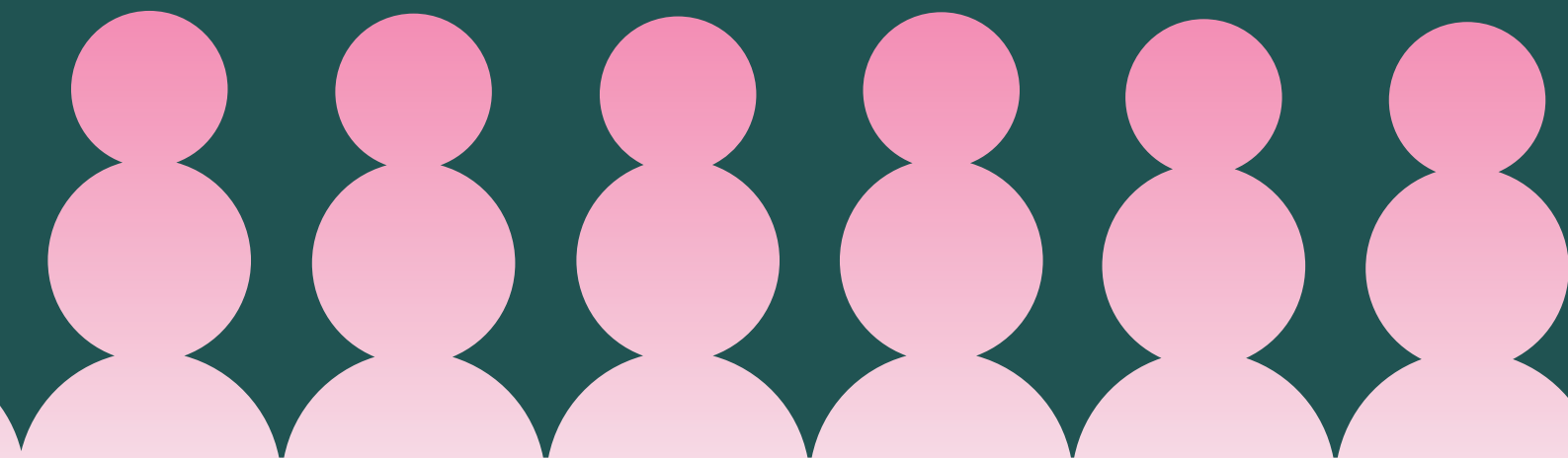




Learning from reviews of Foundation Degrees in England carried out in 2004-05



Sharing good practice

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Summary

This report presents an overview of the findings from a programme of reviews of Foundation Degrees (FDs) in England in 2005, commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. The overview is based on an analysis of the individual published reports resulting from these reviews. The review programme sampled 68 FDs, reflecting a representative range of disciplines, partnership arrangements, geographical regions, modes of study and student cohorts. The programmes reviewed enrolled over 5,000 students between 2002-05. They were launched in 2002 or 2003, a year after the first FD students enrolled on this new higher education award. Many programmes reviewed are offered at several partner colleges. A rich variety of work-based learning (WBL) strategies are evident, and most programmes reviewed have between 10 and 19 sites of WBL. Due to the timing of the reviews, only half of the programmes had students who had graduated and, in most cases, these were very recent. The FDs reviewed are listed in Annex 1.

The reviews took place at a time of significant growth in both applications and enrolments on FDs. Two distinctive student enrolment patterns emerge that appear to be particular to FDs. One group of students study full-time; they are primarily male, under 25 years of age, with traditional entry qualifications at level 3 on the National Qualifications Framework. The other group studies part-time, is predominantly female, mature, employed and holds a greater diversity of entry qualifications.

Admissions procedures for the accreditation of prior experiential or certificated learning (APL) are used for entry purposes or to gain exemption from a part of the FD. In the best examples, applicants gain both a clear understanding of the FD and of the APL opportunity through clear published information, backed up with helpful guidance from staff. Evidence for the prospective student's APL claim is then processed fairly against clear criteria.

Providers have worked exceptionally hard to launch and develop this new distinctive award. They have generally made effective use of the emerging external reference points and the relevant advisory bodies to guide their efforts. This is evident in many programmes that have developed clear and useful information about the FD for applicants, students, employers and staff. In these instances, all stakeholders, wherever situated, hold a clear understanding of the programme's aims and intended learning outcomes and of each other's responsibilities. This is associated with FDs which operate smoothly even in complex consortia arrangements that might span several institutions, learning and teaching locations, a variety of WBL strategies and arrangements, and a diverse mix of employer contributions. In some programmes, there is scope for improving the quality, accuracy and usefulness of the information provided for stakeholders.

Providers have also worked hard to involve employers and employer representative groups in FD programmes. In examples of good practice, employers play a central role in early discussions about the need for graduates at the intermediate/higher technician level. They then continue to engage in the design and development of the programme, as well as in the teaching and assessment of students. Employers

contribute to the FDs in a wide variety of ways, including the design and commissioning of live briefs and projects; WBL opportunities; student support (including mentoring); and formative (and sometimes summative) assessment. Sustaining an effective level of employer engagement continues to present challenges for some providers. In these cases, employers' lack of involvement in regular monitoring and development, assessment practices and student feedback, and in their support for WBL, can limit the professional currency and credibility of the FDs.

The high-quality and imaginative approaches to the design and implementation of a rich variety of WBL arrangements are central to the success of many of the programmes sampled. However, this is a key area where further supported development is required. In particular, the arrangements for establishing, monitoring and assuring the quality of students' WBL experiences need further attention. There is a need to ensure an equitable experience for all students, wherever they are taught, whatever their employment and wherever they gain their WBL experiences. Many providers are finding practical solutions to such challenges through, for example, three-way contracts between provider, student and employer, or through the provision of clear guidance and training for all parties.

Partnerships are also central to a high-quality FD, and many of the programmes reviewed demonstrate strengths in these areas. Of particular note are the effective teamworking practices between staff from further education colleges (FECs) and their colleagues in higher education institutions (HEIs). These underpin effective collaboration through all phases of the programme and, for example, help to set and maintain consistent quality and standards across all partners within consortia. Partnerships with employers and employer representatives are highly developed in some programmes and this makes a significant contribution to the ongoing currency and viability of the FD.

The majority of programmes have clear and appropriate programme aims and have specified appropriate intended learning outcomes (ILOs) for both practical and academic elements, which are supported by learning outcomes at module level. Good practice of particular note occurs where ILOs for WBL are specified at both programme and module level. This helps to ensure that this defining characteristic is fully integrated throughout the programme. The reviewers found positive features of the design and organisation of the curricula in the majority of programmes. These include flexibility in programme design, which enables students to find study patterns that fit with their employment or other commitments and at a pace that suits them; the integration of students' experiences gained from work; and highly relevant content that is current and meets the particular requirements of the profession and/or the skills requirements of employers. Many FDs make effective use of personal development planning to foster the skills of lifelong learning. In a small number of programmes, further work is required to ensure that FD curricula appropriately prepare students for progression to honours degree.

Learning and teaching are major strengths of the programmes reviewed. A variety of methods is used, helping students from a wide diversity of educational and professional backgrounds to engage effectively. This helps to support retention of students. For instance, the use of action learning sets for peer support helps to

encourage both teamwork and independent learning. Both students and staff welcome greater involvement of employers in the learning and teaching of the programmes. In some programmes, greater flexibility would also be welcome, particularly for part-time learners who join the FD with non-traditional qualifications. Some providers are, however, creating greater flexibility by offering the FD through distance learning or by increasing the use of e-learning approaches.

Assessment and feedback to students is an area where FDs would benefit from further development, although some reports indicate good practices and strengths. In particular, students benefit from a wide range of well-designed assessment tasks, thorough marking and moderation, and the effective use of timely formative written and oral feedback to enable them to improve their work. In general, the clarity of the information provided to students, staff and employers about all stages of the assessment process could be enhanced so that greater consistency can be achieved across all providers within a consortium. Students are generally achieving at an appropriate standard for an intermediate level award. Many demonstrate appropriate levels of critical analysis and evaluative reflection on links between theory and practice. FD students frequently investigate key issues relevant to their area of work, make recommendations to senior colleagues and then assist in the implementation of appropriate action. This can have a significant and positive impact on their workplaces.

Students are fortunate in being supported in their learning by many well-qualified, enthusiastic and dedicated staff. Students value their contribution. They also value input from specialists in the relevant employment sector. Some FDs would benefit from further resourcing to encourage teaching staff to engage in additional professional, subject-specific and FD-specific updating. This can help staff to identify and fully exploit opportunities for integrating academic and work-based learning. A large majority of the FDs provide highly effective academic and pastoral student support. Communication between staff and students is a particular strength, as is the early diagnosis of students' learning support needs, the provision of tutorials on request and the quality of support for distance learners, and other part-time students, through email and virtual learning environments.

Many FDs have appropriate library resources, excellent teaching and learning materials and employment-specific physical resources supporting academic and work-based learning. There is scope for some programmes to strengthen their use of e-learning approaches to achieve greater flexibility, and for institutions to provide all FD students with an equal access to resources, regardless of their main study location or attendance pattern.

Students are generally doing well on FDs, with a high rate of progression to honours degree programmes or into relevant employment. Students appreciate regular, comprehensive and timely information about the progression opportunities available to them. This is especially pertinent when FD graduates must compete for a limited number of available places on the articulated honours degree programme, and when providers are forced to apply selection criteria. Some providers could be more imaginative in the design of the progression opportunities for FD students by, for instance, working more collaboratively with other institutions to provide progression routes. This is particularly the case when providers offer the honours degree top-up in

a mode of study or location that is different from the FD and is therefore less accessible for many students. It is also an area for policy makers to review.

The systems for approving, monitoring and enhancing FDs work well in the main and, in effective examples, involve employers and ensure that all of the defining characteristics of FDs are appropriately addressed. Some providers have worked particularly hard to integrate different partners' existing quality systems to achieve consistency across their consortia. Others operate particularly effective annual monitoring practices through collaboration between the awarding HEI, FECs and employer partners. In some programmes there is scope for the awarding HEI to take a stronger lead in the consistent and thorough implementation of validation and monitoring procedures, and to ensure that FD-specific support is provided for all staff and external examiners.

Overall, the FDs reviewed are achieving the defining characteristics of the award, and are strengthening partnerships and collaboration between HEIs, colleges and employers. The distinctive design features of FDs have encouraged the development of innovative and flexible responses to England's diverse range of higher-level skills needs, attracting students who might not otherwise enter higher education. FD students frequently make significant contributions to their workplaces.

The individual review reports contain details of the strengths and good practice identified in these FDs as well as areas where further development is required. These reports, together with this overview are intended to facilitate the dissemination of good practice to help accelerate the enhancement of the award. This overview concludes with suggested actions for policy makers and other major stakeholders to further strengthen and help to assure the quality and standards of FDs.

Introduction

1 This overview report summarises the findings of the Foundation Degree (FD) reviews undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in England in 2004-05. A total of 68 FD programmes were reviewed, of which two had not been completed at the time this report was written. A list of the 68 programmes reviewed is provided in Annex 1.

2 The programme of FD reviews forms part of a wider set of FD review and evaluation activities commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and conducted by QAA during 2004-05. This includes:

- the *Report of a survey to follow up Foundation Degree reviews carried out in 2002-03*, QAA May 2005 (34 FDs)
- the *Report of a survey of Foundation Degrees converted from existing Higher National Diplomas since 2001*, QAA October 2005 (39 FDs)
- a review of FDs in England 2004-05 (68 FDs).

3 The programme of reviews was commissioned by HEFCE to:

- investigate the extent to which programmes align with the defining characteristics of the FD award as set out in the *Foundation Degree: qualification benchmark (final draft)* (FDQB (final draft)), QAA, 2002. The FDQB (final draft) was used by providers to develop the programmes reviewed and was, therefore, used by reviewers. In October 2004, the revised *Foundation Degree: qualification benchmark* (FDQB) was published and now supersedes the FDQB (final draft)
- establish whether the programme meets, or is likely to meet, the academic standards of an FD
- establish the quality of students' learning experience
- identify innovative features and good practice worthy of dissemination
- contribute to the evaluation and further development of the FD award.

4 The reviews were informed by a range of external reference points, including those contained in the Academic Infrastructure, namely, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), the FDQB, relevant subject benchmark statements and relevant sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*), all published by QAA. Other external reference points included the previous *Overview report on Foundation degree reviews*, (QAA 2003) and any frameworks established by Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), employer organisations or professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) which were in place at the time of the reviews. HEFCE asked QAA to work with Foundation Degree Forward (FDF) to disseminate the findings of the reviews.

5 This overview report has been written to identify areas of innovation and good practice for wider dissemination, as well as strengths and recommendations for the further development of FDs. Although reviewers had some significant concerns about some aspects of some programmes, the large majority of programmes provide a

satisfactory student learning experience, which allow students to achieve the appropriate academic standard. All providers have some aspects of the programme that are either strengths or good practice. The report has five sections. The first section looks at the framework and educational context in which the reviews took place. In the second section, the report looks at a number of key themes that are central to the effective operation of FD programmes: information and communication, employer involvement, work-based learning (WBL), partnership links and the role of the awarding institution in the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards. The third section looks at themes relating to academic standards, and the fourth looks at themes relating to the quality of student learning opportunities. The fifth section addresses the overall conclusions and key findings for providers, the main messages for other key stakeholders, including policy makers, PSRBs, SSCs and employers, the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and FDF. Strengths and good practice found in the programmes reviewed are identified throughout the report in text boxes.

6 The findings from the reviewers' lines of enquiry in each FD review resulted in a report containing two threshold judgements on their confidence, or otherwise, in:

- the (emerging) academic standards and the (emerging) achievements of students
- the quality of students' learning opportunities.

7 These two areas of judgement will be referred to as standards and quality in the remainder of this report. The review process took account of the newness of some programmes. In cases where no students had yet completed the programme, the first judgement related to emerging academic standards and the emerging achievements of students. The second judgement remained the same. Full details of the method for FD review are set out in the *Handbook for the review of foundation degrees in England 2004-05*, QAA, 2004.

8 In addition to the two threshold judgements, reviewers evaluated the providers' systems for monitoring and enhancing the quality and standards of the programmes. They also commented on claims made by the providers of examples of good practice and innovative features.

9 The review process was normally completed within a period of six weeks, from the initial meeting between the reviewers and the provider to the final meeting at which the reviewers reached their judgements. A preliminary meeting usually took place no later than four weeks before the initial meeting. The review process was structured around the following activities:

- preparation of a self-evaluation by the provider
- appointment and training of reviewers and facilitators by QAA
- a preliminary planning meeting carried out between the provider and a Review Coordinator appointed by QAA
- a review team visit of up to three days, including visits to the provider and sites of WBL

- off-site scrutiny of documents and reviewers' notes of meetings
- sharing of information among the reviewers
- a meeting at which the reviewers considered their judgements
- a letter to the provider containing the judgements
- a draft report sent to the provider for comments on factual accuracy
- a published report of approximately 5,000 words.

10 As with the first special review of FDs in 2002-03, the review process was based on the providers' self-evaluation, which responded to 11 key questions. Providers were invited to produce a route map containing detailed references to existing institutional and partnership documents to answer each key question. Where existing documents were mainly descriptive, providers were able to add more evaluative commentary within the route map to address the key question more effectively. Key questions 1 to 5 look at academic standards (either actual or emerging) and questions 6 to 9 deal with the quality of student learning opportunities. Key question 10 deals with the monitoring and enhancement of quality and standards, and 11 with areas of innovation and good practice. The 11 key questions are set out in Annex 2.

11 In addition to the programmes reviewed in this sample, FDs are among the awards included in major review of healthcare programmes, commissioned by Skills for Health, where they fall within the scope of provision for review in the cycle 2003-06 (see *Handbook for major review of healthcare programmes, Annex A, QAA 2003*). This cycle is not yet complete and the number of FDs reviewed has been small since many began very recently. QAA institutional audits of higher education institutions (HEIs), commissioned by HEFCE, look at institutional processes for the assurance of academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities for the awards they make. Some FDs are included in the discipline audit trails that form part of the audit process from 2002-06. Collaborative provision audit carried out by QAA between 2005 and 2007 includes some partnerships between HEIs and further education colleges (FECs) that offer FDs.

Framework and educational context

12 Overall, FDs are achieving the defining characteristics of the award. They have encouraged partnerships, increased collaboration between HEIs and employers, encouraged programmes in new subject areas and attracted students who would not otherwise have entered higher education (HE). Many providers are working well to ensure the academic standards and quality of the programmes. This report comments in some detail on aspects that work well for some providers and aspects in which some providers have scope for development. It is intended to help the dissemination of good practice in the sector and to promote a wider understanding of the standards of the award.

Growth in provision

13 Since the first students enrolled on FDs in 2001, there has been significant growth in the provision of both FD programmes and the number of educational locations where they are provided. Information from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in 2005 suggests that between 2002-03 and 2003-04 there was a 23 per cent increase in the number of awarding institutions offering FDs. In addition, in the same period there was a 72 per cent increase in the number of educational sites where FDs were offered. This increase was confirmed by the data collected by QAA in order to select the sample of programmes for review. In 2002-03, when information was collected for the first special review of FDs, the 197 programmes for which information was collected were offered through 241 educational delivery sites. In 2003-04, data collected by QAA show that 427 programmes were offered through 562 educational delivery sites.

Growth in applications and enrolments

14 There has been a significant growth in both applications and enrolments of students. The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) data for England for the period September 2002 to March 2005 show a 160 per cent increase in the number of applications to FDs. HESA reports that over 21,000 students were enrolled on FD programmes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2003-04, of which 64 per cent were first-year enrolments. This represents a 91 per cent increase in total enrolments from the previous year (HESA unpublished data, 2005).

Widening participation

15 One of the defining characteristics of FDs is their role in widening participation by recruiting students who might not otherwise enter HE. An analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of students enrolled on FDs during 2002-05 (QAA student data tables and HESA 2005) suggests that there are two distinct groups of students. One is primarily male, under 25 years of age and predominantly studying full-time. Typically, these students enter FD programmes through traditional routes, hold GCE A-Levels as their highest qualification on entry, and enter directly from education or training. Some 40 per cent of full-time students on the FDs reviewed entered from employment, and nearly 50 per cent entered from education or training. Nearly 50 per cent of full-time students entered the FD with GCE A or AS-Levels, while one-third held either GCSE (15 per cent), BTEC National Diploma (12 per cent) or VCE A or AS-Level or advanced GNVQ (11 per cent). Very few students entered from Advanced Modern Apprenticeships.

16 In contrast, the second group of FD students is predominantly female, mature and studying on a part-time basis. Part-time students are overwhelmingly from employment (98 per cent). Their highest qualifications on entry are much more diverse, with 48 per cent recording a variety of level 3 qualifications from the National Qualifications Framework of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). These include NVQs, QAA-recognised Access to HE certificates and other access qualifications.

17 Among part-time students, the use of accreditation of prior learning (APL) procedures as part of entry was only slightly more common than for full-time students, at 12.4 per cent rather than 11.5 per cent. Overall, over 20 per cent of all students on these programmes have used APL procedures for entry. Figure 1 lists students' highest qualification on entry to full and part-time modes of study along with the total number and percentages for each qualification.

Figure 1 Students' highest qualification on entry to the programmes reviewed

| Highest qualification on entry | Part-time | % | Full-time | % |
|---|-----------|------|-----------|------|
| Accreditation of prior learning | 196 | 12.5 | 288 | 11.5 |
| Advanced modern apprenticeships | 1 | 0.1 | 3 | 0.1 |
| BTEC National Certificate | 81 | 5.1 | 79 | 3.2 |
| BTEC National Diploma | 141 | 8.9 | 309 | 12.4 |
| GCSE | 34 | 2.2 | 370 | 14.8 |
| GCE A level/AS level | 283 | 17.9 | 763 | 30.5 |
| NVQ | 294 | 18.6 | 76 | 3.0 |
| Other level 3 qualification | 328 | 20.8 | 243 | 9.6 |
| QAA-recognised Access to HE certificate | 26 | 1.6 | 25 | 1.0 |
| Other access qualification | 121 | 7.7 | 74 | 3.0 |
| VCE A-level/AS level/Advanced GNVQs | 72 | 4.6 | 272 | 10.9 |

Source: QAA data tables 2005

18 The profile of FD students, showing two distinctive groups, differs from the overall profile of honours degree students in England, and is confirmed by HESA data and the student data tables collected as part of the FD reviews in 2004-05.

Geographical aspects

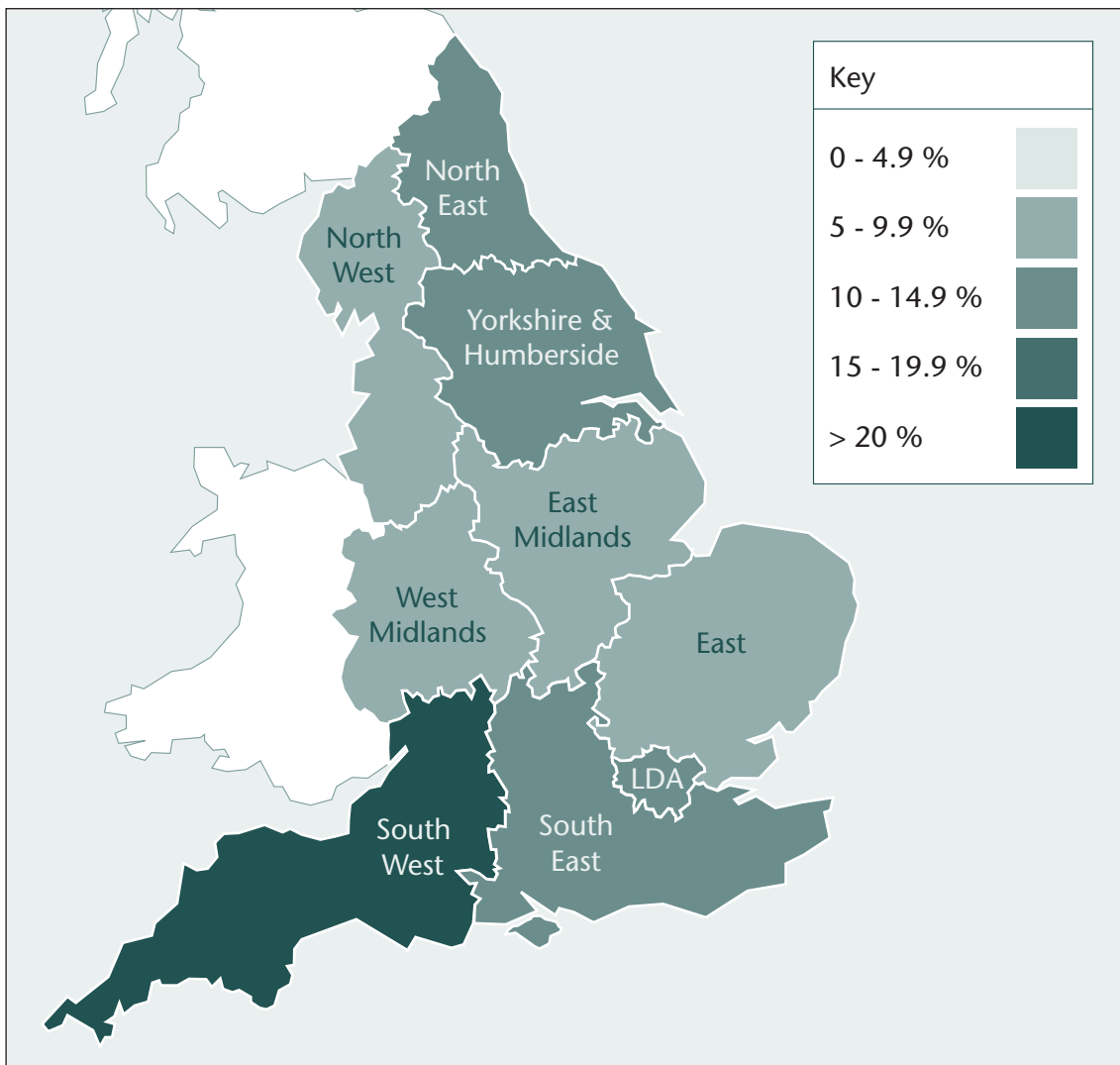
19 Figures 2 and 3 (HESA 2005a PR86 for 2002-03 and 2003-04; QAA Scope and Preference, 2004) below show that there are differences in FD provision between the nine Regional Development Agency (RDA) areas in England. London, the North East and the South West currently offer the largest number of FD programmes and also have the greatest number of students enrolled on FD programmes. The East of England, East Midlands and West Midlands offer fewer programmes and have fewer enrolled students than the other RDA areas. These geographical differences persist even when taking into account factors such as population density. Educational delivery partners within consortia, such as colleges, operate mainly within the same region as the awarding institution.

20 These regional FD programmes and student enrolment are different from those in honours degree patterns in programmes. For example, the sizeable growth in FDs in

the subject of education in various regions is not matched by a similar growth at honours degree level. Students' opportunity to continue onto the articulated honours degree is sometimes restricted by the number of places available, and alternative opportunities are not always accessible for students with limited geographical mobility.

Figure 2 Spread of educational delivery sites for FDs in England by Regional Development Agency areas

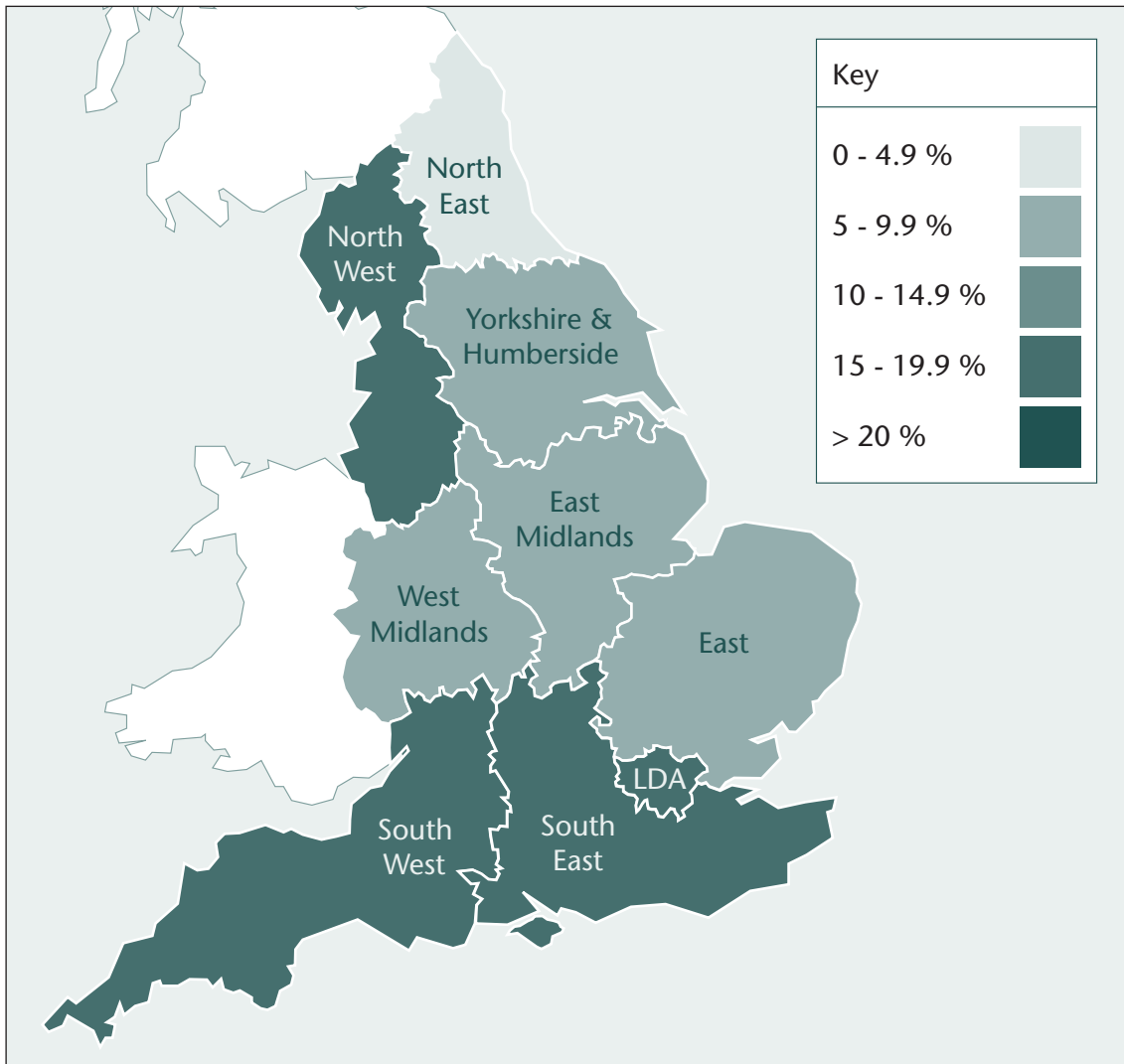
Delivery site by region (%)



Source: QAA Scope and Preference Exercise, 2004

Figure 3 Students registered on FDs in England in 2003-04 by Regional Development Agency area

Students registered on Foundation degrees, by region (2003-2004)



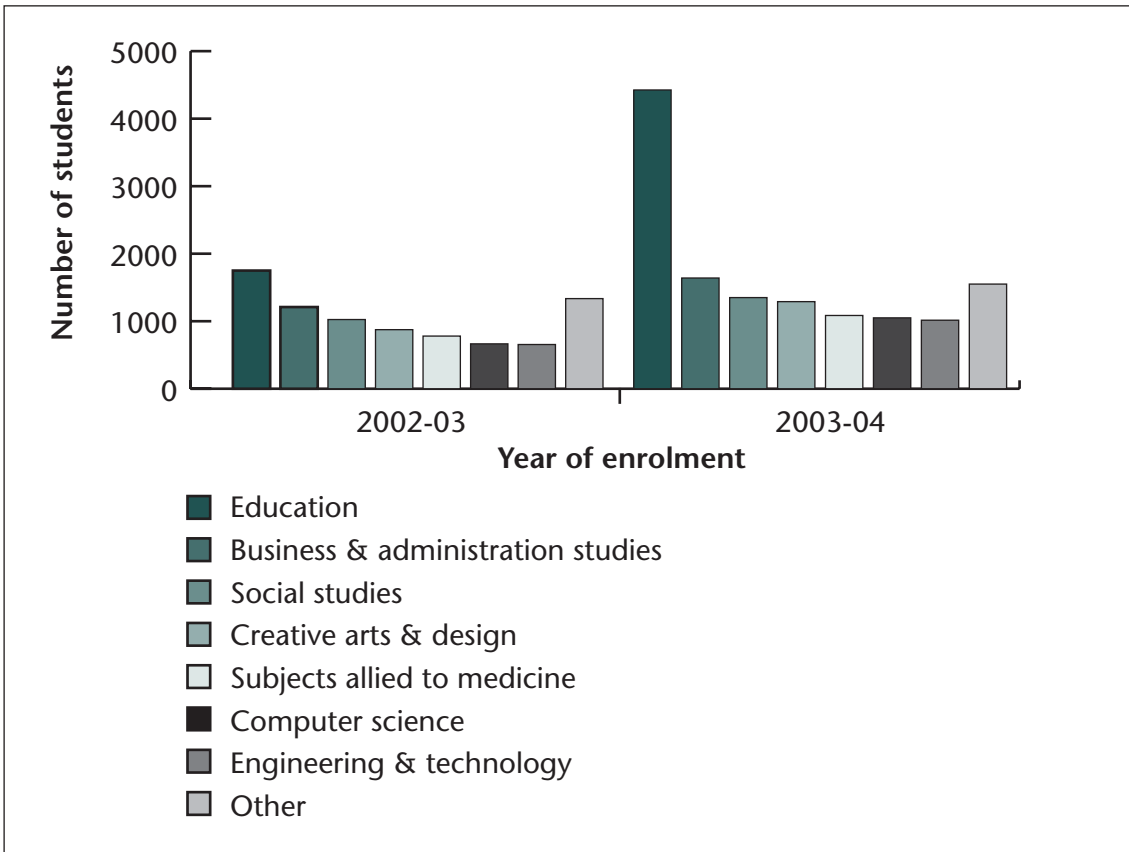
Source: HESA, 2005

The sample of Foundation Degrees reviewed in 2004-05

21 QAA asked awarding institutions to identify FDs they had validated to start in either 2002-03 or 2003-04 (QAA, 2004). All institutions were asked to provide student numbers, subject areas and modes of study for each programme in order to identify the range and scope of eligible provision. Those FDs selected as part of the sample were later asked to complete a standard data sheet for students enrolled on programmes. The data collected, which covered the three-year period 2002-05, provided information on recruitment and admission, progression, retention and employer support.

22 The sample of FDs reviewed in 2004-05 covered 15 QAA subject categories (see Annex 1). The sample reflected the proportion of programmes offered in that subject as identified by HEIs and was representative of the wide range of locations, modes of study, delivery and consortia arrangements.

Figure 4 FDs in England by subject area



Source: HESA, 2005

23 The subject with the largest number of FD students enrolled in England is education studies (HESA, 2005). Education studies also emerges as one of the primary growth areas from 2002-03 to 2003-04 (see Figure 4). Most of these programmes are new since there was very little provision for the subject in Higher National Certificates or Diplomas (HNC/Ds). The Report on the survey of FDs converted from HNDs since 2001 (QAA 2005), confirms that there were very few education studies FDs converted from HNDs. One of the key factors in the increase in education studies students is the introduction by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) of the Early Years Sector-Endorsed Programmes which, in the first two years, included a support package of financial and other resources for students. In England, a total of 4,425 students were enrolled on education studies programmes in 2003-04 compared with 1,750 in 2002-03 (HESA 2005b). In addition, based on the 2004-05 and 2005-06 HEFCE funding allocations, programmes in education studies were one of the main subject areas to receive additional funded places (HEFCE 2004/15). However, there has not been comparable growth in education-related places at honours degree level. This may present some challenges for providers and students in progressing from the FD to the named articulated honours degree as more students complete the FD programmes.

24 The reviews included 15 FDs in Education Studies, incorporating areas such as early years, teaching assistants, education studies, learning support and special needs. The second largest subject in the sample was Business and Management, with 10 reviews in areas such as public sector management, project management and food manufacturing. There were nine reviews in Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism, with four in hospitality and leisure and five in sport-related areas. The eight reviews in Art and Design covered topics such as graphics, photography and kitchen and bathroom design. The seven reviews in Social Policy and Administration and Social Work covered topics such as health and social care, local governance and police studies. Other subject areas, consisting of between one and six reviews, included Subjects Allied to Medicine, Dance, Drama and Performance Arts, Theology and Religious Studies, Law, Psychology, Sociology, Computing and Engineering.

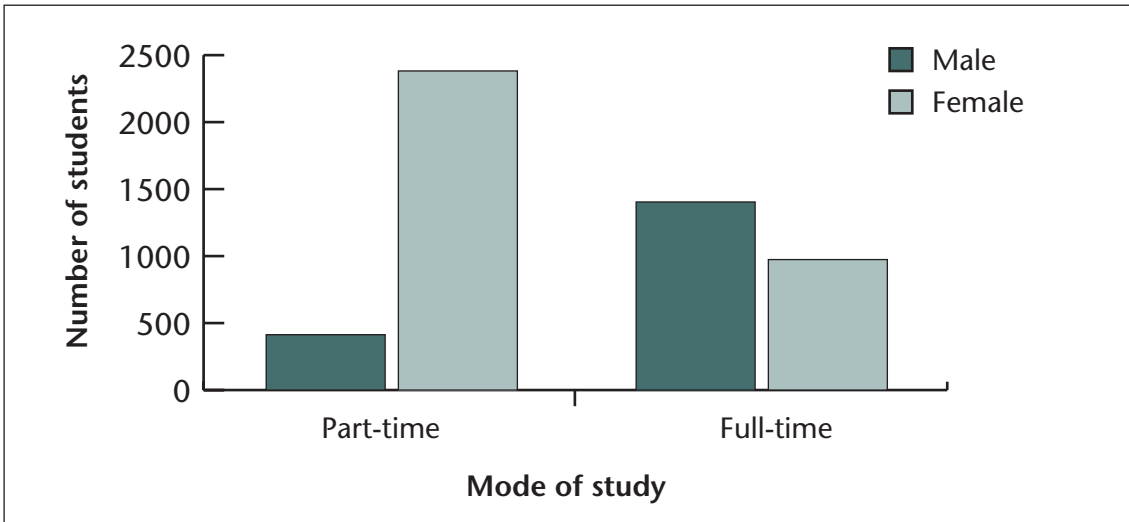
25 Analysis of the number of WBL sites in the programmes sampled shows that the most common range was between 10 and 19 sites (QAA, student data tables 2005). Few programmes have less than 10 sites. Excluding the Open University (OU) FD, the number of WBL sites for each programme in the sample varied from one to 150. The OU had students registered on modules designed for the FD in Early Years but who had yet to decide whether to undertake the FD. The OU was therefore unable at that point to identify the number of sites of WBL. Education Studies programmes are often among the larger ones and the sites of WBL include schools, nurseries, playgroups and other organisations, with an average of between one and three students at each site. This pattern of students at each WBL site was repeated across other subjects, including Business and Management, Art and Design, and Communications, Media, Film and Television Studies.

Students

26 Approximately one-third of the programmes are delivered full-time only, one-third part-time and one third both full and part-time (QAA, student data tables, 2005). On the sample programmes reviewed, 2,895 students (55 per cent) enrolled over the period 2002-03 to 2004-05 to study part-time and, of these, over 85 per cent were female. In contrast, of the 2,412 students studying full-time, 59 per cent were male (Figure 5). However, the trend over the three years has been for the proportion of females studying part-time to reduce and for the proportion of males studying part-time to increase.

27 The number of students enrolled for full-time study on programmes in the sample varies from five to 144, with 49 programmes enrolling between 11 and 20 students. Between one and 123 students are registered on part-time programmes, with two-thirds having up to 20 students.

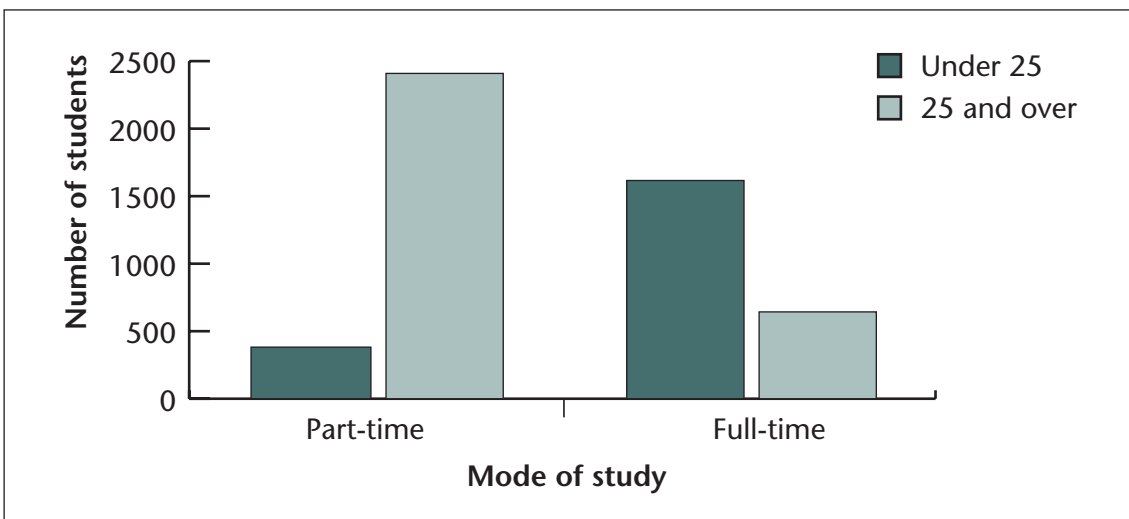
Figure 5 Mode of study by gender



Source: QAA student data tables 2005

28 Most part-time students are older than those on full-time programmes. Some 86 per cent of part-time students are over 25 years of age, compared to 29 per cent of full-time students. Over two-thirds (72 per cent) of those studying full-time are under 25 years of age (Figure 6).

Figure 6 Mode of study and by age group



Source: QAA student data tables, 2005

29 Of the programmes reviewed, 21 are provided at more than one educational delivery site and four are delivered at five or more sites. In 23 programmes, the validating HEI undertakes delivery of all or part of the programme. The largest number of delivery sites, excluding the OU, is nine. In a few part-time programmes, teaching is not restricted to academic institutions: providers also make use of appropriate local facilities such as schools. In these cases, students are widely dispersed. In this way, the locations are more convenient for students with limited time and, in some cases, limited local transport facilities.

General themes

30 A large majority of programmes in the sample are providing a good learning experience for students. Providers have matched their programmes to the defining characteristics of an FD and the Academic Infrastructure, and are working to enhance the programme. Strengths, good practice and areas for improvement are identified in the following sections in order to help the development of the award. It is not the case that any one programme will have all the strengths or all the areas for development.

Information and communication

31 Overall, two-thirds of the programmes provide sufficient, current and clear information and communicate this effectively. Reviewers noted good practice and strengths in the provision of information between all stakeholders in 18 per cent of reviews. These include regularly updated information shared among colleges and employers in the consortium, and the overall quality of documents and consistency of information given to students. Information helpful to students includes clear and effective written communication of the aims and intended learning outcomes (ILOs) in the programme specifications, excellent programme handbooks covering curricula, assessment and student support, and comprehensive information about APL and WBL. The table below summarises effective practice.

Significant benefits are gained where providers achieve the following good practice in information and communication:

- clarity about the defining characteristics of FDs in the programme
- accessible information about APL procedures for applicants before enrolment, and encouragement to use the procedures
- effective communication of assessment schedules
- assessment information with clear criteria-referenced grading descriptors
- useful student handbooks that contain clear descriptions of the ILOs, assessment and WBL arrangements
- module information containing up-to-date reading lists and texts
- clear information for employers and work-based mentors about the programme, particularly in relation to WBL

- clear and timely information for students about articulation with an honours degree, including any bridging arrangements
- accessible, accurate information for students in the programme specification, particularly where changes have taken place
- consistency in the content and use of terminology throughout the programme documents
- consistency of information for students studying at different educational delivery sites
- effective monitoring information to ensure that programmes are kept up to date, accurate and complete
- effective guidance for external examiners on commenting on all of the defining characteristics of FDs
- appropriate identification of opportunities for additional face-to-face meetings when this helps to achieve a shared understanding.

32 However, over one-third of reports highlight that the information available to both students and employers would benefit from further development. Few providers demonstrated significant good practice in the provision of information and in its sufficient and timely communication. The relevant information is not communicated effectively to all those who need it so that they understand the programme and the roles of all participants. Reviewers found, for example, that in some cases employers were willing to become more involved in the programme if offered the opportunity by the provider.

Employer involvement and links

33 In this report, the term 'employer' is used to refer to employers, freelance professionals and people in the workplace who supervise the students. It includes practitioners in the creative industries, local education authorities (LEAs) and other public sector employers, and head teachers. In a few cases the student is also the employer, such as a self-employed designer, business person, or owner of a playgroup. Employers may have one or more of these roles in the FDs reviewed. They may have been involved in the design of the programme, be involved as part of an employer liaison group, they may offer WBL, or they may provide project specifications from the workplace and guest lectures. All programmes include employer involvement. Employer involvement is cited as good practice, or as a strength, in about 25 per cent of reviews. Strong employer links with their education institution partners explicitly underpin all activities identified as good practice. In these cases, programme development has often taken place in response to the needs of the local employment market. This includes the needs of individual employers and relevant professional vocational qualifications. Appropriate communications between the parties are particularly common where the programme has a strong and explicit link with an employment sector. In a few cases, good practice was identified where the FD had been designed to align appropriately with the framework of the relevant SSC. Many of the SSCs were not established early enough to influence the development of the sample of FD programmes reviewed.

34 Programmes are mainly developed and designed through consultation with employers, the institutional providers and, where relevant, professional body representatives to ensure an appropriate mix of work-based and academic skills and knowledge. Some providers included local employers or employer organisations in programme design. Providers sometimes retain employer support and involvement in teaching, learning and the formative assessment of students. A very small number of employers have also been involved in summative assessment. In some cases, employers contribute to the review and monitoring of the currency and appropriateness of the programme, and are committed to supporting students in WBL. This includes the provision of effective mentors and participation in the negotiation of learning contracts for WBL and associated projects. The contribution of subject specialists in some of the delivery of teaching and learning is also an important aspect for integrating both academic and vocational knowledge within programmes.

35 Where consultation with, and feedback from, employers is identified as good practice it is often achieved through industrial liaison panels, steering groups and employer forums. Such groups help to maintain the currency of programmes and are sometimes maintained for programme monitoring and review activities. In three institutions, a coordinator post has been established to facilitate communication between providers and employers. In one case, where the employment sector was geographically scattered, feedback from employers was effectively collected through a questionnaire survey. These strengths and good practices are present in the three major subject groupings of Education Studies, Business and Management, and Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism. In Education Studies programmes, the DfES secured employer involvement through widespread national consultation. This set the context for employer involvement at local level. This is normally carried out through the head of the school or nursery, for example, where the student is employed. Initiatives that, individually or collectively, help to develop effective employer involvement and links are summarised below.

36 Providers who develop effective links with employers:

- involve employers in considering the needs of the local employment market
- identify any professional/vocational qualification requirements which may be addressed appropriately within the FD
- involve the appropriate SSC or PSRB to align the FD with their requirements
- set up three-way learning agreements to promote shared understanding of roles
- ensure appropriate communication between all parties
- explore ways of involving employers in programme design, delivery and in contributing to assessment, especially formative assessment
- stimulate employer commitment to WBL
- ensure appropriate training and briefing of mentors
- explore ways of involving mentors in the ongoing review and development of the programme.

37 Employers are not participating in ongoing programme development activities in approximately 25 per cent of the programmes reviewed. These review reports regularly draw the conclusion that the professional currency of the programme would benefit from such involvement. Areas for development in relation to employer involvement include programme design, delivery and assessment, and the contribution of employers to processes for monitoring and enhancing programmes.

38 The need for strengthening of employer involvement and links is identified in the following areas:

- the links between employers and providers, which need to be increased and made more formal
- employers' involvement in programme design, assessment and student feedback
- employers' responsibilities for work-based mentors, the purpose of the WBL element and elements of assessment
- employers' contribution to the delivery, development and review of programmes
- the recognition of the respective responsibilities of the provider, placement providers and students.

39 Review reports that identify these areas for development regularly draw the conclusion that, without consistent employer involvement, the professional currency of FD programmes will not be secure.

Work-based learning

40 The majority of WBL achieves its purpose. In around 40 per cent of programmes, there are good practices and strengths in WBL. These centre on effective workplace mentoring and provider support for mentors, good written guidance and effective teamwork by the various parties involved. WBL appears to be most effective when integrated fully into the programme, with students who are in employment in the relevant sector pursuing their studies on a part-time basis. This tends to be associated with a higher level of employer involvement, explicit learning agreements and students who drive their studies through their working experience.

41 A key aspect of successful WBL, highlighted in a number of reports, is the support provided to students by mentors, especially through their function as a 'critical friend' to the student in the workplace. The student experience is enhanced particularly in programmes where the providers give appropriate support, enabling mentors to perform their roles effectively. Around one-third of reports identify scope for development in the briefing of mentors in the workplace and the information and support provided for them. Reviewers consider this aspect of WBL as central to the success of the students' work experience.

Mentors operate most effectively when:

- they receive effective induction and useful written information
- they receive specific training for the role
- they understand the roles of all parties involved, including providers, employers and students
- they are appropriately prepared for involvement in the assessment of WBL assignments
- they receive the same information and briefing to ensure consistency of the mentoring experience for all students, irrespective of the educational and WBL locations that the student attends.

42 Other important factors include comprehensive written guidance for students and their preparation for WBL. This is supported by college tutor visits to the workplace. Successful WBL includes strong employer support, good management and oversight of the WBL process. Examples of this are found in Education Studies programmes, which generally provide effective WBL experiences. The students are already in relevant work and the sector is familiar with supporting developmental activities for its staff. In return, most reports for this subject indicate that employers value the benefits that students bring to the workplace, such as their improved understanding of theory, which they apply to practice, and an increase in confidence. This also benefits employees not on the programme, and in a few cases produced changes for the organisation.

43 Many providers of full-time programmes provide effective WBL, although they often have to work hard to maintain a sufficient number of employers. Some programmes provide cumulative experiences, including live projects and simulated WBL. These usually relate to real-world professional experience and are particularly effective when they include the typical demands of being in the workplace.

44 New providers are learning from the implementation of WBL in the first years of the programme and are making appropriate adjustments. In about two-thirds of programmes reviewed, WBL is highlighted as an area that would benefit from some further development. These developments include:

- ensuring that WBL is capable of supporting the assessed work required
- ensuring students are able to undertake real tasks in the workplace rather than simply observing
- ensuring the integration of WBL with academic study and the opportunity for students to apply skills and knowledge from WBL across the programme
- monitoring the quality of information provided to students to prepare them for their WBL experiences
- producing information for employers and mentors that sets out expectations, together with guidance about the likely support needed by students
- ensuring that WBL tasks relate to real-world professional experience including the experience of the demands of the workplace

- confirming the provider's assurance of the quality of the WBL experience for students through tutor visits
- monitoring the support provided by mentors and employers to ensure all students receive an equivalent experience.

Partnership links

45 In the context of the programmes reviewed, partnership links include those with employers, SSCs, PSRBs and between educational delivery sites and the awarding institution.

46 Successful collaboration between HEIs and FECs is identified in about 30 per cent of programmes, with good practice often arising from the combination of strong teamwork and effective communication. This generally involves staff from all educational institutions and the effective coordination by link tutors. In one case, an employer contributes to funding the link tutor post.

47 Effective arrangements across consortia to ensure equivalence of student experience wherever they are taught were identified as a strength by reviewers. Appropriate measures include the joint development of ILOs, core documents and assessment strategies, and also training and development events, often focusing on consistent assessment procedures, for representatives from across all partners within the consortium. This was identified as an area for development in the *Overview report on Foundation Degree reviews*, QAA, 2003. There is evidence from the reviews of 2004-05 that some providers have worked successfully on this area.

48 Links between providers and employer organisations are also highlighted as good practice in a number of cases, leading to enhanced professional credibility and excellent WBL opportunities. In one case, this good practice was achieved in a sector where WBL had to be arranged with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and this was successfully accomplished in partnership with regional agencies. Another example is an extensive network of links with the sport and exercise sectors of the leisure industry. In some cases, fruitful links with other institutions, such as local museums, also take place. However, there are examples where PSRBs have not yet fully understood the significance of the FD award to the sector or considered whether their current requirements are the most appropriate.

49 Reviewers identified areas for development in partnership links, in addition to those discussed elsewhere relating to teaching and learning and employer involvement, WBL and programme monitoring and enhancement systems. Those reports that include reference to partnership arrangements encourage providers to improve links between:

- the awarding HEI and FEC providers, to ensure clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- HEIs, FECs and employers, to improve employer integration and ensure currency
- providers and SSCs, to ensure currency of programmes
- consortium delivery sites, for dissemination of information and good practice.

Monitoring and enhancement of quality and standards

50 The validating HEIs have overall responsibility for the quality and standards of the FDs, whether or not they contribute towards the delivery of the programme. They discharge this responsibility in different ways. Reports of QAA institutional audits provide evidence that awarding institutions, in introducing FDs, are generally aware of the guidance and requirements laid out in the FDQB and are involving employer groups and considering articulation requirements.

Validation

51 Most FDs are validated through the HEIs' established procedures and a small number went through special processes. In a few audit reports, including some not yet published, auditors have identified weak procedures in the validation of FDs and raised concerns about the effectiveness of HEI oversight of the awards. In appropriate and effective validation, the defining characteristics of FDs are considered explicitly, resulting in programmes where these characteristics are clearly met. In addition, all aspects of WBL are considered and there is employer involvement, in some cases through an employer representative body or a consultant. This enables employer needs and the defining characteristics of FDs to be fully considered. However, a few examples of employers not supporting the subsequent implementation of WBL indicates that, even though they may have been involved in validation, increased efforts are needed to ensure they understand the nature of the award and the centrality of WBL.

In the reports of programmes demonstrating good practice in programme approval:

- validations are well documented to demonstrate that all defining characteristics of FDs have been addressed
- employer needs are fully analysed and considered
- employers or their representatives are involved in validation to assist in considering all the defining characteristics of FDs and the currency of the curriculum
- external subject representatives take part
- the appropriateness of the articulated honours degree is considered together with ensuring the FD students fulfil any specific requirements set by the honours degree.

Programme monitoring

52 About half the providers deliver their FDs at more than one site or through more than one college. In such cases, many providers establish agreements on the programme monitoring and enhancement systems. Good practice in annual programme monitoring is centred on strong partnerships between the awarding HEI, colleges and employers, ensuring that the FD maintains appropriate academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and fully meets employer needs. In some cases, this has been reinforced with a quality committee for collaborative programmes or for FDs overseeing the annual monitoring process. Where clear and effective procedures are defined across the consortium, annual monitoring is particularly effective.

53 Effective annual monitoring is underpinned by commitment to continuous improvement by the staff team through planned evaluation and action planning. This results in genuinely reflective and evaluative annual monitoring reports, ensuring that appropriate and timely action is taken. In one consortium, this included an early scheduled revalidation of the programme. In some cases, the introduction of a new framework for the review of FDs to deal with the distinctive characteristics of these programmes has led to enhanced effectiveness.

54 External examiners' reports are an important part of programme monitoring and enhancement. Not all providers have yet taken measures to ensure that the FD external examiner comments on the defining characteristics of the award and specifically on WBL have been fully addressed. In 10 per cent of reports, the reviewers expressed significant concerns about the quality of external examiner reports and their effectiveness in assisting the provider to assure itself of the standard and quality of the award. Examples of good practice are listed below.

Good practice in the consistency and effectiveness of quality assurance systems across the provision includes:

- strong collaboration between the awarding HEI and the delivery colleges
- clearly defined responsibilities and regular contacts with link tutors
- shared understanding and implementation of quality assurance and enhancement procedures
- new appointments, such as a Director of FDs
- the Head of Partnership or Quality Committee playing a central role in monitoring and enhancement
- a programme of development to achieve standardisation of marking and moderation procedures between delivery sites
- enhancing processes to ensure the external examiner report covers the FD's defining characteristics, particularly WBL, its effectiveness and integration with academic study
- ensuring external examiners have knowledge of the defining characteristics of FDs, and the role of WBL.

55 Aspects of programme monitoring and review which would most benefit from enhancement include:

- the awarding HEI taking a consistent and proactive approach in guiding the process
- providing sufficient support for the programme leader
- developing effective liaison with college teaching teams
- formalising the involvement of employers and mentors
- consideration of the appropriate range of employers
- monitoring WBL as part of the formal annual monitoring process

- achieving clarity and ownership between the awarding HEI and college delivery sites
- appropriate formal consideration of the cumulative effect of a series of minor changes to the programme
- systematic analysis of the performance of FD cohorts, including their performance on modules shared with other programmes
- a strategic approach to the monitoring of programme statistics, to inform activities designed to increase the retention of students
- giving appropriate attention to the FD and its defining characteristics in the monitoring and review of programmes in a subject area
- providing feedback to staff, WBL mentors and students on their input to the QA processes.

56 Around 75 per cent of FD providers are involving employers and mentors in the monitoring and review process, but to a varying extent. It is also clear that there is scope to develop strategies for their more formal involvement and to include a broader range of employers. Around half of the providers reviewed have organised employers' groups or forums, or have devised other means of obtaining employer contributions to the programme monitoring process.

Student feedback

57 Most providers employ a range of mechanisms to obtain student feedback, such as questionnaires and module evaluations, student representatives at meetings and informal feedback through tutors. In a few cases, formal opportunities for students to raise issues are limited.

Good practice in obtaining student feedback includes:

- providing opportunities for students to give feedback in different ways, such as questionnaires, student panels and committee membership
- feedback mechanisms that are equally effective for full and part-time, and distance-learning students
- informing students about the different opportunities to provide feedback
- programme teams that respond in a timely way to students' views on the provision.

Themes relating to academic standards

Aims and specification of intended learning outcomes

58 In most programmes, reviewers identified programme aims and outcomes as strengths. In these programmes, aims and ILOs are clearly specified and appropriate for the defining characteristics of FDs and the FHEQ. Programmes also generally align with the relevant subject benchmark statement(s) and the FDQB. Aims and ILOs are appropriately linked, and the links are frequently made explicit in module and programme handbooks, and through formal curriculum mapping exercises.

59 A feature of many programmes, which has become more frequent since the reviews of 2002-03, is the implementation of personal development planning (PDP) intended to support students' lifelong learning. The commitment of FD providers to the development and maintenance of lifelong learning is recognised as a valuable feature of many programmes.

60 In some cases, there is a lack of clarity about aims and ILOs in information for students and/or employers, especially in relation to WBL. The objectives of WBL are not always included in programme ILOs. There are also inconsistencies between different documents in the terms used to describe them. In many cases, the reviewers draw attention to a need for further work to ensure that module ILOs are linked explicitly to programme level outcomes and/or to assessment. Even though they may be clearly stated in institutions' programme documents, reviewers noted that on some occasions, communication of programme aims and ILOs could be more effective.

Good practice in specifying aims and ILOs includes:

- ensuring they are appropriate for the defining characteristics of FDs and the FHEQ
- ensuring they generally align with the relevant subject benchmark statement(s) and the FDQB
- ensuring that programme aims and ILOs are appropriately linked, and that links are made explicit
- incorporating PDP to support the aim of encouraging lifelong learning
- ensuring clarity of information and effective communication for students and employers about aims and ILOs, especially in relation to WBL
- ensuring consistent terminology and wording are used to describe ILOs in different documents, for example, programme specifications and student guides
- linking programme aims and ILOs to those for modules and to assessment instruments/assignments
- differentiating ILOs appropriately for modules at certificate level from modules at intermediate level of the FHEQ
- consulting with business employers to ensure that the stated aims and ILOs include the integration of academic and WBL throughout the programme
- clarifying the mapping of specific unit or module ILOs to particular assignment tasks.

Curricula and flexibility

61 Reviewers have recorded many positive features of the curricula. The relevance of the curricula to the employment and professional needs of students, and employers' skill requirements are frequently identified as features of good practice. In some cases, the provider carried out an analysis of the skills gap in the employment sector before the programme was first proposed. In others, a representative group of employers and employer organisations was established to assist with curricular development.

62 The majority of programmes have taken the needs of students into account when organising the curricula and, in around 25 per cent of reports, the flexibility of programmes is highlighted as good practice. This relates, for example, to the flexibility provided through various modes of delivery, including full and part-time, day-release and distance learning. There are also varied forms of delivering programmes, including block-weekend attendance, a mix of daytime and evening attendance, or daytime attendance between 1000 and 1500 hours to accommodate students' family commitments.

63 Flexible patterns of delivery are frequently matched in some programmes by a responsive approach to student needs that allows them to pause and resume their studies and to progress at their own pace. Reviewers found examples where the opportunity to study fewer modules each year was offered to students to allow them to continue with the programme. This enables students to construct their own pattern of study at a pace that suits them, and facilitates independent learning. There are examples where students work full-time and study part-time but achieve the FD in two years, the same period as a full-time student. In a few cases, there is no flexibility in the pace of study for students who are in full-time employment and this causes difficulties for some students. The curricular design often allows students to draw on their own employment experience as a starting point for learning, and also provides opportunities for them to benefit from the broader experience of employment within the student group. Some FDs, for example in computing subjects, are designed to enable students to gain credit or experience towards employer-recognised qualifications in addition to the FD award.

64 In a small number of employment sectors, the PSRB or employers still require a national vocational qualification (NVQ) as a licence to practice or as the recognised qualification. This remains the case even though the FD is an Intermediate level award. Some providers have, therefore, incorporated the NVQ within the FD so that the students obtain both awards. Where the required NVQ is an award at level 3 on the National Qualifications Framework, providers find the combination of the two awards more challenging. Students also find it particularly demanding since the outcomes of the awards at the different levels do not match. In one case, students are required to pass the NVQ in order to achieve the FD on which they are enrolled. Providers, PSRBs and employers may find it helpful to review their requirements in the light of the development of the FD.

65 The inclusion of individual learning agreements in the curricula to facilitate different pathways and progression routes is highlighted as a strength. Such flexibility is particularly supportive of those students who choose to study part-time, while maintaining full or part-time employment. It also assists other students who enter from non-traditional backgrounds.

66 The further development of the curricula to prepare students more thoroughly for proceeding to the final year of honours degree programmes is mentioned in several cases, either in the context of bridging activities or ensuring a closer match between FD outcomes and honours requirements. Not all curricula provide the necessary prerequisites for progression to the named honours degrees available to students. This is not in the spirit of the FDQB and students are disadvantaged.

Assessment and feedback to students

67 The distinctive mix of academic and work-based learning presents a significant challenge to all providers in the assessment of students. Assessment is identified as an area of good practice or innovation in only a few cases.

Good practice in assessment centres on:

- a formative assessment process which is particularly suited to adult learners
- a wide range of well-designed assessment methods
- the involvement of employers in formative assessment
- strong internal verification procedures
- the use of a professional development profile which contributes to a formative self-assessment process.

68 The most common strength across the sample of programmes is the wide range of assessment methods used to test students' achievement of both academic and work-based learning ILOs.

Examples of strengths in assessment include:

- assessment methods that are well matched to the ILOs and to the appropriate levels of the FHEQ
- an assessment strategy which is appropriate to measure the achievement of students, with arrangements in place to keep it under review
- assessment arrangements that are well documented and transparent
- the assessment of students in a real work environment, with employer involvement in the assessment of WBL modules
- appropriate support and guidance given to employers for their involvement in assessment
- evidence of thorough marking and moderation, which contributes effectively to consistency of practice within and across delivery sites
- encouragement given to students to develop their own assessment tasks, which are then approved by tutors.

69 Comprehensive and constructive written feedback on assessed work is referred to as a noteworthy strength of the programme in only about 10 per cent of reports. In addition to written feedback, however, students emphasised the accessibility of tutors and their willingness to provide individual oral feedback.

70 Good practices and strengths in assessment are significantly outweighed by the need for development in a number of areas. Not all providers align their processes with the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. Assessment-related activities are identified as a major area for development in over two-thirds of reviews. Around 20 per cent of reports identify student feedback as one area for development.

71 Areas for development in the assessment of FDs include:

- ensuring greater clarity of grading criteria and explicit links with the ILOs
- formal mapping of programme aims, ILOs and assessment
- consistency of assessment strategies, grading and moderation procedures
- attention to the security and effectiveness of assessment across consortia
- identifying an appropriate balance between methods of assessment
- clarifying the criteria for the assessment of individual students in the context of group project work
- placing greater emphasis on the integration of assessment with vocational, technical, practical and academic skills
- increasing the involvement of employers in the assessment process, including formative assessment and the setting and development of assignments
- supporting employers in contributing to assessment
- reviewing assessment information to ensure it addresses the different needs of students, mentors and employers
- ensuring the timeliness, quantity, consistency and quality of written feedback to students
- where distance-learning students study on the same programme as students who attend a college, ensuring that all students have equivalent opportunities in assessment to demonstrate achievement of the ILOs.

Student achievement

72 In around one-half of the programmes reviewed, students had not yet completed the award and, in these cases, a judgement of emerging student achievement was made. Appropriate or high standards of student achievement are frequently listed as strengths of the provision, broadly reflecting sound achievement of intended learning outcomes at the relevant stage. In the main, achievement was considered to align with, and in some cases exceed, the requirements of the FHEQ and the FDQB.

73 Student achievement also generally meets professional and employer needs. Even where students have not yet completed the programme, employers report satisfaction

with the growing level of knowledge, skills and confidence of the students. Students demonstrate employment-related, transferable and lifelong learning skills. Some reports draw attention to student work that demonstrates the integration of work-based and academic learning. Reviewers noted examples of work that identified effective interpretation and application of theory to practice, and the high quality of student work in contextual, critical and historical studies.

74 The most common area for development is in relation to critical analysis and analytical thinking in student work, especially at intermediate level. Around one-third of reports indicate that the students' successful achievement of technical and transferable skills was not matched by their levels of conceptual understanding, theoretical understanding and analysis. Reviewers noted in some instances that students demonstrate a descriptive reflection on practice rather than critical self-evaluation linking theory to practice.

Themes relating to quality of learning opportunities

Teaching and learning

75 In all programmes, teaching and learning are sufficient and appropriate. Good practice or strengths in teaching and learning are recorded in over one-third of the programmes reviewed. Good practice relates mainly to action-learning sets, which are seen as encouraging and supporting independent learning, providing valuable peer support and enhancing students' development in terms of analytical skills. The most frequently reported strength is the range of teaching and learning approaches adopted. A variety of methods and approaches to teaching and learning is seen as being especially helpful to students entering from non-traditional backgrounds and, consequently, as supporting the retention of such students.

Teaching and learning strategies that are particularly effective in FDs include:

- the imaginative use of action-learning sets
- a wide variety and range of teaching and learning approaches
- effective support of WBL and integration of this with academic elements of the programme
- effective development of lifelong learning, for example, through PDP
- delivery of teaching and learning sessions in a flexible manner to address different learning styles
- involvement by employers in teaching, including live briefs and as guest lecturers.

76 Teaching and learning are referred to in about 25 per cent of the programmes reviewed as being in need of further development. Areas include:

- involvement of employers and other professionals within teaching and learning activities
- ensuring that methods of delivery are sufficiently flexible to offer equivalent opportunities for all students to achieve the ILOs

- ensuring that all students have an equivalent learning experience through WBL to achieve the ILOs
- opportunities for students in relevant subjects to be taught with industry standard software and resources as part of their teaching and learning
- enhancement of e-learning to promote variety and flexibility
- consistency of the learning experience for students across a consortium.

Admissions and widening participation

77 Many examples of appropriate and effective recruitment and admission procedures are found in the sample of programmes. Good practice or strengths are identified for admissions and widening participation in about 30 per cent of the programmes reviewed.

An effective admissions process that facilitates widening participation includes:

- a high level of staff commitment to widening participation
- opportunities for applicants to visit the HEI or FEC and talk to staff at various stages in the recruitment process
- providers' commitment to widening participation expressed through open, inclusive and robust admissions policies and procedures
- provision of bursaries by employers
- flexible delivery and attendance patterns
- effective arrangements for APL which have clear information available to students before and during the registration process, and by clear processes for presenting evidence of prior learning.

78 Matters that need developing and improving are identified in about 25 per cent of programmes. Many of these relate to APL. As noted in paragraph 15, some 12 per cent of students, both full and part-time, achieve entry through APL procedures. Around half the reports record that APL policies are in place. A few reports note the use of APL for students who are able to demonstrate they can achieve the ILOs of some modules on the programme so that they can achieve exemption from them. So far this has mainly been used for cohorts of students transferring from HNC/D or professional development programmes. In a number of cases, this only happened at the introduction of the programme. However, many reports note that where APL policies are in place, they have not been implemented. Students often reported that they were not aware of the policies. There is scope for development in making admissions processes more accessible to students entering from non-traditional backgrounds and establishing APL procedures to support admission of a wider range of students.

79 Implementing the APL can be enhanced by:

- informing applicants about APL opportunities and the procedures prior to enrolment
- publishing the procedures for admission through the APL route through information and marketing materials

- ensuring that staff actively encourage students to use the APL procedures
- offering students support to submit APL applications
- monitoring widening participation activities with a view to increasing the diversity of students
- offering staff development for the assessment of student applications for APL.

Learning support resources

80 Most provision has a variety of appropriate learning resources that effectively supports the students on the programme. Good practices or strengths in learning support resources are recorded in about half of the programmes reviewed. In physical resources, several reports highlight positive aspects of e-learning, including high-quality electronic resources available through virtual learning environments (VLEs). Reviewers comment specifically on a number of these, which provide excellent support for mature, non-traditional and distance learners.

Strengths in learning resources include:

- effective overall management and deployment of physical resources, benefiting the student learning experience
- the high quality of learning materials
- good on-line and information and communication technology-related resources, including provision of industry-standard software
- laptops provided to students through a government SureStart-funded scheme in Early Years Education
- effective implementation of a VLE making a valuable resource for supporting students' experience of WBL
- appropriate and accessible library and learning resource centres in each HEI and FEC across a consortium
- relevant specialist resources, for example in engineering, which, in a small number of cases, have been supplied and supported by external employers and partners
- good general teaching accommodation which supports academic and work-based learning.

81 Reviewers indicate the need for development in learning support resources in about one-third of the programmes. In the *Overview report on Foundation Degree reviews*, (QAA, 2003), reviewers reported the benefits to students of using VLEs. In the reviews of 2004-05, reviewers noted that there is still scope for the introduction, development, embedding and more extensive use of VLEs to support students. Areas for development in learning resources include:

- ensuring an appropriate level of up-to-date library stock and current specialist equipment for the employment sector
- ensuring appropriate access to the available library resources for all students whatever their location of study

- provision of appropriate induction and support for students so that they can effectively access resources
- ensuring that when e-learning facilities are referred to in programme advertising, they are available in practice for students on the FD
- provision of staff development to assist tutors to exploit the potential of VLEs
- provision of appropriate induction and support to students, particularly in the early stages of the programme
- delivery across a consortium with a consistent or compatible VLE system to ensure equivalent student access to materials.

Staff

82 Overall, staff teaching on FDs are a strength and are a key factor in the success of programmes. The high quality of staff and their appropriate academic qualifications help to ensure the professional currency of programmes. Reviewers highlight the range of staff contributing to teaching and learning. Most programmes have committed and supportive staff teams in place, including technical support staff. They found strengths in staffing and good practice in over 40 per cent of programmes. Students repeatedly express how much they value the enthusiasm and dedication of staff.

83 Many reports refer to well-qualified, full and part-time academic staff with appropriate qualifications and good experience of teaching in HE. Typically there is a small group of staff involved with the FD. In FECs, staff commonly have more class contact hours than their colleagues in HEIs. They also frequently teach on both HE and FE-level programmes. Specialists from the employment sector, who teach on a part-time sessional, basis or guest lecturers also make an effective input and are valued by students. Their contribution enhances the vocational relevance of the programmes and ensures their continuing professional currency. Reviewers noted strengths in staff-development activities in only a few cases, in particular collaborative staff development involving HEIs and partner colleges supported by effective link tutors.

84 Areas for development of staff resources are identified in about 20 per cent of reports. The most common areas are:

- time for staff to engage in professional subject updating
- the facility for staff, including part-time staff, to attend relevant consortium-wide meetings which promote consistency of practice
- evidence of appropriate staff-development activities offered by the HEI and FEC and taken up by staff, in particular to assist a more focused attention on pedagogy, assessment in FDs and teaching at HE level
- ensuring opportunities for staff development for any staff who have little experience of HE level teaching or of the relevant employment sector.

Student support

85 Overall, students receive effective support from a range of academic and other staff. Good practice and strengths relating to general academic and pastoral support were identified in about 40 per cent of programmes. This section of the overview does not deal with the support of WBL, which is addressed in paragraphs 40-44.

Effective student support includes:

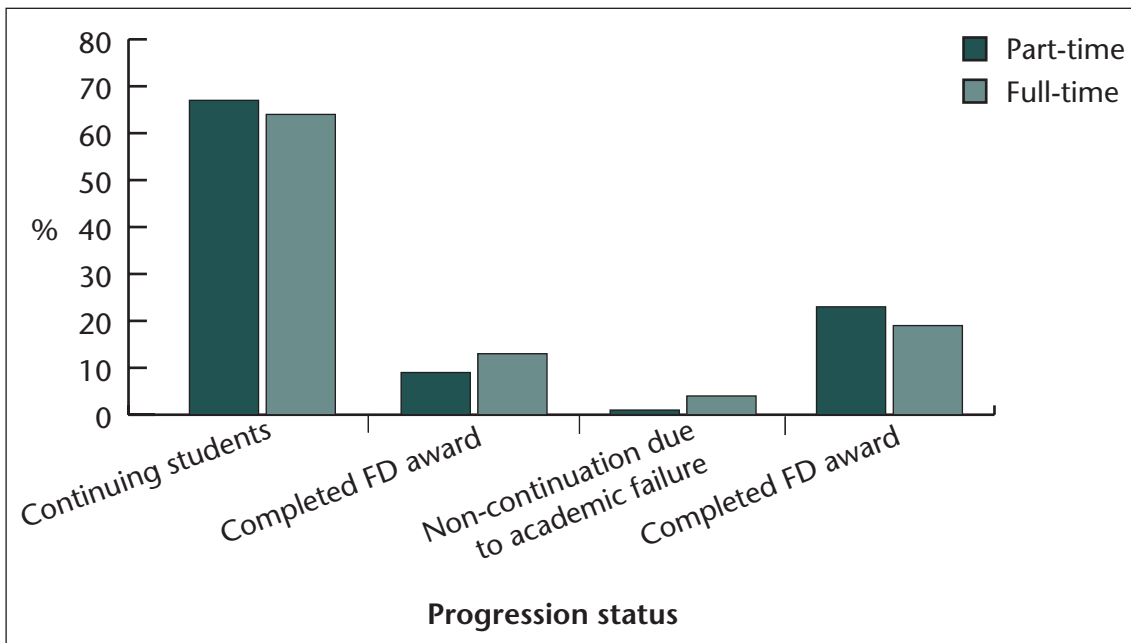
- excellent general academic and personal support for all aspects of the student education
- effective communication between staff and students
- early diagnosis of particular learning support needs and the provision of that support
- availability of a range of study-skills support mechanisms such as handbooks and on-line tutorials, which students can use on a self-referral basis
- appropriate and timely academic advice and guidance, especially relating to progression
- clarity of publicly available information.

86 Reviewers note a strong link between retention rates and student support. They consider that effective student-support mechanisms, in particular formal tutorial sessions, underpin increased retention rates and enable more students to achieve the award. The reviews of FDs in major review of healthcare provision also note that student support was effective and well managed. Students valued the responsiveness of staff.

Student progression and articulation

87 Providers completed student data tables and these were analysed to provide an overview of student progression statistics. In October 2004, about two-thirds of both full and part-time students were recorded as continuing their programme of study from the previous year.

Figure 7 Student progression and achievement



Source: QAA student data tables 2005

88 The data collected show that very few students withdraw as a result of academic failure. However, full-time students are more than twice as likely to fail than part-time students. The numbers are small, with 4 per cent of full-time students withdrawing and only 1.4 per cent of part-time students. The proportion of part-time students withdrawing for reasons other than academic failure has fallen from 31 per cent in 2002-03 to 12 per cent in 2004-05.

89 Strengths in achieving the award and articulation were identified in some 20 per cent of reports. Reviewers considered high rates continuing to articulated honours programmes or into employment as evidence of the success of the programmes. Part-time students confirmed that some of them had gained promotion at work as a result of following the programme even before they had achieved the award. Reviewers reported that some students gain employment during the programme as a result of their study and that this is one cause of withdrawal. Several reports note high retention rates, often secured through good student support and guidance.

90 Areas for development in student progression and articulation are identified in around one-third of reports. In the majority of cases, these issues relate to students' progression to articulated honours programmes.

91 The main areas for development include:

- the clarity and availability of timely information to students about all progression routes
- clear and timely information about senior practitioner status and the progression to Qualified Teacher Status for Education Studies students
- provision of well-designed progression opportunities which are appropriate to the expectations and needs of students

- provision of support, guidance and flexible modes of study appropriate for students entering programmes from non-traditional backgrounds
- provision of a match between the modes of study on the articulated honours degree with the modes of study on the FD
- provision of early information to students, including the selection criteria, where there is strong competition for places on the articulated honours degree
- ensuring the FD provides an appropriate preparation, particularly in the curriculum and methods of assessment, for the honours degree.

92 There are high numbers of students progressing through FDs in Education Studies. This is likely to create additional demand for places on honours degrees in education in partner HEIs.

Conclusions

FDs in England are increasing in number and attracting greater numbers of students. FDs are proving to be valuable new awards that are appropriate for a variety of employment sectors.

The review of FDs in England in 2005 has identified many strengths and areas of good practice. Providers who are developing new FDs will benefit from these examples, as will those providers of FDs where reviewers identified areas for improvement. Some of the improvements required are clearly linked to the specific nature and complexities involved in the FD award, whereas others are more generic issues that have been observed to occur in HE programmes more generally.

Implications for providers

All programmes have strengths and good practice that can be shared across the sector. Effective partnerships have been developed between educational institutions and with employers. Most FDs in the sample reviewed involved more than one educational institution. These partners work collaboratively to ensure that students on the programme have an equivalent experience, wherever they study. Some consortia have developed effective means of ensuring that all staff have a shared understanding of the academic standards required and of the assessment processes. Some consortia have also developed processes for effective annual monitoring of the programme, with all colleges contributing and the HEI appropriately carrying out its responsibilities for the academic standards of the award. Partnerships with employers have largely ensured that they contributed to the development of the programme. The input from employers ensures the currency of the curricula.

In addition to developing the skills and knowledge base in many sectors, the FD also offers opportunities to students who would not otherwise have entered HE to obtain the FD. Universities and colleges have developed appropriate recruitment procedures to support widening participation. Rates of withdrawal due to academic failure are very low. The FD often brings further achievement for students. There is a high rate of progression of students from the FD to an honours degree and some students already in employment gain promotion even before completing the award.

Many institutions provide a range of support to FD students. These include the early identification of additional support requirements and effective academic support through a tutorial system. Many colleges and universities have introduced PDPs and learning agreements to encourage achievement of the ILOs for independent learning. They have also ensured that appropriate specialist resources are available to students either through the education institution, the consortium or the employers.

Most FDs are taught by well-qualified and enthusiastic staff who are highly valued by students. Students also appreciate the contributions that employment-sector specialists make to teaching and learning in some programmes.

When designing FDs, providers have not always paid sufficient attention to ensuring that programme and module ILOs are explicitly linked, and that there are explicit aims and ILOs for WBL. This can be detrimental to the clear specification of links between

module ILOs and assignment tasks. Some providers need to strengthen and adjust their validation processes to ensure their FDs meet all of the defining characteristics of FDs as set out in the FDQB. Validation should also address the suitability of the named articulated honours degree programmes, to ensure a good match between the flexibility and mode of study offered by the FD, and that offered by the honours degree, as well as students' professional aspirations. Additionally, the design of some FDs could incorporate more flexibility for students and employers through the increased use of e-learning approaches and VLEs. Validation should also address the ease of access to library resources for all students regardless of their mode of attendance.

Some awarding institutions could be far more active in their leadership of partnership arrangements to ensure consistent implementation of systems for monitoring and enhancing quality and standards. For example, the format of external examiners' reports can be modified to ensure the defining characteristics of FDs are addressed. Active leadership by the awarding institution should also help to ensure that all partners within a consortium apply student assessment practices consistently. Such practices should aim to enhance the quality and timeliness of written feedback to students, increase the involvement of employers in assessment, and ensure that students achieve critical and analytical skills appropriate to an Intermediate level award.

In a number of programmes there is a need to address the clarity and sufficiency of the information and documents provided to stakeholders, particularly students, employers and work-based mentors. There is also a need to ensure that terminology used between different documents is consistent. These improvements will make a significant difference to the effective operation of FDs, student admission procedures, including APL, and the support and monitoring of WBL.

As might be expected in some employment sectors, FDs may face particular challenges in retaining active employer involvement in the programme's development and in teaching and learning. Unfortunately, this frequently impacts on the professional currency of the FD and limits the development of comprehensive WBL arrangements. Employers can exert an important influence on these matters and can assist in ensuring that WBL is fully integrated with academic learning throughout the programme. Additionally they can help to influence and shape some of the different types of staff development needs required by FDs.

Providers frequently put significant effort into sustaining employer involvement. Some will benefit from further support from the policymakers and other major stakeholders (see Implications for stakeholders). Other providers have had far greater success by, for example, formalising employer input through the use of three-way agreements between provider, student and employer. Providers and partners within a consortium need to assist each other by sharing good practice for effectively integrating employers into the programme.

Implications for other stakeholders

The table below indicates the broad areas where further supported development from policymakers and other major stakeholders can help to strengthen and help to assure quality and standards of FDs.

Many of the areas and suggested actions are applicable to more than one stakeholder, and there is considerable scope for interagency collaboration. There is no order of priority in the table. However, of the areas set out below, two key priorities are the further promotion of FDs to students and employers and the increased involvement of employers.

| Area requiring support for further development | Policy makers | PSRBs, SSCs, Employer-related bodies | Employers | FDF | HEA | QAA |
|---|---------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|
| Supporting students' work-based learning and their progression to honours degree. Suggested actions | | | | | | |
| implement strategic policies to ensure that students and employees receive effective and consistent support in the workplace to achieve work-based learning outcomes | ✓ | | | | | |
| provide improved and consistent levels of support to employees and students undertaking WBL projects and assignments | | | ✓ | | | |
| develop good practice publications on establishing three-way agreements between providers, employers and students to help assure the quality and standards of work-based learning | | | | ✓ | | |
| link the number of places available on articulated honours degree programmes to enable eligible FD students to progress | ✓ | | | | | |
| review the current restrictions on FD graduates proceeding to the final year of a PSRB accredited honours degree | | ✓ | | | | |

| Area requiring support for further development | Policy makers | PSRBs, SSCs, Employer-related bodies | Employers | FDF | HEA | QAA |
|--|---------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|
| Employer involvement in Foundation Degrees. Suggested actions | | | | | | |
| implement national policies to further encourage employers to increase and sustain their involvement in FDs | ✓ | | | | | |
| recognise within funding mechanisms, the resource implications associated with establishing and maintaining employer involvement, especially in sectors made up of SMEs | ✓ | | | | | |
| increase involvement in programme design, development, and annual review. Seek greater involvement in learning and teaching, including appropriate involvement in assessment | | | ✓ | | | |
| Publicity, guidance & dissemination of information about Foundation Degrees. Suggested actions | | | | | | |
| carry out further publicity drives to promote the value of FDs more actively to students and employers, especially employment sectors characterised by SMEs | ✓ | | | | | |
| provide guidance materials so that careers advisers and related national organisations such as the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services are able to advise potential applicants about FDs | | ✓ | | | | |

| Area requiring support for further development | Policy makers | PSRBs, SSCs, Employer-related bodies | Employers | FDF | HEA | QAA |
|---|---------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|
| disseminate the many areas of good practice identified in this overview report and in the individual reports of FD reviews | | | ✓ | | | |
| work cooperatively to address areas for development highlighted in this report | | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| review the activities with FECs and consortia to promote the sharing of good practice in generic and subject specific areas | | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Cross-agency and partnership working. Suggested actions | | | | | | |
| work cooperatively to promote links between providers and HEA subject centres | | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| support SSCs in the development of further FD sectoral frameworks, drawing on the established practices within the Academic Infrastructure for assuring quality and standards, in order to avoid increasing the burden on providers | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| sponsor or facilitate greater interaction between providers and the newly-developing SSCs | | | ✓ | | | |
| sponsor or facilitate direct contacts between providers to share good practice | | | ✓ | | | |

| Area requiring support for further development | Policy makers | PSRBs, SSCs, Employer-related bodies | Employers | FDF | HEA | QAA |
|---|---------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|
| facilitate liaison between SSCs, PSRBs and employer organisations to promote understanding of the FD and to increase employer involvement | | | | | ✓ | |
| work cooperatively to facilitate links between providers, employers, PSRBs, SSCs and HEA subject centres to promote the sharing of good practice in subject communities | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| examine the areas for development identified in this report and establish where its own initiatives might assist developments in FDs | | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Professional recognition and accreditation, FD sectoral frameworks and licence to practice. Suggested actions | | | | | | |
| encourage employers and PSRBs to consider the place of the FD in professional accreditation | ✓ | | | ✓ | | |
| review the requirements for achieving a licence to practice in the light of this new award | | ✓ | | | | |
| develop further frameworks for FDs so that FD graduates obtain associate professional level recognition | | ✓ | | | | |

| Area requiring support for further development. | Policy makers | PSRBs, SSCs, Employer-related bodies | Employers | FDF | HEA | QAA |
|---|---------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|
| promote collaboration of SSCs and PSRBs in connection with the development of accreditation frameworks for professional level recognition | | | | | ✓ | |
| work with PSRBs and SSCs to integrate the FD into the recognised qualifications of the sector | | | | ✓ | ✓ | |

Overall FDs are generally successful. They are fulfilling the original objectives for this new award, encouraging collaboration between HEIs, FECs and employers, and providing opportunities for student who had not previously considered studying at HE level. However, there is still some scope for improvement and this report is intended to assist that process.

Annex 1: The FD programmes reviewed in 2004-05

| Validating Institution | Programme | Delivery site |
|--|--|---|
| Anglia Polytechnic University | Public Services | Anglia Polytechnic University |
| Anglia Polytechnic University | Management of Hospitality | Colchester Institute West Suffolk College |
| Bath Spa University College | Fashion Design Skills | Museum of Costume, Bath |
| Bath Spa University College | Design for Digital Technologies | City of Bath College |
| University of Bolton | Health and Social Care | University of Bolton |
| Bournemouth University | Equine Studies | Kingston Maurward College |
| Canterbury Christ Church University College | Early Years | Canterbury Christ Church University College |
| City University | Ophthalmic Dispensing | City University City and Islington College |
| Coventry University | Motorsport Engineering | Warwickshire College |
| Harper Adams University College | Veterinary Nursing and Practice Management | Harper Adams University College |
| Lancaster University | Criminology | Blackburn College Blackpool and The Fylde College |
| Lancaster University (with Edge Hill College of Higher Education) | Management | Hugh Baird College Knowsley College |
| Liverpool Hope University (at the time of the review know as Liverpool Hope University College) | Special Needs | Liverpool Hope University |
| Liverpool Hope University (see above) | Management of Childcare Provision | Liverpool Hope University |
| Liverpool John Moores University | Public Services (Criminal Justice) | St Helens College |
| London Metropolitan University | Journalism | Lambeth College |
| London Metropolitan University | Performing Arts | WAC Performing Arts and Media College |

| Validating Institution | Programme | Delivery site |
|--|--|--|
| London South Bank University | Early Years | Kensington and Chelsea College Lambeth College Lewisham College Southwark College |
| Loughborough University | Leisure Management | Loughborough College |
| Loughborough University | Sports Science with Sports Management | Loughborough University |
| Middlesex University | Health and Fitness | Barnet College |
| Open University | Early Years | Open University |
| Sheffield Hallam University | Food Manufacturing Management | Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education |
| Sheffield Hallam University | Applied Computing (Defence Geographic Information) | Royal School of Military Survey |
| Southampton Solent University (at the time of the review known as Southampton Institute) | Professional Computer Studies and Professional Network Studies | Southampton Solent University |
| Staffordshire University | Teaching Assistants | Burton College Leek College Newcastle under Lyme College Rodbaston College Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology Stafford College Stoke on Trent College Tamworth and Lichfield College Walford and North Shropshire College |
| Thames Valley University | Credit Management | Thames Valley University |
| Thames Valley University | Public Service Management | Thames Valley University |
| The Nottingham Trent University | Sports Horse Management and Training | The Nottingham Trent University |

| Validating Institution | Programme | Delivery site |
|--|---|---|
| The Surrey Institute of Art & Design, University College | Fashion | The Arts Institute at Bournemouth |
| University College Chichester | Local Government Management | West Sussex County Council |
| University College Northampton | Early Years Northampton | University College |
| University College Worcester | Learning Support | Evesham and Malvern Hills College Halesowen College Hereford College of Technology Josiah Mason College Sunfield School University College Worcester |
| University of Bradford | Engineering Technology | Bishop Auckland College Bradford College South West Durham Training Ltd Wakefield College |
| University of Central England in Birmingham | Early Years | South Birmingham College University of Central England in Birmingham |
| University of Derby | Educare and Early Childhood | Derby College Stamford College University of Derby West Nottinghamshire College |
| University of Derby | Commercial Video/ Photography/Video & Photography | University of Derby |
| University of East Anglia | Early Years | Suffolk College |
| University of East London | Modern Manufacturing | Barking College Havering College |
| University of Essex | Network Technology | South East Essex College |
| University of Gloucestershire | Hospitality and Tourism Management | University of Gloucestershire |
| University of Hertfordshire | Information Technology and Business | Hertford Regional College North Hertfordshire College Oaklands College West's Herts College |

| Validating Institution | Programme | Delivery site |
|--|---|---|
| University of Huddersfield | Learning Support | Craven College Joseph Priestley College Rotherham College Stockton Riverside College University of Huddersfield |
| University of Huddersfield | Community Governance and Public Sector Management | Calderdale College Huddersfield Technical College |
| University of Hull | Bathroom and Kitchen Design | Bishop Burton College |
| University of Leeds | Theology and Ministry | York St John College |
| University of Lincoln | Sport and Exercise Development | Lincoln College |
| University of Lincoln | Counselling | Hull College North Lindsey College |
| University of Liverpool with Chester University (known at the time of the review as Chester College of Higher Education) | Business and Management | Warrington Collegiate Institute West Cheshire College |
| University of Luton | Care Management | Barnfield College Bedford College |
| University of Northumbria at Newcastle | Business Management | Newcastle College |
| University of Plymouth | Education (Teaching Assistants) | Cornwall College Truro College University of Plymouth |
| University of Plymouth | Law | Truro College |
| University of Portsmouth | Police Studies | University of Portsmouth |
| University of Portsmouth | Marine Systems Engineering | HMS Sultan |
| University of Southampton | Working with Children | Eastleigh College Taunton's College Totton College |
| University of Southampton | Childhood Studies | University College Winchester (both sites) |

| Validating Institution | Programme | Delivery site |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| University of Surrey | Computing | Farnborough College of Technology |
| University of Sussex | Creative Sound Design | Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication |
| University of Teesside | Graphic Design | Cleveland College of Art and Design |
| University of Teesside | Early Years (Sector Endorsed) | Darlington College Hartlepool College Middlesbrough College Redcar and Cleveland College Stockton and Billingham College |
| University of the Arts London | Media Practice | University of the Arts London |
| University of the West of England | Sports Conditioning and Coaching | Hartpury College |
| University of Westminster | Professional Photography | City of Westminster College |
| University of Westminster | Hospitality Management | Westminster Kingsway College |
| University of Wolverhampton | Project Management | City of Wolverhampton College Telford College University of Wolverhampton |
| Oxford Brookes University* | Classroom Support | Abingdon and Witney College The Solihull College |
| University of the Arts, London* | Fashion Design and Marketing | University of the Arts, London |

* Denotes reviews not yet complete at the time the report was prepared.

Annex 2: Key questions for the review of Foundation Degrees

The following 11 key questions have been extracted from the *Handbook for the review of Foundation Degrees in England 2004-05*.

Key question 1: To what extent are the aims and intended programme outcomes clear and appropriate for the defining characteristics of Foundation Degrees, and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)?

Key question 2: To what extent do the design and content of the curriculum or curricula reflect the defining characteristics of Foundation Degrees and what is the likelihood that they will enable students to achieve the programme outcomes?

Key question 3: To what extent are the arrangements for assessment clear, robust and capable of systematic testing of the students' achievement of programme outcomes?

Key question 4: To what extent do the student achievements indicate that programme outcomes are achieved and meet the expectations of the defining characteristics?

Key question 5: How are employers/employer-related organisations involved in the design of the curriculum or curricula, and the assessment and achievement of the students?

Key question 6: To what extent is the approach to learning and teaching delivery, including the range of learning and teaching methods, effective for achieving the learning outcomes, reflective of the defining characteristics of the Foundation Degree award and responsive to its students?

Key question 7: To what extent are the arrangements for providing academic support for students effective and to what extent do they meet the distinctive needs of Foundation Degree students, whatever their location and mode of study?

Key question 8: Is the provision of human and physical resources adequate, and to what extent is it appropriately organised and managed to achieve the Foundation Degree programme outcomes and meet the expectations of the defining characteristics?

Key question 9: To what extent do the employers/work-based learning providers contribute to the delivery of the programme and does this reflect the defining characteristics?

Key question 10: To what extent is there a robust and understood framework in place for the effective monitoring and enhancement of quality and standards across all parts of the Foundation Degree provision? To what extent does it address the defining characteristics, and the need for ensuring equivalence of the student learning opportunities between the delivery partners?

Key question 11: Does the evidence in relation to the academic standards and the achievements of students and/or the quality of students' learning opportunities, including their monitoring and enhancement, indicate any areas of innovation and/or examples of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination?

Annex 3: Review coordinators and reviewers who took part in Foundation Degree reviews

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