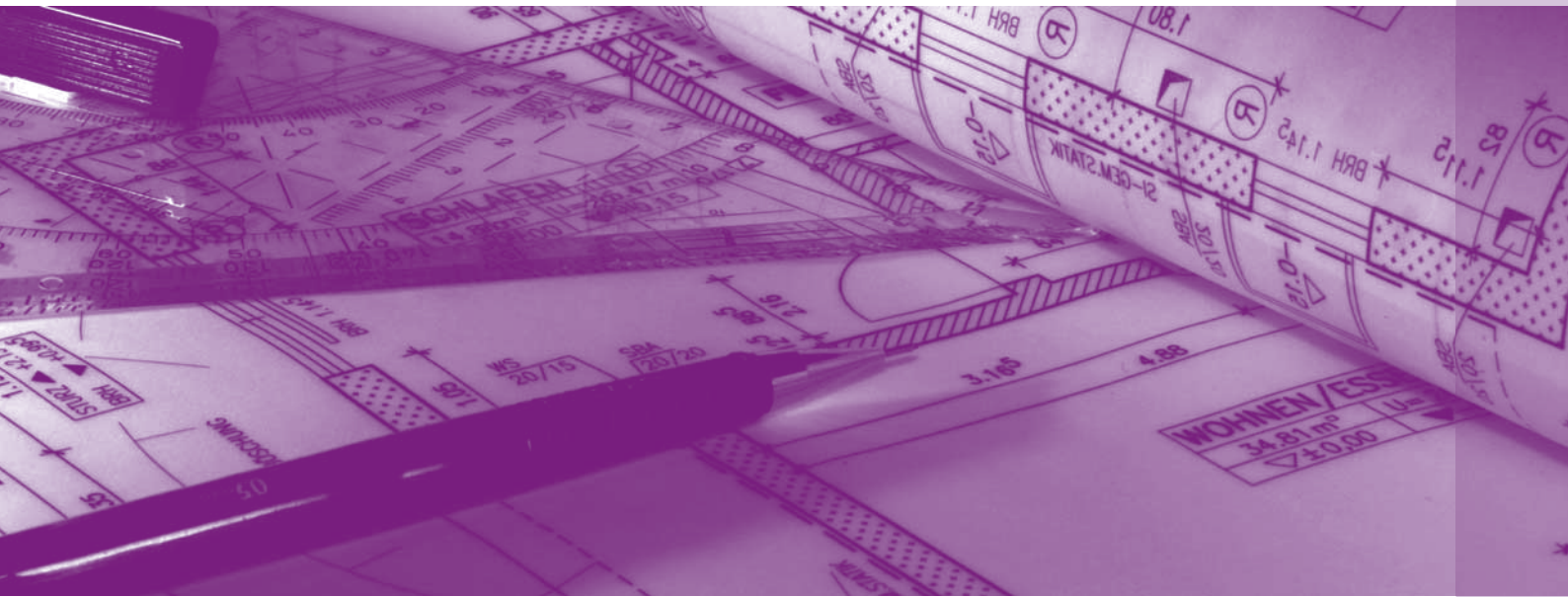


# Work-based learning

Illuminating the higher education landscape



## Final report

Prepared by Iain Nixon, Kevyn Smith, Rob Stafford and Steve Camm (KSA Partnership)

**The  
Higher  
Education  
Academy**

# Acknowledgements

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# Executive Summary

This report summarises the current 'state of play' of work-based learning in higher education (HE). The thinking presented in this report is predominantly based on the findings of a study conducted by the Higher Education Academy (hereafter referred to as the 'Academy') into work-based learning. It aimed to illuminate the higher education landscape by highlighting 'what we know' and 'what we don't know' about work-based learning, and in doing so identify areas on which to focus attention in the future from an institutional and pedagogical perspective.

More specifically, the study focused on **learning which accredits or extends the workplace skills and abilities of employees**. In effect, from an employers' perspective, we are talking about *workforce development* – the upskilling and reskilling of an organisation's employees. The provision delivered by higher education institutions (including HE in FE), at Level 4 and above, that encompasses such learning includes Foundation Degrees, undergraduate programmes (part-time), taught and research postgraduate programmes (parttime), and short courses. Such provision forms part of higher education's well established initial and continuing professional development offer to employers.

## Nature and extent of work-based learning

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This study and other previous studies clearly demonstrate that higher education institutions (HEIs) are providing work-based learning solutions. There are varied levels of emphasis and extent of provision, which in some instances are driven by the institutional mission, while in others it happens as a by-product. Perceptions of work-based learning show that it is still seen by some as belonging to more vocationally oriented institutions. However, in the institutions surveyed work-based learning is seen as a means by which to pull together learning and teaching, research and third strand agendas.

In tackling this agenda institutions have started to create an environment that enables them to respond in a timely manner to identified employer needs. 'One stop shop' approaches have been established to act as a focal point for employer engagement. Centralised support is being put in place to directly deliver programmes and/or facilitate outreach to academic expertise. Frameworks for accrediting work-based learning and in-house company training and development have been established, and quality assurance and validation processes have been streamlined.

Furthermore, **institutions have developed pedagogical approaches that work**. These approaches are distinctive in that they emphasise a process- rather than content-driven curriculum which is strongly student-centred. Learning outcomes

are identified and agreed upfront by the learner, employer and academic institution, and these outcomes form the basis of a 'contract'. The learning outcomes tend to emphasise the need for the learners to broaden their underpinning knowledge and understanding, apply theories and constructs in a workplace setting in order to make sense of complex situations and enhance their skills development through practical experiences.

The curriculum is predominantly derived from context of application of the learning (i.e. the workplace) as well as learners' current knowledge and experience. The pedagogy is also experiential in nature, centred on the application of learning in the workplace and evidence-based assessment of progress and achievement. This makes sure that the workplace - the primary site of learning – provides an opportunity for the practical application of knowledge and skills through action or problem-based projects.

While we know institutions are engaged in work-based learning, baselines are difficult to establish. The 2002-03 Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey (HEBCIS) conducted by HEFCE shows that HEIs attract almost £130m from non-credit bearing CPD activities - £13m from SMEs (10%), £72m from other (non-SME) commercial business (56%) and the remainder from the public sector. This figure is up 25% on the previous year but still represents a fraction of employers' total spend on developing staff. Data are extremely difficult for HEIs to gather in this area and the figures above exclude income generated from Foundation Degrees, part-time undergraduate and postgraduate provision. Hence, **the data do not reflect the true extent and breadth of the activity.** For instance, students whose undergraduate studies are supported by their employer provide an indication of the core interaction between the HE sector and the economy. Such provision is an integral part of how HEIs support workforce development.

## Key issues and challenges

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In order to enable significant movement for those HEIs interested in expanding their work-based learning offer over say the next five years, a number of key issues and challenges will need to be addressed. These include:

## Overcoming the language barrier

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Everyone has a view on what work-based learning means and they use a wide range of terms interchangeably (e.g. workplace learning, work-related learning, vocational learning). This all goes to confuse the situation and undervalue the potential benefits of work-based learning as a mode of learning at a higher level. It is critically important to establish a shared understanding of the particular area

of focus from both an institution's and employer's perspective, irrespective of the terms used. This will be the first step in establishing a common language.

## Raising demand or expanding provision

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When considering any policy interventions to support the HE sector in expanding the nature and extent of work-based learning, allowance must be made for demand side (or employer-related) issues as well. The challenge here is not just about ensuring that the nature and extent of the HE offer meets the needs of employers, but involves motivating employers and individual employees to see value and engage in higher level skills development. Because of this issue we do not, as yet, know enough about the demand from employers and the ability of HEIs to meet that demand. Better intelligence on the nature and extent of provision is required to ensure policy decisions are well grounded.

## Encouraging good pedagogic practice

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While HEIs have developed pedagogical approaches that work, it is clear that the HE sector as a whole does not as yet fully understand the nature of 'what works well in practice' and how different factors (e.g. background of the student, nature of current role, sector of work and size of employer) impact on learning in the workplace. A better understanding of the pedagogy is required.

## Engaging effectively with employers

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Building and sustaining longer term, closer relationships between HE and employers will have to underpin any drive by HEIs to expand their role in supporting workforce development. Overcoming cultural differences and language barriers to establish a shared strategic intent will require substantial time and effort on both sides. Additional resources will be required.

## Transforming accreditation and quality assurance

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Practitioners engaged in delivering work-based learning strongly feel that there is still a need to develop and fund a trans-regional credit-based system<sup>1</sup> for learning at a higher level. Such a system would enable greater transparency, transferability and consistency across the UK higher education sector.

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<sup>1</sup> The Burgess Review of the Quality Assurance Framework convened by HEFCE, the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) and Universities UK is currently looking at this area.

Additionally, quality assurance procedures and codes of practice will need to reflect better the breadth of approaches to flexible learning being adopted by HEIs so as not to stifle innovation in the future.

## Meeting the costs of design and delivery

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Evidence suggests that work-based learning can be more resource-intensive than other modes of learning. Providing cost-effective work-based learning solutions will continue to challenge HEIs wishing to expand their provision in this area and increase their respective market share.

## Moving forward

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For many practitioners work-based learning is already a vital and legitimate mode of learning which offers significant value to HE institutions' strategic teaching and learning agendas. Based on their experience they also feel that it acts as a driver for innovation in the HE system more broadly. However, extending this legitimacy will necessitate developing strategies that cross the cultural bridge between learning and work, address the issues and challenges throughout the system, and demonstrate how the practices of work-based learning have wider applicability in the HE sector.

In considering the issues and challenges, a number of implications emerge in respect to how the HE sector and its partners could support the expansion of work-based learning at a higher level where it fits with an institution's strategic mission.

The key implications are set out below as 'areas for consideration' and are explored in more detail in the full report.

## For the Government

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Consideration should be given to:

- how policy decisions on work-based learning can be better informed by a full range of evidence that takes into account issues for the students, HEIs and employers
- acknowledging and providing a variety of approaches to and interpretations of work-based learning in higher education.

## For HE sector agencies

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Consideration should be given to:

- how best to address the lack of a comprehensive understanding of the nature and extent of the HE sector's work-based learning offer
- identifying ways in which to better support HEIs in providing cost-effective work-based learning solutions
- developing (and testing) pedagogic and financial models for the integration of the different domains of learning
- establishing a credit-based system for learning at a higher level at a national level
- how quality assurance procedures and codes of practice can better reflect the breadth of approaches to flexible learning so as not to stifle innovation in the future
- supporting and resourcing more effective HEI/employer engagement strategies
- research to substantiate or challenge the assumptions that the skills required by employers are most cost-effectively delivered through HE and can be transferred into employment, and that HE knows best how to develop them, in order to help the HE sector to build a better understanding of the pedagogy of learning at work.

## For HEIs

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Consideration should be given to:

- the extent to which HEIs feel it is appropriate to individually and/or collectively prioritise support for continuous workforce development
- adopting a holistic (and client-centred) approach to their third stream function
- the extent to which universities can support the ongoing development of non-traditional students through work-based learning
- the extent to which HEIs feel it is appropriate to develop joint working arrangements with partners at a regional level as a means to ensure participation and progression into higher education.



- how HEIs can best present a more consistent and coherent picture of the breadth of their institutional offers in work-based learning
- building a better understanding of the pedagogy
- how best to support the development of academic staff who are operating at the interface between higher education and the world of work.

### **For employers and their representatives**

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Consideration should be given to:

- directing more energy and effort towards motivating employers and employees to see value and engage in higher level skills development
- establishing and sustaining closer relationships with the HE sector in order to build understanding of the nature of how the HE sector supports and delivers learning.

# I. Introduction

*Work-based learning has increasingly become an area of interest for the higher education (HE) sector. It is seen as means by which to support the personal and professional development of students who are already in work and the focus of the learning and development tends to be on the student's workplace activities*

**(Brennan and Little, 2006).**

This report prepared by the Higher Education Academy (hereafter referred to as the 'Academy') aims to summarise the current 'state of play' of work-based learning in the HE sector. In pulling together our thinking we have tried to retain as far as possible a central focus on **illuminating the higher education landscape by highlighting 'what we know' and 'what we don't know' about work-based learning**. As well we have attempted to identify areas to focus attention on in the future from an institutional and pedagogical perspective in order to effect changes in the student learning experience.

More specifically, the report focuses on **learning which accredits or extends the workplace skills and abilities of employees**. In effect, from an employers' perspective, we are talking about workforce (or professional) development - the upskilling and reskilling of an organisation's employees at a higher level. The provision delivered by higher education institutions (including HE in FE), at Level 4 and above, that encompasses such learning includes Foundation Degrees, undergraduate programmes (part-time), taught and research postgraduate programmes (part-time), and short courses. Such provision forms part of higher education's well-established initial and continuing professional development offer to employers.

Seven institutional case studies provide the basis for a more detailed level of understanding of how higher education institutions (HEIs) are responding to the work-based learning agenda. The case studies highlight some of the HE sector's successes and they help us to articulate the key issues, challenges and sensitivities involved in this contested area of learning. However, we acknowledge that these case studies only scratch the surface of the true extent of the HE offer to employers.

## 2 What is driving the agenda?

This chapter explores in more detail the context in which work-based learning is based. We examine what is driving the agenda at a national level and articulate the likely challenges facing HEIs, particularly at a regional level, if they are considering responding to the increasing demand for higher level skills and work-based learning.

### 2.1 Strategic context

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In order to gain an appreciation of the strategic context, it is important to consider the nuances of what is driving the demand for higher level skills. Work-based learning, unlike other forms of learning, tends to be directly related to the needs of employers and/or the employment needs of those in work (or seeking new work). As such the identified skills deficiencies and low levels of qualifications in the workforce, which are thought to be important contributors to differences in productivity not only across the UK's regions but internationally as well, has led the Government to set out a number of policy responses from an education and skills perspective.

Recently published reports – Brennan and Little (2006), Brennan (2005), Connor (2005b), Penn, Nixon and Shewell (2005), Voorhees and Harvey (2005) – summarise the strategic and policy environment. Without going over much of what has already been well rehearsed in these reports, the key drivers for change in respect to work-based learning in higher education would appear to be:

#### Drive to improve skills and productivity

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Changing employment patterns and in the organisation of work have impacted on the demand for higher level skills. Employees are expected to be more flexible, have a broader range of skills and be better able to manage their own career and development. Graduate level skills and qualifications are seen as being increasingly important in the changing workplace.

#### Drive to increase the supply of science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills

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The supply of science and engineering skills is key to the future survival and growth of businesses operating in what are increasingly competitive global markets.

Continuous innovation will be reliant on the UK reversing the downward trend in supply terms. HE can have a central role to play yet there may be a need to develop stronger, more coherent and more substantial innovation partnerships to boost research collaboration between universities and businesses.

### **Drive to create and apply new knowledge**

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Knowledge creation and the deployment of new knowledge in the workplace have given rise to the workplace itself being recognised as a site of learning and knowledge production. This concept is an integral feature of the 'knowledge economy' and the growing intellectual capital of businesses has the potential to erode universities as being the dominant force in knowledge creation. If HE is to continue to make a contribution to the knowledge economy, collaborative activities based in and around the workplace should be considered (Brennan, 2005).

### **Drive to maximise innovation, enterprise and creativity**

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The challenge for UK businesses is to compete on the basis of unique value. This will necessitate investments in new products, processes or services and in new ways of doing business. Measures to develop the enterprise skills and creativity of the workforce are likely to be a prerequisite. The speed of technological change and market responses demand a continuous drive to innovate. HE has a key role to play in supporting businesses to innovate.

### **Drive to expand further and higher education**

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Educational policy has for the past few years emphasised widening access and participation as part of a drive for lifelong learning at all levels. There has also been an increasingly strong work-related learning focus in the 14-19-year-old agenda characterised by the need to make local and regional employer skills needs a priority for further education. Engaging in workforce development is therefore seen as one means by which HE can work towards the 50% participation target and encourage non-traditional students to access higher education, while helping to address demand for higher level skills.

### **Drive to reduce the reliance on public funding of higher education**

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The financial base of many HEIs is heavily reliant on the HEFCE funding model and in order to improve their financial position and create headroom for reinvestment, institutions are recognising that workforce development offers one option to diversify.

The drivers would seem to be encouraging HE in collaboration with employers (and employer representatives) to focus on three interrelated elements – increasing the number of employees attaining higher level skills; encouraging higher value added activity in businesses; and enabling innovation, enterprise and creativity. The HE sector is, however, making substantial inroads into each of these areas and as a consequence the **challenge for HEIs will be to decide on the extent to which they feel it is appropriate to individually and/or collectively prioritise their support for continuous workforce development.** This will be critically important as HE funding bodies begin to place an increasing emphasis on employer engagement, particularly in relation to incentivising and funding provision which is partly or wholly designed, funded or provided by employers.

Similarly, support for workforce development is seen as one means by non-traditional students, who are beyond the age when individuals are likely to participate in the traditional route from school to university, can access HE. A key question for the HE sector will be to decide upon the extent to which universities can and should support the ongoing development of these individuals.

## 2.2 The regional dimension

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Public policy drivers impact on the behaviour of HEIs in a number of different and sometimes conflicting ways. In considering how policy interventions impact on HEIs in expanding the nature and extent of the supply of higher level skills development and work-based learning, it would be remiss of us not to mention the regional dimension.

The drive to improve higher level skills development is increasingly being addressed through regional strategic planning arrangements. The Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) and Regional Skills Action Plans recognise the importance of higher level skills. Similarly at a sectoral level there is a refocusing of regional sector/cluster priorities aligned to the growing influence of the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) through Sector Skills Agreements and emerging qualification frameworks. The extent to which higher education is integrated into these arrangements and has significant influence over regional priorities and allocation of funding varies considerably. University Associations acting on behalf of a particular region's collective universities have in some instances started to exert significant influence. The newly established Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs) may provide an avenue through which HEIs can further exert influence over the regional priority-setting process in the future. These Networks are necessitating a realignment of the role and contributions of different agencies and providers, including HE, to enable effective partnership working. It will take time before the impact of these structural changes is felt. In addition, while funding does not in the main influence the nature of HE provision, the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) are playing a more significant role in relation to the distribution of earmarked HE

funding regionally (e.g. Additional Student Numbers (ASNs), Higher Education Innovation Funds).

Employer engagement strategies are also being regionalised through the business brokerage process. The brokerage model represents a significant change in the way in which skills are purchased – a demand-led model has been introduced. However, until recently much of the emphasis from a workforce development perspective has been on the development of lower and intermediate level skills. As a consequence in many regions, the HE sector has not been embedded in such arrangements. Also, having such arrangements in place does not always necessarily translate into effective and widespread employer engagement. Consideration should be given to directing effort towards **addressing demand side (or employer-related) issues when thinking about interventions to support the HE sector in expanding the nature and extent of work-based learning.**

Moreover, in the provision of learning the marketplace is competitive: HEIs are competing alongside FE colleges, private sector consultancies and work-based learning providers for an increased share of the employer market.

In setting out an agenda it is therefore important to accept that there is a level of uncertainty in the regional environment in which HEIs operate. The 'shifting sands' do not provide a stable platform on which to make informed decisions about medium to longer term developments, so a degree of caution and flexibility in the approach will be needed. Consequently HEIs will need to **consider the extent to which it is important for them to develop strong joint working arrangements with partners at a regional level to ensure that participation and progression into higher education is increased and that the supply of HE provision within the regions meets regional and/or employer need.**

## 3. What is happening in practice?

This chapter sets out what we know about the breadth and depth of work-based learning provision delivered in HE. We then go on to explore what we know about effective practice and use the institutional case studies – Derby University, University of Leeds, Middlesex University, Northumbria University, Open University, University of Portsmouth, and Cleveland College of Art & Design – as a basis for this digest.

### 3.1 What is the breadth and depth of provision?

Work-based learning plays an important role in meeting the demand for reskilling and upskilling the workforce. This study and other previous studies – Brennan (2005), Brennan & Little (2006) and Connor (2005b) – clearly demonstrate that HEIs are providing work-based learning solutions. There are varied levels of emphasis and extent of provision, which in some instances is driven by the institutional mission (e.g. Derby, Liverpool John Moores, Northumbria) while in others it happens as a by-product (e.g. Leeds).

Perceptions of work-based learning show that it is still seen by some as belonging to more vocationally oriented institutions. It is very much a contested area felt by many to be the preserve of particular disciplines and outside this it tends to be a bit of a 'cottage industry' supported by enthusiasts. However, in the institutions surveyed, work-based learning is seen as a means by which to pull together learning and teaching, research and third strand agendas.

While we know institutions are engaged in work-based learning, baselines are difficult to establish. The 2002-03 Higher Education - Business and Community Interaction Survey (HEBCIS) conducted by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) shows that HEIs attract almost £130m from non-credit bearing CPD activities - £13m from SMEs (10%), £72m from other (non-SME) commercial business (56%) and the remainder from the public sector. This figure is up 25% on the previous year but still represents a fraction of employers' total spend on developing staff (£23.5bn in 2000). While measuring the nature and extent of learning and development in UK employers is problematic, it should be recognised that this investment to improve competitiveness includes the development of basic and intermediate skills, as well as higher level skills. Much of the learning and development is job-specific although leading edge firms are also supporting development beyond the needs of the current job, which tends to be at a higher level.

Examples of institutional non-credit bearing CPD activities include the development of a series of short training courses on professional ethics for the public sector

and NHS by the University of Keele<sup>2</sup> and a range of learning opportunities for women prisoners in HMP Winchester to develop a range of skills in the context of a devised piece of theatre by the University of Winchester<sup>3</sup>.

Data are extremely difficult for HEIs to gather in this area and the figures above exclude income generated from part-time undergraduate and postgraduate provision. Part-time students, for instance, constitute 41.7% of all HE students. And recently there has been an increase in part-time first-years of 4.2% – from 390,095 in 2002-03 to 406,550 in 2003-04 (HESA, 2005). The majority of part-time students were 'other undergraduates', which include Foundation Degrees and programmes below degree level such as Higher National Diplomas and Higher National Certificates: 45.6% (370,480) of part-time students were studying at this level.

Foundation Degrees (FDs) are seen as one of the main vehicles for driving the expansion of higher education and meeting the growing demand for HE level skills at a professional and/or associate level. FDs are seen by some as a success story – they have been designed to inculcate a work-based element (underpinned by an academic construct) which sits closely with employer need. As such FDs are playing a key part in how HEIs are currently meeting regional priorities and recently there has been greater regional involvement in defining FD provision. HEFCE's Regional Coordinators have been involved alongside the RDAs, RSPs and LLNs in influencing the allocation of ASNs and, as a consequence, the nature and extent of FD provision. FDs have experienced a significant increase in entrants (a 61.6% increase between 2002-03 and 2003-04, equating to a rise from 8,295 to 13,405). It is worth noting that the mode students chose to study for FDs is split equally between full-time (49.3%) and part-time (50.7%), and there are examples of students who are working and studying full-time. The aim is to achieve 50,000 places by the end of 2006 for FDs and 100,000 by 2012 – currently there are 47,000 students studying for FDs.

**The data therefore do not reflect the true extent and breadth of the workforce development activity of HEIs.** For instance, students whose undergraduate studies are supported by their employer provide an indication of the core interaction between the HE sector and the economy. The Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) 2002-03 shows that 9,000 students were supported to progress their career, around half of which have their tuition fees paid by their employer (HEFCE, 2005). More specifically, HESA (2005) in an article on part-time students highlighted that for those leavers who were employed during or immediately before their course (22,250), 19.7% (3,650) said that their tuition fees were paid for them by their employer and 13.6% (2,515) had their tuition fees paid and were given

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2 See [www.hefce.ac.uk/reachout/casestudies/list.htm](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/reachout/casestudies/list.htm) >Partnerships (non-HEI)>Uniting expertise with business need>Professional ethics

3 See [www.hefce.ac.uk/reachout/casestudies/list.htm](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/reachout/casestudies/list.htm) >Partnerships (non-HEI)>Cultural enrichment and engagement>Playing for time



study leave. Twenty-five per cent (4,635) of such leavers said that they did not receive any support from their employer at all. A survey conducted by Woodley (2004) into the incomes of and costs incurred by part-time HE students at 24 HEIs and four FE colleges offering HE courses revealed that 83% of part-time students were in paid employment. Of those, 41% of part-time undergraduates received some help with their fees from an employer and 36% had all their fees paid for by their employer. Employer support varied significantly but on average those students studying at FE colleges received most support from their employers.

Information obtained from the 2002-03 DLHE survey about why part-time students choose to study at HE level showed 55.3% (22,600) thought it would help them to get on in their current career or job. A further 23.2% (9,480) said they took the course because of their interest in the subject matter and 13.6% (5,540) took the course to help them change career or job.

Hence, **the extensive part-time provision at undergraduate and postgraduate level appears to be an integral part of how HEIs support workforce development** and the learning gained makes a crucial contribution to productivity and modernisation across all industrial sectors. Universities UK (UUK) has commissioned a multi-strand study into part-time students and part-time study to extend our understanding of this area. The research includes a survey of part-time students, which will concentrate on reasons for study, impediments to study and value for money perceptions. It also includes a survey of universities and colleges to find out about institutional policy on part-time provision and costing issues. The research will be published later in 2006.

Notwithstanding issues related to the robustness of the data it would appear that **the HE sector has a very low market share of the employer learning market** – an analysis which is supported by Connor (2005a), who suggests that HE accesses around 2% of the total £8bn plus spent by employers on training.

*“... a good deal of the problem with skills is among the existing workforce so, important as it is to fix universities and colleges, these won't have much purchase on three quarters of people in work today [who are] not meeting companies' demands and [who] will still be in work in 2010.”*

**Mike Campbell, Skills for Business, Financial Times, 14 November 2005**

Moreover, from an employer's perspective (as the quote above from an article about skills prioritisation and the deployment of funding exemplifies), there is a narrow view of what HE and FE have to offer and a belief that investment in the sector is in competition with investment in the existing labour force, rather than being seen as part of the solution for employers.

In contrast a survey conducted by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) of its 200 largest member organisations identified that 84% of businesses have links with

universities, of which most contacts are UK-wide (74%), but 48% of responding organisations have links with universities in their region<sup>4</sup>. Links are extensive and vary greatly. Collaboration is not limited to the well-established fields of science and technology – new media, entrepreneurship, leadership and management, food and tourism are emerging areas for collaboration. Interestingly, 70% of respondents were involved in developing courses with universities – 52% helping to develop undergraduate courses, 48% Masters/PhD courses and 32% courses not leading to a qualification (CBI, 2003). Expanding employer-led provision has been identified as a priority by the Government, yet evidence would suggest that HEIs have a great deal of well established practice in this area.

Data returned as part of the HEBCIS 2002-03 also shows a positive trend in HEIs' strategic planning on business support and, linked to this, there are more staff incentives for engagement with business (HEFCE, 2005). Institutions in the UK provide the following services for business: distance learning is offered by 109 out of 164 institutions that responded; continuous work-based learning (97 institutions); short bespoke courses on-campus (141 institutions); and short bespoke courses at company premises (128 institutions). Although most institutions' knowledge transfer strategies are developing both in scope and in profile, an increasing number of HEIs are explicitly putting an emphasis on work-based learning as part of their activities in this area. The University of Bristol has recognised the interconnectedness of all their externalisation/engagement activities and the benefits to be realised by adopting a holistic (and client-driven) approach to its third stream function. Similarly, the University of York has radically overhauled the structure of its third stream activity within the University and in establishing the Enterprise & Innovation Office, which provides the focal point for engaging with business, a CPD manager post has been created to drive forward activity in this area<sup>5</sup>.

A random survey of 26 HEI websites (18 universities, 8 specialist colleges) to ascertain the extent to which they promote work-based learning supports the above analysis. All of the institutions, apart from one, promote 'services to business' on their homepage and 19 (73%) of the institutions promote 'work-based learning' (or 'professional development' or 'training and development'). Although the websites vary in quality and the way in which information is portrayed varies considerably, information relevant to businesses is reasonably accessible. It is not clear, though, how much work-based learning is actually being provided by HEIs, although from our analysis it is clearly happening albeit in pockets and **the challenge for institutions will be to present more consistently and coherently the breadth of their offer.**

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<sup>4</sup> A wider CBI Innovation Survey (2001) which looked at 356 businesses found that only 35% had links to universities.

<sup>5</sup> See [www.hefce.ac.uk/reachout/casestudies/list.htm](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/reachout/casestudies/list.htm) >Strategic direction and preparation for change>Embedding strategic coherence of third stream within mission

## A Health Sciences perspective

Work-based learning in health tends to be at NVQ level, and competence-based, rather than at HE level. This is with the exception of foundation degrees. However, even here there is a drift towards 'work-related' foundation degrees, based in HEIs, rather than the original intention of work-based foundation degrees. The priority in the health disciplines within HE is in practice-based education, i.e. where the student is based in an HEI and goes out to the workplace on practice placement. This would be in a supernumerary status. Much of the work-based HE involvement is in the post-registration, postgraduate sphere – professional doctorates and taught Masters Degrees.

### Higher Education Academy Health Sciences & Practice Subject Centre

Other indicators of the breadth and depth of work-based learning provision and the trend towards provision which is partly or wholly designed, funded or provided by employers (or employer representatives) may include the strengthening of engagements between HEIs and SSCs. For instance, nearly 40% of HEIs have a strategic relationship with Creative & Cultural Skills and 35% with e-Skills UK (HEFCE, 2005). In addition, the Higher Education Academy's network of Subject Centres is undertaking development work in conjunction with the SSCs. A notable example of the latter is the work of the Art, Design & Media Subject Centre on a wide range of research, development and dissemination projects with three SSCs: Creative & Cultural Skills, Skillfast-UK and Skillset. Two of the projects with Skillset involve delivering a framework for entry level qualifications in the audio-visual industries and developing an accreditation or kite-marking scheme for HE courses. The Academy's work in this area is focused on:

- **partnership building** – awareness raising to build understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities in order that areas of mutual interest can be identified
- **signposting** – supporting each other's activities through promoting events and disseminating information to our respective 'communities'
- **innovation and development** – undertaking development work which meets the needs of both parties
- **strategy setting** – influencing each other's strategic plans and priorities.

Even though the Subject Centre and SSC relationships are at an early stage of development, a number of issues, challenges and sensitivities need to be addressed to encourage a more collaborative approach. In addressing these challenges it will be vital to agree priorities for engagement, co-ordinate effectively the overlap between cognate disciplines supported by the Subject Centres and the sectors supported by the SSCs, and adopt mechanisms to engage more effectively

at a regional and/or institutional level.

The overarching impression would seem to be that **there is a great deal of workforce development activity underway in the HE sector**. Successful collaborations exist (see section 3.2) and universities can be a source of learning, research and innovation, specialist skills, and increased productivity. However, it is clear that the relationship between the supply-side of learning (universities, colleges and so on) and employers remains a stubborn issue, and there is room for improvement. Efforts by the Government to expand the breadth and depth of HE level work-based learning provision must therefore take into account the complexities of the supply and demand equation. It is important to stress that universities (the 'supply' side) see their role beyond regional boundaries – they have a national and international perspective – and some are increasingly focusing on the international dimension. Yet, as noted in section 2.2, the regional dimension has become increasingly the focus for policy interventions to improve skills and productivity (the 'demand' side). A particular challenge here will be for business support and other relevant publicly funded agencies to motivate employers and individual employees to see value and engage in higher level skills development.

In moving forward **better intelligence (including baseline data) on the nature and extent of work-based learning provision is required** to ensure policy decisions are well grounded. We do not, as yet, fully understand whether there are capacity and capability issues in extending the breadth of work-based learning provision.

### 3.2 What do we know about effective practice?

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Employers are increasingly recognising that one reason why the development of their staff does not result in tangible learning is that it is frequently divorced from the workplace. Research suggests that over 70% of learning comes from experiences, either planned or unplanned, thus emphasising the need to 'learn from real work'. Such learning is also seen as a means by which the economy can respond more rapidly to changing skill needs, when compared to 'campus-based learning'. **Yet from an academic perspective, work-based learning remains a contested area**, not least because it challenges the very essence of universities as the primary source of knowledge.

In tackling this agenda institutions have started to create an environment which enables them to respond in a timely manner to identified employer needs. The institutional case studies – Derby University, University of Leeds, Middlesex University, Northumbria University, Open University, University of Portsmouth, and Cleveland College of Art & Design – typify the nature of the response and characterise what we know about effective practice. Each case study is described in turn and then an analysis is presented in section 3.2.2.

### 3.2.1 Institutional case studies of practice

#### **Case study 1: School of Flexible and Partnership Learning, University of Derby**

##### **Thinking about the strategic context for work-based learning at the institutional level**

Work-based learning is a small but significant part of the University's overall strategy. Interest at a central institutional level has grown to a point where in 2005 a new School (Flexible & Partnership Learning) was set up to demonstrate the institution's commitment and support an increase in work-based learning programmes.

The University provides flexible, blended work-based learning opportunities at HE level across all of its activities. The profile of work-based learning and the new School is growing but the take-up of opportunities across the University remains patchy. Work-based learning now accounts for about 2% of the institution's income; prior to 2002 it was zero.

##### **Thinking about how the School has responded to work-based learning**

The School of Flexible & Partnership Learning was established in 2005 to build a critical mass for work-based learning across the University's faculties. It uses LearnDirect's Learning Through Work online framework (which it helped develop) to support employees plan and structure learning around their job and have it certified with a HE qualification.

The School delivers the highest number of Learning Through Work students (around 300). Its central team of seven academics and tutors also work with Learning Through Work coordinators in each of the University's five Schools to deliver a further 500 students (in the year to May 2006).

Referrals are made through the University and University for Industry (Ufi) websites, from the LearnDirect Adviser Line, by word of mouth, direct marketing and from returning students from other University programmes.

Students (individual and groups) construct their learning programmes online. These are then assessed by an academic tutor and, if accepted, learning contracts are negotiated. Students are registered with the University.

## Example learning programme

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The University worked with a national group of 12 students employed by Ufl in tutorial or management roles at hubs or learning centres.

The programme was designed by Ufl and the University using the online Learning Through Work template. The programme covered a range of generic and technical knowledge and skills appropriate to the students' specific context. It began with a one-day Induction Conference but thereafter learning was delivered and managed flexibly by the individual student through the Learning Through Work website. Students receive tutorial support and advice and can access the University's resources.

The University maintains an overview of three main areas of student assessment:

- Personal analysis (self assessment by the student)
- Research investigation (assessed by the student with their employer)
- Position paper (assessed by the employer with the student).

The programme offers 60 credits at Postgraduate Certificate Level 7.

## Thinking about the future of work-based learning

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There is a need to continue to develop work-based learning programmes across the University, building on the success and capacity provided by the School of Flexible & Partnership Learning.

Recent experience at the University of Derby suggests that work-based learning programmes would benefit from greater flexibility in funding and reporting mechanisms. There is also a need for the nature and flexibility of work-based learning programmes to be recognised.

**Further information:** Dr David Young, Head of Learning through Work, School of Flexible & Partnership Learning, email: [d.a.young@derby.ac.uk](mailto:d.a.young@derby.ac.uk)

## Case study 2: Work-based Learning Unit, University of Leeds

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### Thinking about the strategic context for work-based learning at the institutional level

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Historically, work-based learning has not been seen as strategically important to

the University of Leeds. More recently, and with the emergence of the concept of 'knowledge transfer', it has become part of the University's stated strategy. It is not clear whether this increase in acceptance is based upon an academic acceptance of the value of 'learning in the workplace' or on the institution's drive to build corporate partnerships and generate income from new sources.

Consequently, the institution's response to date has been driven by the interest of individual schools. There is no overall picture of how many Schools incorporate workbased activities as a mode of learning and only one School – the Business School – has a dedicated unit supporting developments in this area. Additionally, there is no clear indication of what proportion of the institution's income is currently generated through work-based learning.

### Thinking about how the School has responded to work-based learning

Work-based learning appears in the strategy of the Business School, but it is not given any priority. The strategy, as might be expected in a five star rated School, centres predominantly on research. That said, the Work-based Learning Unit is in a healthy state – it is working towards being self-financing and the income generated enables the Unit to have a good degree of freedom to pursue its own objectives and priorities as part of a planned strategy.

The Work-based Learning Unit was formerly in the School of Continuing Education. Its history goes back 12 years to a pilot project funded by the DfES. In 2002 the University decided that the Unit would be better situated in the Business School and since then it has gone from strength to strength. The Unit works with a range of large employers and its current (and previous) clients include Yorkshire Water, First Direct bank, Victim Support and the Ministry of Defence.

Recently, the Unit has secured a four-year contract with the Cabinet Office's Emergency Planning College. The partnership will directly contribute to improving the nation's resilience to emergencies and disasters by preparing people in the field of emergency planning – offering a range of bespoke qualifications from City & Guilds Senior Awards, through BA and Masters' provision in civil protection, risk management, business continuity, emergency planning and related subjects. A Professional Doctorate will also be available from 2007. The partnership is attracting interest internationally and has led to a joint venture to deliver a £1.8m contract for resilience training to new graduates from the Police Academy in Abu Dhabi, and to negotiations with other Emirates for similar provision.



## Example learning programme: Management Development, Yorkshire Water

Yorkshire Water has been working in partnership with the Work-based Learning Unit at the Business School on a range of management development initiatives over the last five years. Yorkshire Water have said that the business drivers behind these initiatives stemmed from the need to respond to ever increasing regulatory pressures (in the late 1990s Yorkshire Water were near the bottom of the OfWat performance table) and there was a requirement for greater levels of commercial business acumen across the organisation. Within the organisation, a clear strategy for management development emerged which centred on talent management, career and succession management, a step change in people performance and management, and growing managers as leaders.

A flexible solution was sought which offered high and stretching academic standards, yet integrated practical, business-focused applications to meet Yorkshire Water's particular needs. The solution, developed in conjunction with the Work-based Learning Unit, encompassed a Postgraduate Diploma in Management for middle and high potential first level managers, and a City & Guilds Graduateship in Management and Asset Management for first level and potential first level managers. More recently, the Postgraduate Certificate in Asset Management has proved to be a popular qualification for Yorkshire Water operatives.

Most of the managers who studied on the programmes had professional rather than academic qualifications and, to date, 54 managers have successfully completed the PG Diploma and some have progressed onto the Executive MBA. Sixty-six managers have completed the City & Guilds Graduateship in Management and 52 the Graduateship in Asset Management.

For the students learning (and reflective practice) is supported by university staff, an identified business mentor and the individual's line manager. All assessment is conducted through work-based assignments undertaken as part of 'business as usual' and these engage the students in applying their understanding of context and theory in practical situations.

Yorkshire Water feels that the business impact is highlighted by the fact that a high proportion of the students are now in more senior and more strategic roles. There is also a tangible increase in confidence and a greater level of business understanding. Moreover, people development and learning is now much higher up the organisation's business agenda. The Learning and Development Manager at Yorkshire Water feels that "coincidentally, or as the result of focused development both with [their] partners and in-house, Yorkshire Water has won the National Utility of the Year award for the last two years and are currently number one in the OfWat Operating Performance rankings".



## Thinking about the future of work-based learning

There is still a need for work-based learning to be fully accepted by the academic community, particularly in research-led institutions. This will require experts who have both a theoretical and practical understanding of work-based learning to carry out and publish more evidence based research – therefore, funding to support research activity and business development will be required. In addition, these experts need access to and a dialogue with policy-makers so that a workable strategy for the future of workbased learning at all levels can be agreed and implemented.

From an employer's perspective it is the institution's ability to diagnose and understand the client's needs that is imperative and staff development may be required in this area. Alongside this, employers would like openness as to the range of possible solutions rather than merely being offered 'off the shelf' programmes.

**Further information:** Margaret Gibbons, Director, Work-based Learning Unit, email: [mg@lubs.leeds.ac.uk](mailto:mg@lubs.leeds.ac.uk)

## Case study 3: Centre for Work-based Learning Partnership, Middlesex University

### Thinking about the strategic context for work-based learning at the institutional level.

Work-based learning is a key theme of the Corporate Plan of Middlesex University. This level of institutional support has come about because of the recognition that work-based learning facilitates two fundamental corporate objectives. Firstly it supports the development of a student-centred approach to programme delivery – improving the learning experience. Secondly, through increasing the attractiveness of study, widening the curriculum offer and supporting the international strategy through in-country delivery, it improves the recruitment and retention of students, with a direct consequence of improved institutional income generation. There is also recognition that such activity facilitates the development of partnerships with employers and business, with additional benefits for income generation through subsidiary activities.

The institution supports the development of work-based learning in two fundamental ways. The institution's Corporate Plan requires that each School incorporates workbased learning into their individual School Plans. The Schools of Health & Social Science and Lifelong Learning & Education have, for instance, realised the opportunities presented by work-based learning. In addition, the institution supports the Centre for Work-based Learning Partnerships (CWBLP) which supports the development of work-based learning activity across the institution.

## Thinking about how the School has responded to work-based learning

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The CWBLP is based in the School of Lifelong Learning & Education, and supports one-third of the students within the School. The Centre has supported the commissioning of an extensive range of work-based learning modules which complement those on offer within individual Schools. This approach is seen to offer a number of benefits – it improves the range of modules on offer to students, complements effectiveness of central provision with ownership, development and application at School level, and showcases work-based learning across the institution.

The use of the academic framework to promote work-based learning has been crucial to its successful uptake across the institution. The head of the CWBLP sits on the Academic Board and has therefore been able to influence academic policy, exploiting the simultaneous work-based learning and academic review process to achieve a degree of synergy and recognition. A critical success factor has been the recognition that work-based learning is a 'field of study' in its own right, creating qualifications that are specifically for work-based learning regardless of the discipline. This has created the flexibility and freedom to realise opportunities as they arise (e.g. requests from business); while accreditation of prior experiential learning is not locked into a narrow academic framework, it is not subject to the traditional discipline-specific debate over academic robustness.

The role of CWBLP has been clearly defined as being to extend and embed work-based learning across all Schools in the University. Underpinning this role, the Centre supports the development of staff to deliver work-based learning provision – the training needs of staff engaged in this area of learning are assessed through the Appraisal Scheme – and many are undertaking Work-based Learning Masters or Doctorate degrees. It also undertakes pedagogic research to support an evidence-based approach to practice, produces teaching and learning resources, and supports the uptake of ICT in work-based learning.

CWBLP supports knowledge-creating partnerships between the University and external partners (e.g. employers) and co-ordinates a national work-based learning network. A set of descriptors and assessment criteria have been developed at an appropriate curriculum level, and have been recognised by the QAA as good innovative and rigorous practice, and a self assessment framework for APEL has been developed to assist in identifying the training needs of individual students.

## Example learning programme

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The Foods Unwrapped programme of study has been developed in partnership with Marks & Spencer, as part of their staff development programme for employees

working in their food halls. There are currently 550 students engaged with the programme.

The programme was developed to meet the specific business needs of Marks & Spencer, and was informed by identified student needs and the University's Quality Framework. The programme's learning outcomes and structure were developed after a comprehensive functional analysis of the business and assessment of employee needs. It is wholly work-focused and the majority of learning takes place in the workplace with support by CD-ROM learning materials, group work and workplace mentors.

The University provides a Programme Adviser who has close contact with the students. The students are assessed by means of a portfolio which is reviewed by trained assessors, who are the company Food Performance Managers.

The programme is subject to the normal University quality assurance systems and processes. In addition Marks & Spencer have conducted research into the programme's business effectiveness. The key findings of this research were that most of the graduates have secured internal promotion and that performance has improved in the Food Halls where members of staff have been engaged in the programme.

### Thinking about the future of work-based learning

There is a fundamental need to formally recognise work-based learning as a legitimate HE activity, based upon the 'field of study' approach, which will undoubtedly involve challenging the traditional university academic perspective. In addition, there is a need to clarify funding arrangements, especially for part-time work-based students, as this is often regarded as a fundamental barrier to employer and student engagement. Research is required to continue to increase our understanding of work-based learning – both in terms of developing partnerships with employers to maximise knowledge creation and of establishing how people learn in the workplace.

**Further information:** Jonathan Garnett, Director, Centre for Work-based Learning Partnership, email: [j.garnett@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:j.garnett@mdx.ac.uk)

## Case study 4: Work-related Learning Service, Northumbria University

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### Thinking about the strategic context for work-based learning at the institutional level

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The University has recognised work-related learning as a vital mode of learning for increasing participation and enhancing the HE curricula. It has cascaded work-based learning through the University's strategy and an institution wide framework has been put in place that helps the development of programmes. It also participates in the Ufl Learning Through Work programme.

School-based work-related learning developments/programmes exist in each of the University's eight Schools, although some are more active than others. Schools identify new business opportunities supported by a central Work-related Learning Service. A small grants scheme operates to support Schools in developing learning programmes and the service pursues external funding opportunities.

Income from work-related learning accounts for around 1% of the University's overall funding and in 2006 its target was 900 students (an increase of 350 on the previous year).

### Thinking about how the School has responded to work-based learning

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The Work-related Learning Service provides specialist knowledge and support. It does not have any students of its own; all are attached to a particular School in the University. Its primary role is to develop a portfolio of innovative and relevant work-related learning products across the institution. The service explores current thinking to identify and advise on strategy, direction and new opportunities. It develops and tests curricula, learning products and infrastructure responding to the demands of employers, students, schools and other agencies.

Its key activities to support an increase in demand for work-related learning from University Schools are:

- managing a Tyne & Wear-wide work-related learning project in partnership with the universities of Newcastle and Sunderland
- embedding the new work-based learning framework and supporting School-based development
- supporting the delivery of HEFCE Knowledge Transfer Capability Fund
- managing the Ufl Learning Through Work scheme
- developing an employers' guide and website.

It maintains contact with employers, employer organisations and other relevant organisations, as well as keeping abreast of learning needs arising from regional strategies and programmes.

### Example learning programme

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The University Business School delivered a programme to 12 students from the British Army. All had long service histories and responsibility for command. The programme was part of supporting their transition and readiness for post-service employment.

The programme was designed in line with the University's framework by the Business School and the Army. It was an online/CD ROM-based learning programme which students completed while still on active service around the world.

Students retained control of the pace of the delivery, which was often determined by the nature and conditions of their individual postings. The two-year programme included core and optional modules and a work-based project, leading to a Diploma in Management Development.

Students had access to an online tutor and were supported by the Army's Education Officer.

### Thinking about the future of work-based learning

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Work-based learning will take time to develop and the University needs to address the issue of take-up, which is greater in some parts of the institution than in others. It is still a relatively new concept and a cultural shift will be needed to overcome the workload and resource pressures that will facilitate a step change in the development of future programmes.

The NHS and local authorities are already key partners in University work-related learning programmes. A key future challenge for the University is extending this and increasing participation by large and small companies. This means identifying what their needs are, how they can be met and how current barriers to engagement can be overcome.

**Further information:** Sue Graham, Work-Related Learning Manager. Academic Registry, email [sue.graham@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:sue.graham@northumbria.ac.uk)

## **Case study 5: Practical-Based Learning, Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Open University**

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### **Thinking about the strategic context for work-based learning at the institutional level**

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Work-based learning is a concept that sits naturally with the Open University, whose historical success has been developed through a vocational approach to teaching and learning, the language used and the emphasis of employer engagement and links. It can be argued that a substantial element of the institution's annual income is derived from work-based learning-related activity.

Specific reference is made to work-based learning in a number of key institutional policy documents: the Teaching and Learning, Curriculum Awards, Student Support and Human Resources Strategy.

The Centre for Excellence in Teaching & Learning has been established to support work-based learning developments across the institution. It provides a number of services and functions – influencing institutional strategy with regard to work-based learning, funding teaching development and research, investing in infrastructure, integrating existing systems to support work-based learning (e.g. portfolios on the VLE, online conferencing and student to student collaboration). In addition, the Centre has undertaken an evaluation of work-based learning practice across the institution and future developments will be informed by the outcomes from this study.

### **Thinking about how the School has responded to work-based learning**

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The Centre has adopted a two phase approach to increasing work-based learning within the Open University. Firstly, it has commissioned an evaluation to assess existing activity and best practice. Secondly, informed by the outcomes of the evaluation, it will develop plans to incorporate practice-based learning into mainstream curriculum development and delivery.

The Centre has also been active in other ways. It is supporting research into work-based learning and has recently hosted a national conference, published research materials (e.g. the assessment of practice-based learning), commissioned teaching development projects and established special interest groups. It has also initiated a programme of staff secondments to increase staff competencies in this field of work, while engaging with various Sector Skills Councils and employer bodies.

## Example learning programme

There are approximately 7,000 students enrolled on the MBA Professional Development Programme. All are practising managers mainly aged 25 years and over, with 40% being based overseas. The programme has been delivered for a number of years.

The learning outcomes are developed from employer and student evaluation, and historical experience accumulated over an extended period. The key outcome of the programme is to develop generic management skills, which are especially relevant to the specialist seeking advancement into more general areas of management.

Learning opportunities are presented through a blend of formal academic delivery and reflective practice based upon individual work environments and those of their fellow students. The individual needs of students are reflected in the fact that one-third of the programme is elective. Assessment is undertaken through the submission of assignments, blending an appreciation of skills and techniques with an understanding of workplace application.

Support is provided to students on a number of levels. There is an extensive ICT system, personal tutors and mentors. The Open University has also developed a regional support network and tutorial groups.

## Thinking about the future of work-based learning

There is a need to define work-based learning more clearly, potentially through the development of a framework, because at present it is fragmented and disconnected. This would support the development of clearer progression routes and pathways both within the HE sector, and between the HE and FE communities.

**Further information:** Mark Fenton O’Creedy, Director, Centre for Excellence in Practice-Based Learning, email: [mark.fenton-o’creedy@open.ac.uk](mailto:mark.fenton-o’creedy@open.ac.uk)

## Case study 6: Foundation Direct, University of Portsmouth

### Thinking about the strategic context for work-based learning at the institutional level

The University of Portsmouth in its *Strategic Plan 2004-08* sets out its mission “to continue to be a centre of excellence and innovation in education, student

experience and employability, aspiration-raising, research, knowledge transfer and community leadership". The institution's headline aims include:

- To offer an attractive, flexible and challenging curriculum which responds to market demand
- To encourage applications from, and provide support to, students from groups traditionally under-represented in higher education
- To be the first choice provider of skills development, enterprise, innovation, knowledge transfer and support for private, public and voluntary sector organisations.

While work-based learning is not explicitly mentioned, the University expects this mode of learning to be a central pillar of its approach to teaching and learning. The *Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2005-10* emphasises this point but recognises that more work is needed to further extend and accredit work-based learning. However, in the Strategy's *Action Plan 2005-07* no bold statements are made about the actions required.

Although there has been a cultural shift within the institution, progress to date has been led by a few enthusiastic practitioners who perceive a value in work-based learning. Many of the initiatives have not yet been mainstreamed, even though there is growing support and commitment at a senior level. At other levels in the institution there is mixed support – it is an ideological battle!

As individuals didn't fully appreciate what work-based learning meant in practice they either stepped back or jumped on the bandwagon, and consequently this created the space necessary for innovation and development. While the institution does not have a comprehensive picture of how many work-based learning programmes there are, an initial survey across all faculties suggests there are up to 60 programmes that are either wholly work-based or incorporate work-based elements. These include FDs (Construction & Enterprise, Early Years Care & Education, Police Studies etc), undergraduate programmes (Risk & Security Management, Dental Hygiene & Dental Therapy, Social Work etc) and postgraduate programmes (Applied Biomedical Science, Education & Training Management, Applied Computing etc).

### Thinking about how the unit has responded to work-based learning

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Foundation Direct – a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning – has secured four years of HEFCE funding (£4.5m) to support the institution's growing number of FD students (79 full-time and 588 part-time in 2004-05). It will provide e-learning support for distance learning FD students, mentor guidance to support the professionals in work who support FD students, and research into good practice



into FDs (in collaboration with the Higher Education Academy, Foundation Degree Forward and the Centre for Recording Achievement), amongst other initiatives.

The Centre has been established in recognition of the University's existing innovative practice relating to supporting students to learn and work-based learning, much of which stems from the well established Partnership Programme in the Faculty of Technology. The Partnership Programme (now Learning at Work) offers work-based learning routes to University certificates, diplomas, degrees and postgraduate awards. Currently there are 130 students taking this route on a broad range of technology-related programmes.

The Partnership Programme is based on a three-way partnership between the student, employer and the University, leading to an individualised programme of study agreed by means of a learning contract. Work-based projects designed to address the employer's needs, supported by University study on campus, short courses and/or online/distance learning, form the basis of all programmes. Students can also claim credit for prior learning including formal qualifications, in-house training and on-the-job experience. Throughout the programme students are supported by a personal tutor (University based, subject specialist) and a mentor in their employing organisation.

The model developed by the Partnership Programme has influenced the approach adopted by other Faculties to work-based learning. A key element is the focus on personal (professional) development planning (PDP). Students are encouraged to reflect on their experience in order to maximise their development in three domains of learning: subject knowledge and understanding; self awareness; and practice in the workplace. It is this element that will be embedded in all FDs offered by the University through an online environment designed and supported by Foundation Direct.

### **Example learning programme: FD Early Years Care & Education**

The Early Years FD has been developed in response to the Government's drive to improve standards within the child care sector. It has been endorsed by Surestart and currently has 40 students (nursery nurses, nannies, play-workers, child minders and special educational needs assistants) on the programme. Many of the students hold pre-degree level qualifications and the FD is providing a work-based progression route to the 'top up' degree BA (Hons) Education Studies. The FD is also helping to formalise the new role of Senior Practitioner within the early years education sector.

### Example learning programme: FD Applied Medical Technology

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The Applied Medical Technology FD is taught in partnership with the NHS. It is designed to enhance the skills of non-registered support workers by combining clinical training with underpinning health science education. Practical skills acquired include venepuncture (blood-taking), cannulation, ECGs (electrocardiograms) and catheterisation. The impact of the students completing the FD has been an improvement in patient care for the NHS Trusts involved. This has been achieved by increasing the pool of associate professionals capable of supporting under-pressure doctors and nurses.

### Thinking about the future of work-based learning

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From an institutional perspective it has been recognised that there is a need to provide a 'one stop shop' for knowledge transfer and business interaction activities. The 'Purple Door' has recently been created for businesses. A central focus of the University's offer to businesses is workforce development and provision includes FDs, Learning at Work, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships and tailor-made CPD courses.

Across the HE sector a lighter touch (or more enabling) approach to quality assurance is required to support the expansion of work-based learning provision. Efforts should also be directed towards quality enhancement issues. Building the sector's understanding of what works well in practice through research is a prerequisite to improving the learning experience. The effectiveness of different types of assessment and handling issues relating to intellectual property are areas in which further investigation is needed.

**Further information:** Frank Lyons, Director, Foundation Direct, email: [frank.lyons@port.ac.uk](mailto:frank.lyons@port.ac.uk). John Bishop, Director, Learning at Work, email: [john.bishop@port.ac.uk](mailto:john.bishop@port.ac.uk)

### Case study 7: Cleveland College of Art & Design

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#### Thinking about the strategic context for work-based learning at the institutional level

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Cleveland College of Art & Design, an FE institution, has a strong vocational element throughout its curriculum. Although the concept of work-based learning is not specifically written into any institutional strategy or policy, all of the programmes delivered within the institution are of a vocational nature, with comprehensive employer engagement at all stages of the curriculum design and delivery.

At an institutional level this is articulated through its commitment to develop a range of Foundation Degrees in partnership with the University of Teesside. The FD development initiative is seen as an appropriate way both to refresh the institutional curriculum offer and to contribute to the needs of businesses within the Tees Valley area.

This activity has been sanctioned and supported by the senior management team within the College, whose commitment is evidenced by the creation of a central HE unit.

### Thinking about how the School has responded to work-based learning

The Central Unit sees the engagement of employers in the market research, design, delivery and assessment of the FDs as central to the development of the portfolio of HE programmes. The fundamental guiding principle is that the development of HE opportunities is fully based on preparing the student for work through an extension of work-based skills and abilities.

The Central Unit applies resources to support developments which might otherwise prevent curriculum realignment. For example, the Unit co-ordinates employer liaison groups to influence and inform programme development, undertakes comprehensive market research to identify and test opportunities, interfaces with the relevant Sector Skills Councils, and supports the internal validation process.

The Central Unit has secured funding from the Tees Valley Single Programme, which has allowed the secondment of two staff to deliver programmes and support development activity. The seconded members of staff have academic duties, involving the delivery of work-based learning opportunities alongside their central support functions. This ensures there is closeness between development and delivery activity.

The main factors enabling the development of the FD programme across the institution have been the ability to deliver a comprehensive research process and provide centralised administrative support both to inform course design and to market test. This has been facilitated through external funding. It has enabled the School personnel to identify and realise opportunities through 'horizon scanning' and identification of niche markets.

The fundamental issue is the difficulty in matching the divergent needs of employers with the academic requirements of the validating body, in this instance the University of Teesside.

### Example learning programme

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The FD in Graphic Design was developed from an existing programme of study after direct consultation with employers to capture their perspective on graduate skills and ability profiles. Informed by these consultations, the learning outcomes are focused on the development of a range of industry-specific professional and transferable skills, and knowledge and understanding.

The students on this programme are all full-time students, with the learning taking place wholly within the College. However, the course has been designed to ensure that learning is built around the intended work role of the student. This has been achieved by the involvement of employers in the design of the programme, the creation of industry-standard studio facilities and ICT design applications, and the use of live project work generated by local businesses.

The assessment of students is formally undertaken by the core academic staff, while employers provide input to this process through feedback on the live project work.

### Thinking about the future of work-based learning

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The development of close links with employers to inform and contribute to the institutional curriculum offer is firmly embedded within the institution. It is recognised, however, that the development activity to support this engagement is based upon externally provided funding. This pump-priming will need to be sustained to allow development to continue at the current pace, and potentially extended to realise closer links with local business.

The future focus will be to develop an approach to exploit partnerships with SMEs which meet their business needs as well as the academic requirements of programme approval.

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Recently published reports present further case studies of work-based learning practice. Brennan (2005) draws on University Vocational Awards Council's (UVAC) extensive network of member institutions in depicting case studies from Anglia Polytechnic University (now Anglia Ruskin University), Bath University, Leicester University and Sheffield Hallam University. Similarly case studies from Cranfield, King's College London and Middlesex are presented in the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) report (Connor, 2005b), *Workforce Development and*

*Higher Education*. In Penn, Nixon & Shewell (2005) a range of case studies from the HEIs in the North East are described. These include validated programmes and non-accredited short courses oriented to workforce development. As noted in section 3.1 the HEFCE website reflects examples in knowledge transfer and exchange, some of which centre on workforce development activities<sup>6</sup>. The Academy's website also provides links to the work-based learning related Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, some of which have been described above.

### 3.2.2 Analysis of institutional case studies

As the case studies demonstrate, institutions are responding in different ways and to different levels. Brennan & Little (2006) and Penn, Nixon & Shewell (2005) in reporting to HEFCE on workplace learning provide further examples of practice which clearly demonstrate that HEIs are providing work-based learning solutions. A distinctive feature of these solutions is that an element of the learning arises through work. By 'learning through work' we mean that **learning outcomes are achieved through activities that are based on, or derived from, the context of work or the workplace** (Hills et al, 2003). The learning outcomes for a work-based learning programme operate at a number of different yet interrelated levels – knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and abstraction – as emphasised by Solomon and Gustavs (2004). Again the case studies illustrate this differentiation – the learning outcomes are typically focused on the student *being able to and/or knowing how to* 'operate' at the levels described above.

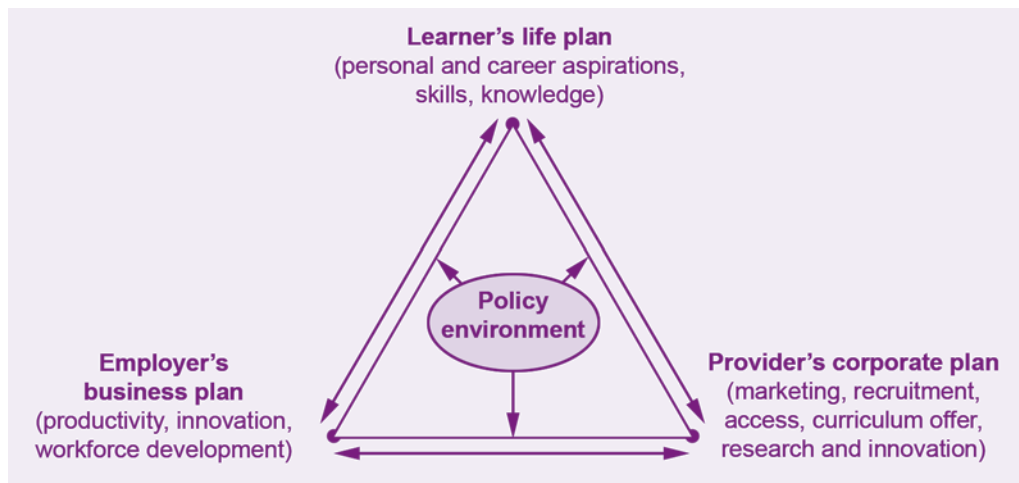
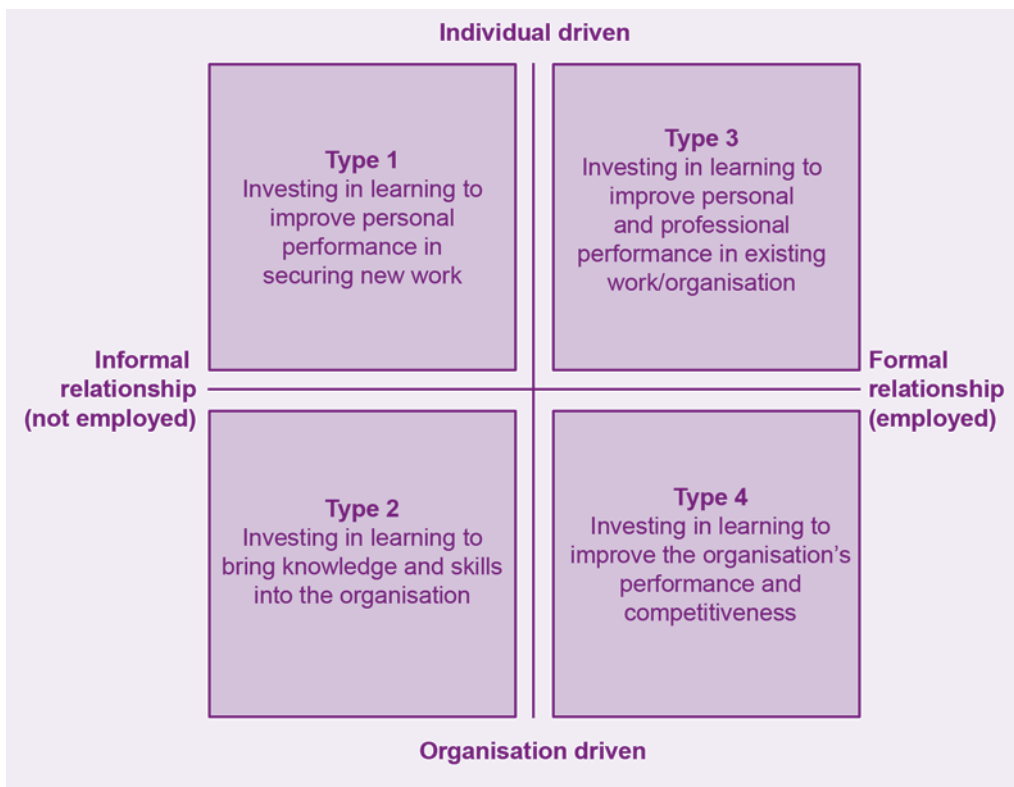


Figure 1 – Workplace learning interrelationships

<sup>6</sup> See [www.hefce.ac.uk/reachout/casestudies/list.htm](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/reachout/casestudies/list.htm)

Another distinctive feature is that the learning outcomes are identified and agreed between an individual student, a learning provider (in this instance a university or college), and an employer (or sector through a sector representative and/or professional body). The focus of agreement will depend on the relative predominance of the needs and interests of the student, employer and provider. Penn, Nixon & Shewell (2005) identified that the needs and interests of the individual student are influenced by their *life plan*, the learning provider by their *corporate plan* and the employer (or sector) by their *business plan*, as shown in the figure above. All of the example programmes described in the case studies in section 3.2.1 exemplify this tripartite approach and involve a learning contract being negotiated and agreed by the individual student, employer and the university or college. The contract sets out the agreed learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the case studies have confirmed to us that the nature of the relationship between individual students and their employing organisation is likely to have a strong influence on the type of work-based learning provision that is accessed or in some cases designed to meet specific needs. We have identified four types of work-based learning which derive from the motivations of the individual and/or organisation to invest in learning.



**Figure 2 - Work-based learning typology**

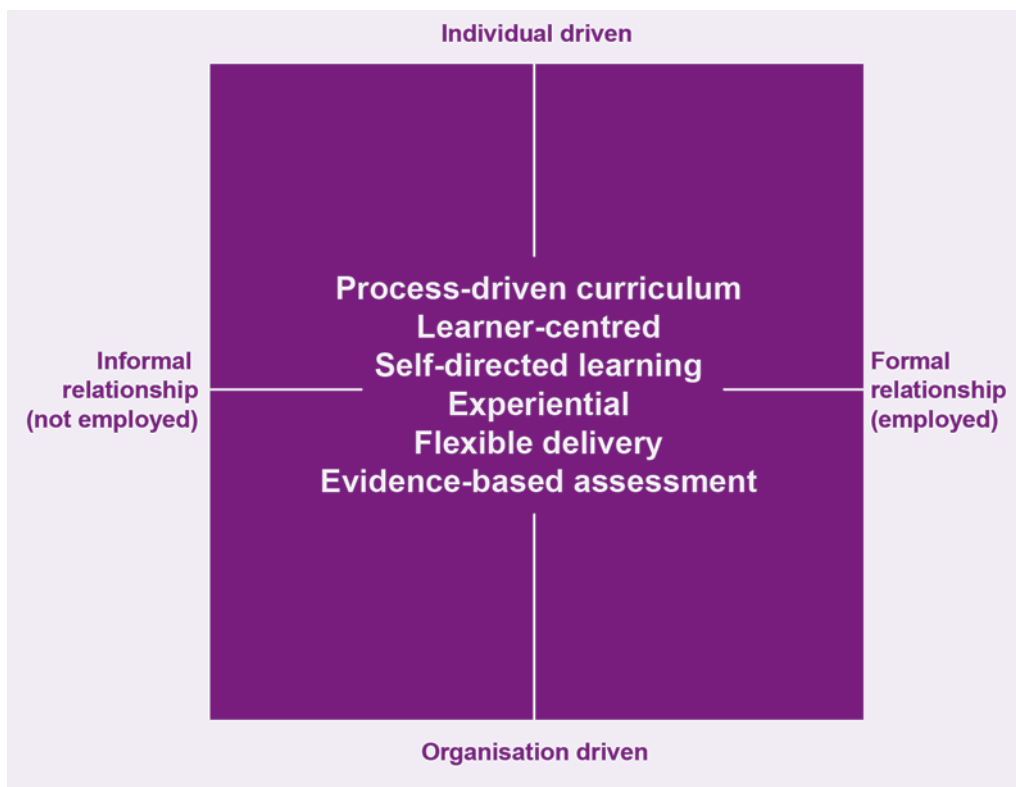
The University of Portsmouth, for example, provides a broad range of FDs. Students access this provision predominantly on an individual basis with a view to improving their personal and professional performance in their existing work and/or organisation. In many instances the part-time students are supported by their employer (e.g. financial assistance, study leave, mentor support). This is characteristic of Type 3 work-based learning even though ultimately there is likely to be a payoff for the employer in terms of improved organisational performance. On the other hand much of the University of Leeds' provision is characteristic of Type 4 work-based learning. Yorkshire Water, First Direct and the Cabinet Office's Emergency Planning College are all examples of where an investment in high volumes of learning at certain levels of the organisation (e.g. middle management tiers) has been driven by the need to improve organisational performance and competitiveness. Similarly, the University of Portsmouth has worked with organisations such as QinetiQ (DERA), Fairey Microfiltrex and Swanwick Air Traffic Control Centre in supporting higher volumes of students through the Partnership Programme, which in this instance is typical of Type 4.

Hence, **Types 3 and 4 tend to be more closely aligned to the upskilling, multi-skilling and reskilling of the existing workforce**, the primary focus of our report. They are characterised by a negotiated curriculum determined by workplace goals and objectives. By contrast Type 1 is characterised by individuals who are investing in learning to improve their own performance in order to secure new work outside their current employment in a different organisation. In other words they are looking to advance their career or make a career change, and as such the student is less likely to receive support from their current employer. For example, Northumbria University and the University of Portsmouth both support service personnel by enabling them to gain credit for their military training and 'top up' these credits to an undergraduate or postgraduate level award with 'civilian' related knowledge to enhance their employability when leaving the military. Type 2 involves an organisation building a relationship direct with an HEI to, for example, influence the design or support the delivery of a learning programme. In doing so the organisation has the opportunity to access and secure new knowledge and skills to benefit the organisation. There is no formal relationship between the student and the organisation, and consequently the curriculum is determined by the HEI and tends to be more prescribed. The Health Service FDs which are linked to Workforce Development Strategies and the Royal Navy FDs in Electronic Engineering and Marine Systems Engineering offered by the University of Portsmouth are examples of this type of work-based learning.

The typology therefore provides a useful means by which to open up a debate and challenge existing perceptions of work-based learning. It is, however, not our intention to 'box in' thinking at this stage of development as **an inclusive approach will be central to overcoming the innate conservatism that leads to a tension between what institutions and academics perceive as their business and the work-based learning agenda.**



In further analysing the case studies, characteristics of what might be deemed to be effective work-based learning practice begin to emerge. The scale of the study did not, however, allow us to make a comprehensive assessment of ‘what makes work-based learning work well in practice’. Furthermore, given the limited nature and amount of pedagogical research into this mode of learning across the UK higher education sector there is a lack of readily accessible substantive evidence to support the identification of effective practice.



**Figure 3 – Pedagogical approaches to work-based learning**

Institutions have developed pedagogical approaches that work. These approaches are distinctive in that they emphasise a **process- rather than content-driven curriculum** which is strongly **student-centred** and less derived from pre-set curricula. As indicated above learning outcomes are identified and agreed by the student, employer and university or college. The learning outcomes tend to emphasise the need for the student to broaden his or her underpinning knowledge and understanding, apply theories and constructs in a workplace setting in order to make sense of complex situations and enhance skills development through practical experiences.

The curriculum is predominantly derived from context of application of the learning (i.e. the workplace) as well as students’ current knowledge and experience. The



academic facilitates the process of learning and supports the student in 'learning how to learn' as part of a more **self-directed approach to learning**. This ensures that the learning has personal benefit and helps individuals to be satisfied that they can cope with the process of learning. Raelin (2000) argues that the acquisition of meta-competence – learning to learn – alongside new knowledge and technical knowledge is one of the defining features of work-based learning.

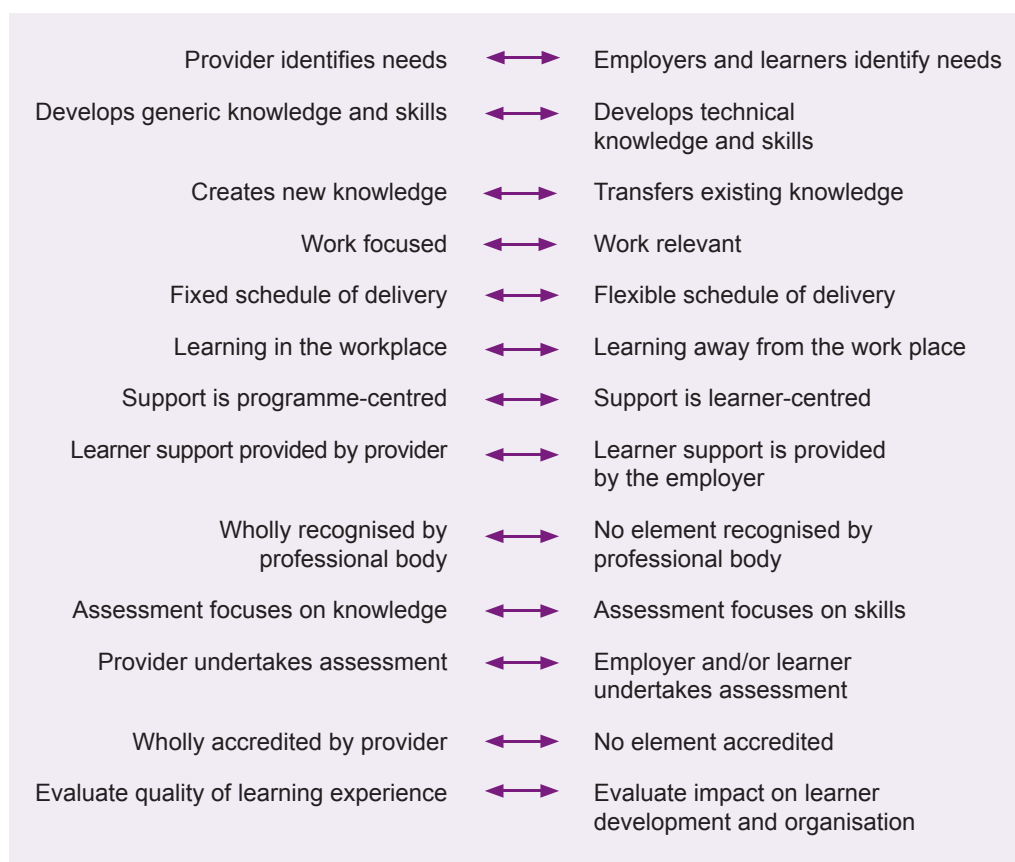
The pedagogy is also **experiential in nature**, centred on the application of learning in the workplace, built around the student's current and/or potential work requirements and taking into consideration the capabilities that the student brings to his or her work practice. This makes sure that the workplace – the primary site of learning – provides an opportunity for the practical application of knowledge and skills through action- or problem-based projects. It is also an environment where many feel comfortable learning away from the formality of more conventional approaches to learning (i.e. the classroom and written examinations). Hence, not only is knowledge being transferred to and from the workplace but students are creating new knowledge through reflective practice, innovation and creativity. Students are encouraged to critically reflect on their experiences as a means by which to recognise knowledge creation and development in the workplace. Solomon and Gustavs (2004) suggest reflection might happen at two levels – descriptive and dialogic. Descriptive reflection involves describing a particular event and reasons why it occurred in the way that it did, which may draw on perspectives from external sources. Dialogic reflection involves stepping back from events and exploring alternative explanations and courses of action in context. Reflective practice is supported through **evidence-based assessment** of progress and achievement. Portfolios, learning logs, journals and diaries are commonly used tools to encourage selfreflection and as methods of assessing work-based learning.

The adopted pedagogical approaches also emphasise the need to take on a **more flexible approach to delivery** that utilises a mixed mode or blended approach to learning, integrating e-learning and distance learning alongside more conventional and formal approaches to education. This enables the student to have a greater say over when and where the learning takes place, and allows the learning to be built around other work and lifestyle commitments.

In a report by the UVAC, *Integrating Work-based Learning into Higher Education: A Guide to Good Practice*, four concepts identified by Gallacher and Reeve (2002) are set out to help our understanding of work-based learning. The four concepts – partnership, flexibility, relevance and accreditation – strongly support our findings noted above. In addition, Brennan (2005), the author of the report, makes reference to the characteristics of work-based learning as defined by Learndirect for their *Learning through Work* programme – a feature of two of the institutional case studies, Northumbria and Derby. The characteristics include:

- **Task-related:** learning arises from performance of tasks in the workplace and tackling workplace problems or issues
- **Innovative:** new techniques and approaches are devised to meet new situations
- **Autonomously-managed and self-regulated:** learning takes place without direct instruction or formal tuition; students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning
- **Concerned with enhancing personal performance and improving organisational performance.**

The approaches to work-based learning provision depicted in this report have been characterised by determining a position along a number of continua, as shown in the diagram below. The continua are based on research conducted by Penn, Nixon & Shewell (2005) and have been further developed through the Academy's study. Each example learning programme identified in the case studies (see 3.2.1) has a different make-up and as such it has not been possible to determine an ideal position on each of the continua that might help us to characterise effective practice. That said, differentiating factors in the nature of provision did emerge.

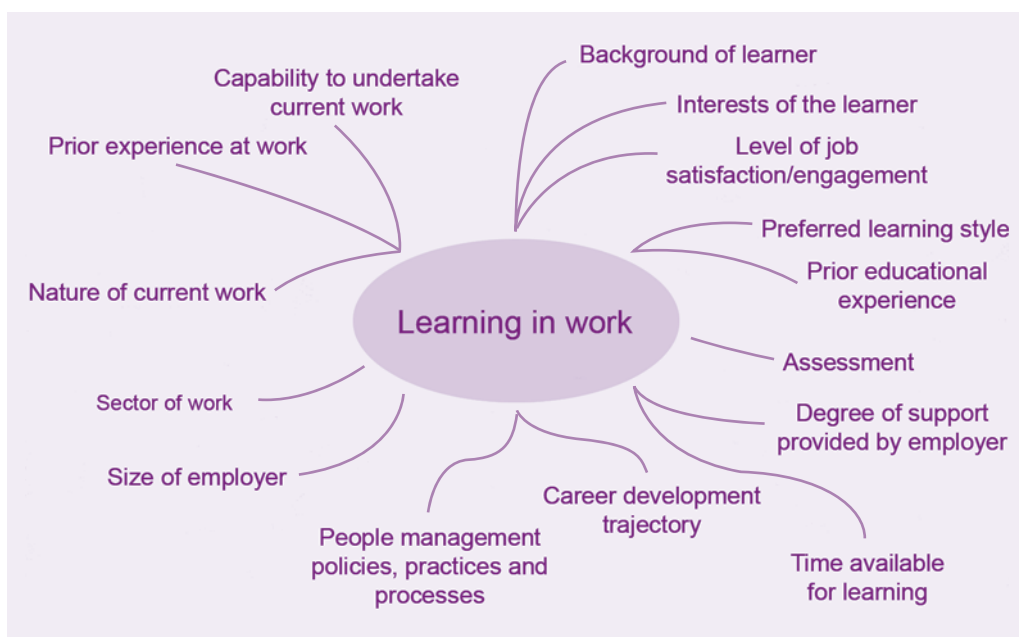


**Figure 4 – Characteristics of work-based learning provision**

The differentiating factors in the nature of provision were identified as being the:

- extent to which the learning provider identifies the needs and sets the programme specification as against the employer and student
- extent to which the student support is programme-centred (focused on the student's progression and achievement) as against student-centred (focused on personal development and career progression)
- extent to which student support is provided by the provider as against the employer
- extent to which the programme is reviewed on a regular basis to evaluate the quality of the student experience and improve the way in which the programme is delivered as against its impact on individual student development and organisational performance.

Many of the learning programmes we appraised embrace a collaborative approach to course design and delivery. Employers are involved in the negotiation of the partnership, selecting the students, agreeing the learning outcomes and designing the learning programme, mentoring the individual students and supervising the work-based (or action learning) projects.



**Figure 5 - Factors affecting pedagogical approaches**

A range of factors, identified through this study, that impact on the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches are summarised in the diagram above.

Accreditation and assessment have been identified by practitioners – those engaged in the design and delivery of work-based learning – as two of the most significant issues affecting the pedagogical approach. Accreditation and assessment of learning are the backbone of UK higher education and together they provide a mechanism by which the degree of learning can be identified and recognition (or a value) can be given to that learning.

The extent to which work-based learning should be regarded as having equal value to more traditional academic learning, and as such should receive equal credit, is an issue that is yet to be resolved across the HE sector. Individual institutions, as demonstrated by the case studies, have established university, faculty or school frameworks and processes to assist in the assessment and accreditation of learning. Middlesex University has created a 'shell' of work-based learning programmes from sub-degree certificates through to doctoral qualifications. The development of a generic framework into which students embed the specific content of their own work and/or other life experience has brought acceptance of work-based learning by the institution. However, as Gray (2001) points out, work-based learning "is the means through which a discipline is delivered, [and is] not the discipline to be studied". There is a risk in such an approach that work-based learning may become the subject for study and not the mechanism for learning. That said, an added benefit of developing a generic work-based learning framework is that it enables institutions to be more responsive to changing employer needs and, as a consequence, new programmes do not require lengthy lead times to be validated. Generic frameworks also provide a basis for work-based progression routes from FDs to higher level awards. Progression from FDs to undergraduate provision is a particularly pertinent issue as it presents a pedagogical challenge to students, given the differing cultures of FE and HE. The University of Leeds has streamlined its quality assurance and validation processes at a School level to ensure that new provision can be established in a timely manner.

Northumbria University has established a framework for accrediting in-house company training which has the ability to award credit for learning in the workplace. Equally, UVAC are currently leading on a study to explore how a credit rated system could recognise learning in the workplace and be matched against the HE qualifications framework. This development project involves the University of Kent, London Metropolitan University, University of Luton, Southampton University and Middlesex University, and Harper Adams University College. This activity is anticipated to grow as increasing demands are placed on HEIs to generate income from new sources and as employees (students) put pressure on employers to recognise their learning and development for personal and professional gain. The latter is a particular sticking point for employers, who provide informal and formal learning and development for their staff – the vast bulk of which is uncertified. However, as the quote below exemplifies, employers do not place the same value on an individual's achievement of an award. Thus accreditation of "work-based learning needs to be on terms which employers recognise, value and embrace...

[and as such] ...is frequently cited as an inhibitor to the effective delivery of workforce development by HE" (Connor, 2005b).

*"Many employers do not share the passion for qualifications that is a hallmark of national policy makers' thinking about vocational education and training"*

**Professor Ewart Keep, Market Failure in Skills, SSDA Catalyst, Issue 1**

The University of Portsmouth has implemented a mechanism for students in the workplace to claim credit for prior learning, up to two-thirds of the credit needed for an undergraduate Honours degree or postgraduate Masters level qualification. Advice and guidance is provided to the student and employer on the accreditation of prior experience and learning (APEL) process, and as far as possible the portfolio approach has been simplified to ensure it is more student-friendly. APEL processes exist in most HEIs but apart from a few notable exceptions they tend not to have been used much in practice. Practitioners feel that there is a need to develop an approach to APEL that has greater consistency across the UK higher education sector.

The issue for assessment revolves around what is assessed, who assesses and whether the assessment is valid and reliable. Brodie and Irving (2006) through their work at the University of Chester suggest that given the interdisciplinary nature of work-based learning, assessment should focus on three components. The components are: learning ('how to learn' and make the most of learning opportunities); critical reflection (reflecting on learning, applying models and theories to aid understanding); and capability ('what the student is able to do'). Capability is felt to be the most important component, yet it is potentially the most problematic to assess.

Moreover, the case studies presented in this report illustrate that assessment is the preserve of academic staff. Equity and quality assurance issues militate against the involvement of employers in the assessment of learning, even though they could (and, in some instances, do) contribute. Where employers are engaged in the assessment process their role tends to be in mentoring students on the technical aspects of work-based projects and providing feedback on the performance (or 'capability') of the student to the academic staff. The University of Portsmouth and Derby University provide guidance and training for workplace mentors. The Academy's Art, Design, Media Subject Centre has through discussions with Skillfast-UK identified the need for creative industry professionals to become engaged in external examining and the requirement for accredited training of industrial professionals. The Subject Centre and SSC are exploring the feasibility for a joint project in this area.

Notwithstanding our analysis of existing practice, it is clear that the higher education sector does not as yet fully understand the nature of 'what works well

in practice' and how different factors (e.g. background of the student, nature of current role, sector of work and size of employer) impact on learning in the workplace. **A better understanding of the pedagogy of work-based learning is required** which will help the HE sector to support or contest its status as a legitimate mode of learning.

Institutions have also put in place structures to support the expansion and uptake of work-based learning. Some have established 'one stop shop' approaches to act as a focal point for employer engagement. Supporting effective **employer engagement strategies is seen by practitioners as a critical area to address**. The University of Portsmouth's 'Purple Door' is one example of how institutions are tackling this issue. Other case studies of practice that illustrate the need for better employer engagement strategies include the University of Luton's Language and Culture for Business Programme and the University of Kingston's part-industry delivered FDs. Both are available on the HEFCE website<sup>7</sup> and highlight the critical importance of investing in understanding the needs of business, especially SMEs, and building a working relationship.

*"Misdiagnosis can lead to ineffective remedies, some of them very expensive"*

**Professor Ewart Keep, Market Failure in Skills, SSDA Catalyst, Issue 1**

One aspect highlighted by practitioners as being critical to influencing the design of effective work-based learning solutions is that of effectively diagnosing employer needs. Staff development to address this issue and help academic staff who are operating at the interface between higher education and industry, to work as 'consultants' has been identified as an imperative by practitioners and institutions. This is particularly the case in institutions that function on a devolved model and lack centralised support.

Given this issue, institutions are beginning to establish units to provide centralised support on work-based learning. These units either deliver programmes themselves and/or facilitate outreach to the relevant academic experts who design and deliver the work-based learning solutions to meet the identified student and employer needs. The Work-related Learning Service at Northumbria University, the School of Flexible & Partnership Learning at Derby University, and the Centre for Work-based Learning Partnership at Middlesex University all provide their respective institutions with a focal point of expertise on work-based learning.

The emergence of such centralised support units (or, in some instances, academic schools) has, in part, been reliant on the availability of public funding.

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<sup>7</sup> See [www.hefce.ac.uk/reachout/casestudies/list.htm](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/reachout/casestudies/list.htm) >Third stream contribution to regional skills enhancement

European funding and regional development funding has been used by the case study institutions for quite a number of years to build capacity and support programme design and delivery. Funding has been used to reduce the direct cost of programmes to employers – a factor that has enabled institutions to engage the SME sector more effectively. The availability of funding has also acted as a considerable lever in encouraging practitioners to take risks and innovate, even when the institutional environment in which they operate has not been conducive to taking on the work-based learning agenda. Nationally funded initiatives (e.g. CETLs, HEIF) have also been used to support these endeavours.

In addition, institutions have built up their work-based learning provision by transferring the costs of designing and delivering solutions to the employer (and/or individual student) on a full cost recovery basis. The issue over 'who pays' for work-based learning was tackled by Brennan & Little (2006) in their report to HEFCE and consequently the co-financing of work-based learning was not a specific focus for the Academy's study. Even so **funding remains an important factor in influencing the behaviour of institutions** and may militate against any further expansion in this area of provision.



## 4. What are the key issues and challenges?

This chapter pulls together our thinking on the key issues and challenges involved in creating an environment in which effective practice in work-based learning can expand and thrive.

### 4.1 Overcoming the language barrier

Everyone has a view on what work-based learning means and they use a wide range of terms interchangeably (e.g. workplace learning, work-related learning, vocational learning). This all goes to confuse the situation and undervalue the potential benefits of work-based learning as a mode of learning at a higher level.

#### A Built Environment perspective

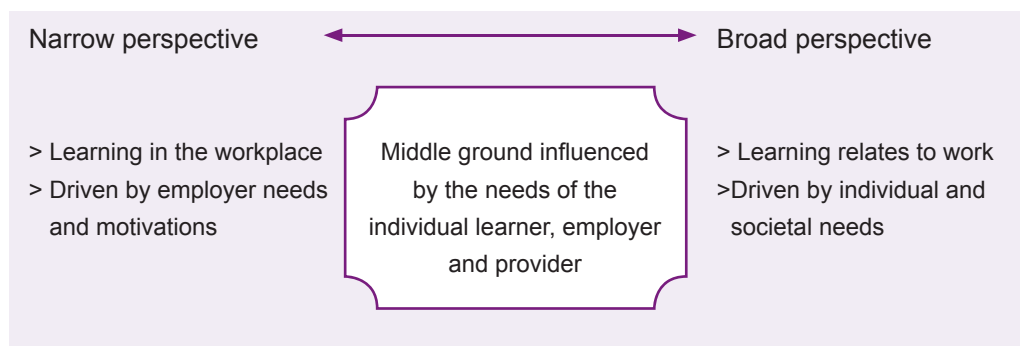
[Defining] work-based learning as 'learning which accredits or extends the workplace skills and abilities of employees'... seems to imply that the students are primarily employees and only in a secondary function within a HE or FE setting. While this applies to some of the students in built environment courses – the definition seems to not [...to include] full-time students on placements or internships (sandwich years) working and learning at work. Whether the learning experiences and support requirements are dramatically different in terms of learning in the workplace may be an interesting element to pursue.

#### Higher Education Academy Centre for Education in the Built Environment

Gray (2001) puts forward a number of propositions of work-based learning from an academic perspective, comprising *learning at work* (e.g. a company in-house training or personal development programme) and *learning for work* (e.g. a work placement on a sandwich degree programme or professional development such as a teacher training), amongst others. Work (whether paid or unpaid) serves as the mechanism for learning and is often seen as the defining feature. And as such work-based learning represents a shift to a more integrated, experiential and trans-disciplinary approach to learning (Mode 2 learning) where the single discipline is no longer used to drive articulation (Mode 1 learning) (Williams, 2006). The validity of such an approach has yet to be fully accepted by higher education institutions and consequently **work-based learning remains a contested area.**



The situation is no better from an employers' perspective – terms such as workbased learning, vocational education and training, and workforce or professional development are all used interchangeably. Furthermore, since the mid-1990s there has been a gradual shift in language and techniques used to describe steps taken by employers to help employees perform their jobs more effectively – a point emphasised by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) who note that *learning*, *development* and *training* are often used in the same context. This has again led to some confusion. The CIPD as a consequence has now defined work-based learning as “a self directed, work-based process leading to increased adaptive capacity. Individuals ‘learn to learn’ and possess the capabilities that enable them to do so... to help to build and retain competitive advantage” (CIPD, 2005).



**Figure 6 – Work-based learning perspectives**

A spectrum of interpretations therefore exists especially in relation to workbased learning and this has led to a rather prolonged debate concerning both what work-based learning means and the exact form work-based learning should take to best achieve its learning outcomes. The narrow interpretation of work-based learning relates to learning in the workplace that is driven by employer needs and motivations, whereas the broad perspective focuses on learning that relates to work and is driven more by individual and societal needs.

The terminology and definitions can get in the way of exploring the territory and dealing with what really matters, notably influencing the policy environment, dealing with issues and challenges from a structural perspective and sharing, promoting and encouraging effective pedagogical practice. An inclusive approach that accepts the variety of interpretations is a prerequisite if we are to avoid over-compartmentalising provision and straight-jacketing institutions by trying to shape an absolute definition. Nevertheless it is critically important to **establish a shared understanding of the particular area of focus from both an academic and employer perspective**, irrespective of the terms used. This will be the first step in establishing a common language. The case studies and work of the Academy's Subject Centres and the SSCs exemplify the need to overcome the language barrier so as to avoid misunderstanding and a breakdown in relationships.

## 4.2 Raising demand or expanding provision

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In the last two decades the Government (as noted in section 2.1) has attempted, through policy interventions and greater levels of public subsidy, to redress the UK's underinvestment in skills and the perceived market failure of employers. The expansion of post-compulsory education has been one of the many policy responses. However, as we stressed earlier, when considering any policy interventions to support the higher education sector in expanding the nature and extent of work-based learning, allowance must be made for demand side issues as well. As Keep (2006) suggests "if raising demand for skills is a policy goal, policy needs to find ways to encourage more employers to raise their game in terms of their product market strategies". In other words low value goods and services demand low levels of skills. The issue being that the low skills equilibrium is believed, in part, to be down to a lack of demand from employers for higher level skills rather than a deficit model created by the lack of appropriate HE level provision.

As the CBI indicates, employers are responsible for the training and development of their employees to meet business needs and where possible this should support their employees' longer-term development. Employees are responsible for their own development and employability beyond the needs of their current employment. Government is responsible for the education and training of young people and should ensure they are all employable. It should also deal with market failure and support organisations with little capacity to train and individuals with little opportunity to learn (CBI, 2003). The challenge here is therefore to **motivate employers and individuals to see value and engage in higher level skills development**, and then to ensure that the nature and extent of supply offered by the HE sector meet the demand.

Hence, policy decisions to expand work-based learning provision in higher education need to be based on a solid body of reliable evidence and data. Developing a better understanding of the nature, extent and uptake by employers of the current level of provision and the capacity and capability of the HE sector to expand its offer should have precedence over intensifying the policy response. We noted in section 3.1 that such a body of evidence doesn't currently exist and **better intelligence is required to avoid over-supply and an overinvestment in skills or underinvestment and skills shortages**.

## 4.3 Encouraging good pedagogic practice

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Encouraging good pedagogical practice in work-based learning is reliant on accepting and valuing the different domains of practice – *learning at work* and *learning in the 'academy'* – and developing a better understanding of the extent to which these domains can and should be more closely aligned. A challenge for

the HE sector is in recognising the interdependence of 'industry' and academia in shaping a student's academic abilities and professional competencies. For some this may necessitate a move away from a viewpoint whereby universities are wholly responsible for academic content and industry wholly responsible for competence development. This also suggests that industry may need to consider its standpoint and make a significant movement in recognising this interdependence.

### A Health Sciences perspective

Programmes need to be individualised, and assessment needs to include the 'softer' skills which cannot be just on a competence-based system alone. A student-centred approach, including a blend of ways of learning, providing a tailored approach would be characteristics of effective practice.

#### Higher Education Academy Health Sciences & Practice Subject Centre

Organisations are seen by many practitioners in HE as providing a legitimate context for learning – a *learning laboratory* – and employment in them provides individuals with a continuous learning experience. This experience needs to be structured in such a way that it turns the experience into a positive one and enhances the benefits to the student and employer alike. The benefits can go well beyond the development of 'employability skills' – students in the workplace can enhance their knowledge and understanding (both tacit and explicit) and exhibit significant changes in their value beliefs and attitudes.

HEIs may therefore wish to develop (and test) models for the integration of the different domains of learning. Successful work-based learning (as noted in 3.2.2) relies upon an effective collaboration between HE and employers. Employers need to recognise the importance of the professional development of work-based students, by allowing them time to reflect upon their experiences and to complete academic work. They would also need to provide support for the students, and ensure that they are allocated work-based projects of sufficient challenge. By contrast academics need to provide frameworks and structures within which students can develop their learning. In such cases mechanisms for the accreditation and certification of work-based learning need also to be developed (see 4.5 below). This may represent a fundamental shift for some institutions should they wish to engage more fully in supporting workforce development.

Yet this all assumes that skills (and knowledge) required by employers are most cost effectively delivered through higher education and that skills developed in the 'academy' are transferable, and in particular, can be transferred into employment. It also assumes that the HE sector knows how best to develop these skills and attributes and therefore that designing an appropriate learning experience is

unproblematic. As we have highlighted in this report, **research to substantiate or challenge these assumptions in order to help the HE sector to build a better understanding of the pedagogy of learning at work is required.** More specifically, as Brodie and Irving (2006) point out, accreditation and assessment of work-based learning provides a demanding and valuable focus for further research.

#### 4.4 Engaging effectively with employers

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Building and sustaining longer-term, closer relationships between HE and

employers has to underpin any drive to expand higher education's role in supporting workforce development. Overcoming cultural differences and language barriers to establish a shared strategic intent requires substantial time and effort on both sides.

From an employer's viewpoint the CBI (2003) highlighted poor customer service as a main barrier to effective collaboration – an issue that is being addressed by HEIs through the creation of 'front doors' for employers. Employers do not know what is available – a point emphasised by our web-based survey – and in many cases employers do not see HE as a natural provider of learning for their workforce (even at higher levels). Other factors mentioned were the relevance of courses, IPR issues and short-term funding driven initiatives.

#### A Bioscience perspective

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Identifying employers' and employees' needs and being able to arrange provision that is cost-effective; providing student support at appropriate times and locations; [and] incorporating sufficient flexibility in assessment and delivery to allow for the demands of the workplace/employment [...are all key issues].

#### Higher Education Academy Centre for Bioscience

More often than not a tailored approach which suits the employee and employer is required, the approach being characterised by a rapid response to requests and queries from employers, a strong focus on providing 'business solutions' relevant to identified needs rather than offering a menu of standard, off-the-shelf training programmes, and a high quality of interaction with an employer from diagnosis of need through to the design and delivery of programmes and evaluating their impact on business performance. And while institutions are increasingly offering tailored solutions, cost (and the return on the investment) is seen as one of the main barriers to HEIs delivering bespoke and high quality work-based learning when, where and how the employee and employer want it. Cost is an issue too for

employers, particularly SMEs, which face distinctive constraints on providing formal learning and development. SMEs face higher costs in developing their employees as they lack the economies of scale (i.e. volume of students) to make tailored work-based learning solutions cost effective.

Furthermore, as institutional priorities do not always emphasise workforce development, relationships with employers have more often than not been built up by an individual, and if this individual changes role or moves on the relationship then falters. In response to this HEFCE funding, through the Higher Education Innovation Fund, has enabled HE institutions (as noted in sections 3.1 and 3.2.2) to put resource behind orienting their services to meet employer needs, but to date this has centred on research and knowledge transfer activities. A growing number of institutions are recognising the benefits to be realised from the interconnectedness between these activities and their teaching and learning activities (including work-based learning), **yet adopting a holistic (and client-centred) approach to their third stream function remains a challenge for those institutions who wish to take on workforce development.** Amongst other things this will necessitate HEIs deciding on how best, individually or collectively, they can package their offer in such a way that it means something to employers and aligns their strengths in order to capitalise on opportunities.

## 4.5 Transforming accreditation and quality assurance

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Practitioners engaged in delivering work-based learning feel strongly that there is still a **need to develop a credit-based system for learning at a higher level.** Anomalies exist in the functioning of institutionally or regionally driven credit-based systems. For instance, the maximum amount of credit a student can achieve through APEL varies by institution and as such a rather arbitrary system seems to have emerged which has the potential to further undermine the value of 'learning at work'.

To add value a credit-based system would need to be trans-regional and enable greater transparency, transferability and consistency across the UK higher education sector. This challenge is particularly well covered by Brennan (2005) and Connor (2005b), and accordingly has not been explored further by ourselves. The emergence of the Lifelong Learning Networks with their focus on vocational routes into and through HE may provide one means by which to realise a credit-based award framework, albeit on a region by region basis.

Additionally, **quality assurance procedures and codes of practice will need to better reflect the breadth of approaches to flexible learning being adopted by HEIs** so as not to stifle innovation in the future.

## 4.6 Meeting the costs of design and delivery

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Evidence suggests that work-based learning can be more resource intensive than other modes of learning. A study undertaken by JM Consulting (2003) on behalf of the HEFCE aimed to cost different types of pedagogy including e-learning, distance learning, foundation degrees, workplace learning and accreditation of prior experiential learning. All these different modes of learning were identified as being more resource intensive than conventional approaches. The report noted that as a consequence these modes of learning tend to play a very small part of HE provision. And because the provision is generally reliant on enthusiastic individuals, it tends not to be part of a well planned or managed business model.

Similarly, the evaluation of FDs by York Consulting (2004) identified resources as a significant issue – currently a 10% premium is in place for FDs to recognise these additional costs.

**Providing cost-effective work-based learning solutions will continue to challenge HEIs** wishing to expand their provision in this area and increase their respective market share. Flexible business models will need to be implemented, alongside more efficient and effective administrative systems for students on non-traditional modes of delivery, particularly for those on 'roll-on roll-off programmes' and off-campus students. Full cost recovery of academic staff time and professional expertise for the development of work-based learning solutions will also be crucially important. **More flexible and improved public funding models aligned to the increased use of co-financing arrangements (the State, employer and individual) in funding higher level (work-based) learning will need to be worked through** to ensure that the benefits can be realised on all sides. This will be particularly pertinent at a regional level as the impact of the Regional Skills Action Plans is felt (see section 2.2) and LLNs start to have a greater influence over regional and sectoral priorities for higher level skills.

## 5. Where should the HE sector focus attention?

In the final chapter we draw on the identified issues and challenges (see chapter 4) to help focus on the possible priorities for action – from a policy, structural and pedagogical perspective – that would enable significant movement on the work-based learning agenda in the next five years. In addition, implications for the HE sector and its partners in expanding the nature and extent of work-based learning are considered.

### 5.1 Focus for attention and energy

For many practitioners work-based learning is already a vital and legitimate mode of learning which offers significant value to HE institutions' strategic teaching and learning agendas. Based on their experience they also feel that it acts as a driver for innovation in the HE system more broadly. However, extending this legitimacy will necessitate developing strategies which cross the cultural bridge between learning and work, address the issues and challenges throughout the system, and demonstrate how the practices of work-based learning have wider applicability in the HE sector. A reflection on how and why other emergent approaches, such as e-learning, have moved so easily into the mainstream may be useful here.

For the pedagogical approaches associated with work-based learning to be mainstreamed in a similar way, practitioners engaged in this area feel the HE sector should:

- focus on **demonstrating how the features of work-based learning fit to the pedagogical mission of HEIs** at both the policy and practice level in such a way that assertions can be evidenced
- demonstrate how **work-based learning development can benefit from existing and new funding streams**
- **orchestrate more detailed research** which:
  - unpacks the territory, captures what is going on now and addresses issues of language, meaning and interpretation
  - highlights practices which work and explores the nature and value of the work-based learning approach to institutions and practitioners
  - explores how new initiatives can be used to inform practice (e.g. how the use of National Occupational Standards alongside professional standards can shape the HE curriculum)
  - challenges our intuitive assumption that the pedagogical processes



- associated with work-based learning are widely applicable and present benefits to institutions beyond that of learning in the workplace alone
- identifies where the 'discipline' and approaches associated with work-based learning can be aligned in order to add value to the teaching and learning strategies of institutions
  - illustrates how flexibility and responsiveness in work-based learning programmes are delivered in cost-effective ways.
  - ensure that a **strong research base provides the bedrock on which policy and practice are developed:**
    - Investment will be needed to support the structural changes – the case for investment needs to be well reasoned and well evidenced with clear cost-benefit analyses
    - Co-financing presents itself as one option; however, different models of the relative contributions of students, employers and the state need to be worked through
  - **adopt a flexible approach** at the heart of developments in the short to medium term
  - ensure **appropriateness and rigour of assessment** in everything that the sector does; approaches to assessment that work well need to be illuminated through further research
  - share understanding and strengthen the 'community of practice' to better enable the adoption of good practice
  - build a stronger understanding of the process of partnership (or collaboration) in learning and the **nature and fit of relationships between students, institutions and employers.**

## 5.2 Implications for partners

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In considering the key findings of our study and, in particular, the issues and challenges set out on chapter 4, a number of implications emerge in respect to how the HE sector and its partners could support the expansion of work-based learning at a higher level where it fits with an institution's strategic mission. The implications are set out below as 'areas for consideration' by the Government, HE sector agencies, HEIs, and employers and their representative bodies.

### 5.2.1 For the Government

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Consideration should be given to:

- **How policy decisions on work-based learning can be better informed by a full range of evidence that takes into account issues for the students, HEIs and employers.** Developing a better understanding of the nature, extent and uptake by employers of the current level of provision and the capacity and



capability of the HE sector to expand its offer should have precedence over intensifying the policy response

- **Acknowledging and providing a variety of approaches to and interpretations of work-based learning in higher education.** A cautious approach will be needed which keeps the focus on work-based learning yet does not reinforce boundaries and prejudices.

### 5.2.2 For HE sector agencies

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Consideration should be given to:

- **How best to address the lack of a comprehensive understanding of the nature and extent of the HE sector's work-based learning offer** and its contribution to UK competitiveness.
- **Identifying ways in which to better support HEIs in providing cost-effective work-based learning solutions.** Funding remains an important factor in influencing the behaviour of institutions and may militate against any further expansion in this area of provision.
- **Developing (and testing) pedagogic and financial models for the integration of the different domains of learning in the HE sector**, including work-based learning. Pedagogic and financial models for workbased learning are immature, and workload management models do not, as yet, appropriately recognise the different styles of working.
- **Establishing a credit-based system for learning at a higher level** at a national level.
- **How quality assurance procedures and codes of practice can better reflect the breadth of approaches to flexible learning being adopted by HEIs** so as not to stifle innovation in the future<sup>8</sup>.
- **Supporting and resourcing more effective employer/HEI engagement strategies**, particularly in respect to diagnosing employer needs, which is seen as being critical to influencing the design of effective work-based learning solutions.
- **Research to substantiate or challenge the assumptions that the skills**

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<sup>8</sup> The Quality Assurance Agency is currently reviewing section nine of the Code of Practice for the Assurance of Quality and Standards in Higher Education: Placement Learning which will go some way to addressing this challenge.

**required by employers are most cost-effectively delivered through HE** and can be transferred into employment, and that HE knows best how to develop them, in order to help the HE sector to build a better understanding of the pedagogy of learning at work.

### 5.2.3 For HEIs

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Consideration should be given to:

- **The extent to which HEIs feel it is appropriate to individually and/or collectively prioritise support for continuous workforce development** and make more substantial inroads into this area of learning for employers.
- **Adopting a holistic (and client-centred) approach to their third stream function** which recognises the benefits to be realised from the interconnectedness between these activities and their teaching and learning activities, including support for workforce development.
- **The extent to which universities can support the ongoing development of non-traditional students**, who are beyond the age when individuals are likely to participate in the traditional route from school to university, through work-based learning.
- **The extent to which HEIs feel it is appropriate to develop joint working arrangements with partners at a regional level** to ensure participation and progression into higher education and that the supply of HE provision within the regions meets regional and/or employer needs.
- **How HEIs can best present a more consistent and coherent picture of the breadth of their institutional offers in work-based learning** as it is not clear how much work-based learning is actually being provided.
- **Building a better understanding of the pedagogy of work-based learning** and ‘what works well in practice’ which will help the HE sector to support or contest its status as a legitimate mode of learning.
- **How best to support the development of academic staff** who are operating at the interface between higher education and the world of work through internal programmes of staff development.

## 5.2.4 For employers and their representatives

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Consideration should be given to:

**Directing more energy and effort towards motivating employers and employees to see value and engage in higher level skills development** to balance the interventions on the supply side.

**Establishing and sustaining closer relationships with the HE sector** in order to build understanding of the nature of how the HE sector supports and delivers learning. Overcoming cultural differences and language barriers will take a substantial amount of time and effort.

## 5.3 Moving forward

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It is clear from what has been described above that work-based learning forms an integral part of the HE sector's focus on work-related learning (defined as 'learning outcomes achieved through activities which are based in, or derive from, the context of work or the workplace'), which in turn is one strand of the broader employability agenda.

In moving forward, the Higher Education Academy sees its role as 'reaching out' to the HE sector and supporting HEIs to do work-based learning where it fits with their wider institutional strategic mission. The Academy is, however, already actively supporting institutions in tackling the work-based learning agenda. At one level the Academy is working with the DfES and HEFCE to influence how Government policy can positively impact on the sector, while at another level the network of Subject Centres is undertaking development work in conjunction with the SSCs (see section 3.1). While all of this work contributes directly to the strategic aims of the Academy, there are opportunities for the Academy to play a further role in supporting institutions in relation to the work-based learning agenda and effecting positive changes in the learning experience.

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## Annex 2 – Methodology

The Higher Education Academy through discussions with the HE Employer Engagement team at the Department for Education & Skills secured funding to support an initial study into work-based learning. The study aimed to **foster and sustain the Academy's focus on work-based learning in order to build capacity in the HE sector and effect changes in the student learning experience**. In working towards this aim, three key objectives were established for the study. These were to:

- inform the development and implementation of a longer-term strategy for work-based learning in higher education by working in partnership with key policy makers
- increase understanding of the different approaches to work-based learning by identifying critical factors in the delivery of effective practice
- engender commitment to a work-based learning focused 'community of practice' by engaging champions and supporting the transfer of knowledge and exchange of ideas across subject disciplines.

The key outputs of this work were anticipated as being a working definition and typology of work-based learning supported by case studies of practice, a set of recommendations (**policy and practice**) and identification of areas for further investigation, innovation and/or development (**programmes**) to be considered by the partners involved.

More specifically, in defining the boundaries for the study the primary focus was identified as being **learning which accredits or extends the workplace skills and abilities of employees**. The provision delivered by HEIs (including HE in FE) at Level 4 and above that encompasses such learning includes FDs, undergraduate programmes (part-time), taught and research postgraduate programmes (part-time), and short courses. The primary focus for the study was initially part-time undergraduate provision; however, this was extended to encompass the areas described above.

**The KSA Partnership** was commissioned by the Academy to conduct the study between December 2005 and March 2006. In delivering the study, KSA drew on its contemporary understanding of the issues and challenges involved in realising effective practice in work-based learning. This understanding, in part, stems from a recent study commissioned by HEFCE on workplace learning in the North East of England.

Environment	Focus	Process	Deliverables
National context	What is the strategic context? (drivers, extent of response, level of demand)	Stakeholder interviews Desk research	Context definition
Regional context			
Institution strategy	How are institutions responding? (institutional, school and programme level)	Literature review Web-based research	Annotated bibliography Map of institutional WBL provision
Faculty/school/unit response			
Programme design and delivery	What types of WBL are there? What makes WBL work well in practice? Where does attention need to be focused in the future?	Targeted institutional visits and/or telephone surveys	Definition of WBL Typology of WBL provision Case studies of WBL practice Areas for further investigation

**Figure 7 – The approach**

From a pragmatic perspective given the scale of the study – it was significantly smaller than the recently completed national study undertaken by CHERI and KPMG and the regional study conducted by **KSA** on workplace learning for HEFCE – a central focus on **illuminating the higher education landscape by highlighting ‘what we know’ and ‘what we don’t know’ about work-based learning** was retained as far as possible, and in doing so areas to focus attention on in the future from an institutional and pedagogical perspective were identified.

Wherever possible **KSA** attempted to add value to the previous studies that have been conducted in this area and as a consequence a key element of the approach centred on engaging partners in the process (see Figure 7). The adopted methodology involved a number of consultations (see Annex 3) with policy and funding bodies to ascertain the strategic context and the imperatives for change, a web-based literature review of primarily UK-based research on work-based learning, a web-based search to explore the extent to which HEIs promote work-based learning (or professional/workforce development) as part of their offer and six institutional visits to provide a more detailed level of understanding in respect

to how institutions are responding to this agenda. The six institutions visited by KSA were Derby University, University of Leeds, Middlesex University, Northumbria University, Open University, University of Portsmouth, and Cleveland College of Art & Design. Annex 4 outlines the templates used for the semi-structured interviews undertaken at each of these institutions.

The emerging findings from this work were then tested out at a 'by invitation only' Symposium held on Wednesday 1 March 2006 at BMA House in London. The Symposium provided an opportunity to gather partner perspectives and stimulate debate on work-based learning policy and practice by bringing together policy makers and funding bodies, senior managers from HEIs, experts involved in delivering work-based learning, employers and Sector Skills Councils, and students – many of whom were involved in the earlier stages of the study. A full list of those organisations represented at the Symposium is provided in Annex 5.

## Annex 3 – Partner consultations

Individual partner consultations were held with:

- Council for Industry and Higher Education
- Department for Education and Skills
- Foundation Degree Forward – research
- Higher Education Academy (York) – HE in FE, employability
- City University
- Cleveland College of Art and Design
- Northumbria University
- Open University
- University of Derby
- University of Leeds
- University of Middlesex
- University of Portsmouth

Workshops were held with:

- Foundation Degree Forward (Regional Managers)
- Higher Education Academy's Employer Advisory Group
- Higher Education Academy's Subject Centres\*
- Higher Education Academy's Work Placements Organisation Forum

\* Individual responses were also received from the following Higher Education Academy Subject Centres:

- Art, Design, Media
- Centre for Biosciences
- Centre for Education in the Built Environment
- English
- Health Sciences & Practice

# Annex 4 – Institutional discussion and case study guides

## Work-based learning discussion agenda

Work-based learning can be defined as learning which accredits or extends the workplace skills and abilities of employees. This discussion agenda provides the outline structure for the institutional visits and sets the context for the case studies of identified practice.

### Instructions

Please answer each of the questions below in relation to the work-based learning agenda in your institution and school/department/unit. For each answer please provide supporting evidence.

<b>Institution:</b>
<b>Contact name:</b>
<b>School/department/unit:</b>

1	Thinking about the strategic context for work-based learning at the institutional level	Interviewer notes
1a	How important is work-based learning to your institution's strategy?	What is the rationale? How is it expressed? What is the focus? Where is it articulated?

<b>1b</b>	What is actually happening in practice across the institution?	<p>What policies are in place to support this area of work?</p> <p>What is going on now?</p> <p>Where is it happening?</p> <p>Who's doing what?</p>
<b>1c</b>	How is work-based learning being supported in practice in your institution?	<p>What support is available centrally?</p> <p>What support is available in the faculties/schools?</p> <p>How is the support resourced?</p>
<b>1d</b>	How successful has the response been?	<p>Is there widespread support?</p> <p>What volume of activity is underway?</p> <p>What proportion of the institution's income is generated through WBL?</p>
<b>1e</b>	At an institutional level what has been working well? And what has not been working so well?	

2	Thinking about how your school/department/unit has responded to work-based learning	Interviewer notes
2a	How important is work-based learning to your school/department/unit's strategy?	What is the focus? What is the rationale? How/where is it expressed? How important is it now? What plans do you have for WBL in future?
2b	What is actually happening in practice?	How have you responded? What is volume of activity? How is the activity funded? How much income is generated?
2c	How is work-based learning supported in practice?	Who does it? What is their background and experience? How are training needs assessed and met? What links exist with external bodies (e.g. employers, SSCs)? How are programmes funded?
2d	What are the main barriers and enablers to your school/department/unit engaging in work-based learning?	What are the key issues, challenges and sensitivities? What's working? What's not working so well?

<b>2e</b>	How does your school/department/unit identify and agree opportunities in relation to work-based learning?	<p>How does your school/ department/unit maintain a contemporary picture of employer needs (i.e. horizon scanning)?</p> <p>How are opportunities prioritised (e.g. market research)?</p> <p>How are funding opportunities identified?</p> <p><b>For each:</b> Who does it?</p>
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<b>3</b>	<b>Thinking about the future of work-based learning</b>	<b>Interviewer notes</b>
<b>3a</b>	How can the nature and extent of work-based learning provision in higher education be improved?	<p>Who needs to do what? Could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Changes in policy</li> <li>● Changes to practice</li> <li>● Changes in funding</li> </ul>
<b>3b</b>	Where does attention need to be focused in order to build our understanding of how to enhance the experience of work-based students?	What future research needs to be undertaken?



## Work-based learning good practice examples

Work-based learning can be defined as learning which accredits or extends the workplace skills and abilities of employees. This questionnaire seeks to explore the nature of practice in this area of learning. Work-based learning can also be characterised by means of determining a position along a number of continua (see below). The continua are based on research undertaken by **The KSA Partnership** for the Higher Education Funding Council for England’s study on workplace learning. The study focused on exploring workplace learning practice in North East England.

### Instructions:

Please answer each of the questions below in relation to an identified work-based learning programme. For each continuum, please put an ‘X’ in the relevant box that best describes the position of the example under consideration.

<b>Institution:</b>
<b>Contact name:</b>
<b>School/department/unit:</b>
<b>Learning programme:</b>
<b>Level (e.g. HE level 4):</b>
<b>Numbers of students:</b>
<b>Nature of students (e.g. profile, background, employer):</b>

**Qu.1 How are/were the learning outcomes for the programme determined and agreed?**

Learning provider identifies the needs and sets programme specification



Employers and students identify the needs and set programme specification

**Qu.2 What are the learning outcomes for the programme?**

Programme develops generic knowledge and skills (e.g. management and leadership) applicable to any sector



Programme develops technical knowledge and skills relevant to a specific sector and/or work place

Programme creates new knowledge through research, innovation and reflective practice



Programme transfers existing knowledge

**Qu.3 How is the programme structured and delivered in practice (e.g. structure, nature of learning activities, use of ICT)?**

Learning is work focused (i.e. built around and relates to the current or intended work role of the student)



Learning is work relevant (i.e. built around an occupational or industrial sector in which the student is or intends to be employed)

Learning takes place wholly in the work place



Learning takes place entirely away from the work place

Fixed schedule of delivery, defined 'route ways' through the learning programme



Flexible schedule of delivery, bespoke 'route ways' through the learning programme

**Qu.4 How is the learning assessed in practice (e.g. methods of assessment)?**

Assessment focuses on knowledge and understanding



Assessment focuses on skills (i.e. application and development of skills)

**Qu.5 How are students supported in practice (e.g. mentor support, provision of IAG, use of ICT)?**

Student support is 'programme-centred' and focused on the student's progression and achievement



Student support is 'student-centred' and focused on personal development and career progression

**Qu.6 How is the programme recognised and accredited?**

Programme is wholly recognised by a professional or commercial body



No element of the programme is recognised by a professional or commercial body

Programme is wholly accredited by the learning provider, awarding body or other appropriate body



No element of the programme is accredited by a learning provider, awarding body or other appropriate body

### Qu.7 How is the programme reviewed and evaluated?

The programme is reviewed on a regular basis in order to evaluate the quality of the student experience and improve the way in which the programme is delivered



The programme is reviewed on a regular basis in order to evaluate its impact on individual student development and organisational performance

## Annex 5 – Symposium attendees

The organisations represented at the National Symposium on Wednesday 1 March 2006 were:

Automotive Skills Ltd  
Centre for Higher Education Research and Information, Open University  
Centre for Recording Achievement  
City University  
Construction Industry Council (partner in ConstructionSkills)  
Council for Industry and Higher Education  
Department for Education and Skills  
Energy and Utility Skills  
Federation of Small Businesses  
Financial Services Skills Council  
Foundation Degree Forward  
Getenergy  
Higher Education Academy (York)  
Higher Education Academy Art, Design, Media Subject Centre  
Higher Education Funding Council for England  
Lancaster University  
London Metropolitan University  
Northumbria University  
Open University  
Quality Assurance Agency  
Sector Skills Development Agency  
University of Derby  
University of Leeds  
University of Salford  
University Vocational Awards Council  
Universities UK



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