Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE)
What LSIS is doing...

Background

This briefing provides an update on the latest developments relating to the provision known as Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE).

In October 2011 Dame Ruth Silver and Rob Wye hosted a partners’ dinner to consider the emerging impact of the HE White Paper - Students at the Heart of the System in order to:

• take stock of the support that may be needed as changes in the landscape impact;
• consider how the partners might work together to provide that support; and
• agree what LSIS’ and other partners’ roles and contributions might be to that support.

The publication of New Challenges, New Chances in December 2011 tasked LSIS with leading work ‘to support FE colleges in developing collaborative approaches to delivering HE including progression pathways from FE to HE’.

In order to fulfil this commitment LSIS convened a formal group – the HE in FE Strategy Group – to build on the outcomes of the partners’ dinner and to provide a formal mechanism for delivering this commitment. The group which is chaired by Rob Wye meets quarterly and provides a forum for members to discuss the strategic and operational issues around HE in FE enabling members to coordinate and deliver collaborative action to address, influence and support providers.

Current policy

Following the publication of the HE White Paper there was an expectation that Ministers would subsequently prepare a Higher Education Bill for presentation to Parliament in early 2012. For a number of reasons this did not happen and whilst some of the plans set out in the White Paper are able to move forward without legislation, others are now in abeyance.

In their response to the outcome of the White Paper in June 2012, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) identified the actions that could take place without legislation. The main ones are set out below:

• the criterion for university title is reduced from 4,000 FTE HE students to 1,000, of which 750 must be following a degree programme. More than 55% of the overall student body must be studying an HE course. This change is made with immediate effect;
there will be no review of the Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP) process this year as take up has been too limited to enable an informed judgement to be made;

part-time students can access student loans and will not have to repay them until the April which falls 4 years after the start of their course (or the April after they leave if this is sooner);

international mobility is supported, with limitations on the fees that can be charged by an HEI during a student’s year abroad and an on-going payment of HEFCE funding to support the university’s costs across the year;

the Student Loans Company and UCAS are establishing a formal working group with regards to a single application portal;

the Higher Education Public Information Steering Group will report on how income raised from student fees has been used by institutions in September 2012; and

HEFCE will consult on measures to bring alternative providers and FECs with no direct funding from HEFCE into the formal student numbers control process. This will have an impact on colleges with no direct funding relationship with HEFCE but who recruit HND students on a fee-only basis. These students are able to draw down loans, thus creating a call on public funds. No date is given for this consultation.

All of these activities will take place in a landscape dominated by the Core and Margin process. The second round of Core and Margin will be a more limited exercise involving the redistribution of only 5,000 places. It remains targeted on full-time undergraduate places. New applicants for Core and Margin funding 2013-2014 must be aware that if they currently recruit ‘off quota’ numbers of HND students, they will no longer be able to do this and keep any HEFCE-awarded numbers without severe financial penalties.

LSIS activity

LSIS has developed a programme of work to support the HE in FE improvement agenda. A summary of the main activities is provided below.

- We have developed a flexible three module residential programme in partnership with the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE). The programme is for senior leaders and managers responsible for overseeing HE in FE strategies and is designed to encourage a deeper understanding of the issues and underpin day-to-day planning and strategy development.

- Our proposals on new qualifications for FE teachers and trainers contains a proposal
for a Level 7 Diploma in Education and Training, designed to meet the needs of those teachers and trainers at the FE/HE interface, and a Diploma Qualification in Continuing Professional Development at Level 7.

- **Through our annual partnership agreement we will be working with the Mixed Economy Group (MEG) on research to explore and expand upon existing knowledge on the range of HE in FE student experiences.** The research will consider the experience of students progressing from FE vocational courses within the same college, mature students, part-time students, those undertaking Higher Apprenticeships, international students and those seeking to learn in the workplace. The aim is to identify and explore the range of expectations and experiences for these groups of learners to identify the various issues, challenges and support needs. Last year we supported MEG to develop a strategic ‘checklist’ which summarises some of the questions that colleges should consider when entering and working within partnerships with HEIs to deliver HE programmes. This was followed by three more resources which complement the checklist; an analysis of the Core and Margin exercise, three scenarios which begin to explore the implications of the Core and Margin exercise, and a guide on reviewing and rethinking strategic planning in response to the new HE in FE landscape are of particular interest to college governors, trustees and leaders.

- **We also commissioned AoC to work with MEG on a complementary guide to provide advice on the operational considerations for sector providers engaging with the HE in FE agenda and will be providing a small amount of resource to AoC to enable them to review and update the guide regularly until January 2014.**

- **We commissioned AELP to develop an introduction to higher level skills provision for ITPs and supporting case studies.**

- **We supported nine Peer Review and Development (PRD) groups to undertake additional reviews or other collaborative activity to develop their strategy for the development of HE in FE.** Case studies will be published on the Excellence Gateway after phase two is completed in March 2013. An evaluative survey was carried out at the end of phase one that informed the phase two development. Seven of the PRD groups will be continuing for another year with a small amount of resource from LSIS.

- **Two CPD workshops on developing your HE in FE strategy/curriculum and engaging students in quality processes are now available for in-house delivery.** These two one-day modules are available on request and are supplemented by access to online support materials.
• Through our practitioner research programme we are supporting some HE in FE related research. One example (at Blackpool and The Fylde College) is of a tutor whose project investigated the different professional language used by HE compared to FE teaching staff and what the impact of that was on their status, professional identity etc. Another example (at Leeds College of Art) has resulted in FE and HE teaching staff working together for the first time to improve support for learners’ transitions.

• We are working with HEA on a piece of joint research to define what scholarship means in a HE in FE context. The project specification was still being drafted but the research would follow a practice-based approach and build on existing research and work such as the LSIS Research Development Fellowship programme.

• We sponsored the HE in FE discussion at the Learning and Skills Research Network (LSRN) conference in November 2011. The discussion provided the opportunity to hear the experiences of delegates from Australia and also to hear from practitioners delivering HE within English FE institutions what they see as some of the key issues from their perspectives.

• We are developing a Higher Level Apprenticeship Support Programme aimed at the successful lead organisations/consortia in Round 1 of the National Apprenticeship Service Higher Apprenticeship Fund. The support programme has been developed to link with the four investment areas set out in the Higher Apprenticeships Fund Prospectus:
  • engaging employers - developing relationships with key large employers or SMEs, typically driven by some common identity – around a supply chain or sub-sector;
  • engaging employees - offering information, advice and guidance support to recruit new apprentices or encourage existing employees to progress – or to recruit targeted groups to improve workforce diversity;
  • improving provision - supporting the development of staff, learning materials, facilities and links to other provision activities e.g. skills competitions; and
  • product development - accelerating the development of the Apprenticeship framework, where research has already been undertaken.

NAS has asked LSIS to extend the support to phase two. LSIS will be represented at the National Apprenticeship Service reception event being held in the House of Commons on 10 December, to celebrate the achievements in the development of Higher Apprenticeships to date.

• Several of our regional response projects are focusing on the progression of Level
3 learners to Higher Education. For example Boston College is supporting Level 3 learners throughout Lincolnshire in order to improve their progression to HE through targeted careers advice, external speakers, curriculum challenge for talented learners or an aspiration raising campaign. New College Durham is looking at activities that set out and evidence progression between key elements in the College offer and into work/HE or Higher Level Skills.

- We will be transferring resources from the University of Sheffield’s HE in FECs Expert Programme\(^1\) and ESCalate HE in FE to a new area on the Excellence Gateway. We also intended to use this area as a central repository for HE in FE where LSIS can share resources and learning from the PRD groups but which can also be offered to partners to upload materials or provide links to other related resources.

- We are exploring the recommendation from the HE in FE strategy group to develop an ‘observatory’ function for HE in FE which would identify practical issues and gaps to be supported by collaborative research, ensure member’s support activities are complementary and remove duplication.

\(^1\) Available here: [http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/heinfestratprog/materials.html](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/heinfestratprog/materials.html)