

## Healthy funding increase will support strong growth

**A** significant 6.4 per cent rise in funding for universities and colleges will provide for overall growth in higher education and meet greater demand in key areas. HEFCE has announced that it has total available funding of £7,137 million for 2007-08.

The cash will support nearly 50,000 extra undergraduate places over the next two years – a 5 per cent growth in numbers. The extra funding is timely as recent figures from UCAS (the universities and colleges admissions body) show rising demand for undergraduate places.

The allocation of additional student places for 2007-08 is the largest in terms of full-time equivalent (FTE) numbers since 1999-2000.

### Key areas

Some 33,000 of the FTE student places are to meet general growth in 2007-08. A further 16,000 FTEs for 2007-08 and 2008-09 are to support growth in key areas such as foundation degrees, courses co-funded with employers, and Lifelong Learning Networks, which enable students following vocational courses to progress into and through higher education.

The grant funding also provides a 2.75 per cent increase in the unit of funding per student for teaching, a 2.7 per cent rise in funding for widening participation and a 5.4 per cent increase in research funding.

Additional funding of £25 million will be allocated for certain very high cost science subjects that are important to society and the economy, but may be vulnerable because of relatively low student

demand. These are physics, chemistry, chemical engineering, and mineral, metallurgy and materials engineering.

HEFCE's Chief Executive, Professor David Eastwood, said: 'This is a good settlement for universities and colleges, providing both stability in terms of their forward planning and a healthy rate of growth.'

*Continued on page 2*



*The University of Worcester (two of its students are pictured above) has enjoyed consistent growth over the last few years and is looking forward to a continuing increase in student numbers next year – it is receiving funding for an extra 636 student places. Other higher education institutions (HEIs) that are enjoying similar growth include the universities of Chester, Kent and Brighton, Manchester Metropolitan University and Kingston University.*

### Inside issue 68

2 Funding analysis

3 Centres for Excellence

4 Financial forecasts

5 Sustaining excellence in HE

7-10 **hefce** UPDATE

11 Student volunteering

12 Physics alliance

13 Foundation degrees

Continued from page 1

‘Applications also show that science subjects of strategic importance are growing in popularity again.

“ **The additional funded numbers we are providing will add to the diversity of the student population and help to increase participation rates in higher education.** ”

‘It is also particularly important for the overall health of the sector that we are able to fund these additional places while maintaining the unit of funding per student.’

Minister for Higher Education, Bill Rammell, said: ‘I am pleased to see funding for additional student numbers and continued support for widening participation which is a priority for the Government.’

Nearly £350 million of the £4,438 million teaching grant has been allotted to widening participation activities. The £1,413 million funding

for research includes £60 million to support institutions undertaking research with business and industry, and £180 million to support high quality research funded by charities. The research funding provides for an average increase of 4.9 per cent for research rated as 4, 5 and 5\* (five star) in the last Research Assessment Exercise, on a like-for-like basis.

### Special funding

A further £738 million is being provided for earmarked capital grants, £449 million for special funding initiatives, and £76 million for other elements of teaching and research grant as yet unallocated.

HEFCE funds 132 higher education institutions and directly funds higher education courses at 143 further education colleges.

*Full details of the announcement showing allocations to individual institutions are given in ‘Recurrent grants for 2007-08’ (HEFCE 2007/06), available on the web at [www.hefce.ac.uk](http://www.hefce.ac.uk) under Publications.*

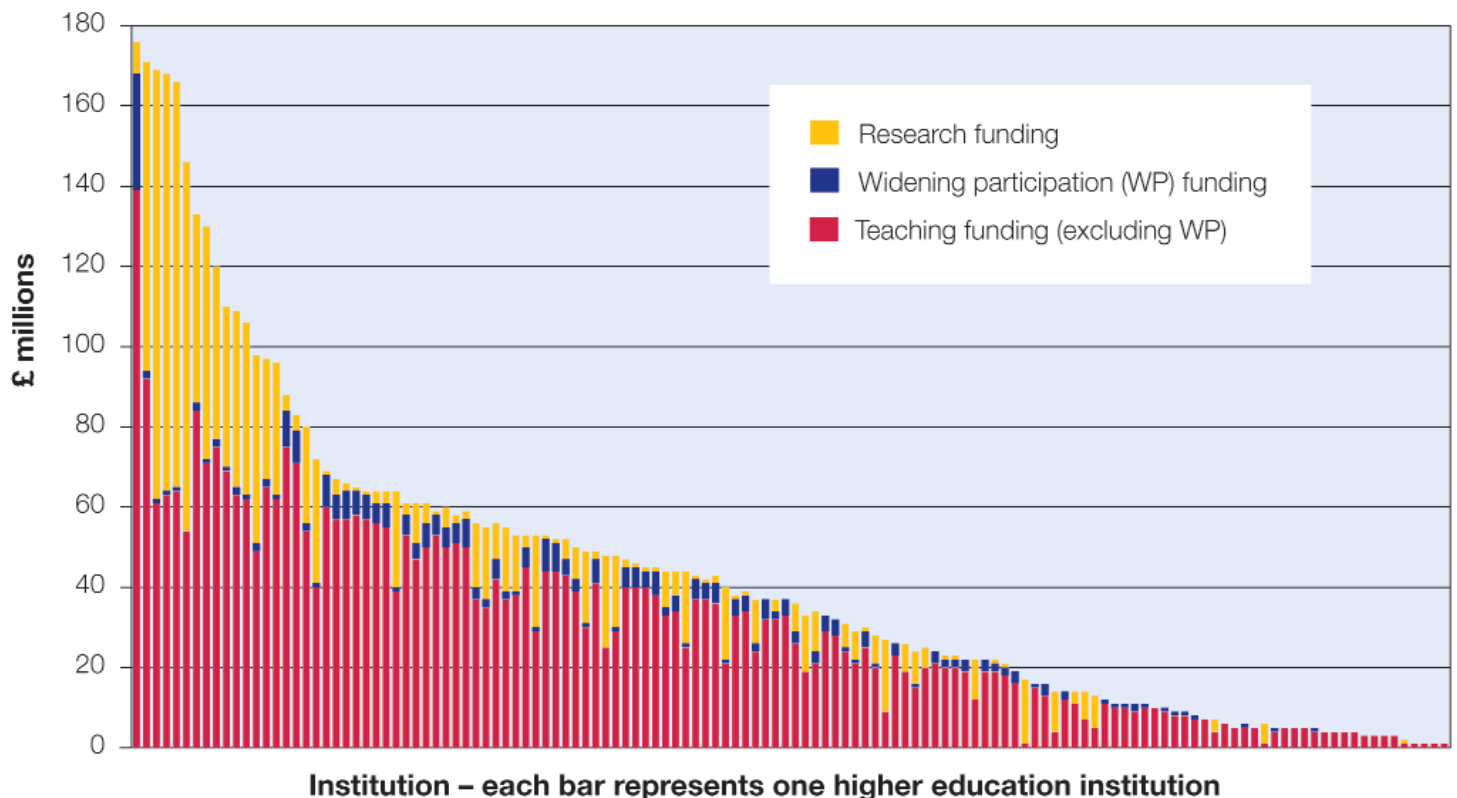
## Regional figures

The allocation of additional student numbers to meet general growth and extra demand in key areas has accounted for above average grant increases in some regions, particularly the East of England and the South West.

### Regional breakdown of total grant and percentage growth

| Regions                | Total grant 2007-08 £s | % change in total grant |
|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| East Midlands          | 457,012,016            | 5.0%                    |
| East of England        | 431,683,467            | 7.7%                    |
| London                 | 1,387,803,906          | 5.8%                    |
| North East             | 327,081,183            | 4.4%                    |
| North West             | 724,838,663            | 4.9%                    |
| South East             | 777,409,980            | 5.5%                    |
| South West             | 471,968,618            | 6.7%                    |
| West Midlands          | 489,415,173            | 4.7%                    |
| Yorkshire & Humberside | 611,144,387            | 4.3%                    |

### Recurrent grants for 2007-08: all higher education institutions



Two years ago HEFCE announced a £315 million funding programme to develop 74 Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs). Council Briefing produced a supplement on the five-year programme last year and featured progress at a cross-section of CETLs. Progress at two more CETLs, Bath Spa University and the University of Liverpool, is featured here.

## Fashion students have designs on excellence

Fashion students Rosie Gibson and Lucy Randlesome's experience of working in a state-of-the-art CETL fashion lab helped them secure work placements with two world famous designers.

The lab, one of six in the Bath Spa University CETL, gives students the chance to use cutting-edge equipment and work with industry specialists to increase their chances of employment. Rosie and Lucy showcased their work to managers at London fashion houses Alexander McQueen and Stella McCartney who were impressed enough to give them the work experience.

They are studying for fashion and textile degrees at the university, which hosts Artswork – the institution's CETL in the creative industries – featuring six 'learning labs' specialising in fashion and textiles,

broadcasting, publishing, interaction design, music and performing arts.

As a result of the placement one of Rosie's designs was featured in McQueen's Paris show. She said:

**“ The fashion show was the highlight of the whole experience and seeing my design on the catwalk was amazing. ”**

Lucy, speaking about her experience, said: 'It has taught me so much about the fashion business, things you can't really learn unless you are there, living it.'

CETL Manager Adam Powell said: 'It's wonderful to see our students such as Rosie and Lucy benefiting directly from CETL funding and demonstrates the real impact of such HEFCE investment.'



Rosie Gibson, left, and Lucy Randlesome in the fashion lab.

Fellow university student Emily Eatwell has also benefited from the Artswork lab in broadcast and creative writing. She wrote a feature helping to promote the work of the fashion students.

*Further information on the CETL is available on the web-site: [www.bathspa.ac.uk/departments/artswork](http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/departments/artswork)*

## Innovative approach helps students tackle medical issues



The newly-opened University of Liverpool CETL in Cedar House.

Medical students are being helped to deal with sensitive professional issues at a new CETL in medical education offering an innovative form of learning.

The University of Liverpool's Developing Professionalism in Medical Studies CETL specialises in a problem-based learning approach.

CETL Director Helen O'Sullivan said: 'There are no formal lectures in problem-based learning. The students are given a set of scenarios and they work through them in groups to improve their knowledge and understanding. The students have regular contact with a member of the academic staff but on a more informal tutorial basis.'

The CETL focuses on the sort of professional and ethical issues which have caused great public concern in recent years following patient record mix-up scandals and the Shipman murders.

The students look at real-life situations and cover such areas as inter-personal relations with patients, leadership skills, communications and clinical records.

The centre builds on Liverpool Medical School's reputation for its problem-based learning approach established 12 years ago.

*Further information on the CETL is available on the web-site: [www.liv.ac.uk/sme/research/cetl.htm](http://www.liv.ac.uk/sme/research/cetl.htm)*

# HEIs borrow more to invest in the future

**B**orrowing in the higher education sector is rising faster than ever before as institutions invest more in building developments and the quality of teaching.

Total borrowing amounted to £3,324 million at 31 July 2006 – £495 million more than on the same date in 2005. The annual increase of 17.5 per cent is significantly greater than the forecast 11.5 per cent. Borrowing now represents 20.7 per cent of higher education institutions’ income – the highest since 1997.

At the same time as borrowing more money, universities and colleges also saw an increase in income of nearly eight per cent between 2005 and 2006, up to £16,087 million.

HEFCE Deputy Chief Executive, Steve Egan, said: ‘Institutions are keen to invest in their future. The additional borrowings are generally being used to improve the infrastructure to ensure the student experience is enhanced.’

The overall financial results for the sector in the 2005-06 fiscal year reveal the sector had an operating surplus of £118.3 million (0.7 per cent of total income). This was in line with 2004-05 and a much better result than the forecast surplus of £35.6 million.

## Caution

Historically, HEIs have tended to forecast cautiously, as shown by the consistently better outturns compared with forecasts. This should be borne in mind when looking at the forecasts for 2006-10 in the graph below.

Despite this caution, the sector overall looks set to be in a financially sustainable position up to the end of the decade. A HEFCE Board paper, ‘Financial health of the HE sector in England’, says some institutions will need to generate better financial results longer term.

The sector, according to the paper, is still reliant on funding council grants being maintained in real terms and other income continuing to grow to remain financially viable.

# RAE: reducing the burden

**A new framework for assessing and funding research post-2008 will significantly reduce the administration burden on higher education institutions.**

HEFCE has set out its plans (in Circular letter 06/2007) for the future of research assessment after 2008 – the main aim is to continue robustly to identify research excellence and provide a stable funding mechanism to support world-class research in the UK.

The first part of the work to develop the framework involves designing new UK-wide indicators of research quality, in consultation with the higher education sector and research users.

Within the framework there will be distinct assessment processes for science-based subjects and for all other subjects. However, these two processes should produce a set of unified quality outcomes, which will be used to inform funding. Expert panels will be involved in producing the quality outcomes.

The new framework will be introduced through a phased timetable, until it fully drives funding from 2014.

The approach for the science-based disciplines will be based on quantitative indicators, including:

- bibliometric indicators of research quality and impact
- external research income
- postgraduate student activity.

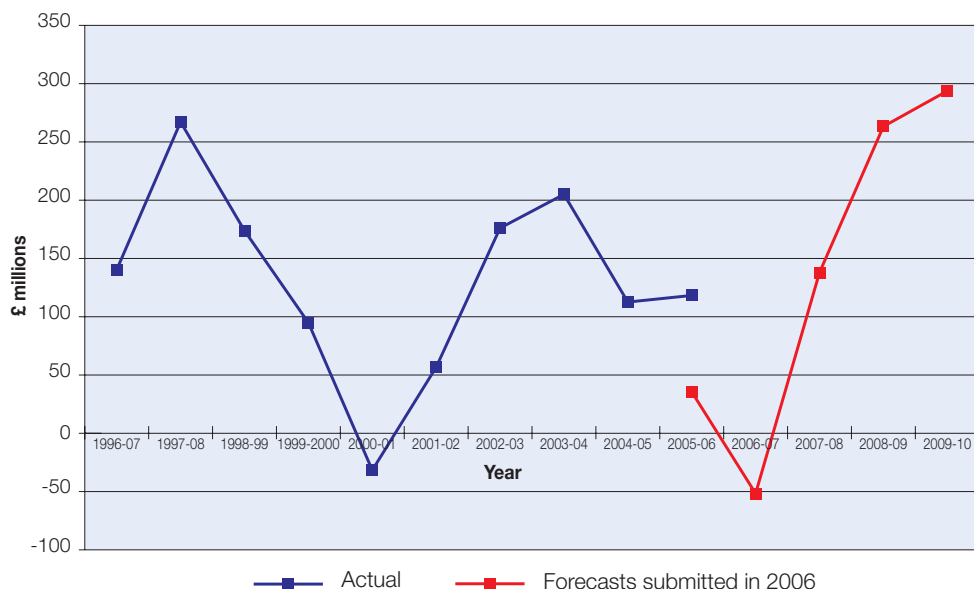
Research quality in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and mathematics and statistics will be assessed through a light touch peer review process, informed by statistical indicators in common with the science-based disciplines.

## 2008 RAE

In the meantime, the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise will go ahead as planned, and the results will continue to inform funding until the new framework is implemented.

## Operating surplus for the sector

Total income less total expenditure before exceptional items



# Investing in leadership to meet the global challenges in HE

Major investments by HEFCE and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) are helping the sector to develop the leadership skills needed to meet the rising global challenges in higher education.

Speaking at a joint HEFCE/LFHE conference on ‘Sustainability in higher education’, the Minister for Higher Education Bill Rammell outlined the scale of those challenges. He said that China and India were producing 1.2 million engineering and science graduates a year – as many as in the US, the European Union and Japan combined. The Leitch Report highlighted that the challenge for HE is to ensure that people’s skills are at the right level by 2020 to maintain the UK’s economic position.

The conference set out to share experiences of achievements by the sector, and to showcase some of the innovative work being supported by HEFCE’s £10 million Leadership Governance and Management Fund and the Leadership Foundation’s Fellowship Programme.

## Funded projects

Funded projects include:

- key performance indicators established by the Committee of University Chairmen, for governors to monitor the overall performance of their institution
- the Higher Education Information Database for Institutions, an interactive database that institutions can use to benchmark their performance against others by comparing, for example, UCAS applications and statistics on estates management
- a guide to promoting biodiversity, produced by the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges, which covers everything



*Singer and television presenter Kim Wilde helps to promote a sensory garden at the University of Hertfordshire. The project is one of many featured in ‘Biodiversity on Campus’, a practical guide produced by the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges. The guide was presented at the conference.*

from making the business case for biodiversity on campus to tips on habitat management

- a project by Bournemouth University to develop and embed global perspectives in the curriculum. This brought together everyone in the university whose work had an international element – from student services staff to course designers.

Building on the progress so far will clearly be a task for leaders in HE, but also for all staff and students. Nicola Dandridge, newly appointed Chief Executive of the Equality Challenge Unit, outlined to conference delegates how the unit will be working with the sector as an agent for change. Its objective is to release the talents of the whole population so that the country can meet the challenges ahead.

*The Leadership, Governance and Management Fund is still open for proposals: for details see the web at [www.hefce.ac.uk](http://www.hefce.ac.uk) under Leadership, Government and Management/LGM Fund. See also page 14.*

## Sharing services offers benefits

An advisory group established by HEFCE has identified the opportunity to further develop shared services in higher education.

The Shared Services Advisory Group, drawn from across the sector, has highlighted the potential to improve the quality and cost effectiveness of services by sharing provision between HEIs in many areas, such as student records systems, financial transaction processing, IT technical support, legal services, buildings maintenance/property management, and library storage projects.

HEFCE will soon be asking HEIs to gauge their demand for these shared services. The Council will also be asking HEIs to express an interest in leading feasibility studies into the potential projects. Funding will be available for the studies and subsequent pilot projects.

In addition, HEFCE’s Leadership, Governance and Management Fund has supported similar work between the University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University, to identify the scope for shared services in Liverpool. This has proved a success and is being widened to include more institutions locally.

The project found that shared services are part of a spectrum which covers activities ranging from collaboration and partnering to outsourcing. There are different risks and benefits attached to each – with the right solution also being determined by the readiness of the institutional climate and context as much as the financial business case.

# ‘Scientists engaging with the public – it’s a two-way street’

**N**ew HEFCE Board member Alastair Balls is Chief Executive of the Centre for Life in Newcastle – a leading centre for genetics and stem cell science. It also popularises science through education programmes, interactive events and exhibitions. He is a former Chief Executive of the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation and currently a Member of Court of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Here he gives some of his views on higher education.

**Q:** Why did you want to join the Board?

**A:** Universities have a huge contribution to make to society – not just to the economy but as bastions of independent thinking in a democratic society – and they are without doubt going through challenging times and under pressure to adapt. Universities are also receiving very large sums of money from the public purse. It is important that there is some kind of rational support and oversight of that process. Outsiders should be involved and not just universities alone. I am very happy to be able to contribute to the process.

**Q:** Are there any particular aspects of higher education that you feel could be improved?

**A:** Every institution has to evolve and change in response to factors outside its control. I think universities are adapting and recognising that with the introduction of significant student fees there is inevitably going to be more of a marketplace in higher education. Universities also recognise they are still receiving £7 billion of funding from the Exchequer. They are responding to that by showing that, given the opportunity, they want to contribute

more to the economy. However, I think they have to learn new business skills. They have to go through a learning process themselves because this is all new territory for them and they don’t necessarily have all the skills it takes to engage fully in business. It has not been their area of specialism.

**Q:** You are obviously interested in science. What are your thoughts about raising the profile of strategic subjects in the sciences?

**A:** I’m not sure that the profile of science does need raising. I think science is coming more and more to the forefront of the public’s consciousness. One area where that is particularly true is climate change, which is making people much more aware of science. Scientists are telling us that by the end of the 21st century temperatures could have gone up by between 3°C and 5°C. This will have an enormous impact on the planet. Stem cell technology is another area. I do think that scientists engaging with the public is very important. It’s not just about scientists offering a more graphic or simpler explanation of their work. It’s also about listening to what people are saying about what scientists are up to – it’s a two-way street.

**Q:** Does higher education need to play a greater part in adding value to the quality of society and the economy?

**A:** Universities already play a major role in sustaining the quality of society but if universities want to become part of the knowledge-based economy they need to learn how to interact with it. They have got to see themselves as social enterprises. They are quite exciting places because they have the potential to let loose a lot of people to search out new areas, without receiving a lot of instruction from the



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top. They just need to learn how to tailor that talent a little more to the needs of society in a business-like way.

**Q:** How important is university autonomy?

**A:** Universities serve a critical role in a pluralistic society and should never drift into becoming subservient to the state. The danger for higher education is that as it receives so much public funding it might become part of the state. It’s all very well to say universities are receiving a smaller proportion of public funding but the pressure is still there and they still need to retain their independence.

## Degree for volunteers offers benefits to community

Students are being given the chance to make a lasting impact on society, as well as turning their volunteering skills into professional qualifications, through a new university degree aimed at committed volunteers.

The University of Central Lancashire is building on its reputation as a leading volunteering and community action centre by offering a degree in active citizenship and volunteer development.

The degree has been co-developed by Ali Melling, the manager of the university's volunteering and community action centre which has engaged 3,000 students and local people in over 200 community activities. Lecturer Wajid Khan, a former award-winning student volunteer, co-developed the degree.

### Amazing skills

Ali said: 'Working with lots of young people in the community I realised that many had no formal qualifications but they had amazing skills. They can work with very intensive tasks, they show organisation and leadership skills. They often have more skills than people with an armful



*A University of Central Lancashire project, aimed at reducing racial and community tensions in East Lancashire, involved taking young people to Londonderry in Northern Ireland to see similar work undertaken there. Three young men, Moh Owais, Zahoora Hussein and Tommy Pickle, who took part in that project are pictured enjoying a linked social event.*

of A-levels but, for a variety of reasons, may not have had the opportunity to develop those skills through mainstream education. We recognise those skills and help volunteers develop them as a pathway to HE through volunteering.

'This course gives students the chance to implement their own community-based programmes during their studies. It will help them professionalise their volunteering and

develop highly transferable skills for other work contexts.'

Many of the centre's volunteering activities have been funded by the Higher Education Active Community Fund. One of these is the highly successful Touch health promotion programme which does outreach work in central Lancashire to reduce the number of sexually transmitted infections and raise awareness of substance misuse.

## Mission of Mercy wins student volunteering award

**A series of documentaries on homelessness by self-taught filmmaker Mercy Liao has helped raise awareness and challenge prejudices, leading to her winning a top student volunteering award.**

The films, on the plight of homeless people on the streets of Chester, gained Mercy a Higher Education Active Community Fund (HEACF) award.

Mercy, who is reading religious studies at University of Chester, said: 'The normal media people only focus on the drink and drugs problems of the homeless but I found out the situation is quite different from what I thought.

There are people who have lost their job or had a breakdown.'

She worked with Chester Aid to the Homeless to make the series of short films to promote the cause of homeless people.

### Mentoring children

Mature student Alan Sleat won a similar award by drawing on his own experience of being blind to help mentor young children suffering from low esteem and lacking confidence.

Alan, with his guide dog Mr Pip, was able to demonstrate how he has overcome huge personal challenges

and used this to encourage primary schoolchildren to believe in themselves.

'The children could see that I had a problem, that I was blind, and talking about that helped build a rapport with them,' said Alan a psychology and criminology graduate at the University of Northampton.



*For details of all the award winners see the HEACF web-site: [www.heacf-awards.ac.uk/](http://www.heacf-awards.ac.uk/)*

## Three universities link up to create world-class physics centre

**T**he scientific talents of three universities in the Midlands are combining to create a centre for world-class physics, underpinned by £3.9 million in HEFCE funding.

The Midlands Physics Alliance will bring together leading academics from the universities of Birmingham, Nottingham and Warwick to undertake large-scale research.

It will also see the formation of a graduate school to attract the best students from across the world and inspire the next generation of scientists.

Alliance partners will build on the international research reputation of the departments, whose achievements include the 2003 Nobel Prize in Medicine awarded to Sir Peter Mansfield, Emeritus Professor of Physics at Nottingham, for the development of magnetic resonance imaging.

HEFCE funding over the next five years will help to create six

lectureships across the three universities and 20 taught postgraduate modules.

The alliance will further HEFCE's aim of developing a framework for collaborative research, particularly in high cost subjects where economies of scale can be gained through effective partnerships.

### Building on strengths

Professor David Eastwood, HEFCE's Chief Executive, said: 'This alliance demonstrates the real advantages that collaboration can bring. It is a means of capitalising on strengths and will pull together key players in the Midlands to create a centre for world-class physics. It also carries forward HEFCE's policy to support subjects of strategic national importance.'

Professor Mike Gunn, Head of the School of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Birmingham, said: 'This initiative will bring together



*Students collaborate in the physics lab at the University of Nottingham.*

the best minds in science, creating key appointments and attracting some of the most promising students from across the world.'

The alliance will see all three universities working with other organisations, including Advantage West Midlands, the Regional Development Agency, to secure further funding.

## Sports enterprise wins accolade

**The spirit of enterprise between a budding sports company and a Midlands university has produced new-style cricket gloves which help protect batsman from serious injury when facing 90mph balls.**

The link-up between Teardrop Technologies – formed by graduates John Wood, Jon Cartwright and Tom Milsom and the University of Wolverhampton – has also won the Lord Stafford regional award for Entrepreneurial Spirit for firms working with HEIs in the West Midlands.

The sports technology students came up with the idea of pumping air into cricket gloves to give greater cushioning protection while they were studying at the university.

They went on to develop the idea and set up their Walsall-based company

with help from Steve Moore, the Enterprise Development Consultant at the university's Institution for Innovation and Enterprise.

### More Lord Stafford awards

Ederyn Williams of the University of Warwick was awarded the title of West Midlands Knowledge Transfer Champion. He was responsible for the launch of Warwick Ventures which has secured £8 million funding from HEFCE and resulted in the spin-out of more than 30 companies.

The Impact through Innovation award was secured by Magnecell – a company spun out from Keele University where it is based. The company has developed an innovative bioreactor – a vessel in which a chemical process is carried out.



*Managing director John Wood shows off the company's new-style cricket gloves.*

The Achievement in Innovation award was won by GSF of Oswestry, which worked with the University of Wolverhampton to develop a pioneering 'slide and tilt' mechanism which can be used for fire and rescue vehicles to increase their load capacity.

## The sky's no limit for RAF staff

**R**AF personnel are now able to study for foundation degrees while working, in a new collaboration between four universities. The two foundation degrees, in business, and leadership and management, give staff the chance to gain qualifications without interrupting their careers.

Even if staff are posted in remote places or on deployment they can still continue with the courses, which are run by the Open University, Staffordshire University, the University of Chester and the University of Derby.

Squadron Leader David Freak, Accreditation Staff Officer for the RAF Foundation Degree Consortium said: 'Not only will the degrees develop knowledge, understanding and skills directly relevant to an RAF career, but they are also transferable to civilian employment when staff finally leave the service.'

### Flexible

Both degrees offer flexible starting dates and a range of learning styles, from distance learning to face-to-face lectures delivered at RAF bases, designed to meet the learner's preference. Students can gain credits for work experience and can select modules from any member of the consortium to 'build' the degree.

The RAF collaboration is a successful example of establishing foundation

degrees in large companies or organisations (another example is the accompanying picture case study).

Foundation degrees were introduced six years ago to give people the skills that employers need. They are now available nationwide, with almost 61,000 students in 2006-07.

HEFCE recently published a report on foundation degrees which describes the key characteristics of the courses and students (HEFCE 2007/03). It covers the trends in student numbers, the characteristics of programmes, attributes of students, students' feedback, progression and qualification rates, employment outcomes, and support from employers.

### Challenges

The challenge of setting up foundation degrees with small and medium-sized businesses is just one of the issues addressed in two forthcoming research and evaluation reports commissioned by HEFCE.

The reports 'Sustainable foundation degrees: a case study of Northamptonshire' and 'Demand for foundation degrees and engaging employers in the East Midlands' offer a regional perspective on foundation degree provision and the aim of increasing uptake among local employers.

*All of these reports will be available on the HEFCE website under Publications shortly.*



### Keeping competitive

The benefits to business that involvement in foundation degree course design and delivery can bring are amply demonstrated by Young's Bluecrest Seafood based in Grimsby. As a result of its foundation degree collaboration through Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education and Sheffield Hallam University, Young's was able to double the volume of meals produced, save £100,000 from better efficiency in fish finger production, reduce rejects to the value of £50,000 and cut system breakdowns by 90 per cent. Stuart Baker (pictured) is one of the Young's foundation degree graduates in food manufacturing management.

## Good practice guide for HE in FE colleges

A guide to creating better relationships between HEIs and their partner further education colleges (FECs) providing higher education courses, is being developed by a new joint body representing the partners.

The Association for Collaborative Provision of Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE) won the contract from the Higher Education Academy. The guide will cover arrangements where an FEC teaches

higher education courses that are funded by HEFCE – but indirectly through an HEI rather than grants being paid straight to the college.

In support of the Council consultation on higher education in further education colleges (HEFCE 2006/48), the association convened a series of meetings in all nine regions, which attracted widespread interest. The responses have been fed back to HEFCE.

The association, which evolved from a number of forerunner bodies, was launched at a meeting in October last year.

Professor Chris Green, chair of the association, said that it will represent the views of its members in talks with other bodies and will provide advice for members on issues of mutual concern, in addition to promoting good practice.

# Praise for pump-priming leadership funding in HE

**A** consultant's evaluation has found that HEFCE investment has made a significant contribution to improving leadership, governance and management (LGM) practice in higher education.

The report, by Oakleigh Consulting Limited, argues that the majority of LGM and good management practice projects would never have got off the ground without HEFCE funding. It goes on to say that the investment has stimulated innovation, risk-taking and practical improvements in management practice.

The Council commissioned Oakleigh to evaluate the management and impact of its £10 million LGM Fund set up in 2004 to run for three years. Oakleigh also found that HEFCE could more actively promote the LGM Fund, such as including the involvement of more of the sector's professional bodies.

## How the Fund has had an impact

According to the report the Fund has helped:

- develop more innovative thinking in LGM across the sector
- improve governance arrangements
- improve estate management practice
- establish more effective management of contract research staff
- establish more informed and responsive approaches to risk.

The report recommends that a successor scheme should be instigated when the funding runs out in July of this year. Subsequently, the HEFCE Board has agreed to give the LGM Fund £10 million for a further three years to 2009-10.

*The full report will be published on the HEFCE web-site shortly.*

## Exploring ethnic differences in attainment

A project is to explore why some minority ethnic students do not attain the same proportion of high degree classifications as white students.

The attainment gap was revealed in a recent Department of Education and Skills (DfES) research paper. HEFCE and the DfES have now commissioned the Higher Education Academy to follow up the research by examining the original data and looking into new areas.

The research paper 'Ethnicity and Degree Attainment' explains that once certain factors have been taken into account there is still a gap in achievement, which remains the largest for Black Caribbean, Black African and Chinese students.

*The report 'Ethnicity and Degree Attainment' is available from the DfES web-site: [www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway).*

## Project encourages Muslim women to study for degrees

**The University of Bolton is reporting positive results from a project aimed at increasing the numbers of people from ethnic communities studying in higher education.**

The university's Enlighten project has encouraged women from Bolton's large Muslim community to take up degree studies. Many of them have family backgrounds where university education is not typical.

In the last few years the project has given educational advice to 350 Asian women and 35 of these have gone on to university.

A key to the project's success has been the part-time employment of three project workers, Yasmin Hussain, Rehana Makkan and Sabiha Makkan, who all live and work in the Muslim community. Yasmin speaks Urdu and Punjabi while Rehana speaks Gujarati.

### Gaining trust

Yasmin explained: 'I live and study in the local community which goes a long way to gaining women's trust. Local Asian women may walk past the university but they do not think of it as being a welcoming community where there is a place for them.'



*Enlighten colleagues Rehan Makkan, Sabiha Makkan, and Yasmin Hussain in the foreground with former colleague Susan Ford.*

The women go out into the community and promote the benefits of education and give advice. They also hold workshops and awareness events.

The Board meeting was preceded by an 'Awayday' to discuss high level issues such as the skills agenda.

Several items on the Board agenda are covered elsewhere in Council Briefing. The agenda included the following.

### **Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)**

The Board approved the HEFCE contribution of £34.48 million to the JISC budget for 2007-08. The funding mainly supports the provision of network services, through the United Kingdom Education and Research Networking Association (UKERNA), and JISC services and projects.

### **Open access to research publications**

The Board noted the growing interest in the academic community in using the internet to disseminate research and confirmed its policy that all research supported by HEFCE funding should be widely and freely accessible. HEFCE will work with higher education institutions, JISC and the Research Councils to improve the way publicly funded research is disseminated.

### **Next meeting**

The next meeting of the HEFCE Board will be on 18 April.

### **Board papers on the web**

HEFCE Board papers and minutes are available on the HEFCE web-site under About us/HEFCE's Board.

### **Board membership and committees**

Board and committee members are listed on the HEFCE web-site under About us.

## **Review of research network**

**HEFCE has commissioned an evaluation of the Research Information Network, which leads and co-ordinates the provision of research information in higher education in the UK.**

The network was set up by the UK funding bodies, national libraries and the Research Councils in 2005 for a three-year term until June 2008, with total funding of around £3 million.

The review, later this year, will also analyse the network's future needs and priorities. Consultants Alan Brickwood and Associates Limited will undertake the independent evaluation.

The researchers will be consulting widely but are also inviting any interested parties to send their views on the Research Information Network to: [alan@alanbrickwood.co.uk](mailto:alan@alanbrickwood.co.uk).

## **Tributes paid to research leader**

**Tributes have been paid to former HEFCE Board member Sir Gareth Roberts, who died recently aged 66.**

Sir Gareth was President of Wolfson College, Oxford, and was appointed to the HEFCE Board in 1997 when he was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sheffield. He chaired the Board's Research Advisory Committee and led the funding councils' review of the Research Assessment Exercise and the Treasury review on the supply of people with science and engineering skills.

He was also President of the Science Council and was knighted for his services to higher education in 1997.

HEFCE Board Chairman David Young paid tribute to Sir Gareth, saying: 'Gareth was a hugely valued member of the HEFCE Board on which he served for the unusually long period of seven years. His contributions carried weight and insight but were delivered with a lightness of touch and humour. He still had much to offer the HE sector and will be greatly missed.'



## Major archives to go online in £12 million project

Students will find it easier to access archives of national importance online following a further £12 million investment by the English and Welsh funding councils in digitising major resources of scholarly material.

The new digitisation projects – managed by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) will capture a wide variety of aspects of British life, from Cabinet papers to First World War poetry, radio news to East End music hall and political cartoons. The archives to be digitised are in a wide range of media including sound, film, pictures, journals, newspapers, maps and cartoons.

The 16 projects represent a wide range of rich and vivid perspectives covering five centuries of history, culture and landscape from the UK and beyond.

Some 60 organisations are involved in the projects offering a mixture of archive content and technical support. The organisations include the British Film Institute, the BBC, ITN, the British Library, the Bodleian Library and nearly 30 universities.

### Leading the way

Professor David Eastwood, HEFCE's Chief Executive, said: 'The JISC digitisation programme has been leading the way in making more widely available resources which are either inaccessible or hard to access, something that is quietly but rapidly transforming education and research in this country. I look forward to seeing the results of these projects in the coming years and the uses to which these important resources will be put.'

The 16 projects will join six similar ones funded since 2004 which have

already been delivering wider access to archives which, in some cases, are fragile and unique.



This painting, 'The Last of England' by Ford Madox Brown, 1891, is part of the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery Collection and will be made available online.

Further information is available at: [www.jisc.ac.uk/digitisation\\_home.html](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/digitisation_home.html)

## Promoting sustainable development

A research programme is underway as part of HEFCE's strategic review of sustainable development in higher education.

HEFCE has commissioned research by a consortium, led by the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) at the University of Westminster, to establish a baseline against which to measure progress in sustainable development and to learn from institutions' experiences of embedding sustainable development.

The consortium also includes the Centre for Research in Education and the Environment at the University of Bath and PA Consulting.

### Scoping study

The research is based on the findings of a scoping study undertaken last year and will mainly look at existing data although higher education institutions have also had an opportunity to input information.

### Bridging the gap

Promoting sustainable development across the higher and further education sector will be the main focus of a two-day conference, 'Bridging the Gap – How Sustainability Links Campus, Community and Curriculum', being organised by the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC).

One of the main speakers will be Bill Rammell, Minister for Higher

Education, while many environmental organisations and higher education policy specialists will be contributing to workshops. The conference is being held at Durham University on 18-19 April.

For more information contact Fiona Goodwin at the EAUC: [fgoodwin@eauc.org.uk](mailto:fgoodwin@eauc.org.uk)

For more information on the HEFCE research contact Kate McGeevor at PSI, [k.mcgeevor@psi.org.uk](mailto:k.mcgeevor@psi.org.uk), or Joanna Simpson at HEFCE, [j.simpson@hefce.ac.uk](mailto:j.simpson@hefce.ac.uk).

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