was immediately pronounced and very actively promoted by some! In reality the ultimate survival or demise of the HNC/D will be determined by three factors:

- Politics, a force to be reckoned with, but one that seems to suffer from a lack of staying power
- The market, which includes students, parents, employers, and higher education itself, has variable characteristics
- Funding sensitivity – if funding declines then the qualification supported by that funding suffers.

These three components are now considered in greater depth.

The Political Climate

Critical observers recognise a clear progression of three phases in the development of a political idea, particularly in education. It starts with a flagship concept. The current administration favours the simple concept of a flagship route from GCSE to A level to degree, which has been prosecuted with vigour.

A-levels firmly remain a gold standard with the new Labour administration. The vocational counterparts, the GNVQs, were

tastefully renamed to create the vocational A-level. The rationale was laudable – to give these qualifications parity with A-levels, whilst retaining the word “vocational”. Perhaps observers perceive a similar pattern with foundation degrees and other higher level vocational qualifications.

From the flagship concept, the tendency is to move swiftly to a denial phase, i.e. the creation of a flagship route whilst pretending nothing else exists. The same approach was adopted in the early days of NCVQ, apart from the NVQ all other qualifications mysteriously disappeared from official literature even though NVQs then accounted for less than 1% of all vocational and occupationally specific qualifications.

In phase three, there is acceptance – an acknowledgement that other qualifications exist which might be able to co-exist with the flagship qualifications to the greater good of all stakeholders.

The Market

Progression routes into higher education, employment and the professions remain powerful influencers. Professional bodies vary widely in their views and, whilst most will embrace the foundation degree, it is unlikely they would relinquish HNDs unless they become palpably unfit for their purpose. At the present time more than 95 professional institutions recognise HNDs as part of the recognised routes to membership and progression.

Status is important amongst young people and their parents. It is as yet difficult to predict whether the “glitter and dazzle” of a qualification with degree in its title will be a powerful factor in choice.

National consistency in the content and style of a qualification and its match to employment needs weigh heavy with many employers. Here there is evidence that the HND has the edge, as these qualifications have been designed to national standards of consistency. At present there does not seem to be any mechanism for foundation degrees to be externally quality controlled in this way nor does it appear to be an obvious design feature.

Funding Sensitivity

It is possible to observe enthusiasm and interest amongst education providers in almost direct proportion to the amount of pump-priming funding available. In the case of foundation degrees the amount of funding is impressive. Looking ahead, however, continuity of funding is important if qualifications are not to be “left high and dry”. The Higher Education Funding Council for England directly and explicitly funds HNDs so the views of this organisation remain critical. The national qualification framework, NQF, includes HNDs and thus meets the criteria required to be included in this defined national framework, in particular that these qualifications are both fit for purpose and eligible for public funding.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, QCA, the guardian of the NQF, published criteria for higher level qualifications, and Edexcel considers four of them as relevant to the current debate:

- National consistency – a requirement that the qualification will be the same wherever it is offered. Built into this is a limited provision to meet local needs, for example through option streams, but the core and the key options will be nationally available. This contrasts with the foundation degree programmes that seem to be more or less unique to each providing institution;
- Clear progression routes – established for HNC/Ds;
- Relationship with the National Occupational Standards – this was intended to be a design feature of both foundation degrees and HNC/Ds, although the former seems to have drifted away from this concept. National accreditation makes this explicit relationship a requirement;

- Support from industry, commerce and the professions – this is support that the HNC/Ds have always enjoyed as it is much easier to negotiate support and recognition on a national basis by qualification. The main design features found are:
 - A stronger relationship with employment
 - A progression route aimed towards professional recognition as well as higher education
 - The linkage to higher level NVQs where these are developed
 - An expectation that HNC/Ds will continue to run alongside foundation degrees for the time being.

One factor in favour of HNC/Ds is that this particular qualification is available nationally, and subsequently is easier to financially sustain. This has enabled these qualifications to be developed to serve a wide range of sectors. It may, of course, be feasible for foundation degrees to cover this range, but this will take time and resources.

There does not seem to be any evidence of an imminent demise of these qualifications and there is no doubt that they will continue to play an important role in the post -19 education and training provision.

Competition between qualifications is a healthy, but each must seek to satisfy a particular market and purpose. It is likely that the two types of qualification under consideration can co-exist although the profile of successful sectors and occupations is bound to change over time.

The key to success will be determined by:

- The extent to which there is national and international consistency
- The recognition provided by commerce, industry and the professions
- The ability to meet the needs of specific employers
- The extent to which flexible delivery is achieved.

As with most successful enterprises, whether foundation degree or HNC/D, the most sensible course of action is to allow the market to decide.

Reflections on the introduction of Foundation Degrees in the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium

Kate Arter, University of Hertfordshire

Introduction

This paper describes the experiences of negotiating, developing and delivering foundation degrees at a local level.

It is important to recognise that each region, sub region and locality in which a university resides reflects a diverse community. Hertfordshire is not normally associated with social deprivation, but recent research commissioned by the Hertfordshire IAG Partnership indicates that the gap between the “Haves” (of which many are affluent commuters) and the “Have-Nots” (especially those drawn from rural areas to the East of the County which has a notoriously bad transport infrastructure, and those living in specific wards within urban communities) is growing ever wider.

The university did not receive development funding for its first wave foundation degree programmes, however it has some ten years’ experience developing HE in FE at the colleges through the Associate College Network. This has been formally approved by HEFCE as the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium with 1400 full time and 800 part time HE students mainly on sub degree programmes (for example on HND/C), but up to and including the DMS. In addition good working relationships and trust have been built up between the colleges, the university, a substantial number of employers and their representative bodies. It was agreed at an early stage that foundation degree (FD) development should be led by the colleges in the network in recognition that the majority will be delivered by them. A Consortium Quality Committee was established to validate and quality assure FDs at the university.

An example of this collaboration is the development of a modular HNC/D in IT and Business, validated by the university and delivered at all four colleges which commenced in 1999. This year sees the progression of the first cohort of full time students to final year Honours Degree studies at the university. Indeed, other than the employment component, this scheme meets many of the criteria for FDs (including guaranteed progression to final year undergraduate studies) and will be developed as a FD for September 2002 with an entirely new approach to employer involvement and changed delivery for part time students.

NVQ provision

The university also has significant experience of NVQs in HE and as NVQs or units are expected to be found where appropriate in FDs this experience has proved particularly helpful. In 1993 it established the NVQ Development Centre, the aim of which was to establish the role, which could be played by NVQs and National Occupational Standards for staff, students, and employees of partner organisations. Over a two year period thirteen NVQ assessment centres were established offering NVQs and units thereof, in subjects as diverse as Environmental Conservation, IT, Early Years Care and Education, Languages, Training and Development and Management. A wide range of models were piloted; in one, units from the Environmental conservation NVQ level 2 (Landscapes and Ecosystems) were offered on the Conservation and Recreation Management route within the university’s Environmental Science Scheme as a means of accrediting students’ fieldwork. In another, the DipHE in Parent Education, qualified midwives’ work towards NVQ level 3 in Training and Development as an integral part of their practice based course.

The university took a pan-institutional approach to its NVQ work, establishing both quality systems, which met the criteria of the NCVQ Common Accord and complemented existing academic quality procedures and administrative procedures. As far as possible they were embedded into the central administrative function of the university. The NVQ Handbook is currently undergoing revision to address the requirements of the new Common Inspection Framework. This will also involve incorporation of an approach to the credit rating of NVQs, which was piloted during the development of the BA Hons in Community Justice (which includes a NVQ at level 4 for which the university has attributed 120 credits at HE level 2).

learndirect

The university is one of 9 HEIs to have piloted the use of Ufi (learndirect) materials within the sector. The criteria for this HEFCE funded project required that students on such programmes must not be existing students of the university. It was therefore decided to develop what were in effect, two access type courses (Introduction to IT for University students and Developing IT for university students – credit rated at 10 and 15 credits at Level 0 respectively). In close liaison with Hertfordshire Ufi Hub, students accessed the courses at community learning centres or through the virtual learning centre established by UFI. Once introduced to the programme many were happy to study online from home. This project involved essentially “packaging” a number of small UFI courses into a coherent whole, designing a summative assessment strategy, which built on the formative assessments, integrated within the UFI materials and developing an appropriate validation process. Despite initial teething problems, the students were almost unanimous in their appreciation of the courses. The university believes that the flexibility offered by learndirect, which allows students to study when and where they choose, should be a key characteristic embodied within the new vocational initiatives.

So the building blocks are in place and the Consortium is validating five foundation degrees for the start of the 2002/3 session; namely in Early Years, Design, Media and Business Specialisms delivered at the colleges, and Paramedic Science at the University. All these are areas of demonstrable skills shortage in a county where the unemployment rate fluctuates at around 0.75%.

Piecing together the jigsaw...

If Foundation Degrees are to be both truly innovative and effective in attracting students who hitherto have been unable to access Higher Education (due to work or caring commitments), then there are a daunting number of hurdles to jump.

Firstly there is the language barrier – a simple example of which is in the area of transferable skills. It soon became apparent that our Further Education colleagues were making an assumption that the national key skills units were the accepted model for both the FD and subsequent progression routes. In common with many other HEIs however the university had taken a quite different approach in this area developing a skills menu known as the Hertfordshire Integrated Learning Project (HILP) from which curriculum developers could choose those skills appropriate to a specific learning opportunity. There are important implications here for the seamlessness being sought between the two sectors.

The FD prospectus suggests the possibilities for development leave scope to ensure that foundation degrees match the specific needs of each employment sector. However, it has become increasingly clear that an accepted paradigm outlining the characteristics of a FD for each consortium is required, so that “economies of scale” can be exploited across FDs in all disciplines (in such areas as the Accreditation of Prior Learning or the use of learndirect materials). The existence of such an agreement is also important from a quality assurance point of view.

The issue of meeting the learning needs of disparate groups, namely those mature students with wide ranging employment related experience, and at the same time young less experienced students in a given foundation degree area, poses a particular challenge. On the one hand those at work with experience capable of accreditation will need individually negotiated learning contracts and substantial support to enable them to maximise their learning. On the other hand, the logistics of finding suitable work placements at the right level and with sufficient support for those with little employment experience is likely to cause problems in disciplines where a paucity of such provision exists. For both groups the human resource implications inherent in the work setting are substantial and it is difficult to see how this can be sustained in the current climate despite the recognition of how fundamental this will be to the success of the FD initiative.

In cases where a FD incorporates a NVQ or an online learndirect Course, these will be subject to at least two different inspection regimes – The Common Inspection Framework (under the scrutiny of the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and Ofsted) and QAA, in addition in some cases to scrutiny by professional bodies. Support would be welcomed (through UVAC perhaps) on a suitable and cost effective approach to this heavy workload not to mention advice on the Common Inspection Framework as this unfolds.

National Training Organisations (NTO) involvement is seen as desirable and it would make sense to embed where appropriate NVQs that exist at a suitable level. However, if this were to be encouraged it would mean that the NVQ must be given a credit value at an HE level. Some guidance on a process for this would be useful. It is more likely that many Consortia will choose to use National Occupational Standards to inform the curriculum. However, unless these form part of a NVQ it is hard to know where to find them or indeed which ones actually do exist. A national database of occupational standards is necessary as it is not always only those developed within the occupational sector, which would be appropriate to use for curriculum development. An example is the existence of national occupational standards in Health Promotion that have far reaching applicability within nursing and professions allied to medicine – if curriculum developers knew they existed!

The university's experience of learndirect has been one of the most positive within the HE sector. The University for Industry and the network of learning centres, which it is starting to spawn, offers many opportunities to widen participation. These are hampered however by the cumbersome charging regime within which there are administrative "hub" charges, learning centre charges and an upfront cost to access the online courses. This must be simplified if advantage is to be taken of the flexibility learndirect offers. Currently the university subsidises the provision of short courses using learndirect materials.

There are significant staff development issues inherent within these initiatives for academic staff at all levels and those in partner organisations. This will need to address such issues as quality assurance, coordination of delivery to meet assessment requirements, workplace support (with or without NVQ assessment), awareness raising (among course tutors from whose courses students progress onto FDs and for university admissions tutors managing the guaranteed progression to an Honours degree), negotiated workbased learning contracts, APEL systems and procedures and so on.

This raises access issues. What experience and qualifications will ensure that students are sufficiently well prepared to manage their learning in this new highly work centred environment? Will this new structure prepare part time students for study at HE level 3 once they progress to an Honours degree? It is important to share emerging practice in this area.

Lastly where there is not an obvious progression route at a HEI, it will be necessary to identify them at other institutions and to be able to communicate in detail the experience and achievements of a student including their employment related experience, which will form a crucial part of the award. This is likely to vary significantly across a programme.

The new vocational initiatives are a potentially powerful means of tackling skills shortages and encouraging non-learners into higher education, However, to embrace fully their inherent opportunities it will be crucial to resource these developments adequately (particularly for those consortia without development funding) and to work together to seek solutions to the challenges discussed above. UVAC is well placed to coordinate such support through its networks and to lobby for necessary adjustments at national level to facilitate the introduction of these valuable programmes. Only once these have been addressed will the sector be in a position to develop and sustain the flexible, stimulating and accessible product it seeks to introduce.

Linking Work and Learning

How Universities should be using the workplace to Widen Participation in Higher Education

Dr Phil Margham, Liverpool John Moores University

Introduction

The new vocational initiatives require a much closer engagement with the workplace and this has implications for the curriculum modes of delivery and needs of the learner.

Like many post-1992 universities, Liverpool John Moores University (JMU) has taken a long-term strategic decision “to be open to all, encouraging the participation in higher education of groups not traditionally represented.” The university is in a large urban conurbation, which is one of the poorest in Europe, and, consequently, many local students could come from social groups “not traditionally represented”. Liverpool (like other cities such as Glasgow) has a long history of students ‘going local’ in terms of choosing HEIs, so the task of recruitment from a wide range of groups should be relatively straightforward.

However, when looking at the socio-economic distribution of our students the university is not doing very well at widening participation. The figures show that, as compared to the overall UK University data, the institution is attracting similar proportions of students from managerial and skilled non-manual backgrounds as compared to the average, but rather more students from the skilled manual worker background. However, there is a long way to go before a claim can be made of significant impact on recruitment from the lower socio-economic groups, but it is just these groups that need to be attracted if participation is to be widened in HE at JMU. Their lack of recruitment is not because of restricted access since, for the first time in the university’s history (and that of many other HEIs), increasing the supply of places no longer automatically leads to increased recruitment.

Clearly there are many reasons why certain social groups do not consider embarking on higher education, but the chief factor is likely to be the high cost. A survey of the current student body shows that many students are leaving University with debts of over £10,000, often as high as £20,000: sums greater than the annual income of their parents. This is a daunting prospect for families for whom debt is an ever-present concern. Couple this with a lack of expectation that ‘HE is for me’ and a nagging worry that a job may not result from an HE course, it is perhaps not surprising that the university is not yet fully realising the goals for widening participation.

According to HEFCE, the facts about potential numbers of 18 year-old students are:

- Staying-on rates post-16 are levelling out
- Almost all students with A-levels enter HE already
- Decline in “20-somethings” as potential students
- Little evidence for increased demand for part-time study
- High financial costs.

So the future recruitment of a wider range of students from this age group does not look optimistic. This is where Work-Based Learning (WBL) should be central to any strategy for Widening Participation, since it can provide opportunities for:

- Income: to supplement/replace loans
- Learning: for new learning and for previous learning to be applied and /or contextualised
- Experience: for development of employability skills.

JMU students have extensive experience of work, as; they do it all the time, the majority for between 10 and 30 hours per week. In fact this level of activity forces a reconsideration of the description, “full-time” mode of study!

Why do they do it? A recent survey reveals that 2% are taking work to gain useful experience (skill enhancement) or for the application of learning gained on their course. But 55% suggest they work in order to be able to continue on their course with no hint of skills gain or application of learning. This ‘earning while learning’ may represent a missed opportunity both for our students and for the university. Could these learners be given a chance to identify and possibly accredit, work-related skills from even the most mundane tasks? To persuade a learner to come to JMU three activities are expected:

- Recruitment: we must persuade her/him (or her/his parents) that the financial risk of time spent at JMU will be reasonable.
- Retention: we must provide reasons to stay on the course, convincing her/him that the course is relevant and linked to the world that s/he will be going on to.
- Employment: we must have a track record of preparing students for employment and a history of students actually gaining jobs.

Work-based learning can address each of these three challenges:

WP Challenges	The workplace offers
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ a way of minimising the financial risks of ‘going to Uni’ ■ maximum relevance of curriculum ■ earning potential, debt reduction, sponsorship
Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ a chance to experiment with possible career paths ■ a faster study rate? ■ a strong link of tutor to ‘real world’, improved credibility with students?
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ development of work-related skills ■ a chance of possible future long-term employment

This appreciation of the value of the workplace as a positive environment for learning has a substantial history at JMU, stretching back to its roots as a Regional College of Technology. It has consolidated and developed ideas, and since the mid-nineties had an academic policy that all academic programmes (both UG and PG) should provide opportunities for work-based learning.

A wide range of work-based learning structures have been developed as a result of this policy, which fall into two groups:

1. Placements: full-time students going off-campus for varying periods:

- A year-long sandwich element, although numbers of are slowly declining,
- Semester-long placements, still quite rare,
- Placements of 4 weeks duration or equivalent size over a longer period.

JMU is an active partner in a Liverpool HEI initiative called Business Bridge, whose role is to help small companies improve performance with assistance from students. To date nearly 2000 ‘bridges’ have been completed.

2. At-work Opportunities: part-time students using their daily workplace as a learning environment in which to carry out structured initiatives linking their course-based learning to the working world. Although this group would seem to be the most likely candidates for WBL, in fact the use of the workplace for learning is surprisingly limited. One growing area of interest is an initiative called Learning at Work through which part-time students negotiate their own learning with JMU tutors and their employers.

Last year over 4000 JMU students (20% of total) undertook WBL in some form. What they gained from these various off-campus environments depended largely on the expectations of academic staff. Some students will be helped to devise learning outcomes for the workplace that, if demonstrated, gain academic credit that can contribute towards their JMU

course. Others use the workplace for gaining personal skills. Several sandwich programmes (notably Business Studies) award the Licentiate of the City & Guilds of London Institute (LCGI) for the demonstration of personal skill development (along the lines of key skills) and for the appropriate application of learning in the workplace.

A small number of programmes use NVQs to accredit competencies achieved in the workplace. A pilot scheme to accredit Key Skills (using Objective One funding from the EU) has not proven sustainable in the longer term. A major issue with skill accreditation has been the funding for this activity is not contained within the JMU normal student fee structure. So far this has proved to be a sticking point to further growth and is likely to do so with initiatives such as the Foundation Degree and the Graduate Apprenticeship.

The description of these schemes provides a clear indication that JMU is committed to work-based learning and sees a real advantage in terms of widening participation. So why, then, is there not more work-based learning activity at the university? Basically there are three factors:

1. Staff resistance

- Loss of control: academics are no longer in charge of the learning environment and the achievement of learning objectives.
- Quality assurance uncertainties: probably the greatest issue.
- Threatened loss of role: of the students aren't in classes what is my role?
- Inadequate funding for learner support: off-campus support (and skill accreditation) is expensive and often not covered by basic funding models.
- It's more difficult!

2. Student resistance

- Innate conservatism? Why choose this option when there are 'proper' classes to go to?
- Greater risk of failure – it may not work out, with consequent financial implications.
- It's more difficult!

3. Placements Issues

- Limited (finite?) number of limited duration.
- Many small companies have had a limited exposure to 'graduate' culture (although the proportion is improving).
- But there are increasing HE alumni in the region who will positively effect changes in the culture.

Revisiting the issue of Quality Assurance in WBL

As indicated, QA is often regarded as the biggest single limitation to the use of the workplace for learning. Some of the main issues may be summarised as follows:

- Defining specific learning objectives: ensuring that the planned learning is do-able in the working environment and fully understood by the learner, the employer and the tutor.
- Improving university/workplace communication: developing ways (such as the use of Virtual learning Environments, e.g. Blackboard, WebCT) to support interactive learning.
- Ensuring quality mentoring by employers: helping employers understand the requirements placed on them, a task that can be difficult where there has not been experience of HE culture.
- Coping with changes in learning opportunities at work: the working environment is often less stable than the classroom environment; this may impinge on the definition of learning outcomes.
- Who assesses, and what is assessed (learning vs training): this is a big one. The employer gets to observe the student on a daily basis and probably knows her/him at least as well as the tutor. But experience shows that, if employers are to be involved in HE assessment, careful training is needed to ensure equivalent standards are observed.

■ Defining learning level and volume: an old problem but still a live one. The issue of level is gradually being tackled with the development of academic level 'descriptors' by credit consortia. But defining the learning volume is still a black art, and there seems to be common agreement that volume cannot be measured by the input time.

One solution to addressing these very real challenges is better staff development, particularly in the development of learning agreements, which set out the learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and timescales of the proposed learning. The university experience has been positive: with proper support work-based learning can be a thriving reality.

Universities should have a clear view of how Learning and the Workplace are linked. A vision could be, an intimate link between the workplace and the university, enabling learners to gain a wide range of university awards and complete their studies with reduced debt.

To achieve this it is necessary to operate strategically in at least two areas. Firstly there is a need for programmes of study to fully integrate work-based learning as part of the curriculum, not as an add-on. An example would be the forming alliances with commercial and industrial groups through which students spend an increasing part of their programme (and their vacations) in paid work that involves structured learning, which contributes credit towards the final award. An essential part of the off-campus curriculum would be the development and, ideally, the accreditation of personal and work-related skills.

At the same time there is a need to think about new vehicles for growth. Given the statistics confirming the limited numbers of available 18-year-olds, universities should aim to greatly expand opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD), as part of lifelong learning. In this way we will inevitably draw in people from local communities, from all types of backgrounds, who have never been exposed to HE before and yet now, as a result of business and personal development interests, may find universities offering worthwhile courses. The CPD opportunities need to be manageable for those in full time work and include significant elements of work-based learning for credit. Of course all the features of our credit accumulation and transfer systems need to be used to ensure that lifelong learning is recognised, seen in the round and may, if required, lead to larger university awards.

The second area that requires consideration is the 'official' view of work-based learning. It is not a cheap option; on the contrary, if done well it can be just as expensive as traditional delivery. And yet the funding models do not easily accommodate off-campus learning. There are quite restrictive rules about attendance at University, which relate to a previous era. These should be re-examined. And, of course, the whole area of paying for the accreditation of work-related and personal skills is another topic that needs addressing. These costs simply cannot be met from within the normal HEFCE funding and, given the indebtedness of students, often cannot be paid for by them either. To mention one real situation: the issue of funding for skills development is a major uncertainty influencing the future of the Graduate Apprenticeship schemes.

So there are actions that need taking to make work-based learning a natural element within all vocational HE programmes. The prize of opening up institutions to all that can benefit surely makes this a worthwhile cause.

A pragmatic approach to the introduction of Graduate Apprenticeships

Anna Hughes, Graduate Apprenticeship Project Manager, Loughborough University

Introduction

HEFCE awarded funds to Loughborough to develop two new Graduate Apprenticeship frameworks. In common with other institutions introducing the Graduate Apprenticeship (GA), there have been a number of issues to overcome and a very short timescale in which to succeed. Working with much help from our forerunners in this project, we have been able to design two GA frameworks, one postgraduate and one undergraduate.

One of the first lessons from the pilot projects was that an effective partnership needed to be built between the Higher Education Institution and the National Training Organisations (NTO). A formal Steering Group was therefore established with representatives from the e-skills and Polymer NTOs, as well as East Midland's Development Agency (emda), to oversee the project. The work of this group, and the more informal relationships developed with our partners, has been an important element in the success of the project.

Framework design

The two frameworks, proposed to HEFCE, were

- A postgraduate award aimed at graduates unemployed or under-employed in the East Midlands. The region suffers from a net annual loss of graduates and the University is working with emda to reduce this loss. The framework was also intended to encourage small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to employ more graduates and to commit to their long-term skills development.
- An undergraduate award based on the year in industry, strengthening the structure of sandwich degrees by more closely integrating the work-based element into the overall degree programme. An additional intention was to structure the appraisal and assessment of the industrial placement to meet the requirements of the Quality Assessment Authority's (QAA) codes of practice for placement learning.

Issues to resolve

At the beginning of the project, there were a number of key issues to resolve in designing these frameworks.

The most important of these were:

- Quality and assessment of work-based learning
- External accreditation
- Short timescale.

The issues to resolve

The following issues were identified and solutions developed to enable the two schemes to be implemented successfully.

- Quality and assessment of work-based learning – adapt existing elements to suit GA requirements

The means of assessing work-based learning and performance satisfactorily was a key issue for the university. Carol Newbold, a member of the Learning and Teaching Development team at the university, suggested that we look at a web-based vehicle developed by the Department of Civil and Building Engineering. It was called RAPID and designed for use by their students to help in the process of qualifying for professional association membership and to establish good Continuing Professional Development (CPD) habits.

This was an excellent solution as RAPID combines key, personal and professional, and technical/subject-specific skills in one web-based package, so allowing for evidence gathering, skill attainment and appraisal during all stages of the Graduate Apprenticeship process. The RAPID Development Team is working with e-skills NTO, Loughborough and Chester College of Higher Education to finalise a GA-specific RAPID software package.

- External accreditation – absorb GA assessment and quality into QAA mechanisms

The use of RAPID also helped to achieve another objective. It has been possible using this software to ensure the year in industry experience for undergraduate students in the participating departments conformed with the Quality Assurance Agency's Code of Conduct for placement learning. As far as possible on top of this, it is expected the software will absorb the other GA assessment requirements into in-house mechanisms.

- Short timescale – start small

The most important early objective was to gain the support of individual departments to achieve Senate agreement for the frameworks by Spring 2002. The GA team duly developed a network of a small number of individuals enthusiastic about the Graduate Apprenticeship to act as advocates in their departments. This has been the most powerful tool in enabling us to design the frameworks and gain agreement within the university to proceed.

Conclusion

The short timescale has ironically had a beneficial effect on the design of these frameworks and their introduction at Loughborough University. Since the GA team has not had the luxury of time, it has had to look at what already existed, match this to the requirements of the GA and get on with developing the additional elements needed in the GA package.

The team has also benefited from the experience of the pilot programmes and the other HEIs and NTOs who are further ahead in this process.

The integration of NVQs with higher education qualifications as a means of meeting employer needs

Ruth Goatly, Community Justice National Training Organisation

Introduction

The Diploma in Probation Studies (DipPS) is the new professional qualification for probation officers, introduced in 1998. Its title is confusing because it is not a diploma in the sense of an academic award, but the title of the professional qualification and a prerequisite to employment as a qualified probation officer. It comprises an NVQ level 4 integrated with an undergraduate degree, which must be capable of being delivered within 24 months to trainees who are employed full time by probation areas for the duration of training. The DipPS is currently being delivered in eight programmes in England and one in Wales with a total annual intake of approximately 280 in the first three cohorts. Two cohorts have already completed, the third is half way through and fourth, a dramatically increased entry of just under 1,000, has just commenced.

Different arrangements for training of probation officers remain in place in Northern Ireland and for criminal justice social workers in Scotland.

The story of the DipPS is a story of achievement, and there are three aspects of achievement that are highlighted in this paper.

Creating the new qualification

The first achievement is hidden behind what is often quoted as the starting point for the development of this new qualification, the Home Secretary's statement in July 1997¹. The statement began with the decision that the new qualification should be 'located in higher education and combine a National Vocational Qualification'. This represented a significant shift from the original intention of the previous government, to create a skills-based qualification with little or no role for higher education. This original decision in 1995 followed a review of probation training, which found that much of the existing training appeared to be of good quality, and was capable of being tailored to the probation services' needs, producing recruits who were 'ready to practice'². Nevertheless, it was decided to remove probation training from social work and create what was 'for convenience' labelled a diploma in probation studies, (DipPS). Within this proposed framework, it was to become the responsibility of probation consortia to assess training needs of the trainees they employed and to put together practice-orientated training packages, if necessary including some theoretical input purchased from academic institutions.

There followed a period of intense activity in which it was agreed to work towards the development of national occupational standards for probation officers, but exceptionally and explicitly including higher education as part of the steering group. In addition, a small commissioning group was set up which comprised probation managers, employers, unions, higher education and the Home Office to identify a potential training model to support the implementation of the standards and awards and to recommend effective models for delivery of this training. Although by February 1997 the draft standards were ready to go out for consultation, their publication was stalled and in the period between then and the general election of May 1997, a small group of key stakeholders, including higher education, worked to prepare a business plan which was presented immediately to the incoming Secretary of State. This resulted in the Home Secretary's decision announced just over one month later.

This first stage of achievement was not lightly won and there were some difficult, sometimes competing, agendas to negotiate. However, a sustaining factor was that managers, employers and employee interest groups openly shared the commitment with higher education to retaining the benefits of education and qualification in higher education. Within contributing higher education groups, there also were some difficult debates about the concept of NVQ on a continuum of outright rejection of its academic credibility to active engagement with integration.

Turning the framework into reality

The second stage of achievement followed the statement in July 1997, when the finer details of the requirements of the qualification had to be worked out and implemented, and new structures for its management and delivery put in place. Between September 1997 and May 1998, the occupational standards were submitted for approval, a core curriculum for the qualification, based on the occupational standards and a qualification structure with a regulatory framework agreed. Probation consortia were constituted and consortium managers appointed, and NVQ assessment centres established. In May 1998 national advertisements for the first recruitment of trainee probation officers were placed and tenders invited from higher education institutions for contracts to deliver in partnership with the probation consortia. Once contracts were agreed, higher education institutions had to work exceptionally fast to get programmes validated, and the first programmes begun delivery in October 1998.

It does not take much imagination to appreciate that this period of development took place in a context in which political dimensions and interests could not be ignored, and that given the nature of the changes required, the pace of the development was phenomenal. On reflection, and interestingly in the light of some of the discussions at this conference, there is no doubt that a guiding and beneficial factor was not just the willingness of employers and higher education to work together, but also that the process forced both groups to examine and articulate from their own perspective, the basic principles which would underpin the qualification, as well as the knowledge, skills and values it should deliver.

Responsibility for regulatory framework, monitoring and inspection devolved to a Standing Panel within the Community Justice NTO. The DipPS programmes were approved through a process established by the Standing Panel and the first full inspection of all programmes following full implementation was carried out in January and February 2001. The findings of these inspection visits are contained in a composite inspection reportⁱⁱⁱ. In summary, the report records a very positive endorsement of the DipPS, with graduates achieving excellent degree profiles and demonstrating that they are well equipped with relevant knowledge and skills for practice. Anecdotal evidence at this stage would indicate that employers and significant others such as magistrates and judiciary have increased confidence in the employability of graduates, confidence in the relevance of their knowledge and skills and confidence in their capacity to effectively undertake their role and responsibilities within the organisation. This is the third stage of achievement.

Lessons and issues from the experience

In terms of turning this innovative framework for a qualification into a reality, the importance attached to continuing the responsive dialogue between all parties should not be underestimated. Although there are some differences in the nature of the partnership relationships, some giving more emphasis to the contractual nature of the relationship between employers and higher education, it is clear that such an integration of university-based and workplace learning demands that the commitment and energy that characterised the first stages of achievement have to be maintained in the delivery and in the ongoing development and evaluation.

The regulatory framework document and associated core curriculum, drawn from the knowledge requirements of the 12 designated units of the NVQ award, requires that the qualification is an integrated award. Overall there have been high levels of compliance with the regulatory framework. Some of the areas where programmes are meeting the challenges of implementation with continuing work and development are:

- Integration lies not just in the content of the qualification, but also the structures through which it is delivered. There is an ongoing task to strengthen the understanding and definition of roles and responsibilities and clarity of boundaries, relationships and channels of communication between all those involved in management and delivery of the programmes.
- The pace and demands of the programme put a significant pressure on the learning process and on all parties to maintain a learning environment with the focus and understanding of the trainee as a learner in the context of all their roles. Careful attention needs to be given to the support of the trainee as employee, student and NVQ candidate in managing these multiple roles.
- As a work-based qualification, there has been a shift in the sense of ownership of this qualification and the whole organisation and staff at all levels need to be enabled to understand what the qualification is and what it requires, in order for there to be effective levels of engagement of all parties in the process.

■ There are resource implications, which flow from creating and owning an integrated award. There are two main aspects to this: the regulatory framework requires that programmes are able to deliver through flexible modes of delivery and this has enabled some programmes to develop using open and distance learning models, on-line supported delivery and some with all or substantial parts taught delivery. Whichever model is employed there are resource implications for learning support resources, including appropriate and accessible technology. In some cases, these have been slow to be established. Secondly, the role of the workplace assessor (Practice Development Assessor, PDA) has without doubt proved to be pivotal. There is here a human resource implication, not just in terms of ensuring sufficient numbers of PDAs, but also appropriate levels of training and support.

Two specific characteristics of this innovative development are worthy of fuller consideration in this forum: integration and accreditation of the NVQ and accreditation of prior learning.

Integration and accreditation of the NVQ

The overall requirement of integration is that programmes leading to the DipPS must be designed to ‘ensure a coherent and integrated vocational training and educational experience for each trainee’^{iv}. The specific requirement for accreditation of the NVQ requires that “Any learning which is demonstrated and derived from practice, and meets the relevant award, or part of the award, should be fully accredited. Each programme must have arrangements for the academic accreditation of practice learning via the NVQ. Normally the practice components will form 50% of the programme”¹. The guidance notes on the framework make it clear that this regulation requires that the NVQ achievement should be recognised by the award of academic credit, although it is acknowledged that the extent and process by which this is achieved will be a matter for each individual institution.

All programmes have succeeded in achieving integration of the NVQ knowledge in planning course content and most programmes ensure that the academic assessments are framed in such a way that they can provide evidence of knowledge for the NVQ and assist trainees in making links between theory and practice. There are a number of lessons that have emerged from early implementation:

- The centrality of the role of the PDAs has already been mentioned and it is important therefore that they are well informed about the programme, its structure and content. There are various examples of good practice in engaging them in curriculum development and delivery, and of liaising over learning input in the university and workplace.
- If PDAs are going to be able to assist trainees in linking theory and practice, there may be a development need for them and equally, tutors need to be kept up to date with practice developments.
- There is a consequence of locating an NVQ within a degree for the pacing and sequence of NVQ achievement, which may mean that it is driven more by what is appropriate for the overall programme rather than reflective of the candidate’s pace and balance of practice learning and activity. There were examples also of pressures being experienced in juggling two assessment processes within the specific time constraints and structures of a degree programme.
- Some HE providers have found that building the curriculum around the specific NVQ knowledge requirements has had the effect of narrowing the scope of the curriculum and creating expectations among learners that the primary focus of its delivery will be functional to the purposes of the NVQ rather than developing skills of critical evaluation and analysis. Others argue that these skills are essential and required by the rigour and demands of knowledge assessment in NVQ level 4.

Award of credits for the NVQ

Not all programmes have yet achieved the requirement to award credits for the completion of the NVQ, but the two programmes that so far have offered no credits for the NVQ, are moving towards some partial credit. Where credits are being achieved for the completion of the NVQ, there are some differences in the extent and processes, which include:

- Level of credits (some at level 2 only and some at combinations of level 2 and 3)
- Number of credits (programmes vary between 60 and 120)
- Credits attached to units (i.e. 10 credits per unit) or to the whole award
- ‘Dual purpose’ modules, which are constructed around single units and which are separately assessed by academic assignment for academic credit and practice evidence for the NVQ

One or two emerging points are perhaps worth noting about the quality assurance mechanisms.

- In most programmes, NVQ assessment centres were set up by and within the probation consortia. In one programme it is located within the HE institution. Some were built on established experience but others were entirely new. Whatever the history, there is perhaps an issue of centres having a sufficient confidence and independence to maintain a focus on the NVQ in its own right irrespective of its contribution to the overall DipPS.
- Where credits are awarded for the completion of the NVQ, it is essential that the HEI has confidence in the rigour of the quality assurance processes of the NVQ assessment centre. This may mean having some complementary roles on quality assurance or management boards and mechanisms for linking annual monitoring and quality assurance reporting. The extent to which these have been embedded in the developments so far has varied.
- In some programmes, the HEI has put in place some additional requirements for academic scrutiny or assessment of knowledge evidence for confirmation of the award of credit. This is generally presented as a concern with quality assurance.

Accreditation of prior learning (APL)

The regulatory framework requirement for accreditation of prior learning is that "All programmes must ensure provision for APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) and APCL (Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning). Each HEI will have its own rules concerning the extent of prior credit available and this will vary. The NVQ assessment centre will also need to have accredited APA advisers."

By the time the first round of inspections took place; procedures were in place in all programmes, although they have been implemented in some only in the most recent intakes. The inspection report and an earlier research report commissioned by the CJNTO into academic structures to support level 4 S/NVQs in the community justice sector², found that generally, there was inconsistent and limited use being made of APL and that more work needs to be done to support its effective application.

In practice, it has tended to be applied more in programmes that include the use of distance learning, but there is considerable debate about its capacity to enable accelerated progression through the total qualification. However, the Community Justice NTO has developed a Certificate in Community Justice, which is both a Certificate in Higher Education and a City and Guilds Higher Level Qualification. Where this corresponds to Phase 1 of the DipPS this would be capable of accelerating progression by enabling entry with advanced standing directly into Phase 2.

One of the difficulties is that the importance of APL to these programmes lies not just in the importance of recognising and valuing prior learning and experience, (all recruits will have had some relevant practice experience, but not necessarily in direct work with offenders and some will have had substantial practice experience in probation, and the profile of recruits to date shows that 50% or more will have already achieved undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications), but also in the capacity to deliver qualified staff into the probation service quickly. There is therefore a tension between APL as a part of the learning process and mechanism for speedier (and cheaper) achievement of DipPS, which needs to be carefully negotiated.

There are a number of issues that APL has raised in the short time that these programmes have been implemented and at this stage it has been identified that there is a need for more research into its application in order to be able to promote good practice. This is currently being taken forward and is likely to be completed in the early part of next year.

This exciting and challenging qualification places new requirements, roles and responsibilities on programme managers and deliverers, and critically creative engagement between employers and higher education. The first outcomes and the findings from the first full inspection of programmes positively endorsed the value and achievement of this approach. It also recognised that the experience raises some pertinent observations for some of the wider education issues, in particular, the integration and accreditation of NVQ in higher education and the accreditation of prior learning.

Why is Higher Education left out of the debate on NTO and LSC work-based learning Initiatives?

Adrian Anderson, Director of Policy and Development, NTO National Council

Introduction

Higher education is often criticised for its lack of responsiveness to employers and sector skills needs. On the whole, higher education also has little involvement in NTO and LSC work-based learning initiatives, particularly National Occupational Standards, NVQs and Modern Apprenticeship.

In this paper, it is argued that it is often not so much the fault of higher education or employers (represented by NTOs/SSCs), but the English 'silo' based approach to work-based learning and qualifications. It will only be possible to persuade HEIs to accept National Occupational Standards, NVQs and Modern Apprenticeships when they are more involved in the debate on their purpose and development process.

The recently announced establishment of a new network of Sector Skills Councils charged with 'leading the drive to boost skills and workforce development in a sector and forge stronger links between employers and schools, colleges, training providers and higher education'³ is a major opportunity to enhance co-operation and partnership. The Cassels' report on Modern Apprenticeship⁴ should also provide a basis from which to involve HEIs in the work-based learning agenda. Excellent examples of partnership do exist and perhaps the little known Graduate Apprenticeship initiative provides a model for future higher education and SSC/sector employer partnership.

The Problem

Firstly, it is necessary to outline what may be regarded as the problem:

- Higher education can be unresponsive to the national skill agenda – ask any NTO Board of employers and the majority will say higher education is not sufficiently responsive to the skills needs of their industry⁵. They will, in particular, argue that higher education does not deliver the courses or programmes needed to overcome skills shortages or skills gaps. There are many examples of excellent local employer/HE partnerships, but somehow many sectors still consider that much more needs to be done.
- A lack of awareness and acceptance by higher education of work-based learning initiatives – work-based learning policy makers lament that although Modern Apprenticeship has been deemed by government as having 'parity of esteem' with A level and Advanced GNVQs (Vocational A levels), it does not feature in the UCAS tariff system and is not generally accepted or understood by admissions tutors. The Foundation Degree is a particular case in point. Despite all the talk of opening up HE to work-based learners, how many HEIs accept NVQs or Modern Apprenticeship completion certificates as an entry qualification? Similar points could be made in respect of National Occupational Standards. How many vocational degree programmes use National Occupational Standards?

It is suggested that these problems arise from what can be described as the 'silo' approach to policy and development in England. The 'silo' based approach being where work-based training initiatives are developed largely, or in some cases entirely, in isolation of higher education.

These issues are explored through three elements of work-based learning policy: firstly, the LMI and Workforce Development Planning system, secondly, National Occupational Standards, and thirdly, Modern Apprenticeship. Finally the paper illustrates how effective partnerships can be developed through describing the operation of the Graduate Apprenticeship system in the context of the development of Sector Skills Councils.

LMI and Workforce Development Planning System

The English labour market intelligence and workforce development planning system – and the term is used in a very broad sense – suffers from a classic lack of ‘joined up policy’. It is a massive industry that to date has had marginal impact. Every TEC had a research department, as do each NTO, local authority and many HEIs. As the Third Report of the Skills Task Force acknowledged the problem was not so much the lack of labour market intelligence, but its suspect quality and uncoordinated production⁶.

All sector based NTOs (66 in all) produce Sector Workforce Development Plans. These plans, based on an analysis of issues impacting on the competitiveness of a sector and consequential skill requirements, outline the action that partners need to consider in planning learning provision. SWDPs at their best provide an excellent analysis of the national and international issues affecting a sector and action required by the suppliers of learning. Chris Humphries, Chairman of the Skills Task Force, confirmed this, ‘skills gaps and shortages are best tackled by thinking globally and acting locally’, but how many HEIs are aware of SWDPs? Where there is awareness, is the intelligence contained in SWDPs really communicated in the right way to enable HEIs to develop provision that is more responsive to sector skills needs?

The establishment of the Learning and Skills Council in April 2001 should have provided a major opportunity to ensure the system works better. The initial signs are very encouraging and the outline of a system involving the LSC, Regional Development Agencies and the NTO network has been developed. However, as has too frequently occurred in the past, higher education has been excluded from the debate. Similarly, the Cabinet Office’s study of workforce development through the Performance and Innovation Unit excluded higher education from its remit. The illogicality of this view is obvious. Out of 54 NTO workforce development plans, 23 explicitly identified higher education as the priority area for the formation of partnerships. In some sectors, pharmaceuticals, ICT, broadcasting, the responsiveness of HE is critical to the economic success of their industry. Incidentally, it is such industries that have been identified as the economic drivers of regional competitiveness.

The Reforms to Modern Apprenticeship and the Cassels’ Report

In February 2000, David Blunkett, the then Secretary of State for Education and Employment, announced a major reform to work-based learning for young people. Central to these reforms were proposals for the inclusion of technical certificates in all Modern Apprenticeship programmes and the development of a Modern Apprenticeship Diploma.

In future every Modern Apprenticeship framework at advanced level would include:

- An NVQ at level 3
- The three Key Skills – Application of Number, Communication and IT
- A technical certificate

The NVQ and Key Skills developed in a work-based context were designed to demonstrate occupational competence. The technical certificate had two purposes; the first to provide the necessary knowledge and understanding to underpin the NVQ; the second to act as a base for further learning and in particular open up opportunities for progression to higher education and professional qualifications. During the last 12 months, NTOs, under contract from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority have been identifying appropriate qualifications to fulfil the purpose of technical certificates in Modern Apprenticeship. Although HE is a key customer of this process, involvement at a strategic level has been limited and at a sector level variable.

To understand why Modern Apprenticeship is an important subject to HE it is only necessary to turn to Sir John Cassels’ report. Ask teachers or careers advisors about Modern Apprenticeship, and they are likely to view it as a marginal choice and certainly not a mainstream option for young people between 16 and 18. Perhaps admission tutors in higher education have similar views?

The statistics, however, tell a very different and more encouraging story. Currently, in England 20% of all young people have participated in a Modern Apprenticeship programme by the age of 21. Sir John Cassels has also advised the Secretary of State for Education and Skills that the Government should aim to raise this participation rate to 28% by 2002 and 35% by 2010. Looking at the figures another way – if the recommendations are accepted, then the Government will be aiming for 230,000 young people to enter Modern Apprenticeship a year.

Perhaps it is also worth noting that there are currently 94 Advanced Modern Apprenticeship frameworks available in sectors ranging from Accounting to the Water Industry. Take-up by sector varies tremendously; the following table ranks the top 20 sector frameworks.

Participation in Advanced Modern Apprenticeship by Sector Framework

Sector	Number in Training as % of all on AMA
Engineering Manufacture	13
Business Administration	11
Customer Service	8
Construction	7
Motor Industry	7
Electrical Installation Engineering	7
Hotel & Catering	7
Health & Social Care	6
Hairdressing	6
Retailing	4
Childcare	4
Accountancy	3
Plumbing	2
Travel Service	2
Telecommunications	1
Information Technology	1
Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration	1
Printing	1
Road Haulage & Distribution	1
Management	1

Source: DfES Work-Based Training for Young People Trainee Database (in training 25 March 2001)

Why is this important to higher education? Well the first point is that 230,000 young people represent a major recruitment pool, particularly for foundation degrees, Graduate Apprenticeship and other vocational degrees. Secondly, although there are no statistics, it is suspected that relatively few apprentices progress to higher education even acknowledging that there are likely to be major variations between sectors. Thirdly, many apprentices will be interested in subject areas difficult to fill. Finally, and again statistics are lacking Modern Apprentices are likely to come from the socio-economic classes that are currently under-represented in HE programmes. Could not the recruitment of Modern Apprentices into HE courses therefore be a positive response to the Government's challenge to engage more young people from working class backgrounds in higher education?

What then is needed?

Both higher education and employers represented through Sector Skills Councils/NTOs and the LSC have responsibilities.

- SSCs and the LSC need to involve HEIs in MA framework design and approval. Perhaps this will involve the development of criteria jointly agreed by the LSC, SSDA and LSC. HEIs might also have a role in framework approval or alternatively work

with a sector to define additional optional elements of a structure that would enable a framework to gain HE acceptance. Should Modern Apprenticeship programmes be included in the UCAS tariff system?

- Action will also be required from HEIs. It should be acknowledged that Modern Apprenticeship is different to A levels or Vocational A levels, but certainly not inferior. At advanced level Modern Apprentices will have developed key skills at a high level and solid practical skills demonstrated by the award of an NVQ level 3. The cognitive knowledge and understanding of an apprentice may be less developed than an 'A level' student, but we should reflect this in the design of degree programmes and in particular the foundation degree. Could foundation degree programmes be specifically designed by an HEI with an SSC to appeal to and meet the needs of Modern Apprentices in a particular subject discipline?
- A final action must be to improve information flows. UVAC has done some work in this area, but how many HEI admissions tutors understand what a Modern Apprenticeship involves?

The National Occupational Standards System

Tens of millions of pounds have been invested by government and employers in the development of National Occupational Standards. The UK has the most sophisticated system of competencies in the world. Over 3.1 million NVQs/SVQs have been awarded; each one based on National Occupational Standards, annually 450,000 people achieve an NVQ/SVQ (Autumn 2000 Labour Force Survey). NOS have been developed in virtually every occupational sector in the UK. Many sectors, from electrotechnical and engineering services to petroleum retailers and social services, are starting to use NOS as a basis of certification schemes or 'licence to operate'.

NOS define the occupational competence needed for a particular job function. They should therefore be the ideal base from which to develop the content of a vocationally related degree, or in particular a foundation degree. Yet despite this investment and the potential use of NOS, their use in HEIs is limited. Similarly, awareness of NOS by employers, schools and colleges is disappointingly low. Perhaps this is not surprising, as there has been little effort to promote NOS.

With the support of DFES, the TUC and CBI, NTO National Council has established an Employer Champions Group to advise ministers the LSC, QCA, RDAs and other partners by April 2002 on how NVQs, NOS and qualifications based upon NOS should be promoted to raise skill levels and overcome skill shortages.

Importantly, as part of its remit the Champions Group will also advise on how higher education institutions should be persuaded to accept qualifications based upon NOS, and incorporate the inclusion of NOS into their own awards

In view of previous comments it is important to emphasise that UVAC has been invited to lead on this particular aspect of the work of the Employer Champions Group.

It is, however, not simply in the promotion of NOS that problems are apparent. It is astonishing that the recent Hillier review of the development of National Occupational Standards gave no consideration to their use or acceptance by higher education. No HEIs attended QCA/SQA consultation events, or were among the 184 who provided written evidence to the review. Yet Government policy has been to encourage the use of NOS in the development of foundation degree and Graduate Apprenticeship. Perhaps, this has something to do with QCA's role as a regulatory authority with responsibility for only certain qualifications. While welcoming, and indeed applauding some of the recommendations of the Hillier review, this is really a missed opportunity.

The solution is simple: remove the responsibility for NOS from QCA and SQA and develop a framework for their development focusing on the customer and not the regulatory authority. In NTO National Council's response to the Hillier report, it is proposed that responsibility for the NOS programme should be transferred to the new SSDA. The SSDA would develop a new more flexible approach to NOS development and ensure that they responded to changing skills needs and the needs of customers including HE. The SSDA would also be charged with developing criteria to ensure key partners, including higher education, steered the development of the NOS process and were fully involved in it.

The new Network of Sector Skills Councils

There is, however, a silver lining to this debate. For all the faults in the overall system some Training and Enterprise Councils and HEIs did establish good relationships with local universities and encourage progression from Modern Apprenticeship. Many NTOs also have excellent relationships with universities, but the overall system is lacking clarity and coherence.

It is hoped that the new network of Sector Skills Councils to replace NTOs will lead to the development of more effective partnerships with HE. As strategic organisations SSCs will:

- Lead the drive to boost skills and workforce development in their sectors and through this improve productivity, business growth, public service improvement and employment.
- Build unrivalled intelligence and analysis about the skills needs of the sector, professionally communicating this in a way that leads to real change in the workplace and the supply of skills linked to changing and future requirements.
- Directly influence the planning and funding of education and training throughout the United Kingdom, working within the distinctive arrangements in each country.
- Forge strong links between employers and schools, colleges, training providers and higher education to influence the decisions of young people and adults who are not yet a part of the workforce.
- Develop convincing evidence and share best practice to promote the business case for skills investment and the more effective use of people in the workforce.
- Be run and owned by employers and draw on the expertise and active involvement of trade unions, professional bodies and other stakeholders in the sector.

Will SSCs be different to NTOs? Will there will be substantially fewer than the current 71 NTOs?

They will be far better funded and given a more strategic role, with more emphasis placed on recognition criteria of working with higher education.

Graduate Apprenticeship

In terms of partnership the Graduate Apprenticeship initiative demonstrates how a national initiative involving HEIs and employers though NTOs/SSCs can be successfully implemented.

Graduate Apprenticeship was announced by the Department for Education and Employment (now DfES) in the 1998 Learning Age green paper. Graduate Apprenticeships are a means of enhancing the 'employment skills' of HE students and graduates by combining existing higher education qualifications with work-based learning, underpinned by NVQs or NOS and Key Skills units. In essence Graduate Apprenticeship is about helping graduates to become effective quickly in a particular sector. Most graduates, whether from a technical background or not, will need a lot more training on the job before they can make a major contribution to an employer.

A Graduate Apprenticeship offers:

- A nationally-recognised development route incorporating both degree and work-based competence
- An integrated, modular plan for all skills and training, including vocational and employability skills
- Practical training leading to the achievement of national occupational standards
- Coaching in key skills such as communication and problem solving
- A motivational programme to attract the best graduates and make them effective more quickly

Each Graduate Apprenticeship is piloted with a range of employers, including small and medium enterprises as well as major multinationals. Graduate Apprenticeship frameworks have been used by large companies that wish to develop or align their own in-house graduate development programme to recognised national standards and qualifications. Smaller businesses, which do not have their own in-house training facilities, can work with their local HEI to develop and deliver a programme suited to their needs.

To date 50 universities and 36 NTOs have participated in the initiative and initial evaluation is positive.

Key Findings to emerge from the evaluation include:

- That the projects have successfully developed and trialed a number of models for the establishment of collaborative partnerships, involving NTOs, employers (including some SMEs), TECs and universities. The partnerships reflect the tripartite framework upon which the Graduate Apprenticeship concept is based, which includes educational and work-based components together with a requirement for the apprentices to develop key skills
- That the Graduate Apprentices recruited to the projects have responded positively to their experience, and report that they have improved their skills in team working, in organising and planning their work, in their use of IT, in their understanding of the business context in communication and in problem solving. The prospect of obtaining an NVQ and having their key skills developed and accredited, in addition to their mainstream degree programme, is seen as a bonus which should enhance their career opportunities.
- That employers expect the projects to result in fast-track development of graduate trainees; better graduate retention and hence more cost-effective training; and enhanced quality training and development.

From an NTO or sector employer perspective it is useful to outline why Graduate Apprenticeship is developing as a successful HE/NTO partnership:

- The existence of a strong Graduate Apprenticeship National Steering Group – drawing on the expertise of HEIs, NTOs, DfES and other key partners
- Development funds were assessed under criteria developed by the steering group – all had to demonstrate a strong and enduring HEI/NTO partnership
- Emphasis was placed on the need to respond to skills needs identified in NTO sector workforce development plans, RDA skills strategies and TEC/LSC local priorities
- All Graduate Apprenticeship frameworks had to demonstrate the use of NOS
- National co-ordination existed, but flexibility was promoted to facilitate sector and institutional need and promote innovation
- The initiative was based on a clear understanding of mutual responsibilities. The degree was the responsibility of the HEI, the work-based competence component the responsibility of the HEI and NTO

With success there are, however, a growing number of challenges. The large number of HEIs and NTOs involved in the initiative mean that there is a growing need to develop national support mechanisms, identify and disseminate good practice and promote the initiative. If such activities are not undertaken, then Graduate Apprenticeship will not develop as a co-ordinated initiative. Furthermore, much of its potential to enhance the employability and entrepreneurship of students and support HEI to respond to employer skills needs will be lost. To develop the initiative further NTO National Council and UVAC with DfES support is launching a Graduate Apprenticeship Support Programme.

The objectives of the support programme are to:

- Identify and disseminate good practice in the development and implementation of graduate apprenticeship
- Support NTOs and HEIs in the development and implementation of graduate apprenticeship
- Collectively advise DfES and Hefce on taking forward the outcomes of the initiative and the further embedding of vocational and key skills in honours and further degrees
- Provide a national Graduate Apprenticeship Directory to inform individuals and employers of the availability of graduate apprenticeship
- Provide, or foster the development of national support mechanisms for graduate apprenticeship (including, framework approval, 'kite marking', quality assurance, progression into and from the initiative and equal opportunity/social inclusion)
- Promote the concept of Graduate Apprenticeship

Perhaps as an organisation with a remit to ensure the learning system is more responsive to the skills agenda, the final word on Graduate Apprenticeship is left to an employer and individual learner:

'Graduate Apprenticeship creates a win-win situation for both employer and employee. It is a low cost, high value approach where a person gains the qualification from doing the job well or performing their role well. The IT industry has grown used to doing courses and taking exams. This is a paradigm shift – to achieve a certificate based on what you do and how you perform. Graduates perform many roles at Unisys and we find, how after working this through with the e-skills NTO, that the Graduate Apprenticeship covers all of them with national standards. It is a balance of everything they need for the short term and long term success.'

Alex Bedford – Unisys

'An extra qualification that will increase my potential for employment. I will have that extra edge over a candidate who does not have this vocational qualification. It will also make me more aware of the attributes I need to possess to be more successful within this industry'

Discussions

Garth Rhodes, Northumbria University

There were several workshops and the following paragraphs encapsulate delegate comments and views.

■ Rationalisation & Strategic Planning

With the current government focus on Enterprise and Employability in Higher Education, HEROBC/HEIF initiatives the introduction of the LSC and imminent establishment of the Sector Skills Councils etc, the time is ripe for some inter-agency strategic planning at national, regional and institutional level.

In order to do this effectively, however, there is a real need for a rationalisation of the plethora of initiatives, funding streams, jargon and acronyms in use so that there is a universal understanding of issues and a mechanism by which expertise and resources can be brought together for mutual benefit.

■ Restrictive Funding

There are concerns that the design and implementation of projects/activities are often driven, not by the 'real need on the ground', but by the requirements of a particular funding stream. These criteria are often restrictive, require extensive reporting and auditing arrangements and do not allow for the flexibility required in order to promote innovation. Some members were critical of Labour Market Information (LMI) available to them within their regions, which did not always reflect real need, but appeared to be driven by the whims of regional agencies.

■ The Take-up of National Standards & NVQs in HE

One of the reasons for the slow take-up of the use of National Standards and NVQs in HE can be attributed to the need for a simple translation process between academic standards and national vocational standards. There is a feeling that the functional analysis, 'drilling down approach' to standards-design militate against them being used in their 'raw state' to influence academic course design. Subject benchmarking exercises need to take more cognisance of the National Vocational Standards.

■ Employers' Voice

Evidence from employers suggest that in the main they are not critical about the content of HE curricula, but are concerned that many of the students with whom they come into contact are unable to apply what they have learned to the workplace. Employers are demanding courses that

focus on the development of people who are capable of being responsive to change.

Employers' views on issues of Enterprise & Employability are vital, but it must be realised that they are very busy people. One of the more successful ways for HE to engage with them is through employer representative groups e.g. Sector Skills Councils, CBI etc.

■ Staff Development

If the quality and uptake of Work-based Learning, Enterprise and Employability etc is to improve across the whole HE sector there is much to be done in terms of intensive staff development both for academic staff and for employers. There is a need to increase the opportunities to capture best practice and to transfer this across sector disciplines. There is evidence to show e.g. FDTL projects, that those involved are not currently doing enough to share good practice.

■ Negotiated Work-based Learning

This emerging provision is a great opportunity to provide bespoke learning opportunities that meet the needs of both employee and employer. HE needs to capitalise on the opportunities for the development of negotiated work-based learning e.g. the Ufl/ HE electronic negotiated learning platform – Learning through Work.

■ Foundation Degree (FDs)

General consensus that those within education do not generally understand the difference between FDs and HNDs. If this is the case how do we expect learners and parents to be able to differentiate between them?

Concerns that during the pilot phase much re-badging of HNDs to FDs is common, rather than being through the true work-based learning route as originally proposed.

There was a view that if FDs are successful this may threaten the future existence of the ordinary/honours degree.

Background information

NTOs Recognised by the DfES (now Sector Bodies), 2001

Accountancy NTO
 Council for Administration
 Metier
 Bakery Training Council
 Skillset
 Central Government NTO Secretariat
 Association for Ceramic Training and Development
 Chemical Manufacturing and Processing NTO
 Cleaning Industry NTO
 CAPITB Trust
 Training Alliance for Surface Coatings
 PAULO
 Community Justice NTO
 Construction Industry Training Board
 Cultural Heritage NTO
 Custodial Care NTO
 Institute of Customer Service
 Dairy Training and Development Council
 Distributive NTO
 Early Years NTO
 National Electrotechnical Training
 Electricity Training Association
 Employment NTO
 EMTA – NTO for Engineering Manufacture
 Engineering Construction Industry Training Board
 EPIC (NTO) Ltd
 Financial Services NTO
 Food and Drink NTO
 Footwear and Leather NTO
 Furniture, Furnishings & Interiors NTO
 Further Education NTO
 GWINTO
 Glass NTO
 Hairdressing And Beauty Industry Authority
 Healthwork UK
 Engineering Services Training Trust Ltd
 Higher Education Staff Development Agency
 Hospitality Training Foundation
 Housing Potential UK
 Information Services NTO
 e-skills NTO
 Lantra
 Languages NTO
 Local Government NTO
 Meat Training Council

Merchant Navy Training Board
 Motor Industry Training Council
 OPITO (NTO)
 Paper Education and Training Council
 Petroleum Industry NTO
 Pharmaceutical Industry NTO
 Photo Imaging NTO
 British Plumbing Employers' Council (Training) Ltd
 Police Skills and Standards Organisation
 Polymers and Associated Industries NTO
 British Ports Industry Training Ltd
 Print and Graphic Communication NTO
 Property Services NTO
 Publishing NTO
 Rail Industry Training Council Ltd
 Refractories and Building Products Training Council
 Road Haulage and Distribution Training Council
 Science, Technology and Mathematics Council
 Seafish Training
 Security Industry NTO
 TOPSS – the NTO for Social Care
 Sports and Recreation NTO
 Metals Industry Skills and Performance
 National Textile Training Organisation
 Ttento
 Voluntary Sector NTO

HEI's – Involved in the Graduate Apprenticeship Initiative, 2001

Aston University
 Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies
 Bolton Institute
 University of Bradford
 University of Brighton
 University of Bristol
 Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College
 University of Cambridge
 Canterbury Christ Church University College
 Carshalton College
 University of Central England
 Chester College of Higher Education
 City University
 Coventry University
 Cranfield University
 Crawley College
 De Montfort University
 University of Greenwich

The University of Hull
King Alfred's Winchester
Kingston University
Leeds Metropolitan University
University of Leicester
Liverpool John Moores University
The London Institute
Loughborough University
University of Luton
The Manchester Metropolitan University
University College Northampton
Northern School of Contemporary Dance
University of Northumbria at Newcastle
The Nottingham Trent University
The Open University
Oxford Brookes University
University of Plymouth
University of Portsmouth
College of Ripon and York St John
St Martin's College of Higher Education
University of Salford
University of Sheffield
Sheffield Hallam University
South Nottingham College
Staffordshire University
University of Sunderland
University of Surrey
University of Teesside
Thames Valley University
University College London
University of Wolverhampton
Writtle College

NTOs (Sector Bodies) – Involved in the Graduate Apprenticeship Initiative, 2001

CAPITB Trust
Ceramics NTO (ACTD)
Chemical Manufacturing and Processing NTO
Community Justice NTO
Construction Industry Training Board
Council for Administration
Cultural Heritage NTO
Distributive NTO
Early Years NTO
EMTA
e-skills NTO
Food and Drink NTO
Footwear and Leather NTO
Gas and Water Industry National Training Organisation
Hospitality Training Foundation
Institute of Management
Languages NTO
Lantra
Local Government NTO
Metier
National Textile Training Organisation
OPITO
PAINTO
Pharmaceutical Industry NTO
Polymer and Associated Industries NTO
British Ports Industry Training
Print and Graphic Communications NTO
Property Services NTO
Rail Industry Training Council
Science, Technology and Mathematics NTO
Seafish Industry
Security Industry Training Organisation
Skillset
Sport and Recreation Industry NTO
Steel and Metals NTO
Training Organisation for the Personal Social Services

Summary of AMA Frameworks, 2001

AMA Title

Accounting
 Agricultural & Garden Machinery
 Agriculture and Commercial Horticulture
 Amenity Horticulture
 Animal Care
 Arts and Entertainment
 Aviation
 Broadcast, Film, Video & Multimedia Industry
 Builders Merchants
 Building Services Engineers
 Business Administration
 Call Handling
 Ceramics
 Ceramics (May 2001)
 Chemical Sector: Process Operations,
 Engineering Maintenance or Laboratory Operations
 Cleaning & Support Services
 Clothing Industry
 Community Justice
 Construction
 Craft Baking
 Customer Service
 Distribution and Warehousing
 Early Years Care & Education
 Electricity Supply
 Electrotechnical
 Emergency Fire Service Operations
 Engineering (Ex EnTra Foundation)
 Engineering (ExM&ETA Foundation)
 Engineering (Issue 5)
 Engineering Construction
 Environmental Conservation
 Farriery
 Fibreboard Packaging
 Floristry
 Food and Drink Manufacturing Operations
 Furniture Industry
 Gas Industry
 Glass Industry
 Guidance
 Hairdressing
 Health and Beauty Therapy
 Health and Social Care
 Heating, Ventilating, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration (HVACR)
 Heritage Sector
 Horse Industry
 Hospitality
 Housing

NTO (Sector Bodies)

Accountancy NTO
 Lantra NTO
 Lantra NTO
 Lantra NTO
 Lantra NTO
 Metier
 Aviation Training Association
 Skillset
 Builders Merchants Federation
 Engineering Services Training Trust Ltd (ESTTL)
 Council for Administration
 e-skills NTO
 Association for Ceramic Training and Development
 Association for Ceramic Training and Development

 Chemical Manufacturing and Processing NTO
 Cleaning and Support Services NTO (CSSA)
 CAPITB Trust
 Community Justice NTO
 Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)
 Bakery Training Council
 Institute of Customer Service
 Distributive NTO
 Early Years NTO
 Electricity Training Association
 National Electrotechnical Training
 Local Government NTO
 Engineering and Marine Training Authority (EMTA)
 Engineering and Marine Training Authority (EMTA)
 Engineering and Marine Training Authority (EMTA)
 Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB)
 Lantra NTO
 Lantra NTO
 Printing and Graphics Communication NTO
 Lantra NTO
 Food and Drink NTO
 FFINTO
 Gas and Water Industry NTO
 Glass NTO
 Employment NTO
 Hairdressing and Beauty Industry Authority (HABIA)
 Hairdressing and Beauty Industry Authority (HABIA)
 Healthwork UK – The Health Care NTO / TOPPS
 Engineering Services Training Trust Ltd (ESTTL)
 Cultural Heritage NTO
 Lantra NTO
 Hospitality Training Foundation
 Housing Potential UK

AMA Title

Information Services
 Information Technology and Electronic Services (Strand 1)
 Information Technology and Electronic Services (Strand 2)
 Information Technology and Electronic Services (Strand 3)
 Insurance
 International Trade & Services
 Jewellery, Silversmithing & Allied Trades
 Laboratory Technicians Working in Education
 Land Passenger Transport: Maintaining Automotive Vehicles

 Man-made Fibres
 Marine Engineering
 Marine Industry
 Meat Industry
 Mechanical Engineering Services: Plumbing
 Motor Industry (Vehicle Body and Paint Operations)
 Motor Industry (Vehicle Maintenance and Repair)
 Motor Vehicle Service & Repair (Vehicle Parts Distribution & Supply)
 Motor Vehicle Service & Repair (Vehicle Selling)
 Moving into Management
 Newspaper
 Occupational Health and Safety
 Operating Department Practice
 Optical Manufacturing Technician
 Paper Manufacturing
 Personnel Support
 Pharmacy
 Photography & Photographic Processing
 Physiological Measurement Technicians
 Polymers
 Printing
 Procurement
 Providing Financial Services (Banks & Building Societies)
 Rail
 Residential Estate Agency and Residential
 Property Letting & Management Agency
 Retail
 Road Haulage and Distribution Council
 Seafishing
 Security Systems
 Signmaking
 Sport, Recreation & Allied Occupations
 Steel & Metals Industry
 Surface Coatings Industry
 Telecommunications
 Textiles
 Timber Industry
 Travel Services
 Water Industry (Process Operations)

NTO (Sector Bodies)

Information Services NTO
 e-skills NTO
 e-skills NTO
 e-skills NTO
 Financial Services NTO
 Management Standards Unit
 Engineering and Marine Training Authority (EMTA)
 Science, Technology and Mathematics Council
 TRANSFED (Passenger Transport Forum for Employee Development Limited)
 Man-made Fibres Training Trust
 Engineering and Marine Training Authority (EMTA)
 Engineering and Marine Training Authority (EMTA)
 Meat Training Council
 British Plumbing Employers' Council (Training)
 Motor Industry Training Council
 Motor Industry Training Council
 Motor Industry Training Council
 Motor Industry Training Council
 Motor Industry Training Council
 Management Standards Unit
 Newspaper Society
 Employment NTO
 Healthwork UK – The Health Care NTO
 Science, Technology and Mathematics Council
 Paper Education and Training Council
 Employment NTO
 Science, Technology and Mathematics Council
 Photo Imaging NTO
 Healthwork UK – The Health Care NTO
 Polymer NTO
 Printing and Graphics Communication NTO
 Management Standards Unit
 Financial Services NTO
 Rail Industry Training Council

 Property Services NTO
 Distributive NTO
 Road Haulage and Distribution Training Council
 Seafish Training
 Security Industry NTO
 Polymer NTO
 The NTO for Sport, Recreation and Allied Occupations
 Metals Industry Skills and Performance
 The Training Alliance for Surface Coatings
 e-skills NTO
 National Textile Training Organisation
 Timber Trades Training Association
 Ttento
 Gas and Water Industry NTO

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