HIGHER LEVEL SKILLS
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
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This document aims to answer some of the basic questions that employers may ask you about higher level skills.

1. What is considered a higher level skill?
Higher level skills can be defined as anything at Level 4 and above (e.g. NVQ 4 or equivalent) including professional qualifications and non accredited Continuous Professional Development. Examples of higher level qualifications taken from the National Qualifications Framework (QCA) include:

Level 4  Certificate of Higher Education, Level 4 Certificate/NVQ/Diploma
Level 5  Foundation degree, Level 5 Certificate/NVQ/Diploma
Level 6  Bachelor’s degree (BA, BSc, BEd), Level 6 Certificate/NVQ/Diploma
Level 7  Master’s degree (MA, MSc, MBA), Level 7 Diploma/Advanced Professional Certificate
Level 8  Doctoral degree (PhDs), Specialist Diploma

2. Who is eligible for higher level skills training and development?
Those previously educated to Level 3 (i.e. ‘A’ Levels or NVQ Level 3) are eligible to study for higher level qualifications. Work experience and prior learning may also be taken into account for programmes.

3. What types of provision can Higher Education Institutions offer employers?
Higher Education Institutions are increasingly offering training provision of a flexible nature to meet employer needs. This flexibility is shown through methods of delivery such as on and/or off-campus, within the work place or by distance learning – or a mixture of them all.

Types of provision and courses for workforce development include:

- NVQs
- HNCs/HNDs
- Foundation degrees
- Undergraduate (part-time)
- Taught postgraduate (part-time)
- Research postgraduate (part-time)
• Short courses (accredited/non-accredited)
• Accreditation of employer’s in-house training

It is also possible for higher level skills provision (for example a Foundation degree) to be delivered by a Further Education College, but accredited by a Higher Education Institution.

4. What types of programmes or training and development do businesses want?
Research\(^1\) has shown the following:

• Small business prefer bite sized chunks of learning to fit with working hours and commitments
• Training which improves economic/business performance or meets legislative requirements is preferred
• Quality and relevance to business needs along with the delivery method of provision was rated as more important to employers than cost
• Bespoke training with the aim of solving specific organisational problems

5. How can information about higher level skills provision be accessed?
If the region has an HE gateway (provided by the HERA) or protocol in place this should be the first point of contact for Brokers who are searching for higher level skills solutions.

If a regional HE gateway or a protocol is not in place there are a number of national websites that list higher level training courses such as:

• [http://www.hotcourses.com](http://www.hotcourses.com)
• [http://www.learndirect.co.uk](http://www.learndirect.co.uk)
• [http://www.lsc.gov.uk/Whatwedo/Employer/egtp.htm](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/Whatwedo/Employer/egtp.htm)

A gateway to all UK universities and colleges in the UK is available at [http://www.hero.ac.uk](http://www.hero.ac.uk).

Information about local universities can be found by contacting your Higher Education Regional Association (HERA). Details can be found in Question 8.

Most universities also have a section on their homepage entitled Services to Business or similar. This will provide links to information outlining their relevant

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services such as business units, lifelong learning and continuing education information.

6. How are higher level programmes assessed?
The assessment of higher level programmes will depend on the nature of the training undertaken. Assessment methods that may be used within workforce training and development include:

- Personal analysis and self-assessment by the student
- A mixture of student self-assessment and assessment by their employer
- Work-based assignments applying theory & context in practice
- Portfolio - reviewed by assessor

7. What funding is available for employers/employees to access higher level training and development?
In most cases the employer or individual will have to fund some or all of a higher level qualification.

Funding may be available for part or all of specific courses in different areas and it is worth checking with your local:

- Higher Education Regional Association (HERA)
- Regional Development Agency
- Learning and Skills Council
- Business Link
- Train to Gain service

Funding may be provided by HEFCE core funding, initiative funding, or through European Funding. The Higher Level Skills Pathfinder projects provide funding for course development and capacity building in Higher Education Institutions but not for course delivery.

Examples of specific regional funding available include:

- Funding for employees who study part-time Higher Education courses within London. Funding is dependent on employee earnings and the intensity of the course studied – for more information see London Higher website below.
- Funding for managers and their staff (from specific geographical areas) for certain Level 4 programmes delivered by the University of Huddersfield from the Learning and Skills Council and Yorkshire Forward (Regional Development Agency).
Part funding of Level 4 (NVQ or equivalent) is available in the North East through the Flexible Skills Fund (FSF) supported by the Regional Development Agency and accessed through the Business Link network.

Leadership and Management funding via the LSC (for more information see the Leadership and Management Train to Gain Module).

8. Universities tend to work on an independent basis, are there any regional or national networks?

There are a number of networks and initiatives set up on a regional level. These include the Higher Education Regional Associations (HERAs) and Higher Level Skills Pathfinders in the North West, North East and South West.

Regional contact details:

- Higher Education South East [www.hese.ac.uk]
- London Higher [www.londonhigher.ac.uk]
- West Midlands Higher Education Association [www.wmhea.ac.uk]
- East Midlands Universities Association [www.emua.ac.uk]
- Association of Universities of the East of England [www.auee.ac.uk]
- Yorkshire Universities [www.yorkshireuniversities.ac.uk]
- Universities for the North East [www.unis4ne.ac.uk]
- North West Universities Association [www.nwua.ac.uk]
- Higher Education Regional Development Association - South West [www.heresa-sw.ac.uk]

A number of Lifelong Learning Networks exist within regions to “improve the coherence, clarity and certainty of progression opportunities for vocational learners into and through higher education” (HEFCE website). More information about Lifelong Learning Networks can be found at [www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/lln/].

There are also various public sector agencies that work with Higher Education Institutions to achieve common goals. They include Sector Skills Councils, professional bodies, Universities UK, the Higher Education Academy and Regional Development Agencies through initiatives such as Regional Skills Partnerships.