



**The Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education**



Foundation Degree review

**University College Worcester
Evesham and Malvern Hills College
Halesowen College
Herefordshire College of Technology
Josiah Mason College
Sunfield School**

Learning Support

JUNE 2005

FD25/2005

ISBN 1 84482 344 X

© Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2005

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Copies of this report are available priced £2.00 from:

Linney Direct
Adamsway
Mansfield
NG18 4FN

Tel +44 (0) 1623 450788
Fax +44 (0) 1623 450629
Email qaa@linneydirect.com

Published by

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel +44 (0) 1452 557000
Fax +44 (0) 1452 557070
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

Purposes and outcomes of the review

The Higher Education Funding Council for England has commissioned the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education to carry out a second programme of reviews of a sample of Foundation Degrees (FDs) in England in the academic year 2004-05. The major purposes of the review process are:

- to encourage improvements in the quality of FDs through the publication and sharing of good practice
- to provide effective and accessible public information on the standards achieved by students on FDs
- to provide public information on the quality of student learning opportunities in FDs
- to secure value from public investment in FDs.

The findings from the reviewers' lines of enquiry result in a published report containing two threshold judgements. In the case of programmes where there are students who have graduated, the report contains judgements on the confidence, or otherwise, the reviewers have in:

- the academic standards and achievements of students, and
- the quality of students' learning opportunities.

In the case of recent programmes where no students have graduated to date, the report contains judgements on the confidence, or otherwise, the reviewers have in:

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

The report also comments on the maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality, and on the examples of good practice and innovation which may be worthy of wider dissemination.

Each review looks at one FD programme. It covers the entirety of that programme and includes, as applicable, the provision at all sites of delivery, all pathways, sites of work-based learning and modes of study.

The review takes place within a framework that includes a range of activities common to all reviews. Each review is structured around a series of 11 key questions to be considered by the provider in preparing its self-evaluation and by the reviewers when summarising evidence to be used to reach the two threshold judgements. The same questions form the structure of the report.

The programme reviewed:

- Foundation Degree (FD) in Learning Support

Section A

Framework

1 The FD in Learning Support (FDLS), validated by University College Worcester (UCW) developed out of a continuing professional development modular certificate and has been designed specifically for learning support workers in a range of educational settings. It has a particular focus on social inclusion and is comprised of mandatory and optional modules. The programme has a strong concern for and involvement with the workplace, with opportunities and encouragement to reflect on and improve upon practice. At the time of the review, the FD was being delivered in six institutions to 229 students, all in workplace environments.

2 The target student group consists of learning support workers employed in education and care settings. These cover over 150 workplaces, of which 52 per cent are primary schools and 16 per cent secondary schools, while the rest include middle and special schools, social services, further education (FE) colleges and charities. The workplaces are situated over a 70-mile range, from north to south, and in three counties and a metropolitan authority.

3 The FDLS grew out of a partnership arrangement between UCW and Worcestershire Local Education Authority (WLEA), with active input from several local schools and other organisations involved in educative roles. The need for highly skilled learning support personnel in the region has been identified and the shortage has caused real problems for local employers wishing to recruit high quality support staff. While institutions such as UCW were producing graduates with teaching qualifications, a need was perceived to recruit and retain teaching assistants. This is in line with current government strategy in relation to the

development of a well-informed teaching assistant workforce.

4 UCW is a former College of Higher Education, which became a University College in 1998, and is awaiting the outcome of its application for University status. It is a campus-based institution, with approximately 5,000 student full-time equivalents (4,848 in 2003-04). The FDLS programme is managed through the Institute of Education's Centre for Education (non-Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)).

5 In addition to its own degree courses, UCW has partnership agreements with local FE colleges. Evesham and Malvern Hills College and Herefordshire College of Technology (HCT) have offered the FD since 2003. In September 2004, Halesowen College and Josiah Mason College in Birmingham joined the partnership and in January 2005, Sunfield School, a residential Special School with a long-standing relationship with UCW also enrolled students on the FDLS.

Section B

Overall educational aims of the programme

6 The FDLS is intended to meet the needs of employers within the field of education by providing Learning Support Assistants with the skills, knowledge and understanding required to effectively carry out their role. In particular the programme aims:

- to provide students with all the necessary skills to support learners in a wide range of educative environments
- to enable students to understand the fundamental ways schools and other educative institutions function
- to reflect on education and development issues in the context of the workplace
- to analyse evidence of successful management and support
- to evaluate effective school practice using the yardstick of pupil achievement and attainment

- to draw upon and extend the existing skills, knowledge and experience of students
- to assist students in recognising their strengths, acknowledging their weaknesses and seeking to overcome the latter
- to give students the necessary skills and knowledge to confidently tackle problems in a range of working environments
- to provide students with a sufficiently stimulating work experience to allow them to put their acquired skills and knowledge to use in the real world.

Section C

An evaluation of the standards of the programme and the achievements of students

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)*?

7 The aims and learning outcomes, as stated in the programme specification, clearly relate to the FHEQ descriptors for academic study at certificate and intermediate level. Students work with children and adult learners and their parents and carers in a wide range of education, health and social care situations. The structure of the programme and a credit rating of 240 credits are outlined in the programme specification. The course offers considerable flexibility in delivery and study through offering full and part-time routes. Full-time students take eight modules a year for two years and part-time students take their 16 modules over a period up to three years in negotiation with their centre.

8 The aims and intended programme outcomes are clearly and effectively communicated to all stakeholders through student handbooks, module contracts, taught sessions and ongoing tutor support to students on an individual and group basis.

9 The course is successful in meeting the defining characteristics of FDs with regard to employer involvement, accessibility, articulation and progression, flexibility and partnership. Having successfully completed the FD, it is possible for students to follow a work-based pathway leading to a BA Ed. (Hons) in-service degree, through a further 18 months of part-time study.

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?

10 The design and content of the programme enables students from this diverse range of work settings to achieve the aims and programme learning outcomes by requiring them to critically reflect on theories in their field as well as develop knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to the specific nature of their work roles.

11 Students completing the programme successfully may progress to either the BA Education (Hons) (In-service), the BA (Hons) in Education Studies, or onto a BA (Hons) (QTS). The BA Education (In-service), designed as a part-time top-up degree, and the BA (Hons) in Education Studies have dedicated pathways for part-time and full-time students respectively when they progress from the FD.

12 Of the students currently enrolled on the course, approximately 70 per cent have non-traditional entry qualifications and their needs have been closely considered in the design of the FD. All students are provided with access to support for study skills, in part through module FDLS1001 Introduction to Study Skills and to Research Methods, but also through generous tutor support and work-based critical friends.

13 Work-based learning (WBL) is a central element of the course and is well integrated with the academic content to achieve an appropriate balance of the theoretical and the practical. Overall, 70 per cent of assignments

written by students have direct work-based elements that reflect the relevant learning outcomes. Coursework is designed to reinforce and develop an understanding of theory and promote evaluation of practice. The intended learning outcomes for individual modules provide the opportunity for students to achieve the WBL aspect of the programme outcomes. All modules have a WBL element and four modules are wholly WBL.

14 A key-skills portfolio requires students to record their personal development, an important aspect for non-traditional students and a contributor to all students' lifelong learning. All modules indicate the key skills that need to be demonstrated, particularly those gained in the workplace and specific to that module. The portfolio is built up throughout the course. The course team is aware of some inconsistency across the partnership in the student experience of the Key Skills Log and is reviewing this area to take action.

15 There is a very strong commitment to partnership within the FD course team and in UCW in general. Employers and partner institutions are involved in decisions about the design and review of the programme. In the main, all delivery sites provide similar experiences for students.

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?

16 Assessment standards meet the minimum requirements of the FD with a varied range of appropriate assessments across both levels of the programme and clear arrangements. Most assessments relate directly to workplace practice, and build on previous knowledge, understanding and skills. Students receive an assessment schedule for the year at their delivery site. Students and staff communicate effectively to establish common understandings of assessment requirements in general and expectations related to their specific settings.

17 There are some differences in the approach to assessment and the provision and quality of feedback. The course team is beginning to address such issues through staff development activities and clearer identification of specific outcomes related to each assessment during taught sessions. Following external examiner advice, the course team plans to reduce the number of learning outcomes in some modules through the programme review process during 2005-06. At all sites, group presentations are assessed using the course generic criteria grid and there are flexible, negotiated arrangements for addressing issues of non-involvement and absence. The course generic marking grid reflects the grade criteria in the UCW FDs scheme document to cover both levels.

18 The system for marking and moderation is rigorous, with link tutors monitoring the processes in partner institutions. Students receive productive and timely written feedback. Workplaces are not involved in formal assessment processes although some employers provide formative assessment through support for academic work. An area of confusion for some students is the way they are required to record key skills on assessment cover sheets but the course team intends to address this immediately.

19 UCW regulations set out clear procedures for the accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (AP(E)L) and students are admitted to the programme by various routes including relevant experiential learning. Students receive an annual transcript of their results.

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

20 Since 2002, 229 students have been enrolled on the FD, 88 per cent of all applicants. Of these, 45 per cent are full-time students with almost all students working as teaching assistants. In total, 20 full-time students at UCW and HCT have successfully

gained the award and over 50 per cent have gone on to further appropriate study.

21 Subsequent student achievement is broadly in line with that of the first cohort. The retention rate of 89 per cent and the completion rate of 25 students so far from an original cohort of 33 are commendable, particularly in view of the heavy demands of working while studying, and are the result of high-quality support from both the workplace and the partner staff teams. Overall, a high standard of academic achievement at appropriate levels is confirmed by the external examiners and by the student work the reviewers scrutinised. Module outcomes are being successfully achieved and students at all centres are attaining the threshold standards of the award.

22 Students benefit from a broad range of study and workplace, while academic activities and skills are effectively integrated throughout all modules. In FDLS 2000, (Independent Study) one student is investigating and producing an induction pack for all newly appointed school staff. The outcome of this study will produce specific benefits for workplace development and is actively supported by the senior management. Local Education Authority (LEA), school staff and students consider that there is an increase in knowledge, understanding, reflection, effectiveness and confidence.

23 External examiners have expressed some concern over the achievements of the students in the lower assessment range. The reviewers identified a weakness in analysis at all levels. The partners have held two staff development days on assessment as well as providing ongoing targeted support for individuals following their assessments.

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?

24 Employers and employer-related organisations have been very effectively

involved in the design and content of the programme. The course is a development from a well-established partnership, delivering professional development programmes for support workers in education and care, between UCW and WLEA. The FD has built on existing courses developed by the partnership and provided a route from GNVQ level 3 in to higher education (HE) and on to honours. This model is being adopted by Hereford LEA and is beginning to be evident in links with Birmingham LEA. It is also clear that individual schools and other workplaces have been effective in this area of the course's development, notably Sunfield Independent Residential School for autistic children. This employer has its own professional development centre, and is working in partnership with UCW to deliver the FD as professional development for their 60 teaching assistants. WLEA's appointment of a Head of Teaching Assistant Training, located at UCW, is a practical and helpful demonstration of their commitment to the FD. Employers are members of the steering committee and comment that the course team is very responsive to any developments suggested by employers and students.

25 All assessment of WBL is undertaken through the module assessments. Employers participate in the assessment process through providing evidence in supporting their teaching assistants. and by providing them with critical friends. There are examples of WLEA and other employers who also tutor on the course, contributing to assessment through marking of assignments. Although employers are not routinely engaged in assessment, this is an area where the course is still developing its practice.

26 All employers the reviewers met commented on the importance of such a course in providing professional development for teaching assistants. Recruitment to the course for 2004-05 is being challenged by the introduction of the Teacher Training Agency's Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) scheme. However, HLTA is a status, not a qualification, and employers are committed to the FD as a route for professional development although they foresee potential

problems with funding the FDLS. The course team is looking to include the achievement of the HLTA standards as part of the outcomes for future students taking the FDLS.

The reviewers have confidence in the academic standards and achievements of students.

Section D

An evaluation of the quality of students' learning opportunities

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?

27 The learning and teaching strategies enable students to use and build on naturally occurring aspects of their daily work. In this way, children's learning activities become the focus of investigation and reflection. For example, one useful activity involved conducting a trial and evaluating a learning resource with children. A wide range of teaching and learning methods is evident from students' work and course handbooks, which includes lectures, seminar groups, group discussions, video, group presentations, library-based investigation and skill acquisition.

28 The high standard of academic achievement, confirmed by external examiners' reports and by the review of student work, provides clear evidence that learning and teaching are effective in supporting students to achieve the learning outcomes. One employer commented that 'the relevance of the academic to the practical ensures skills development' and that the course produced 'elite TAs [teaching assistants]'. Success is also demonstrated by students developing their roles and skills within their places of work and

by their contribution to educational attainment in their schools. The student experience is enhanced by frequent guest lectures from employers with related specialisms.

29 Consistency of teaching across the partner institutions is effectively monitored by the link tutors and the standard of students' work is comparable. There is evidence that significant, appropriate attention is paid to the development of key skills to promote independent and lifelong learning.

30 A virtual learning environment (VLE) is currently in the early stage of development. As yet there appears to be very little teaching material available on-line to support the course, but it will in future support flexible and distant learning. Students from partner institutions reported that they find the intranet useful for communicating with and sharing information with other 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?

31 Applicants receive clear and accurate pre-course information and advice through a presentation at an open evening, local promotion and a UCW website. Applicants are usually interviewed, although there is some difference in practice between Evesham and Malvern Hills College and HCT and other providers over entry levels and interviewing. UCW staff are linked with partner institutions and a strong support network is developing. College link tutors visit the workplace early in the programme to address any concerns and subsequently, at least once to see the students, their critical friend and the head teacher. Enrolled students receive an induction at course level and for individual modules. There is a full range of student support at UCW which includes Information and Learning Services (ILS), media, careers, crèche, health care and counselling.

32 The student profile is 94 per cent female and most students are over 25. These figures reflect the national profiles for the teaching assistant workforce. The majority of students enter with non-traditional qualifications, including BTEC National Certificate or Access courses. In general, students the reviewers met stated that their expectations of the FD are being met and they recognise and appreciate the readily available tutorial support. The high retention rate of 89 per cent confirms this. The course team justifiably takes pride in the provision and benefits of the tutorial system which is flexible and accessible to support students in their workplace. Students said that the quality, availability and balance of tutorial support provide an appropriately nurturing environment leading to a gradual growth in independence. Writing for a newsletter, two students said, 'Everyone is extremely supportive and go out of their way to reassure us whenever we have concerns about work'.

33 Special educational needs of students are being recognised and supported. At two colleges, students with dyslexia were quickly identified and assessed and appropriate support provided. Once a diagnosis has been confirmed, any further assignment work is clearly identified to notify future assessors. Students with language needs receive weekly support in English as an Additional Language at the college centre. The course team has been proactive in enabling some students to continue their studies and achieve in spite of severe illness such as meningitis, cancer and brain tumour and other interruptions to study. A further strength of the provision lies in the way staff liaise closely with students to ensure that appropriate, flexible progression routes are made clear and are available. The principles and procedures for AP(E)L are clearly set out and have been successfully implemented, although the process, especially for APEL, is time-consuming and little used.

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?

34 Staff delivering the programme are well qualified and possess relevant experience and expertise in education. In all centres staff teams are small, usually consisting of two or three key staff members, which puts staff under some pressure. New staff receive induction training, including mentor support, and have access to UCW staff development opportunities as well as their own institution-based initiatives. There are appropriate staff development opportunities for all, including involvement in a project with Escalate, the education subject centre of the Higher Education Academy, in collaboration with other HE providers. Staff attend appropriate subject-specific training, for example, in numeracy and assessment. Staff delivering the programme in partner institutions are provided with associate lecturer status to enable appropriate access to UCW resources. In addition to written guidance, a student's critical friend is offered induction and briefing sessions, but to date uptake has been limited. UCW is taking creditable and proactive steps to encourage all partner institutions to provide time for staff teaching on the FD to have time for scholarly activity as well as course administration.

35 The range of learning resources is comprehensive at centres visited, and appropriately focussed to meet the needs of FD students. UCW's ILS education section stocks many books directly relevant to this programme. Printed and electronic journals are available in the subject area, and there are reciprocal access and borrowing schemes with other universities, through UK Libraries Plus. Course staff are encouraged to keep ILS informed of new developments and changes in their field by regular book selection coffee mornings and publishers' open days. ILS staff deliver sessions on resource availability and use at partner institutions specifically for distance learners at partner institutions. All students have the opportunity of an initial tour of resources at

UCW with optional later guided visits to revise the available facilities and resources. The purchase of multiple copies of all the books on the reading list is developing. In term-time, the library at UCW is open for 86 hours each week, including evenings and weekends.

36 All students have access to information technology (IT) through their workplaces and UCW, and the partner institutions provide good IT support, with workstations available at different locations. The WebCT VLE under development to support the integration of academic and vocational learning has so far had little impact on the course and requires considerable further development. Student criticisms of the teaching accommodation at UCW led to changes and dedicated rooms have been made available.

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?

37 The workplace learning on the programme has been designed so that the defining characteristics of the FD can be effectively achieved. WBL underpins the whole programme in such a way that it depends on employers for its successful implementation.

38 A number of employers worked closely on the development and design of the course and they and others have been involved in delivering some of the modules. There are employer representatives on the course committee and the steering group. WLEA has a member of staff with dedicated responsibility for identifying and supporting FDLS students. Based at UCW, the staff adviser has had a significant input in writing modules and moderating as well as supporting students. While there is a high level of involvement from some employers, others have little or no involvement, particularly from centres new to the course.

39 The work-based assignments are supported by critical friends who are typically class teachers

or Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators. Most employers and critical friends are briefed before joining the scheme and further guidance is given during the initial visit by the link tutor on the support they are expected to provide. The students' research areas are jointly decided with advice from their critical friends and link tutors and are often based on the needs or concerns of the workplace.

40 Employers the reviewers met were extremely positive and indicated that they are more than satisfied with the support they receive from the tutors and the outcomes of the course. Some commented on the students' increase in confidence, knowledge and skills. They are clear about their roles and consider that the course is a good route for staff development and very applicable and relevant to their work.

41 The FDLS meets the defining characteristics of the FD particularly well in relation to employer involvement and WBL.

The reviewers have confidence in the quality of the students' learning opportunities.

Section E

An evaluation of the monitoring and enhancement of quality and standards

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?

42 The development of the programme has followed the very clear UCW quality assurance handbook that outlines effective arrangements for approval of delivery off-site with transparent roles and responsibilities. Centre annual monitoring reports (AMRs) feed into

the course coordinator's AMR as part of the UCW annual review process. In this way, the monitoring system involving six link tutors ensures consistency of approach across all six sites. External examiners' reports, largely extremely favourable, are highly valued, taken seriously and all actions are followed up.

43 The programme is responsive to the needs of students whose views are sought in tutorial and through module evaluations and surveys. Students and employers agree that their respective needs are met. The course team has used the final draft of the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* statement, published in November 2004, to evaluate provision. In addition, the team have identified professional links with HLTA standards which will be very useful to students achieving HLTA status through the assessment-only route. Issues raised by students and employers are addressed through good communication, action plans and excellent levels of responsiveness from the team. For example, there is recognition that some of the deadlines for assignments need spacing out and each delivery site has responded quickly to student requests for more advice about key skill tracking.

Section F

Good practice and/or innovative features

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?

44 The reviewers agree with the three examples of good practice highlighted by the course team in their self-evaluation. The first concerns the responsiveness of the course team to students' comments and the subsequent changes made to the programme.

These changes are part of what the team believe is an effective system of consultation and negotiation where the 'student voice' is heard and acted upon.

45 The collection of opinions from employers is a further example of good practice. Employers were sent a questionnaire to ascertain their views of the usefulness of the award. While the sample is small, employers expressed a positive response with all nine head teachers indicating that they felt the course had produced more effective learning support assistants.

46 The course team believes that the FD adds value to the students' personal and educational development and to the institutions in which they work. The data indicates a very wide spread of qualifications on entry to the programme and a large number of 'mature' students.

Summary of the main review outcomes

The Foundation Degree in Learning Support validated by University College Worcester (UCW) and delivered at Evesham and Malvern Hills College, Halesowen College, Herefordshire College of Technology, Josiah Mason College and Sunfield School as well as UCW was reviewed in the academic year 2004-05. Judgements were made about the academic standards and the achievement of students and of the quality of the learning opportunities provided.

Overall, the reviewers have **confidence** in the academic standards and achievements of students.

Overall, the reviewers have **confidence** in the quality of learning opportunities provided for students.

Conclusions and areas for development

Features of good practice and innovation include:

- the innovative appointment by Worcestershire Local Education Authority of a Head of Teaching Assistant Training, located at University College Worcester (paragraph 24)
- the responsiveness of the course team to student and employer comments and suggestions (paragraphs 24; 43)
- the way employers are consulted by questionnaire to allow for detailed consideration of their views (paragraph 45)
- the added value the course provides to students and their work places (paragraph 46).

Strengths of the programme include:

- clear aims and learning outcomes which are effectively communicated to stakeholders (paragraphs 7; 8)
- learning outcomes that can be achieved in diverse work settings and build on skills development (paragraph 10)
- flexibility of entry which offers a second chance to non-traditional learners, with clear arrangements for the accreditation of prior experiential learning and flexible modes of delivery through full and part-time routes (paragraphs 10; 12; 19)
- clearly articulated progression routes with appropriate preparation for several suitable routes (paragraph 11)
- the provision for academic support, through study skills and research methods modules (paragraph 12)
- work-based learning that is a central element of the course and is well integrated with the academic content to achieve an appropriate balance of the theoretical and the practical (paragraphs 13; 22)
- effective relationships with partner colleges which include clearly delineated responsibilities, regular contact with link tutors, staff development opportunities and a continuing effort to encourage time for scholarly activity among the partner staff members (paragraphs 15; 31; 34; 42)
- varied and appropriate assessment mechanisms, including rigorous marking and moderation arrangements, monitored in the partner institutions by link tutors and productive and timely written feedback to students (paragraphs 16; 18)
- opportunities for contextualisation in the workplace (paragraph 22)

- a high level of support from employers who are involved in the design and delivery of the curriculum, form a steering group and are extremely positive in their responses to the outcomes of the course (paragraphs 24; 37 to 40)
- learning and teaching strategies that enable students to use and build on naturally-occurring aspects of their daily work, supported by a wide range of teaching and learning methods (paragraph 27)
- highly accessible, supportive staff who offer regular tutorials, email and web-based support and have clear ways of enabling students to develop their academic independence (paragraphs 29; 32)
- strong support for students with special needs or circumstances (paragraph 33)
- well-qualified staff who possess relevant experience and expertise (paragraph 34)
- a comprehensive range of learning resources and appropriate access to information technology, with helpful support structures for students (paragraphs 35; 36)
- responsiveness to student and employer requests and suggestions (paragraphs 43; 44).

Areas for development include:

- resolve minor differences in parts of the student experience relating to assessment practices and varying approaches to ensure consistency for new partners (paragraphs 14; 17)
- the reduction of some of the learning outcomes when the programme is reviewed (paragraph 17)
- clarification for all students about how to record key skills (paragraph 18)
- address concerns regarding the achievement of some students in the lower assessment range and their level of analytical skills (paragraph 23)
- consideration of how employers can be more actively involved in assessment (paragraph 25)
- continued monitoring of the effect of the Higher Level Teaching Assistant scheme on recruitment (paragraph 26)
- monitor and develop access to WebCT and its effectiveness (paragraph 30; 36)
- find ways to alleviate the pressure on small staff teams (paragraph 34).