

HEFCE 01/40

June

Report

Foundation degrees: report on funded projects

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To Heads of HEFCE-funded higher education institutions
Heads of HEFCE-funded further education colleges
Heads of non-HEFCE funded further education colleges

Of interest to those responsible for Academic and strategic planning; recruitment and participation; HE and FE partnerships; learning and teaching; links with industry

Reference 01/40

Publication date June 2001

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Executive summary

Purpose

1. This publication provides details of development funds and additional student numbers (ASNs) allocated to support the introduction of foundation degrees in 2001-02. It includes summaries of the 40 prototype foundation degree programmes, and sources of further information.

Key points

2. In November 2000 we allocated £5,186,805 of development funds and 2,123 ASNs to 21 consortia to develop and deliver 40 prototype foundation degree programmes from 2001-02. In February 2001 we allocated a further 1,642 ASNs to 13 institutions to deliver a further 28 programmes from 2001-02.

3. The development and launch of foundation degrees will be aided by a support team, and by a national marketing and promotional campaign.

Action required

4. No action is required. This report is for information only.

Background

5. Plans to introduce foundation degrees were announced by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment in February 2000. Also in February 2000, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) published a consultation document which proposed the nature of, and funding arrangements for, foundation degrees. In March 2001, the Foundation Degree Group was established, representing a range of key stakeholders. It considered responses to the consultation, and provided advice to the DfEE and the HEFCE on the core features and funding arrangements for foundation degrees.
6. In July 2000, we published the 'Foundation degree prospectus' (HEFCE 00/27), which set out the policy aims, core features, and funding arrangements for foundation degrees.
7. The policy aims of foundation degrees are:
 - a. To address shortages of intermediate level skills in the national and regional economies.
 - b. To enhance students' employability.
 - c. To widen participation in higher education and contribute to lifelong learning.
 - d. To rationalise and enhance the quality of provision below honours degree level.
8. The core features of foundation degrees are designed to achieve these policy aims, and to provide a common framework for the new qualification.
9. HEFCE 00/27 invited higher education institutions (HEIs) and their consortia partners to bid for funds to develop and deliver prototype foundation degree programmes. It also outlined the funding options for higher education providers that wished to provide foundation degrees but did not succeed in securing prototype funds.

Prototype foundation degrees

10. In October 2000, we received 56 bids, requesting a total of £16.5 million in development funds and 7,800 additional student numbers (ASNs). These bids were assessed by the Foundation Degree Assessment Panel, against the criteria outlined in paragraph 80 of HEFCE 00/27. Membership of the panel was drawn from the Foundation Degree Group and the Council's ASN Advisory Group (see Annex A).
11. Bids which scored highest against the full set of criteria were selected. These were then reviewed as a whole, and the panel was satisfied that they represented an adequate regional distribution, and spread of subjects and types of consortia.
12. Twenty-one consortia comprising 35 HEIs and 68 further education colleges (FECs) were awarded £5,186,805 to design and develop 40 prototype programmes. These funds have been allocated for an 18-month period. The successful consortia were also allocated 1,406 part-time and 717 full-time ASNs for 2001-02. These additional numbers will be matched for 2002-03.

13. Summaries of the prototype programmes and their funding allocations are provided at Annex B.

14. In February 2001, the DfEE made available an additional £500,000 to be allocated to the prototype consortia to promote their foundation degree courses. Allocations of these marketing funds are identified separately in the summaries.

ASN-funded foundation degrees

15. Institutions were also able to bid for ASNs for foundation degree places for 2001-02, through the ASN competition described in 'Additional student places and funds 2001-02' (HEFCE 00/39). Institutions could either submit a bid directly for ASNs or, if their foundation degree prototype bid had been unsuccessful, could transfer that bid to the ASN competition.

16. Nineteen unsuccessful prototype bids were transferred to the ASN competition, and the assessments by the Foundation Degree Assessment Panel were carried through.

17. Fifteen further bids for ASNs for foundation degree places were submitted directly to the ASN competition in October 2000. These were assessed against the same criteria as the prototype bids, by members of the ASN Advisory Group who had also been members of the Foundation Degree Assessment Panel.

18. Of these 34 institutions, 13 have been awarded and have accepted additional funded places to deliver 28 foundation degree programmes in 2001-02. These are listed at Annex C. Some institutions have deferred their allocations of ASNs for foundation degree places until 2002-03.

Sources of further information

Support team

19. In March 2001, we commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to manage a support team for the foundation degree initiative. From April 2001 to October 2002 the team will help institutions and consortia to develop and introduce foundation degrees, through:

- offering advice and support on an individual basis to prototype and ASN-funded consortia
- providing generic advice and guidance on the web
- keeping the sector informed about national developments, including policy developments
- gathering and disseminating information about emerging foundation degree models and practices
- facilitating a web-based network for all practitioners and other interested parties

- convening conferences and workshops
- providing feedback to the Council, the DfEE and the Foundation Degree Group.

20. Further information and contact details are available on the team's web-site, www.foundationdegree.pwcglobal.com. New users will need to register to access the web-site: this is to monitor the site's usage, and in no way restricts access.

FEC development officer for foundation degrees

21. The Association of Colleges has appointed a foundation degree development officer, who works alongside the support team, to support FE colleges in becoming involved in providing high quality foundation degrees. Further information is on the support team's web-site. Her contact details are:

Margaret Lawson
tel 01270 654648
e-mail M-LAWSON@s-cheshire.ac.uk

National marketing and promotion

22. The DfEE is running a national promotional campaign for foundation degrees, and has established a web-site, www.foundationdegree.org.uk. The site aims to provide general information for potential students, employers and higher and further education providers, as well as a database of foundation degree courses. For details on the campaign, or to add details of courses to the web-site, contact:

Jane Austick, DfEE
tel 0114 259 4811
e-mail foundation.degree@dfee.gov.uk

23. LearnDirect (tel 0800 100 900) also provides advice and information about foundation degree courses to potential students.