

April 2003/15
Good practice

This report is for information and
guidance

This document is aimed at lecturers and tutors providing higher education courses in further education colleges. It contains good practice guidance, with examples from over 50 institutions, information requested by colleges, and suggestions. A companion volume for senior managers (HEFCE 2003/16) addresses policy issues and prospects for HE in FE colleges.

Supporting higher education in further education colleges

A guide for tutors and lecturers

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Introduction: using the materials

This document and additional materials on the web aim to meet the needs of colleges providing higher education, who identified areas in which they would welcome good practice guidance. Further education colleges (FECs) do not always acknowledge what they do as 'good practice', and can be reticent about using the term. The definition of good practice for these materials is examples that have worked well in FECs with higher education provision.

The topics were identified through a questionnaire by the University of Warwick with FECs that receive money from HEFCE's Development Fund for Learning and Teaching, and through feedback from conferences and seminars. Their relevance will depend on the range and size of a college's provision, the nature of its partnerships, and the length of experience that individuals have of HE in FE. This is a very diverse sector in which one size definitely does not fit all.

Not all the materials will be of equal use to all colleges, but we hope some will be. We also believe they will be useful to higher education institutions (HEIs) to inform and develop their partnerships with FECs.

The good practice guidance has been produced at a time of rapid change, but we believe that the principles will still be relevant.

The materials cover:

- guidance (with practical examples from over 40 FECs and 12 HEIs)
- information (requested by some colleges)
- suggestions.

This guide and additional materials – including longer documents, templates and proforma submitted by colleges – are on the HEFCE web-site under 'Publications', HEFCE 2003/15. They can be downloaded and customised to make them most useful for each college's circumstances and provision. These materials are listed in Annex C, and are referred to in the text in **bold**.

Because colleges are likely to use the materials in an order that suits them, they may find some repetition. The materials do not need to be read in sequence. Cross-references to other sections of the guide are also shown in **bold**.

There has been extensive consultation about the draft materials through:

- the original questionnaire
- three conferences for senior managers in the summer of 2002
- regional seminars in all nine English regions, which included delegates from FECs and HEIs – lecturers, student support staff, librarians, careers staff, disability officers – and organisations such as the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) and the Association of Colleges
- comments from more than 500 people.

1 The context for higher education in further education

- 1.1 Background to HE in FE
- 1.2 Distinctiveness of HE in FE
- 1.3 Some comparisons between FECs and HEIs
- 1.4 Environment for higher education in a further education college
- 1.5 Writing strategies for higher education

1.1 Background to HE in FE

Colleges are becoming used to being told that their role is pivotal in:

- widening participation
- offering flexible higher education for students who are employed
- offering delivery modes that suit non-traditional learners
- offering a progression route to FE students who may prefer a familiar college environment
- attracting local students who might not otherwise consider higher education
- developing foundation degrees in partnerships that include employers.

These messages have most recently been reinforced in the Government's White Paper, 'The future of higher education' (January 2003). There is no doubt that colleges carry out these roles effectively and with enormous amounts of enthusiasm and commitment – to their students, their colleagues and their subjects.

However, it is not surprising that some colleges have been disheartened by some of the press coverage about HE provision in FECs. Fortunately, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has reviewed its earlier statements about concerns over quality in FECs. While there have been some examples of poor quality, the majority of QAA subject reviews of HE in FE have identified far more strengths than weaknesses.

Colleges operate in a world of contradictions.

Most HE provision (prescribed HE) is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), which provides funding directly – or indirectly through franchise or consortia arrangements – to some 300 FECs. However, this is not its major area of responsibility.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds higher level education and training and a raft of professional qualifications and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels four and five. This non-prescribed higher education is subject to different requirements from Higher National Diplomas and Certificates (HNDs, HNCs), foundation degrees and other undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, particularly in terms of data collection and quality assurance. So the LSC does not take full responsibility for prescribed HE in FE either.

Colleges are encouraged to develop their HE provision (as long as it is part of a critical mass) and to widen participation by developing new courses for new students. However, policy decisions that allow all HE providers to grow have meant that HEIs have been able to offer more attractive degree course places to many students who had accepted places on HNDs.

The only way colleges can increase their provision is by bidding to HEFCE for additional student numbers. However, this system, designed for institutions with large numbers, may not always appear sympathetic to the needs of institutions with smaller numbers.

So why do colleges offer HE provision?

1.2 Distinctiveness of HE in FE

Colleges believe that they offer something special to students. The student experience in an FEC is different from that in an HEI. FE staff believe that they can offer a student the following.

Personal help and interviews pre-entry

Because there are not as many applicants for each place in an FEC, more individual attention can be offered, including during the Clearing period.

A suitable programme close to home

Local employers know the college and release their staff for part-time study; not having to travel is an advantage for some.

Relevant curricula for new kinds of learners

Most HE courses in FE are vocational, frequently developed to meet local needs jointly with employers, using innovative approaches.

Regular access to friendly, supportive staff

In many cases the HE student has progressed through the FE institution and is well known to the staff, although clear efforts must then be made to offer the step from FE to HE.

Small teaching groups

If students are recruited from under-represented groups, small groups give a more supportive environment to build their confidence.

Plenty of teaching support, especially in the first year

It is common for HND students to have 15-18 contact hours a week, facilitating the gradual transition to more independent learning.

Entitlement to regular personal tutorials

It is common practice for students to have individual tutorials several times a year in addition to group tutorials for careers advice, skills development and portfolio building. Because the group size is manageable, tutors get to know their students very well.

Flexible timetabling

Many FECs timetable to suit part-time or mature students' hours, or to allow students to hold part-time or full-time jobs. The scale of the provision makes this possible.

Staff with industrial experience as well as academic qualifications

The custom of using part-time staff in colleges enables subject teams to recruit practitioners to ensure course content is up-to-date.

Good work experience and industrial contacts

Most colleges offer a range of work placements, work experience and live briefs set by industry. Since a great deal of HE provision in FECs is vocational, industry contact is embedded within the curriculum.

Continuing flexible access to specialist facilities and equipment

Students frequently return to their colleges after they have left to use specialist equipment.

Specialist guidance workers and counsellors

Students have access to specialist support staff on a flexible basis.

Support for learning

Most colleges make it easy for students to get learning support in learning/study skills or specific areas such as dyslexia and using English as a second language (ESOL). There can be some difficulty identifying funding for this work, which is usually supported by the LSC, but most colleges provide accessible learning support.

Good links with HEIs to offer progression routes

Increasingly, progression routes are being agreed to offer 2+1 or 2+2 progression, or joint curriculum development with some tuition in the HEI.

Waltham Forest College (student)

Although I had worked in an office since leaving school I gave up my job to look after my baby son André. In order to ease myself back into the employment market whilst at the same time considering a total career change, I decided to look at what was available for me locally. Initially I came to Waltham Forest College as an evening student at the age of 25. Six years later, having gained a whole range of qualifications including an HND in Fashion, I am now working full-time for David Howard which is a company that supplies menswear to major high street retailers. The college and company have been really great in giving me yet another opportunity to continue studying on a day release basis as a student teacher and gaining experience supporting students in the evening.

Arden School of Theatre, City College Manchester (student)

Having worked since leaving school at 18, the prospect of 'going to college' at the age of 40 was a little daunting. I had been to the Arden School of Theatre for an audition some seven months earlier and was aware that Acting Studies was one of two degree courses on a site shared by numerous further education and specialist HND courses. Although utilitarian and a little shabby, Arden was a fascinating opportunity to rub shoulders with an eclectic mix of musicians (jazz, rock, electronic), fine artists, graphic designers, jewellers, young performers, people with special needs, and many others. It meant that I was not forced to spend every moment with other actors! And the range of courses meant that all age groups were represented. 'Maturity' did not result in my feeling out of place. This was in sharp contrast to my reaction on visiting a local university's Theatre School in a building used exclusively by actors and a few filmmakers. I considered it a retreat by comparison. Give me an Arden anytime!

Stockport College of Further and Higher Education (member of staff)

Nothing can beat the 'buzz' of an FE college, and HE students form an important part of the 'mixed economy' ethos. I would suggest that the 'HE experience' can mean many different things and that, over the next few years, the HEI experience will only be one such example – and not necessarily the best.

Many of these considerable strengths are connected with the more manageable scale of the provision, and the mix of HE and FE within one institution. However, they must be offset against some of the contradictory policies and issues affecting the student experience. These include:

- financial support for students, especially those on HNCs, who are not eligible for most support systems
- unsuitable accommodation for students because of the lack of capital funding for HE in FE – especially for lecture theatres and dedicated HE social or study areas
- some inadequate learning resources.

There are also issues that largely affect staff but impact on students (see **Section 8**):

- the pressures on staff teaching substantial numbers of hours
- the lack of time for development, scholarly activity and professional updating
- the lack of time to carry out all the administration, monitoring and evaluation that should be taking place as a matter of course
- meeting the requirements of different quality systems
- lack of coherence in data collection for HE and FE.

1.3 Some comparisons between FECs and HEIs

Understanding FECs

There is a wide range of management structures in FECs and a demanding number of validating/awarding bodies to deal with.

HE provision in FE, especially sub-degree work, is often in specific vocational areas where the college has developed 'niche' provision. Vocational programmes of longstanding may have initially been developed and funded quite independently of the HE sector.

Many FECs have built strong links with HEIs, and these need to be pursued with energy and consolidated. They can also be somewhat dependent on their relationship with an HEI if they wish to develop a foundation degree. Colleges with exclusively Edexcel provision might not have an HE partner.

HE teaching groups will probably be smaller in FE, but high teaching loads are standard. In most cases, staff teaching HE will be teaching across a wide range of levels.

Staff deal with a multiplicity of awarding bodies and quality assurance systems and workload is high, so engagement in scholarly activity may be limited by the pressures of time.

Managers at a senior level within the college structure, responsible for the academic and administrative co-ordination, have an important role to play. The scale of the provision usually determines whether there is an HE manager.

Understanding HEIs

HEIs are autonomous organisations, most with their own degree-awarding powers, and distinctive and individual styles of operation. Faculties are frequently autonomous in the partnerships they develop.

Schools, departments or faculties in HE often focus on the development of knowledge and learning within a particular discipline or clusters of disciplines. However, there is a growing emphasis on interdisciplinarity and enterprise, with more flexible choices.

HEIs differ in the extent to which they view FE as a key external partner, and have different levels of understanding of the FE sector

Lecturing staff in HEIs are likely to have lower teaching loads than FE staff, but will frequently have responsibility for the academic achievement of large cohorts of students.

Many HEIs are making efforts to co-ordinate activity with other HEIs and FECs, a move which will be strengthened by the joint HEFCE/LSC initiative, Partnerships for Progression.

1.4 Environment for higher education in a further education college

Some questions identified by colleges include:

- how do you create/cultivate an HE environment?
- how effectively can staff undertake action research and scholarly activity?
- how can FECs best develop students' higher level skills?

Many of the answers depend on the scale of HE provision in the college.

Colleges submitted strategy statements to HEFCE as part of phase two of its Development Fund for Learning and Teaching. An examination of a sample of these statements identified the following

components as important in creating an environment for higher education. This list is an aggregation of features rather than a consensus.

A distinctive experience for students:

- a separate central administrative, admissions and guidance system for HE students
- an HE open day
- an HE graduation/awards ceremony
- clear progression routes.

Curriculum:

- commitment to vocationally focused educational opportunities
- course design in partnership with professional bodies and industrial representatives, with work placement opportunities
- emphasis on transferable skills and employability.

Appropriate staff:

- an HE co-ordinator/manager
- teaching staff with appropriate qualifications
- staff to support learning, for example study and research skills, disabled students, ESOL
- admissions and guidance staff with relevant knowledge
- librarian with relevant experience.

Dedicated activities for staff teaching HE:

- timetabling to allow for preparation and scholarly activity
- specific staff development for staff teaching HE
- staff access to local HEI libraries
- opportunities for research and professional updating
- development of partnerships with HEIs and employers.

Learning resources:

- high quality dedicated learning environment for HE students
- good facilities for study and on-line course support.

Quality systems (some differentiated from FE):

- rigorous assessment of the HE provision
- preparation for QAA reviews
- HE documentation (such as end of module feedback questionnaires, and annual course reviews)
- HE academic/assessment regulations
- HE boards of studies
- HE assessment/examination boards.

Accommodation:

- designated base rooms for HE
- upgraded accommodation
- social and communal areas
- residential accommodation for students
- a lecture room for joint delivery of shared core lectures to HE students on different courses.

Some colleges have chosen to establish an HE Centre or are working towards one.

Norwich City College

With over 1,500 HE enrolments, Norwich City College is the largest regional provider of HE in FE and the largest regional partner of Anglia Polytechnic University. The development of an HE faculty is fundamental to the goals of the college in developing a specific HE ethos and environment. The aim is to enable HE students to relate to the faculty as the focus of their time at the college.

City of Sunderland College

The HE provision at the college was originally fairly evenly split across all of its four sites. This was largely a reflection of where provision was based in the two city colleges prior to merger.

In the last three years, the HE provision has been concentrated in one centre, Shiney Row. This has created a critical mass of HE students, maximising peer identity and peer support, and allowing for the centralisation of HE study materials and support systems. However, Shiney Row Campus is still an active FE centre, so the valuable interaction between HE and FE staff and students, which the college believes to be important in an FE institution, can be maintained.

Some colleges identify a need for a certain amount of separation, frequently because their HE students ask for it. This often reflects the scale of the provision. Other colleges consciously decide to integrate their HE and FE provision.

Cornwall College

In general our philosophy is to provide at least some separation between FE and HE provision. The college has agonised over this for a long time. Many people feel that there is merit in integrating FE and HE, especially as the boundaries between the two become less distinct. Others point to the different expectations in terms of physical resources, staffing workloads and term dates. In the end, our decision to separate has been largely driven by the students themselves. They expect to experience something different. This is especially true for those progressing internally. As they become HE students, they want to make the physical and mental progression that is associated with a change of environment and staff.

Bridgwater College

Our strategy will be to integrate our HE provision within the broader range of college activity. The volume of HE is unlikely to be such that separate HE facilities with separate HE staff would ever be a viable option. We also believe that there are benefits which result from the interaction of HE and FE staff and students.

We do, however, wish to create opportunities for HE students to provide each other with peer support and to meet in both a study and a social context.

Swindon College

We want to develop a distinct brand image for HE within the college. This brand image may in its development be differentiated to meet the different markets for full-time and part-time HE. To this end we want to develop an HE environment for our HE students. However, this has to be tempered by a continual awareness that the HE exists within an FE environment and that, in particular, we must develop an HE culture for these students without discriminating against FE students.

1.5 Writing strategies for higher education

HEFCE introduced the Development Fund for Learning and Teaching (DFLT) in 2000 as a way of supporting further education colleges which were not eligible for the special funding for teaching and learning available to HEIs (see HEFCE 00/09). Colleges with more than 100 full-time equivalent (FTE) higher education students were allocated funding, but all colleges, whatever the size, were required to provide a strategy statement for their higher education provision.

A second phase of the DFLT in April 2002 allocated increased funding (HEFCE 02/02). This time the strategy statements showed a good deal of progress in developing quality systems, to enhance learning and teaching and resources for higher education provision. The strategy statements were more focused, clearer about their sense of purpose and better able to set targets with measurable outcomes.

The best strategy statements are:

- developed and owned by the staff who will implement the objectives
- linked to the college strategic plan
- approved, monitored and supported by senior management
- clear in the purpose and direction for the HE provision
- precisely and concisely expressed
- those with aims underpinned by objectives, expressed as specific actions
- regularly reviewed
- clear about the responsibility for implementation and monitoring.

North Tyneside College (190 FTEs)

The key strategic aims for HE at North Tyneside College include:

- enhance the learning and teaching experience for HE students
- widen participation by developing internal support mechanisms and progression routes to HE programmes
- further develop the skills, scholarship and knowledge of staff and students involved in HE
- improve performance through better retention and achievement on higher education programmes
- expand provision in higher education by increasing the portfolio, either directly funded by HEFCE or through franchise arrangements with local HEIs
- improve the physical and learning resources available to HE students at the college
- encourage a culture of innovation, enquiry and research among staff and students.

These aims are clearly written in order to be understood by the staff who have to carry them out within the context of their higher education provision. They also address key national issues of widening participation, skills development, retention and achievement, and collaboration and partnership.

Translating aims into actions and outcomes is particularly important. Some colleges find this difficult. The SMART acronym helps, that is, actions should be:

- S – specific
- M – measurable
- A– achievable
- R – realistic
- T – time-based.

Colleges chose a wide variety of activities for their plans. The examples in Table 1 focus on one of the six criteria of the DFLT, developing staff skills, and give some examples of ‘smart’ targets.

Table 1 Examples of activities and targets

<u>College and number of HE students</u>	<u>Proposed activity for developing staff skills</u>	<u>Target outcomes</u>
Leeds College of Art & Design (512 FTEs)	Allocation of research, curriculum development and professional updating time to all HE course leaders and year tutors.	All relevant staff (total 19 FTEs) to be given entitlement to three weeks per annum (or pro rata).
Leeds College of Music (372 FTEs)	In May 2000 a research committee was established to foster and develop research activity.	Remission from teaching will be provided for up to seven academic HE staff. The appointment of a Teaching Fellow (full-time, fixed term) is required as a consequence.
The Oldham College (421 FTEs)	To increase investment in staff development by enhancing the qualifications’ profile, guaranteeing access to relevant courses and conferences, and providing staff training in HE learning and teaching methodology, including the facilitation of independent learning.	15 per cent increase in staff with higher degrees by 2004. All staff to attend a minimum of one external training event annually. Teacher assessment feedback shows 90 per cent grade improvement.* Monitored via staff appraisal, staff records, and the annual review of resources.
Otley College of Agriculture and Horticulture (40 FTEs)	Training at University of East Anglia in the use of WebCT (a commercial package). User workshops to develop staff skills to widen participation through more flexible delivery.	Six staff trained in the use of WebCT by June 2003 to enable it to be applied to three programmes from September 2003.

* As measured by the common inspection framework of grades for teaching observations.

2 Developing higher level skills

2.1	What are higher level skills?
2.2	A college approach to developing higher level skills
2.3	Academic skills
2.4	The independent learner
2.5	Using the library/learning centre
2.6	Supporting higher level skills through ICT

2.1 What are higher level skills?

One of the key differences between the learning of a student at FE level 3 and in higher education is the development of higher level skills. The term 'graduate skills' is used in some parts of the HE sector, while in others graduate skills have been incorporated into the two areas of 'core skills' and 'employability'. For BTEC Higher National programmes, these skills are addressed through Edexcel's common skills.

The QAA's framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ) may be of help in defining higher level skills. (See the QAA web-site for the full document: www.qaa.ac.uk, under Publications/Qualifications framework.) There are five levels in the framework, moving from level 1, or C, for university certificates to level 5 (D) for doctoral awards, see Table 2.

Table 2 Framework for higher education qualifications

Level	Category	Examples
1 - C	Certificates	Certificates of higher education
2 - I	Intermediate	Foundation degrees, ordinary (bachelors) degrees, diplomas of higher education and other higher diplomas
3 - H	Honours	Bachelor degrees with honours, graduate certificates and graduate diplomas
4 - M	Masters	Masters degrees, postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas
5 - D	Doctoral	Doctorates

Directly funded provision, externally validated by an HEI, will inevitably comply with the HEI's awards framework which will in turn be consistent with the FHEQ.

Although BTEC Higher National awards are not yet included in this framework, it is expected that they will appear at intermediate level, following accreditation by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Some confusion for staff not familiar with Edexcel programmes is the distinction between H1 and H2 units. These are not equivalent to levels 1 and 2 of the FHEQ, and are not intended to be sequential.

The framework document contains some useful descriptors to help ensure that the qualification is designed and delivered at the appropriate level (see Table 3). When writing programme specifications, words and phrases in the descriptors may be useful, but it must be clear how any wording from the FHEQ applies specifically to the programme.

Table 3 Key words and phrases from the QAA framework for higher education qualifications

<u>Extracts from the descriptor for a qualification at intermediate level</u>	<u>Extracts from the descriptor for a qualification at honours level</u>
Knowledge and critical understanding Apply underlying concepts and principles Apply principles in an employment context Knowledge of main methods of enquiry Evaluate critically different approaches Solve problems Understand limits of knowledge	Systematic understanding of key aspects Coherent and detailed knowledge informed by forefront of discipline Apply established techniques Devise and sustain arguments Conceptual understanding Appreciate uncertainty and limits of knowledge
<u>Use a range of techniques</u> Critical analysis of information Devise arguments Develop existing skills Acquire new competencies Personal responsibility Decision-making	<u>Manage own learning</u> Initiate and carry out projects Critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, concepts and data Identify a range of solutions Use scholarly reviews and primary sources

Note: There is some overlap between levels. If an intermediate programme is particularly challenging it may well draw on a number of phrases from the list for honours level.

Subject benchmark statements

In this context *benchmark* has a different meaning from the way the term is usually used in further education. The QAA's subject benchmarks are 'statements which represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level in a particular subject'. (See the QAA 'Handbook for academic review' page 7.)

The published statements (available on the QAA web-site www.qaa.ac.uk under Publications/Benchmarking) were drawn up by groups of subject specialists and relate to the expected threshold standard for level H (honours degree). There are no specific subject benchmark statements for HND/HNC level work. Although it is not mandatory, it is a good idea for colleges to take the benchmark statements into account when designing and reporting on programmes. If the programme offers progression to a top-up degree course, it is worth showing which of the subject benchmark statements will apply to students at the time they progress.

A draft generic benchmark statement has been produced for foundation degrees, which will be finalised after the QAA reviews of foundation degrees in 2003.

The QAA defines higher level skills in terms of:

- intellectual skills
- practical skills
- transferable/key skills.

Some colleges also offer support in developing learning or study skills.

Intellectual skills

The skills required to understand and engage with the theoretical framework which structures a field of knowledge: research, critical analysis and evaluation. These are the skills most closely identified with academic achievement in higher education.

Practical skills

These are increasingly discussed in terms of employability and problem-solving. They include the ability to apply theory in practice and evaluate theory in the light of practical experience. These skills enable learners to apply theory to action in a critical way and to reflect upon performance. An understanding of these skills also enables students to draw on experiential learning to inform their academic development.

Transferable/key skills

Skills with which the learner can most effectively access, interpret and communicate new and diverse forms of knowledge. They include communication skills, information technology, and numeracy skills; the ability to communicate in written and verbal form; and the ability to work with others. Colleges are likely to have well-developed systems for developing these skills, frequently through students 'claiming' common skills at the end of the BTEC Higher National course.

Learning or study skills

Some colleges find it helpful to offer additional learning and study skills to those students who need them in their first year. This can be done:

- before the course starts
- during induction
- as a drop-in facility in a learning centre
- as taught group tutorials
- in partnership with an HEI.

All types of skills will be identified in the learning outcomes statements, tested through assessment.

Headstart

Headstart, a widening participation study skills project, was developed at City College Manchester in response to the needs of non-traditional students progressing to HE. It then became part of a large HEFCE/LSC funded project, with the college working alongside Manchester Metropolitan University and Manchester College of Arts and Technology.

The project aims to prepare students for higher education. Key features are:

- 30 hour course – delivered as an intensive week or in staged weekly sessions
- accredited by the Greater Manchester Open College Network (GMOCN) – students gain credits and institutions draw down funding
- electronic and paper-based forms, which allows flexibility and independent study
- a facility for customisation, for example for nurses in health trusts
- follow-up support (essential for this target group)
- six modules – the brief, essays, research, tutorials, personal development, plagiarism
- training for tutors to deliver the programme.

For further information, contact Heather Pollitt, the project manager by e-mail:
heather@turbotext.co.uk

Hertfordshire Integrated Learning Project

The University of Hertfordshire has developed a useful guide to the development of higher level skills in the context of a number of academic disciplines.

The project uses the term 'graduate skills' and identifies five key areas of skill development:

- self-management
- intellectual skills
- communication
- practical/applied skills
- interpersonal skills.

The project offers some useful materials and tools for development, including:

- skills descriptors
- support materials
- self-assessment materials
- case-studies from different subject areas illustrating the potential of problem-based learning in the development of higher level skills.

There are also useful links to other web-sites dealing with various aspects of skills development in HE: www.herts.ac.uk/envstrat/HILP

2.2 A college approach to developing higher level skills

For FE course teams providing HE, a consensus on the meaning of higher level skills, and approaches to teaching them should be established at the stage of course design. Since not all staff

teaching on the course will have been involved in its design, a written strategy setting out the college's approach to teaching higher level skills will be useful. It is often the higher level skills that will differentiate the progressive and more challenging aspects of learning.

The balance between the QAA's three areas of skills development may vary according to the type of course. Vocational courses, for example, may have a particular emphasis on practical skills. Foundation degrees and top-up degrees accommodate progression to an honours degree for substantial numbers of students. Therefore, it is important that students have a broad understanding of higher level skills as a whole, and the purposes of academic study in its widest sense.

The development of higher level skills in HE has generated considerable debate as to the most appropriate and effective models for delivery. Research into the impact of various models is in its early stages, and no conclusive evidence exists as to which approach works best. However, there is a growing consensus that students respond most effectively when skills development is incorporated within the range of assessed work making up the core part of the course. Separate skills support, possibly provided centrally, can also be helpful. There need to be effective mechanisms for diagnosis and referral and for monitoring progress.

When course teams develop programme specifications (see **Section 10.7**) they will need to consider the skills and their levels. It can be helpful to develop a grid on which all skills are mapped and to see whether they are assessed.

2.3 Academic skills

When course teams are designing teaching and learning activities and assessments, it is worth making sure that a range of academic skills is included, particularly:

- critical analysis
- academic discourse
- research
- referencing
- awareness of plagiarism.

Critical analysis

Students need to be able to evaluate different types of evidence, based on an understanding of how the data have been collected, interpreted and presented. Critical analysis is one of the skills for which students need to provide evidence progressively through their learning.

Academic discourse

In FECs where recruitment is largely from under-represented groups, students may well need focused support in this area and other study skills. Students need to understand how to use key terms and concepts connected with their subject, along with related vocabulary.

Research

Higher level skills for both academic achievement and employability require students to engage directly in the generation of knowledge in their chosen subject area. Terms such as 'investigation' and 'enquiry' raise learners' awareness of the many ways in which they are already engaged in collecting and collating information. The status and use of that knowledge is a foundation for the development of a more systematic set of practical research skills.

For FE staff who are not exposed on a daily basis to institutional debates on research, many HEIs offer free-standing modules or workshops on research methods, or could be invited to present a workshop to introduce staff to current discourse on research approaches and methodology.

Some leaders of Higher National programmes import one of the Edexcel units on research methodology into their programmes (for example, the unit in travel and tourism).

Useful texts include:

- Bell, J (1999) *Doing your research project*. 3rd edition. Open University Press
- Blaxter, L, Hughes, C & Tight, M (1996) *How to research*. Open University Press
- Cryer, P (2000) *The research student's guide to success*. 2nd edition. Open University Press.

Referencing

The purpose of referencing is to assist others (including examiners) to map the development of knowledge and follow up themes of particular interest. It is a professional expectation that academic arguments are attributed appropriately, and failure to do so, whether out of ignorance or a deliberate intention to conceal sources, is treated very seriously. Students need to be introduced to correct referencing from an early stage. Various protocols have been developed, of which the Harvard method of referencing is probably the most widely used.

Clear understanding of the process of referencing and why it matters should reduce the amount of unwitting plagiarism.

Awareness of plagiarism

A clear understanding of the processes and protocols described above is particularly important in helping students to understand definitions of plagiarism. Misuse of the internet and copying and pasting extracts from others' work is a growing problem. Indeed, cultural differences may make this apparently acceptable for some international students. HEIs and FECs are increasingly developing their own guidelines about academic honesty. It may be useful for FECs to work with local HEIs in developing their approaches to the issue. New software packages are now available for detecting plagiarism, a development of which all students should be made aware.

Evidence suggests that weaker students are most vulnerable to charges of plagiarism; they are less certain about how to handle new subject matter and less confident about expressing their views. These students may also have limited command of essay-writing skills and the conventions attached to quotation. International students are also at risk: academic conventions are to a certain extent culture-bound, and expectations of how sources should be used and referenced should be clearly explained.

The funding bodies' Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) – www.jisc.ac.uk – has funded projects on plagiarism and offers an advisory service, www.jiscpas.ac.uk.

2.4 The independent learner

Developing in students the confidence to operate as independent learners is core to the development of higher level skills and a positive approach to lifelong learning in the workplace.

The ability to operate as an independent learner is particularly important for those who are:

- intending to move on to study in an HEI
- moving on to top-up degrees from Higher National awards. This is critical for students moving into the second or final year of a degree course, as by then students are expected to operate with a high degree of autonomy and self-reliance
- progressing from foundation degrees.

Diplomates or graduates entering employment will equally need these skills for long-term effectiveness in updating their skills and facing the challenges of new learning in the years ahead.

Students who move from FE into HE are generally positive about the experience of studying HE in FE. However, some students do not feel they have been well prepared for the experience and struggle with new and unanticipated expectations. HND students, for example, frequently report difficulties with the volume of reading required, and the expectation that all students will have well-developed essay-writing skills or be able to cope with a dissertation. Some HEIs run special workshops for students making the transition at this stage, to prepare them for the experience. However, these cannot cover the long-term development of independent learning skills. Students in FECs need to develop the skills that will make them feel comfortable if they transfer to an HEI very different from their current experience. Table 4 sets out some of the skills of independent learning.

Table 4 Skills of independent learning

Time management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • balancing the demands of study with work and/or domestic commitments • understanding and planning for a set amount of study time per week, over and above contact time • organising time across different study activities • prioritising efficiently • meeting deadlines • planning for contingencies
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning and organising a reading schedule • reading to deadlines, using skimming and scanning techniques • using various forms of note-taking, and spidergrams and mind mapping to assist learning from reading • recording sources for referencing
Self-motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working independently without regular reassurance • taking active responsibility for seeking feedback • seeking out and using formal structures of support • building peer group support
Information technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • locating resources through on-line catalogues • seeking information independently via the web • using discussion groups and virtual learning environments.

Student self-assessment questionnaires

Many colleges in the US have developed independent learner profiles, short on-line questionnaires designed as recruiting and self-assessment tools for virtual programmes of learning. These could usefully be adapted for FE use.

Additional material on the web: Self-assessment questions for independent learners, Lansing College, adapted with permission from Waukesha County Technical College, Wisconsin.

2.5 Using the library/learning centre

Some colleges struggle to sustain the level of funding enjoyed by HEIs for developing learning resources. The comparatively limited resources available for library materials has sometimes disadvantaged colleges in terms of quality assurance. For example, it can be difficult to provide a wide selection of journals with the most current articles, abstracts and reviews.

Staff teaching on HE courses and learning centre/library staff need to work together in making available a broad and rich range of texts and resources, both traditional and electronic. Library staff from local HEIs will often help. This may take the form of negotiating access to the university's learning resource centre, or through professional support in developing electronic access.

Imaginative and creative use of new technology can give most colleges access to a wide range of resources. Practical and comprehensive induction of students and on-going support from learning centre staff should back this up.

It makes a real difference if these members of staff are proactive in bringing students into the learning centre and teaching them to help themselves.

Teaching staff in some FECs support students extremely well for substantial amounts of contact time. This approach occasionally means that students become dependent on their teachers and do not develop the skills of independent learning. They need to spend time accessing external sources too.

Colleges occasionally underplay the value of journals or periodicals, which can offer important updating of the subject. A number of colleges have purchased Infotrac (an on-line collection of 3,000 journals in a range of subjects). However, some students need to be encouraged to read paper-based journals. Setting a task whereby a small group of students read different articles on the same subject from a range of journals, and then present their findings to the rest of the group, has been a useful way of getting them to appreciate the currency of journals.

South Cheshire College

South Cheshire College has drawn together a wide range of academic electronic resources under one roof to create a virtual learning resource centre (LRC) within its Learnwise managed learning environment (a commercial package).

The virtual LRC includes

- a home reference library (dictionaries, encyclopaedias, directories and timetables)
- subject gateways under the auspices of JISC, including a direct link into the Pinakes homepage hosted by Heriot Watt University, giving entry to major subject gateways for UK higher education
- subscription e-resources such as Know UK and Newsbank (obtained at special rates through JISC)
- inter-library loans catalogues, such as OPAC and the British Library.

In addition to including the LRC area within Learnwise, the college has established a separate icon on the interactive desktop to further encourage students and staff to use the virtual LRC. It is particularly useful for the HE students, as most of the JISC gateways and portals were initially established for HE.

Colleges usually provide library induction for all their students. Some differentiate activities for HE students by adding to their basic induction:

- information on copyright, plagiarism and collecting references
- presentation of appropriate reference materials, specialised collections and journals
- advice on planning research
- help with literature searching and information resources.

Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology

Two important new staff roles were created in the learning centres: gateway adviser and gateway tutor. These roles have been essential to achieving more effective integration of information and communication technology (ICT) by:

- proactively providing direct support, and guidance to learners in using the ICT resources, and in engaging in open learning
- producing open learning resources for a given curriculum area
- identifying and evaluating ICT resources and cataloguing all resources for a curriculum area.

Advisers were selected for a good subject expertise and to be a cross-college resource. Their attitude to change and new ideas and their ability to work effectively with lecturers are also important. Gateway tutors also provide direct delivery to students.

The introduction of gateway advisers and tutors has made a significant impact in the effective delivery of ICT through projects, some of which are listed below:

- research into suitable web-sites
- developing a virtual reality leisure centre
- creating spreadsheets to understand social trend information
- producing on-line worksheets for social care
- developing interactive web-sites for skills for work.

2.6 Supporting higher level skills through ICT

Learning through information technology takes place within a rapidly changing world. JISC has connected all FE colleges to the Joint Academic Network (JANET), and has established regional centres to provide local support for colleges in using the network and other JISC services. The government's web-site on ICT in education, the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA), offers a wide range of supporting materials: www.becta.org.uk.

On-line learning and virtual learning environments

Educational institutions at all levels are currently considering the most effective way to deliver learning opportunities to their students over the Internet. It is now widely recognised that teachers should be empowered to produce and manage on-line learning opportunities without having to undertake a course in web design. Virtual learning environments (VLEs) address this and other pedagogical issues.

A VLE incorporates software that enables teachers to generate on-line content by means of simple keyboard procedures. No web design skills are required. The essential characteristic of a VLE is that it should be easy to use. Additional features may:

- enable teachers to produce tests that are automatically marked on-line
- allow teachers to track the progress of students on-line
- allow communication with groups of students on-line
- allow assignments to be circulated on-line.

A VLE should do what it says: produce a virtual environment in which students and teachers interact to help students learn.

There are many commercial companies producing VLEs but a handful currently dominate the UK market. These include Blackboard, WebCT, Granada Learnwise, TekniCAL, PLATO and Fretwell Downing LE. Two questions face educational institutions in relation to commercial VLEs: do we need it and if so which one?

Additional material on the web: Choosing a virtual learning environment, City College Manchester.

Reading College

A web-based resource, www.design-stuff.co.uk, allows graphic design students to keep up to date with information and initiatives the staff are putting into the course as the year progresses. For example, they can download teaching notes for the modules on the course.

The resource is a supplement to the normal contact teaching time not a distance learning initiative. The use by and response from students has been very encouraging.

QAA reports

The College of North West London, Engineering, May 2002

'Computing facilities are generally good, especially the Digital Village project which has used partnerships with industry to fund an open-plan centre with PCs and digital simulators.'

Oaklands College, Engineering, March 2001

'A praiseworthy practice is that students use the software to design complete products that are then manufactured and tested to complete their learning cycle.'

3 Curriculum development

3.1	Developing the curriculum within a national policy context
3.2	Developing higher education programmes
3.3	Models for developing a new programme in an FEC
3.4	Stages in developing a new programme
3.5	Development of foundation degrees
3.6	Role of Sector Skills Councils in foundation degree development
3.7	A regional approach to developing foundation degrees
3.8	HEIs and FECs working effectively together

3.1 Developing the curriculum within a national policy context

FECs and HEIs will both be aware of their role in meeting the government target of 50 per cent of those aged 18-30 having experience of higher education by 2010. There is a general agreement that FECs are key to this growth, but this potential is not borne out by the numbers of students on higher education programmes recruited to FECs over the last few years. The figures show little growth, even a decline in directly funded provision.

The White Paper on the future of higher education highlights the role FECs are expected to play in expanding provision, mainly through foundation degrees but also by offering new courses to new learners using new methods of delivery.

All providers of higher education may need to re-examine what they offer the prospective students who do not currently enter higher education. This group may:

- have had an unrewarding experience at school
- have little confidence in their own ability
- see being employed as more important than studying
- have few role models in their immediate family or among their friends
- not see themselves as traditional undergraduates.

FECs have experience they can draw on to support students from under-represented groups by:

- raising awareness and aspirations, perhaps through projects funded under the Excellence Challenge initiative and other outreach work
- offering information, advice and guidance close to home
- offering tuition in a flexible way in small groups
- offering enough individual contact for the student to feel well-supported
- accommodating students' need to work part-time by careful timetabling
- offering a welcoming environment in which students from a diversity of backgrounds feel comfortable.

Northbrook College

Part-time students studying for a degree in computing at Northbrook College may be very different from undergraduate counterparts in a university. For example, they may:

- take longer to get the qualification
- attend on day release from work
- work online with e-mail contact with tutors
- have the support of the employer
- be able to apply their studies directly to their workplace
- not be interested in what is commonly understood to represent student life.

FECs have the community links and the potential to act quickly in response to demand. It is therefore vital that HEIs working with FE partners have structures which can support flexible and fast responses to local markets.

Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College

We validate and quality assure a combined studies programme which is offered by four neighbouring FE colleges. The programme is designed for adult part-time students who wish to sample HE study at level 1. The programme is flexible: we offer modules ranging from metalcraft to abnormal psychology and Islamic studies. The colleges react to local demand, and the process for validating new modules can be completed quite quickly. The programme is now four years old and over 500 students have achieved at HE level 1.

New students will probably need a new curriculum. FECs and HEIs are using the intelligence from Regional Development Agencies to identify skills shortages and are also assessing student interest in new areas. Table 5 gives examples of recently developed courses.

Table 5 Examples of courses developed to meet demand

<u>Course</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>Institution</u>
Adventurous activity management	HND	Cornwall College
Brewing and distilling	BSC	Heriot-Watt University
Calligraphy and heraldry	HND	East Surrey College
Cleaning science	Foundation degree	Matthew Boulton College with Coventry University
Culinary arts management	BA	Birmingham College of Food, Technology and Creative Studies
Decorative artefacts	BA	De Montfort University
European film and world cinema	BA	University of Exeter
Football technology	BSc	Staffordshire University
Gamekeeping	HNC	University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)
Interactive entertainment systems	BSc	University of Sunderland
Live television production	HND	Buckingham Chilterns University College
Logistics and transport	Foundation	Anglia Polytechnic University

	degree	
Professional cookery	HNC	UHI Millennium Institute
Professional gardening and plant knowledge	HND/BSc	University of Central Lancashire
Sail and powerboat studies	BSc	Pembrokeshire College
Turf science and golf course management	HND	University of Central Lancashire
Viking studies	BA	University of Nottingham
Virtual reality design	BA	University of Huddersfield
Visitor attraction management	HND	University of Central Lancashire
Wildlife identification	HND	University of Central Lancashire

Many FECs offer additional short courses which enhance their HND provision. For example, a student taking an HND in travel and tourism might also have the opportunity in many colleges to take such additional FE qualifications as:

- ticketing
- the ABTA travel agents certificate, ABTAC
- the Galileo booking system
- foreign languages.

3.2 Developing higher education programmes

Colleges develop new programmes for a variety of reasons, but there should be a clear strategy for these developments. Having an enthusiastic member of staff who would like to develop the next stage in a subject area is not sufficient reason, unless there are palpable indications that students on FE programmes would progress within the institution and there is a wider demand. Nor are general wishes to increase the HE provision or widen participation good enough by themselves. A key plank of planning in the LSC is the notion of 'adequacy and sufficiency'. However, the strategy for FECs wishing to develop HE programmes need not be constrained by this. (For further discussion of strategy, see **Section 1.4** above, and the companion document, 'Supporting higher education in further education colleges: policy, practice and prospects', HEFCE 2003/16.)

Any strategy to develop new programmes should derive from local initiatives (for example to address skills shortages), national initiatives (such as foundation degrees), or partnerships with employers or HEIs or other FECs. In particular, colleges need to pay even more attention to providing different sorts of programmes which are delivered flexibly to attract groups of students who may not normally have considered higher education. The flexibility may include catering specifically for part-time students, timetabling to accommodate part-time work, and offering opportunities to work on-line from home or work.

Local circumstances usually determine the best way forward. However, when thinking about the development of a new HE programme, do not underestimate the amount of planning time that will be needed, especially where other partners are involved. FECs are used to being responsive to rapid change. The rather more complex procedures of an HEI will almost always slow down the process. Time is needed to understand partners' culture, structure and priorities, which will strengthen the basis for the development.

Key elements

It may help to reflect on the following key questions:

- why does the college want to offer the programme?

- does it have any feeder or pre-entry programmes?
- will there be articulated progression routes?
- is there local or regional demand from employers?
- is there student demand from within the college and outside?
- are staff willing and able to spearhead the development and design of the programme at the appropriate level?
- does the college have or will it be able to get the resources, including:
 - well-qualified and committed staff
 - accommodation
 - specialist resources
 - library stock?
- does the college have available student numbers or will it need to bid to HEFCE for additional numbers?
- are there suitable partners to work with?
- is there a sufficiently long lead-in time?

3.3 Models for developing a new HE programme in an FEC

Some of the current models for developing a new HE programme in an FEC are set out below, analysed under the following headings: context, process, support, quality assurance, cost and key features. The five models are:

- validation by an HEI of directly funded provision
- the Open University Validation Service
- Edexcel (formerly BTEC programmes)
- indirectly funded partnership or franchise
- accreditation.

Model one: Validation by an HEI of directly funded provision

Context

The college designs and writes the programme, often with the advice and help of subject specialists in the HEI. The HEI approves the programme. This model usually applies to foundation degrees, honours degrees, postgraduate diplomas and masters degrees, and can include Higher National awards under licence.

The process

First step is to approach the HEI in principle and get the support of the relevant department. (Some HEIs will not validate programmes if they do not offer the same subject themselves.) Complete the HEI's new programme proposal about the demand for such a programme, the labour market information, course design, teaching and learning, assessment and resources – human and physical – including staff CVs. Ensure that senior management in the college supports the proposal. Also obtain as much information as possible from the HEI about the validation process, so everyone is clear exactly what is involved.

The programme is validated to assure the HEI that this is a valid HE programme, with HE aims and outcomes, offering an HE experience to students. The 'validation event' normally involves a visit to the college to view the library, accommodation and other resources; and a meeting (frequently half a

day) with a panel from the HEI and an external adviser. Establish good communications with the HEI and ensure that the college is kept updated about progress.

It will be important to designate link roles in the FEC as part of the approval process to support ongoing quality assurance processes. (For further information about roles, see **Section 8.2.**)

Support

Staff in the colleges involved in the programme will need a support structure for staff development, research and scholarly activity. Some of this could usefully be provided by the HEI.

Quality assurance

The college will be required to follow the quality assurance system of the HEI. For example the HEI will appoint the external examiner. Identify staff and schedules for quality assurance processes and administration. The programme will be subject to QAA academic review even if those of the HEI are not. There is likely to be a periodic review, probably every five years.

Cost

Usually the FEC is charged fees by the HEI on a per capita basis, depending on student access to HEI resources. Some examples give £100-150 per head. Ensure that the college negotiates a reasonable fee, and that there is a binding written agreement.

Key features:

- students obtain an award of the HEI, which can bring added status
- if local, students may have access to HEI facilities such as the library, but this must be negotiated
- there may be enhanced progression opportunities for students
- the college designs the programme and has ownership of it
- the FEC develops a productive working relationship with the HEI department, providing good staff development opportunities for FE staff.

Model two: Open University Validation Service (OUVS)

Context

The OUVS developed from the former Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). When CNAA was dissolved, the (then) DfEE asked the Open University to take over validating responsibilities for those institutions that did not become universities. Like CNAA, the OUVS operates through processes that rely on peer networks and judgements. The emphasis is on the development of ownership for quality assurance by the providing institution. So an organisation must first achieve **accreditation** by demonstrating that the organisation can provide an appropriate and supportive infrastructure for the delivery of HE programmes.

The process

Validation of programmes is a similar process to that of other validating HEIs, although OUVS draws on a national network of peers. In preparing for accreditation of institutions and validation of HE programmes, OUVS takes a developmental approach and will work with institutions and course teams. Programmes need to be clearly comparable with other HE programmes, and staff CVs will be vetted.

The institution completes a preliminary questionnaire to assess whether it is eligible for accreditation. An advisory visit follows a decision to progress. A validation event (see model one above) then

assures the programme as a valid HE programme, with HE aims and outcomes, offering an HE experience to students.

Support

The OUVS works closely with the course team developing the curriculum for validation, but staff will need time for professional and curriculum development and scholarly activity.

Quality assurance

The college will need to follow the stringent quality assurance systems of the OUVS. Programmes will be subject to QAA academic review.

Cost

A one-off charge is made of £3,000-£4,000, with ongoing charges per capita for registered students.

Key features:

- a national validating body close to the Open University
- can lead to institutional accreditation
- a very good support service if it has the capacity
- may be an answer to problems affecting foundation degree development.

Model three: Edexcel (formerly BTEC programmes)

Context

This covers BTEC HND and HNC programmes, following standard specifications. In specialist areas not covered by standard specifications, colleges can devise their own specifications. (HND/HNC programmes can still be delivered in HEIs under licence, which means the HEI can design its own programme. This does not apply to FECs although FECs can deliver a Higher National programme developed by an HEI under licence. Discussions continue with the QCA about accreditation of Higher National programmes.)

The process

First seek approval from Edexcel, giving details of the staff who will deliver and assess the programme (usually by including CVs), and the specialist physical resources necessary for the qualification. For centre-devised qualifications, the full units also need to be submitted: 16 units for an HND, 10 units for an HNC. A certain number of units can be imported from other specifications.

When Edexcel publishes new specifications that replace an existing qualification, approval is usually transferred to the new qualifications using a streamlined approval process.

Send the proposal/submission to Edexcel. It is scrutinised by a reader or panel and may then be approved after any necessary revisions. Currently, programmes are being approved for some years without a formal periodic review system. FECs need to ensure that their own internal systems review this provision.

Support

Edexcel offers a number of staff development opportunities. Staff designing new programmes will need time for scholarly activity and curriculum development.

Quality assurance

The college will follow Edexcel's quality assurance system, which involves a combination of visits by an external verifier, national standards sampling, and self reporting, all underpinned by the FEC's own robust internal verification policy. Programmes will be subject to QAA academic review.

Ensure that the college systems are robust and rigorous and that course teams have ownership of them and their implementation.

Cost

The annual registration fee is around £100 per student for the qualification.

Key features:

- offering a nationally validated qualification
- support of a specification designed by the awarding body so it can be operated off the shelf
- the opportunity for the college to design some of its own units
- the college implements Edexcel's systems without reference to an HEI.

Model four: Indirectly funded partnership or franchise

Context

The initiative may be taken by either partner. The course can be developed by the HEI or through collaborative arrangements. The FEC may be approached by the HEI to offer part of a degree, a whole degree, or a diploma. This may be because it does not have the accommodation or staff to offer so many places. Or, commonly with foundation years, it is because the HEI believes the FEC has something distinctive to offer in terms of location, widening participation or links with employers and the community.

The process

The model of development and the nature of the partnership will determine the college's involvement. HEIs can develop HNDs under licence from Edexcel, a process which is becoming more flexible and may be worth considering. Some programmes, especially foundation degrees, are developed collaboratively. HNC/HND programmes have been designed to link up effectively with foundation degrees, in some cases by mapping them against the course design.

There will probably be some process of validation where the HEI visits the college to assess the quality of the staff, resources and other facilities.

Support

Staff in the FEC need close links with subject staff in the HEI and the opportunity to join staff development activities. It will be important to designate link roles in the FEC as part of the approval process to support ongoing quality assurance processes. (For further information about roles, see **Section 8.2.**)

Quality assurance

The college follows the quality assurance systems of the HEI. The programme may not be subject to QAA academic review but will be subject to the HEI's periodic review and included in part of the HEI's provision during QAA institutional audit.

Cost

This varies a great deal. HEIs top-slice a proportion of the HEFCE funding per student, on the basis of what they offer the FEC in return. This can range from 10-40 per cent. The partnership agreement should demonstrate the arrangements clearly (see HEFCE 00/54, the code of practice for franchise and consortia arrangements).

Key features:

- usually a close working relationship with the HEI
- support for staff development
- good progression opportunities for students
- student access to HEI facilities.

Model five: Accreditation

Accreditation is a further arrangement, still relatively unusual, which combines some of the features described above. For an FE college this means that the FEC develops, validates and teaches undergraduate programmes which are awards of the accrediting university. To achieve accreditation, the FEC will normally have substantial HE provision. (See the case study of Suffolk College and the University of East Anglia in HEFCE 2003/16.)

3.4 Stages in developing a new programme

Any college thinking about introducing or developing a new programme needs to be clear how this fits with its HE strategy. Adopting a forward-looking approach about what to offer in terms of the subject and how to deliver the curriculum to accommodate the target group will be most effective.

New provision can be developed in two stages, taking account of the guidance in the QAA code of practice, section 7, on programme approval, monitoring and review (see [www.qaa.ac.uk_under Publications/Codes of practice](http://www.qaa.ac.uk_under/Publications/Codes_of_practice)). The advantage of this is that the decision about whether a course will be relevant, in demand and viable comes before the intensive course design is undertaken.

The method proposed will differ according to whether the new programme will be directly or indirectly funded. Courses are subject to the programme approval process of the validating body. The awarding/validating body may require completion of a standard template, supported by guidance notes. For further advice, clarification or support, contact the appropriate validating body/institution.

Additional material on the web: Programme approval template, developed by a member of the Open University staff.

Whatever the format, the proposal will usually cover the main areas listed below.

Stage one

The initial proposal could contain the following:

- a rationale for the programme – why it should be introduced and the evidence base
- how it fits in with the college's strategy
- labour market information that suggests that this is a course that is needed locally, regionally and perhaps nationally (see below for further detail)

- a competitor analysis that shows whether this subject area is already available in the locality. It can be helpful to look on the web for similar programmes further away to determine a benchmark. Edexcel will also give information about colleges offering an award
- evidence of student demand. This needs careful planning, and should not only be from students progressing internally
- recognition of the wider range of abilities students might demonstrate
- information about partners involved in the development
- evidence of employer support and support from National Training Organisations/Sector Skills Councils or other relevant bodies
- an indication that the awarding body will validate it at the planned level
- resource implications – that is, staff including staff qualifications, accommodation and equipment
- a simple business plan showing how the HEFCE grant allocation and tuition fees would meet the resources necessary for the programme with the appropriate contribution to the college.

Additional material on the web: Model business plan for proposed HE course, City College Manchester.

Market research and labour market intelligence

The following web-sites give useful information:

- labour market information, www.statistics.gov.uk, then select Themes, Labour market
- National Training Organisations, www.nto-nc.org
- Regional Development Agencies, www.dti.gov.uk then select Regional and Regional Development Agencies
- Sector Skills Development Agency, www.ssda.org.uk.

It will save time and effort to get approval for stage one before moving on.

Stage two

Alongside the course development, the college may need to prepare or contribute to a bid to HEFCE for additional student numbers (ASNs). The timing of this is critical since bids go to HEFCE in October/November of the year preceding the start of the course. This means the development work needs to be done well in advance to be ready for the bidding process. HEFCE will usually allow two years to recruit to a new programme.

The development will then address:

- overall educational aims of the programme and the intended outcomes of learning
- curriculum design – units/modules and the level of the programme, making sure it matches the level descriptors in the QAA framework for higher education qualifications where appropriate (see **Section 2.1**)
- reference to QAA subject benchmark statements, where appropriate
- teaching and learning strategy
- assessment strategy
- student support
- the development of learning materials (which can be shared in a collaborative development, thus ensuring that students on the same programme use the same materials)
- resources:
 - staff (availability, experience, specialisms, qualifications, with a CV or teaching profile)

- accommodation
- equipment (including IT)
- other learning resources, especially library book stock and periodicals
- the programme specification
- progression arrangements
- the timescale for receiving accreditation or validation
- contribution to the ASN bid
- the marketing strategy (marketing can start before validation or ASN bids are approved as long as the publicity materials say ‘subject to validation’).

3.5 Development of foundation degrees

The response to the Government’s invitation to bid for prototype foundation degrees in 2000 led to some rapid and innovative curriculum development. Because the bidding process was underpinned by the need to have partnerships between HEIs, FECs and employers, and because groups or new consortia proposing foundation degrees had to work much more quickly than usual, there is some interesting practice. (For a full review and some case studies, see the report by the PricewaterhouseCoopers support team, ‘Types of foundation degrees’ on the HEFCE web-site, www.hefce.ac.uk under Publications/R&D reports.)

The emphasis on the expansion of foundation degrees in the White Paper on the future of higher education confirms the position of this qualification as one of the key planks of policy. The Government intends to provide development funding to support the design of new foundation degrees. It also proposes a package of incentives for students, and actively encourages further links between FECs, HEIs and the RDAs and Sector Skills Councils. The Government envisages that much of the planned expansion of foundation degrees will take place in FECs, through structured partnerships between colleges and universities.

From 2004, the Government will provide additional funded places for foundation degrees, in preference to traditional honours degree courses, so that growth will come predominantly through foundation degrees.

Lessons from foundation degrees

In addition to the support team, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) funded a foundation degree officer, managed by the Association of Colleges. The case studies, advice and sharing of good practice that have emerged as a result have been extremely useful. The lessons learned are summarised below, with thanks to Margaret Lawson, Foundation Degree Officer.

HEFCE-recognised funding consortia can be led by further education colleges. If some form of collaborative agreement already exists, for whatever purpose, it may well facilitate the process of designing and developing foundation degrees but it is not essential for partners to already be part of an agreement. A new group can be formed involving a variety of institutions and employers to design and develop a foundation degree to meet local needs.

For foundation degree consortia that were not funded as one of the prototypes, FECs can be funded by HEFCE in any one of three ways:

- as part of a HEFCE-recognised funding consortium
- indirectly funded via the HEI partner

- directly funded (so long as they have HEI partners that validate the degrees and offer progression routes).

The development of foundation degrees is an excellent incentive for HEIs and FECs to work together.

Consortia have found it useful to follow the guidelines set out in HEFCE 00/54. In particular it is important to draw up and agree a proper partnership agreement (memorandum of co-operation) as early as possible. This should clarify procedures for funding, allocation of student numbers, staffing, resources, and quality issues. It should be discussed and agreed by all staff involved in the development process, not just senior management.

A foundation degree must be validated by an HEI, but can be offered and funded through HEFCE by an FEC. If a local HEI is not keen to become involved or does not offer the best progression routes for the proposed foundation degree, then look further afield. However, as a foundation degree should meet local needs, this would clearly favour working with a local HEI wherever possible.

Involve employers and employer organisations as well as the new Sector Skills Councils at an early stage as they are crucial to the success of foundation degrees. There may be issues over confidentiality with work-based assessment. Ensure agreement is reached with the employer before the course starts, perhaps through a 'learning contract'.

Entry requirements must be designed to encourage application by non-standard students, and should recognise the work experience of potential students. Develop and use the excellent accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (APL/APEL) systems for foundation degree students.

There are many variations of programme design and delivery in foundation degrees, but the majority are designed around a range of modules or units – both core and optional – which attract a total of at least 240 credits (120 at level 1 and 120 at level 2). Key skills are integrated into the course modules in most foundation degree designs and assessed in a variety of ways.

Work-based learning is an essential feature of the foundation degree; the degree must reinforce, as well as enhance, work-based skills. Assessment of work-based learning must be fully integrated into the course, not 'bolted on'. This assessment should be valuable educationally to the student but also considered productive by the employer.

Progression routes must have been previously negotiated and agreed with HEIs as part of the design process. Some HEIs are starting to develop new honours degrees more appropriate to the needs of foundation degree graduates.

Quality assurance arrangements, an important part of the foundation degree, are laid down by the HEI validating the degree.

Looking back on their developments of prototype foundation degrees, a number of colleges are concerned that the design had been over-influenced by consideration of the content and approach of existing progression routes. These colleges warn that it is inappropriate to design a foundation degree to fit in with the third year of an honours degree. HEIs might need to reconsider what they offer in year three for those students who progress.

3.6 Role of Sector Skills Councils in foundation degree development

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are independent, UK-wide organisations developed by influential employers in industry or business sectors of economic or strategic significance. SSCs are employer led, and actively involve trade unions, professional bodies and other stakeholders in the sector. The establishment of the SSC network began in April 2002, and there are now seven in operation, see Table 6.

Table 6 Sector Skills Councils

<u>Name of SSC</u>	<u>Key sectors represented</u>
Cogent	Oil, gas, chemical manufacturing and petroleum
TES (EMTA)	Technology, engineering and science
Skillsmart - UK	Retail
Skill fast	Clothing, footwear and textiles
c-Skills UK	IT and telecommunications
Lantra	Environment and land-based industries
Skillset	Audio visual industries

The Sector Skills Development Agency was established to underpin the SSC network and promote effective working between sectors. Details, and links to the SSCs, are available on the web at www.ssda.org.uk. If no SSC exists as yet in a particular sector, then contact the SSSDA for further help.

Educational institutions should contact their appropriate SSC for help in the design, delivery and promotion of foundation degrees. They can provide information on skills required in any particular geographical or sector area, and can advise on the integration of national occupational standards into the design of foundation degrees.

Each SSC will agree sector priorities and targets with its employers to address four key goals, one of which is improving the supply of learning, including apprenticeships, higher education and national occupational standards.

A number of SSCs are beginning to articulate the needs of employers.

3.7 A regional approach to developing foundation degrees

The example below demonstrates how a regional partnership can form the basis for the development of foundation degrees. Nine foundation degree titles (one with four pathways) have been developed in the regional partnership led by Anglia Polytechnic University, with five separate institutions. More are planning to join the partnership. Early in 2002-03 there were 400 students, including full-time and part-time students.

Foundation degrees: Anglia Polytechnic University (APU)

APU's foundation degrees are validated for use throughout the Regional University Partnership. Once validated, any member of the partnership, subject to planning protocols and centre approval, may offer them. The partnership currently consists of 19 FE and sixth form colleges in partnership with APU.

APU has validated a core template of 120 credits common to all foundation degree pathways. This template is contextualised into the industry area by the development team. A further 120 credits reflecting the industry's needs are developed, which together with the core form an integrated industry-specific pathway. Professional body recognition is an important element, and all pathways must have at least 20 per cent of the credits as work-based learning. Flexibility of delivery, APL/APEL, accessibility and widening participation are important design elements, as is a requirement for a named honours award for progression.

APU schools or partner FECs may propose a title for a new foundation degree. The title, once approved, is circulated to all partners. This affords an opportunity for partners to join a regional development group and influence the development, and ensures that what is validated will reflect the needs of the region. A relevant APU core school must be part of the development team, and provides a named honours degree onto which students from the foundation degree may progress without a bridging programme. Staff development with respect to foundation degrees and the validation process is mandatory; this is provided by APU. This staff development, together with the validated core, facilitates a one-stage validation event for the pathway. Centres, that is APU schools or regional partner colleges, may then seek approval to offer the pathway.

All foundation degree pathways validated by APU are subject to the university quality assurance processes and curriculum regulations. APU employs a foundation degree co-ordinator to manage development and operation of foundation degrees in the Regional University Partnership.

The example below of delivering contextual studies in a foundation degree validated by Manchester Metropolitan University, shows how practice can be developed and shared collaboratively.

Manchester Metropolitan University, City College Manchester, Hopwood Hall College, and Rochdale and Tameside College

The foundation degree in new media design was developed as a prototype by a consortium of three colleges: City College Manchester, Hopwood Hall College, and Rochdale and Tameside College together with the Manchester Metropolitan University. Contextual studies has been seen as the lynchpin of the foundation degree, enabling the validating university to ensure an appropriate academic standard and a context for developing transferable skills. The unit devised for the second semester set out to develop an awareness of Manchester's cultural industries. The process was as follows:

- lectures outlined the context, growth and activities of the city's cultural, design and media industries
- the students were asked to explore and contextualise a chosen example of creative design work developed there today
- the unit specifications and briefs were developed by one college and shared with the other two. A collaborative delivery process was made possible by a common cross-site slot on the timetables of all three colleges agreed at a very early stage
- the course teams found they could follow the first unit in a mode appropriate to the curricular strengths of their own colleges
- they participated in planning meetings to develop a common second unit for the second semester.

The colleges prepared for the collaboration by:

- holding four recorded meetings between December 2001 and February 2002
- scheduling only the first few weeks of the unit initially to allow for flexibility
- agreeing to take responsibility for different areas and allocating class topics
- putting in place outside speakers who would spearhead the first half of the unit
- constantly using e-mail to continue the planning and dialogue.

Initiating the collaborative unit

The colleges pooled contacts and invited two active design practitioners and two specialist speakers to illustrate and contextualise their themes. Manchester Metropolitan University provided a venue which promoted the collaboration. Practical arrangements for travel were planned early, but course details were left open and not disseminated until the true direction evolved.

Students appreciated the common ground established by group work among the three cohorts, which shared and compared their parallel experiences.

Further development

The schedule was renegotiated after consultation and in response to the material presented. On a weekly basis, the staff were able to discuss and modify the programme plan. Successful strategies were repeated, for example mixing the cohorts in group work. And regular news-sheets describing `where we are now` ensured that the common direction was not lost.

Problems to solve:

- accommodation/equipment problems needed weekly solutions and an on-site contact
- in two colleges it proved difficult to link up with other units to maximise resources
- after good participation and attendance, there was a fall-off in numbers after seven weeks and,

with the approaching deadlines, the last two sessions were cancelled

- the lack of a planned framework for college calendars/dates/trips caused problems
- planning did not extend to embedding collaboration on the assessment procedures
- some speakers were unreliable, changing dates for example, but this was generally solved by improvisation.

Key enabling elements:

- the e-mail dialogue was indispensable
- the project manager acted as facilitator, which is invaluable in a collaborative venture
- a subject specialist led the planning and many sessions, which avoided too much indecision
- all the staff involved pitched in; everyone seemed confident that the others would help out
- group work for students was a uniting force, and vocationally valuable
- guest speakers provided a uniting focus
- the common delivery slot facilitated both collaboration and smooth consultation.

Impact on the students

The collaboration gave them a feeling of being involved in something special. In particular the group work validated the unit and confirmed the foundation degree identity of the students. This was reinforced by the neutral and prestige venue at Manchester Metropolitan University.

By mixing and sharing with others, students were able to compare experiences. Team teaching also enlarges their experience.

What needs to be done

The partners need to address the fact that the mix of fractional, part-time and full-time staff in the team made it difficult to delegate responsibilities. They also need to find solutions to the disruption to staff: at present the process is too dependent on goodwill.

Closer liaison is needed between the colleges over dates and unit planning. They will also be exploring the online potential, which could make mark two of this unit look quite different.

3.8 HEIs and FECs working effectively together

The degree to which an HEI is involved when a new programme is developed or an existing programme is changed will vary according to:

- how close the links are at the subject level
- the length of time the two institutions have worked together
- how many partners are involved
- whether the programme is to be validated or franchised
- how open the institutions are with each other.

The most productive arrangements are those where:

- the purpose of the development is clear and important to both sides
- the development makes appropriate use of the strengths of each institution
- there is sufficient time to discuss the academic nature of the programme
- there is a clear action plan with timescales and responsibilities
- the links at subject and course level are strong

- problems are discussed openly at an early stage
- funding is allocated and agreed at an early stage.

Blackburn College, and Blackpool & the Fylde College

The University of Lancaster validates the degrees of two large colleges in its region, Blackburn and Blackpool & the Fylde. When a new programme is proposed, the HEI appoints a course consultant to work with the college on the design and development. This connection does not stop after validation. Staff development takes place, and support is given to the new programme staff to introduce them to or extend their knowledge of a research culture.

Administrative staff are also involved in the agreement of academic regulations, with appropriate staff development.

As the relationship has grown, the HEI has invited one college to provide consultants to sit on the validation panel that considered whether an art and design programme was academically coherent and of the expected standard.

QAA report

Carlisle College, Engineering, May 2002

'Staff associated with lecturing on the new BSc (Hons) Industrial Systems Engineering final year will receive support both from the University of Sunderland, whose lecturers will deliver the specific lecture material, and from the college – as the staff will be allocated time to shadow the university lecturers during the first delivery of the material.'

Peterborough Regional College

For the past three years, Peterborough Regional College has built into all its new HE programmes an accredited (20 credits) graduate skills module (or professional skills for foundation degrees). Its development generated great debate among the staff teaching on the programmes about the nature, development and assessment of graduate skills (as opposed to key skills).

A research group has been established (funded by the HEFCE Development Fund), and mentored by the HE/FE adviser from the University of Loughborough. This aims to:

- look at the skills deficit of students entering with non-standard qualifications and how to overcome it
- monitor the development of skills that students are expected to have acquired by the time they graduate.

For an account of dealing with potential skills deficits at Somerset College of Arts and Technology, see **Section 6.5**.

4 Assessment

The QAA code of practice has 10 sections for assuring quality and standards in higher education. FE colleges should be able to show how they have considered the precepts of four sections of the code as part of academic review. They include Section 6: Assessment of students, and Section 4: External examining. This is not a question of compliance: the precepts provide guidance for what is seen as good practice in these areas. This section covers some of the assessment precepts.

4.1	QAA comments on assessment
4.2	General principles
4.3	Assessment regulations
4.4	Academic appeals
4.5	Internal moderation/verification
4.6	Writing assessments
4.7	Assessment methods
4.8	Peer assessment
4.9	Working with Edexcel

4.1 QAA comments on assessment

The overview reports for QAA subject reviews 1998-2000 have identified the assessment component of teaching, learning and assessment as one of the priorities for improvement, along with quality management and enhancement. This applies to HEIs and FECs alike.

The QAA identified the following main areas to improve in student assessment:

- clarity of assessment criteria
- consistent application of assessment criteria
- clarity of rules for progression
- match between assessment and planned learning outcomes
- clear differentiation of grade or mark bandings
- articulation of assessment questions
- consistency of oral feedback
- quantity and quality of written feedback
- prompt return of marked work.

What evidence might institutions need to provide for external scrutiny?

Information on:

- the assessment strategy
 - assessment process
 - assessment criteria
 - guidance to markers
 - external examiners'/verifiers' reports
 - procedures for monitoring and recording achievement
 - examination board minutes
- samples of students' work with marks and feedback
- assessment questions/briefs
- guidance on providing feedback to students.

4.2 General principles

The reasons for assessment include the need to:

- assure academic standards
- improve learning
- motivate learning
- provide feedback (for students and staff) to lead to an improvement in performance
- find strengths
- correct errors
- consolidate learning
- provide information for progression – to employers and HEI admission tutors.

Assessment materials

The Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) generic web-site, www.ltsn.ac.uk, has a range of materials on assessment that will be extremely useful to colleges.

Since many disciplines have their own pedagogy of assessment (such as art and design and computing), it is also worth looking at the LTSN subject centres.

Assessment strategy

An assessment strategy needs to address the following points:

- why, in the context of the programme's aims and outcomes, that range of assessment methods was selected
- how the pattern of assessment supports the development of students and their learning
- how the strategy addresses the balance between the demands made of students in terms of their workload and independent learning at different levels
- the relationship to the intended learning outcomes but also to the teaching and learning strategies used
- how the teaching and learning strategy prepares students to cope with assessment. For example, if presentations are used, the students need to develop the skills to make presentations.

Key features of assessment

The assessment strategy should incorporate the following key features, showing why assessment is carried out in a particular way.

There should be a policy on assessment which includes a statement on systematic internal moderation/verification and external standard setting and/or scrutiny, including second marking and anonymous marking.

Four elements need to be aligned:

- level descriptors
- grade descriptors
- assessment criteria
- the assignment brief or assessment task.

Assessments should be appropriate to the learning, and evaluated and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are clear and allow evidence to be generated to meet the standard.

All assessment instruments – including tests, projects and examinations – should be presented clearly with assessment criteria in direct relation to clearly specified learning outcomes. It is good practice for them to be internally moderated/verified.

An assessment schedule should be discussed by all staff teaching on the programme, and made available to students so they can plan their workload in a manageable way across the whole programme. Necessary amendments should be notified and/or negotiated. Students should also be given an indication of when they can expect their assessed work to be returned.

There are a variety of informal and formal assessment methods, ranging from initial diagnostic tests, through internally set formative assessments to summative assessment externally moderated on a periodic sampling basis. The assessments used should cover a sufficient range of instruments and methods to suit a variety of learning styles to offer all students the opportunity to achieve. Students with disabilities must not be disadvantaged, so the subject team may need to explore alternative methods of assessment (see **Section 6.8**).

The specific roles of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment need to be clear.

The purpose and requirements of assessment should be clearly communicated to students at various stages of their experience at college, beginning with pre-course advice and induction. Students and staff (especially those involved in an assessment they have not designed) should understand what students need to do to achieve a particular grading.

Consideration should be given to whether marks rather than grades are appropriate.

Course teams benefit from maximising opportunities for feedback on the students' experience of assessment (through surveys, unit/module evaluations, group discussion and tutorials) to inform annual course reviews and associated action plans.

Mechanisms need to be in place to deal with breaches of assessment regulations and appeals against assessment decisions.

Assessed student work needs to be archived for one year, especially if a QAA subject review is planned.

Northbrook College

Assessment policy

Assessment is at the heart of the learning experience of students. Assessment motivates students and drives their learning. It determines their progression through their programmes and validates their success or failure in meeting programme objectives. It is assessment that provides the main basis of public recognition of achievement and gives it its value and marketability.

Assessment is usually construed as being either diagnostic, formative or summative.

Diagnostic assessment aims to identify attributes or skills in the learner that

suggest appropriate pathways of study, or to identify learning difficulties that require support and resolution.

Formative assessment is designed to enable the learner to obtain feedback on his/her progress in meeting stated objectives and reviewing goals.

Summative assessment provides the means whereby a clear statement of achievement or failure can be made in respect of a student's performance in relation to stated objectives.

Any assessment method can, and often does, involve more than one of these elements. So, for example, much coursework is formative in that it provides an opportunity for students to be given feedback on their level of attainment, but also often counts towards the credit being accumulated for a summative statement of achievement. An end-of-module or end-of-programme written examination is designed primarily to result in a summative judgement on the level of attainment the student has reached; but the result, and discussion around it, can be formative. Both formative and summative assessment can have a diagnostic function. Assessment primarily aimed at diagnosis is intrinsically formative though it would rarely contribute towards a summative judgement.

St Helen's College

Code of assessment practice

Assessment should enable students to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the learning outcomes of a unit/module/course of study and achieved the standard required for their award/course.

The design of the assessment should make effective use of student and staff time.

The purpose and objectives of assessment should be clearly identified and related to the stated learning outcomes of units/modules/courses.

Relevant assessment criteria should be identified and communicated to all those being assessed and to those conducting the assessment. If the explanation is verbal, arrangements must be made to update anyone absent from the session.

Assessment methods should be appropriate to the unit/module/course objectives and capable of testing the learning outcomes.

The practice of assessment should be objective, impartial, consistent and free of bias.

Assessment outcomes should be communicated to students with appropriate feedback to support the learning process.

All higher education courses should produce a student handbook, which contains, *inter alia*, assessment regulations.

Any penalties related to assignment deadlines must be described clearly in the student handbook and enforced consistently.

Key elements of an assessment schedule

The assessment schedule should demonstrate:

- how many assessments are in each unit/module
- weightings of separate assessments
- submission dates
- that there is no under-assessment or over-assessment
- a range of instruments of assessment
- a range of methods of assessment
- that the needs of students with disabilities have been accommodated
- a manageable workload for students
- a published timetable.

The whole course team needs to make time to discuss and agree the assessment schedule because any member of staff could unwittingly affect it.

4.3 Assessment regulations

Students have the right to know what the assessment regulations are and the responsibility to abide by them. Any regulations should be clearly described in the course handbook and the programme specification. They may differ between BTEC HND/HNC programmes and degrees, so the course team must be clear what needs to be covered. For degree courses, most colleges will use the assessment/academic regulations of the validating institution.

Many colleges have developed their own assessment regulations, which might differ according to the kind of HE provision.

St Helen's College

Contents of assessment regulations

1 General principles of assessment

- 1.1 Fulfilment of programme objectives
- 1.2 Confirmation of standards
- 1.3 Assessors and assessors' judgement
- 1.4 Basic requirements of assessment regulations for programmes of study
- 1.5 Modification to individual programme assessment regulations

2 Application of the regulations

3 Programme management committees

- 3.1 Responsibilities of programme management committees
- 3.2 Membership of programme management committees
- 3.3 Mitigation, illness and absence
- 3.4 Appeals

4 Progression, failure and awards

- 4.1 Eligibility for assessment
- 4.2 Conditions for progression
- 4.3 Conditions for awards: final stage assessment
- 4.4 Referral opportunities
- 4.5 Reassessment opportunities
- 4.6 Aegrotat awards

5 Conduct of assessments including invigilated examinations

Appendix A: Rules for the conduct and invigilation of written examinations

- Responsibilities of the student
- Requirements for examinations
- Responsibilities of invigilators for procedures for the conduct of examinations
- Unfavourable circumstances

Appendix B: Acceptable arrangements which may be made for the assessment of students with known disabilities

Appendix C: Academic impropriety

- Definitions: cheating; plagiarism; collusion
- Procedures to be followed in cases of suspected cheating
- Procedures to be followed in cases of suspected plagiarism and collusion
- Appeals procedures

The following statement from Edexcel might affect college's policies on submission dates and action taken in relation to missed deadlines.

'Edexcel centres are encouraged to have an assessment policy which is published to students. This policy should include any rules about deadlines for the submission of work. However once the work is accepted for assessment it must be assessed against the published criteria and cannot be marked down i.e. a Distinction piece of work cannot be given a Pass.

'In the current BTEC Higher Nationals, centres can make use of the common skill 'Managing own self' to penalise the students for late submission, which could ultimately result in the student achieving a low grade for that common skill or indeed failing the common skill and therefore the qualification as a whole.

'It is in the nature of the qualification that many units require business or professional related skills to be demonstrated. The handing in of work to set deadlines is a requirement within the world of work and this can be reflected in the assessment and grading criteria for the related assessment.'

The weighting of assessments is used for a range of reasons, for example, to allocate more marks developmentally and progressively or for different kinds of learning. Any weightings should be made clear in the unit/module guide.

Reading College

We have re-weighted the reflective practice module from 15 to 20 credits on the graphic design BA, so it is now worth more than the dissertation module. We felt that this was a fairer indicator of students' development throughout the course and their understanding and use of the medium.

The course ethos is about facilitating practitioners of graphic design, over theoreticians writing on graphic design. We worked in liaison with staff at Oxford Brookes on this initiative and they are keen to see how it progresses – they have been thinking on similar lines themselves.

Academic honesty

Colleges need to ensure that there is a policy on academic honesty or plagiarism that is clearly stated in the course handbook. A self-declaration on work to be submitted can be helpful.

City College Manchester: Arden School of Theatre

Students now submit all work with a top sheet which gives details of the module, name, and date and must incorporate the following statement.

Statement of academic honesty

This work is entirely my own. The words it contains are my words and, where it has been necessary to use someone else's words, I have accurately attributed them to the writer or speaker who created them.

Some colleges insist that any assessments with definite answers, for example in mathematics, should be done in class.

The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) has funded projects on plagiarism (see www.jisc.ac.uk) and offers an advisory service: www.jiscpas.ac.uk.

4.4 Academic appeals

There should be a formal procedure for students to appeal against assessment decisions. The following example is from Northbrook College whose degrees are validated by the Open University Validation Service.

Northbrook College

HE (OUVS) academic appeals against the Final Examination Board

As a general rule decisions made by the Final Examination Board cannot be overturned. Decisions may only be reviewed in exceptional circumstances. The Academic Board Appeals Panel, as authorised by the Academic Board, may in the following circumstances require the Final Examination Board to reconsider its decision if:

- a candidate requests such a reconsideration and establishes to the satisfaction of the Academic Board Appeals Panel that his or her performance in the examination was adversely affected by illness or other factors which he or she was unable, or for valid reasons unwilling, to divulge before the Final Examination Board reached its decision. The candidate's request must be supported by medical certificates or other documentary evidence acceptable to the Academic Board
- the Academic Board Appeals Panel is satisfied on evidence produced by the candidate or any other person that there has been a material administrative error, or that the examinations were not conducted in accordance with the current regulations for the course, or that some other material irregularity relevant to the assessments has occurred.

Disagreement with the academic judgement of the Final Examination Board in assessing the merits of an individual piece of work or in reaching any assessment decision based on the marks, grades and other information relating to a candidate's performance cannot in itself constitute grounds for a request for reconsideration by a candidate.

A candidate who wishes to appeal should within three days of the publication of grades inform the divisional manager, who will advise the candidate whether there are valid grounds for appeal. Should the candidate not reach agreement with the divisional manager as to the validity of the grounds, a decision will be made by the convenor of the Academic Board Appeals Panel.

The Academic Board Appeals Panel shall convene within one month of receipt of an appeal, and shall communicate its decision to the candidate and the divisional manager within five working days. The decision will be reported to the Academic Board at its next meeting.

The Academic Board Appeals Panel shall comprise the unit manager responsible for quality assurance, as convenor, together with a divisional manager from a division other than that involved in the appeal, and a programme manager from the division involved but from a different programme area.

4.5 Internal moderation/verification

A number of terms are used in colleges and HEIs to describe the process by which course teams ensure that their assessments are fair, consistent, comparable with teaching teams in their own and other institutions, and meet national standards. Although they have slightly different meanings, institutions describe this process as moderation, standardisation or verification, and it is a useful way of sharing practice.

Colleges with Edexcel programmes are required to use internal verification systems to ensure the appropriateness and security of assessment, and to ensure that assessment meets national

standards. Since internal verification schemes were originally developed to meet NVQ requirements, some colleges have refined or adapted their FE procedures to fit higher education programmes.

Internal standardisation usually occurs in two ways:

- moderation of the assignment or examination paper to ensure that the learning outcomes are met, the assessment criteria are clear, and the task is appropriate, and that students will understand what they have to do to achieve
- moderation of assessed student work: either all the student work or a sample is double marked to ensure consistency of standards within a team or across similar student groups. In some colleges, any comments made by the second marker are written on the feedback sheets and made available to students. This process is also called cross-marking or second marking.

Anonymous marking, also called blind marking, is another way of assuring standards because pre-knowledge of students cannot influence the assessment.

Good practice includes a number of assessment methods and several ways of marking, including self-assessment, peer or team assessment, to ensure the broadest possible moderation of standards.

Edexcel requires some work from each assessor to be internally verified and checked by the external verifier.

Bridgewater College

Bridgewater College organises a verification day for each course team, including part-time staff. They look at assessments, have samples available, and expect clear mark schemes and model answers for essay assessments.

University of Plymouth

The University of Plymouth has seven partner colleges and organises cross-moderation events between the colleges and across subjects. Module leaders meet and moderate each other's assessments. This addresses over-grading and over-assessment.

City of Bristol College

Assessment activity brief – checklist for quality

Assessment features are identified, commented on and signed off by the lecturer and internal moderator:

- title
- clearly defined tasks – are they understandable without further input?
- tasks linked to learning outcomes?
- grading criteria contextualised?
- knowledge requirements met?
- group or individual work?
- tasks set at an appropriate level for HE?
- appropriate/varied assessment methods?
- realistic deadlines set?
- realistic/authentic material?
- the assessment is practical in terms of resources and staff?
- the assessment is free from bias and supportive of equal opportunity?

4.6 Writing assessments

Course teams need to think about the language used to write assessments so that students will understand what they have to do. An assessment couched in the language of academic discourse might be appropriate to a final year student but can be very intimidating to one starting a higher education course. A planned approach to introducing the language of the discipline progressively will give students a better chance of achieving the learning outcomes.

Learning support staff are often called upon to deconstruct or interpret assignment briefs because they are not written in language students can easily understand. This can also happen when the brief is overly long.

Some of the time spent agreeing an assignment is usefully spent reviewing the language as well as the assessment design. A clear, concise style will make students feel comfortable with what they are being asked to do. Straightforward language can still require sophisticated activities.

University of Gloucestershire

The university shares its good practice with its partner colleges. A detailed brief is followed by a bullet point checklist at the end, asking students: Have you [fulfilled each of the requirements]..?

Setting the level of an assessment is also important and needs to be discussed. Course teams may find it useful to consult the level descriptors of the QAA framework for higher education qualifications to ensure that the level of the assessment is sufficiently challenging (see **Section 2.1**)

4.7 Assessment methods

The following list gives the range of assessment methods identified in the QAA subject benchmark statements. It provides a potentially rich, cross-discipline resource from which to identify alternative methods for assessing learning outcomes. It is taken from SENDA 'Compliance in higher education –

an audit and guidance tool for accessible practice within the framework of teaching and learning'. This can be downloaded from the web at www.plymouth.ac.uk/disability.

Analytical exercises	Internship diaries
Briefings	Laboratory practical reports
Computer-based assessment and exercises	Laboratory examinations and practical tests
Continuous assessment	Multiple choice testing
Coursework with discussion elements	On-line assessment
Critical diaries, learning logs and journals	Optical mark reader assessments
Critiques	Oral examinations
Data interpretation exercises	Placement or exchange reports
Design tasks	Peer and self-evaluation
Dissertation	Personal research projects
Documentation	Portfolios and sketchbooks
Electronic presentations: CD, web pages etc	Practical reports
Essay assignments	Problem based learning
Examinations (open book)	Projects, independent or group
Examinations (seen)	Sandwich year reports
Examinations (take away)	Simulation exercises
Examinations (unseen)	Slide and picture tests
Exhibition and poster displays	Student-led seminars, presentations and discussions
Extended investigations (eg, statistical)	Synoptic examinations
Fieldwork reports	Treatment reports
Finding primary source material	Video formats
Geological mapping	Viva voce examinations
'In class' and module tests	Work books
	Work experience report

Assessment methods should be appropriate to the learning outcomes and the assessment criteria. When constructing the programme specification, assessment strategies (along with teaching and learning strategies) should be clearly linked to the learning outcomes. An example is the following brief extract from a programme specification in computing at Stockport College.

<i>Stockport College</i>	
<p><u>Skills and other attributes</u></p> <p><u>B Intellectual (thinking) skills – [the student should be] able to:</u></p> <p>B1) Analyse and solve computing problems</p> <p>B2) Design complex information systems that require the use of the principles and tools of information system design</p> <p>B3) Identify a range of solutions and critically evaluate the proposed solutions</p>	<p><u>Teaching and learning methods</u></p> <p>The analysis and problem-solving skills (B1) are developed through lectures, coursework, projects and computer laboratories. Students apply the skills to simple and well-defined problems in the first part of their first year of study. This is followed, in part two of year one and throughout the rest of the programme, by the application of these skills to fairly complex problems.</p> <p>Students gain design and evaluation skills (B2 & B3) through mainly coursework, computer laboratories, and projects. Students exercise these skills in various assignments and consolidate the skills in their final year projects.</p>

	<p><u>Assessment</u></p> <p>Analysis and problem-solving skills are assessed through coursework, time-constrained assignments and projects.</p> <p>Design skills are assessed through computer laboratories and projects.</p> <p>Evaluation skills are assessed through coursework, projects, time-constrained assignments and presentations.</p>
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The following are commonly used assessment methods:

- examination
- case study
- essay
- reports
- posters
- role play
- applying understanding to a particular situation
- practical
- observation
- group work
- peer assessment
- dissertations and projects
- recap quiz
- presentations
- vivas.

Issues to consider:

- gender – men respond better to objective/multiple choice tests than women; women do better with essays
- assessment strategies need to take account of different learning styles
- assessment must take account of students with disabilities
- assessment should offer a mix across the whole programme, not just individual units/modules
- students should have the opportunity to demonstrate the full range of abilities and skills
- if assessments are planned carefully then this can minimise problems elsewhere, for example with plagiarism. An assessment that is closely related to specific curriculum design or delivery will not lend itself to indiscriminate quoting from texts or downloading from the Internet
- creative/innovative assessment methods take more time to set up and conduct.

(Thanks to Professor Michael Bradford, Pro Vice-Chancellor at the University of Manchester, who gave permission for a number of points to be included from his lecture on assessment to the annual conference for affiliated institutions in July 2002.)

4.8 Peer assessment

Peer assessment has led to some debate. It is generally agreed that it is good practice to get students to assess their own and others' work, to devise criteria and make judgements. On the other hand, it can lead to some tensions, especially if the assessment is the result of group work.

Moray College

Peer assessment is one of the approaches used on the BA fine art course at Moray College and one which has proved to be beneficial for the students involved. Where they have been engaged on a common project, they are invited to assess one another's work. This exercise has been carried out with first and second-year students and includes a requirement to design their own assessment criteria.

Student groups are usually quick to organise a system of marking, and discover for themselves reasons to employ weighting and grade criteria. They have demonstrated efficient teamwork and, whilst every group tends to have evident leaders, all members participate actively, often contributing to lively debate on issues such as fairness and standards. Observing them in action, as their lecturer, I have been impressed by how focused they can be on the task, and how seriously they take their responsibilities. There have, for instance, been occasions when they have spontaneously entered into 'moderation' when they detected discrepancies in their judgements.

As with other forms of assessment, an important aspect of this exercise is the feedback session that follows. The students are asked to explain the criteria they have applied and give a critical appraisal of each piece of work along with the marks. This is usually done with refreshing honesty but great sensitivity. Those involved often comment on finding it much more difficult and demanding than they had anticipated, but say that active participation gives them a real understanding and appreciation of the process.

City College Manchester

Tutor feedback: HND music performance (Merit grade)

'Mountie' is a cheeky and well delivered blues with a strong stamp of femininity. You have derived and applied the essence of blues feel and formula with some effective breaks eg the stop pre guitar solo. The 12/8 feel also works well giving an appropriate blues swing to the piece. Your vocal line is appropriately bluesy and the vocal break at the end with the harmony on the vocals is a fitting end to what is a standard blues formula.

'My Words' was a suitably contrasting tune with some effective musical and production ideas. I like the vocal interaction which helps create an element of confusion and excitement for the listener. I feel the instrumentation ideas could have been developed further, however, especially in the earlier stages of the song. The vocal interaction ideas could also have been applied to other instruments for interest and variation – eg develop the guitar ideas further to avoid the straight funky strum idea. The breakdown to the shaker and use of space was effective but I feel this could have moved on a little more quickly. Always be careful that parts have long enough to get established but don't outstay their usefulness and effectiveness.

Overall you provided an effective result. Try to develop other melodic instrumental ideas in your composition as well as vocal ideas (this clearly comes first with this being your first instrument but do endeavour to develop your use and understanding of the roles and uses of other instruments also).

Tutor feedback: HND Travel & Tourism (Pass grade)

On the whole, a good piece of work. Some sections are significantly stronger than others, notably functions of management and culture. Very good outline of the functions. You would have benefited from applying these functions to the management of CCM Ltd, with critique.

Again, good application to the three organisations and coherently put.

Areas to improve:

1. Table of contents and introduction (see above).
2. Overall format of report. Write in paragraphs which have logical progression, not stand alone sentences.
3. Try to compare and contrast theories, ie, types of structure and management theories.
4. Provide more application to the tourism industry and give examples.

Progression requirements

Students need to know what is required for them to progress from an HND or foundation degree to the second or third year of a degree. (See the University of Plymouth's materials on Student progression and transition: www.spat.ac.uk.) They also need to be clear about possible exemptions from professional bodies' awards.

4.9 Working with Edexcel

During QAA subject reviews there have been a number of tensions, especially when subject specialist reviewers are not familiar with Edexcel and its systems. Edexcel has been meeting with the QAA to see how to address some of the issues that have arisen.

There is some difference in terminology. For example, in further education *benchmarks* are national pass rates; for the QAA they are statements about subjects that represent the threshold for undergraduate programmes. There are no specific QAA subject benchmark statements for Higher National programmes although some of the published statements do apply to BTEC Higher Nationals. They will be taken into account as the BTEC Higher Nationals are updated for submission to the QCA national qualifications framework.

Regulated BTEC Higher Nationals will sit within the national qualifications framework and are expected to be transparent to any end user. In order to achieve this, the QCA requires that qualifications meet the published design principles.

The external responsibility for quality assurance on colleges rests with OFSTED, the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and the QAA, each from a very different standpoint – inspection versus peer review.

In spite of these inherent difficulties and potential confusions, it is Edexcel's intention to:

- root HND/HNCs in the intermediate level of the QAA framework
- address the issue of credits, particularly important for students progressing onto top-up degrees (2+2 or 2+1) as national credit frameworks are developed
- explore the potential of introducing external examiners to independent assessment for BTEC Higher Nationals, to bring them closer to HE models.

Current issues for colleges delivering Higher Nationals

Supporting a large number of option units (optional to the centre not the student) with specialist content is difficult. Not many FECs can offer a real choice of these.

Many of the current specifications were revised in 1998 and some, such as the computing qualifications, are rapidly getting out of date. The intention is to review and redesign the specifications for 2003 in such a way that they should not become out of date. Edexcel sees it as essential to ensure that the portfolio of units is fit for purpose, and reflects sector responsibilities and workforce development plans.

Centre-devised units offer scope for keeping up-to-date and meeting local needs. Edexcel anticipates that the use of 'centre choice' units will continue once the BTEC Higher Nationals are accredited to the national qualifications framework.

Guidance for the new specifications will be written with QAA practices in mind – the qualifications framework, programme specifications and the code of practice for assuring academic quality and standards.

Generic criteria for pass, merit and distinction will be strengthened, and there will be better guidance about how to apply the grades. It is good practice to have clear grading assessment criteria on the assignment.

Units should be seen holistically to avoid over-assessment. Integrated units that meet all the outcomes can make for a more coherent learning experience.

The Edexcel guidance to tutors is carefully crafted. The language is particularly important, ranging from *advised* to *must*.

Edexcel works with National Training Organisations, Sector Skills Councils and employers to meet occupational standards. Staff from FECs are involved in the development of new or revised specifications.

5 Marketing for recruitment

5.1	What does marketing mean?
5.2	Research
5.3	Networks and liaison
5.4	Textual and on-line information
5.5	Recruitment, referral and progression

5.1 What does marketing mean?

The term marketing refers to the set of activities which aims to promote the college in a competitive environment. This can involve market research to support the development of new courses, attendance at special events, contact with former students or, most frequently, publicity. This section is mainly about marketing in the sense of promotion. For information about market research as part of curriculum development, see **Section 3.4**. Depending on the college's strategy, different approaches may be needed to marketing HE programmes.

The message:

- be confident and positive about the HE provision. FE has much to offer in terms of flexibility, levels of support, and an innovative approach to course development. Successful marketing is likely to be confident in tone and clear about the value of studying at HE level within an FE college
- ensure that student support staff as well as course leaders see the draft materials to be certain that they convey an accurate message about the experience that students will have and the support they can receive
- tell potential students how they can find up-to-date information on the financial implications of studying at HE level, including crèche provision, and travel subsidies
- make clear the progression routes open to students when they complete a course in the college, and their employment prospects.

5.2 Research

For most HE courses, the validation submission document will require details of the anticipated student market. The college can be proactive by:

- systematic gathering of evidence through contacts with employers, professional organisations, schools, community organisations and existing students
- close liaison with outreach workers and other college staff who are active externally
- approaching the local Regional Development Agency if employer links are less well developed. Organisations such as Business Link or the Sector Skills Councils, whose role is to gather and collate labour market intelligence on a regular basis, will also provide useful information (see also **Sections 3.4 and 3.6**)
- keeping up-to-date on how the HEFCE funding methodology encourages colleges to target under-represented groups of students.

5.3 Networks and liaison

Word-of-mouth promotion, by both students and professionals, is often the most effective way of marketing courses at local level. Local networks are a highly effective way of spreading information. Developing and sustaining them systematically enables ready dissemination of up-to-date information.

Although outreach and marketing are distinct (the former aimed at raising aspirations rather than promoting one particular institution), the two areas should liaise to ensure consistent and sensitive messages are conveyed, and that inclusivity is a clear message in all HE programme marketing materials. Outreach staff should also be able to provide accurate information on progression opportunities and the financial implications of HE study, which is one of the first enquiries usually made (see **Section 6.10**).

Filton College

Filton College has developed outreach work in local communities in Bristol. It believes that it needs to use local people to teach local people – those who will have credibility with the target group.

The college also works with primary and secondary schools in various ways. For example, it runs a series of life drawing events for secondary school pupils and their teachers on a Saturday morning to offer:

- an experience of HE teaching
- a purposeful activity contributing to students' academic success
- marketing of the college and its courses to both prospective students and their teachers.

Make sure that careers services and Connexions partnerships are kept fully informed of developments at the college, and invite them in on a regular basis to visit the provision.

Ensure that local HEI guidance services are kept informed about the provision. A significant amount of referral across institutions takes place at this level, even in the current competitive environment.

A graduation event for HE students is very popular with students and their families, and an ideal marketing opportunity.

Alumni associations enable colleges to use student success to market higher education provision effectively. Information on the destination of graduates is now required for the HEFCE-funded courses, and this can also be a valuable source of information on which to develop an association linking former students and keeping track of their progress.

Examples of alumni associations on the web are:

- Liverpool Institute for the Performing Arts, www.lipa.ac.uk
- Rose Bruford College, www.bruford.ac.uk
- Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, www.bcftcs.ac.uk.

5.4 Textual and on-line information

Carefully-targeted publicity in local (or national) newspapers and journals may attract wide attention. Identify those which are likely to reach the target audience, then produce a press-release, and write a 'human interest' story on the experience of some students (with their permission).

Where funds are limited, consider working in partnership with other local institutions to market the range of HE programmes available in an attractive and comprehensive brochure, or on a regional web-site such as uni4me.com. Every region has a HEFCE-funded HE consortium (for contact details see HEFCE 2002/03).

Inclusion in the annual Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) Handbook will reach a national audience for colleges where a niche area of provision is being developed (wwwucas.ac.uk). Writing the UCAS profile for all the college's courses gives considerably more space to describe them and target specific groups.

It is advisable to incorporate a disclaimer into any publicity to cover the college if a course is withdrawn or has to be changed. The following is an example:

'This prospectus is prepared well in advance of the academic year to which it relates. Consequently, details of programmes offered may vary with staff changes, and fees payable may be affected by inflation or national changes. The college therefore reserves the right to make such alterations to programmes and fees as are found to be necessary. If the college makes an offer of a place, it is essential that you are aware of the current terms on which the offer is based. If you are in any doubt, please feel free to ask for confirmation of the precise position for the year in question, before you accept the offer.'

Ensure that the college's HE web-site is up-to-date and attractive. (This could be an ideal student project.) The web-site should incorporate a range of links to further sources of information, including student support and employment opportunities.

Use national events such as Adult Learners Week to promote the college's HE courses. This takes place in May each year. Contact the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (www.niace.org.uk) for further information and contact details of regional co-ordinators.

Macclesfield College

The college gives publicity about the foundation degree in business to all its level 3 business students who are going on work experience, to pass on to the human resources department of their placement.

5.5 Recruitment, referral and progression

Pre-course information

Evidence indicates that choosing the right course is a major factor influencing success, and, before enrolment takes place, colleges should make available information and guidance on all options. This may be provided by trained advisers or by course teams (see also **Section 6**, Academic advice and support: the student life-cycle).

Students applying should have access to clear advice on the application and admissions processes, including writing personal statements, and the sort of reference required. Sources of advice on courses include UCAS course profiles which map interests, attributes and experience against listed courses and give details of the admissions process. Table 7 sets out good practice on admissions.

Table 7 Good practice on admissions procedures

<u>Element of admissions process</u>	<u>Good practice</u>
Pre-entry information	Set clear criteria for selection and communicate them to applicants.
Selection	Provide feedback to applicants who are rejected. This is particularly important for local students who may not have the option of studying elsewhere.
Recruitment	Although the HE recruitment climate can be highly competitive for FECs, it is far better to recruit with integrity – students are more likely to succeed.
UCAS admissions	Participate in UCAS training courses for FE staff if available. UCAS publishes a booklet about the process for tutors. Plan the annual calendar in accordance with the standard national timetable, with a deadline of January in the year of entry.
Data collection and monitoring	Establish mechanisms to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor the proportion of queries converted to intake (feed back to marketing) • enable the college to monitor the application profile and to track students through from application to entry and subsequent achievement.

Clearing

Clearing is a process led by UCAS, immediately after results of GCE A-levels and Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs) are published in mid-August. Courses with remaining places are advertised and students who have not been offered a higher education place may apply through the UCAS Clearing procedures or, in some cases, directly to the institution.

HE tutors must be available to talk about their courses to prospective students who telephone the college, and to ascertain their suitability. A friendly welcome, clear information, and efficient referral processes can make all the difference to students who may be ringing several institutions. It is also, obviously, advisable to have in place the means whereby decisions can be made and communicated rapidly to potential students.

Many colleges recruit a majority of their HND students during and soon after Clearing. A number of colleges are not members of UCAS, and depend upon recruiting at this time. This unpredictable method of recruiting sits uneasily with a funding method which allocates a target number of places. Furthermore, the drive to meet targets can sometimes lead to insufficient attention being paid to matching the student to the appropriate course, resulting in higher withdrawal rates and lower achievement.

Table 8 sets out some elements of good practice.

Table 8 Good practice in relation to progression, withdrawal and transfer

<u>Stage in progression</u>	<u>Good practice</u>
Students progressing on to the next level within the FEC or to an HEI (for example, HND to 2+1 or 2+2), or from level 1 of a degree to subsequent years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on application process • Written transcript of modules completed, clearly indicating levels and grades • Support for students to familiarise themselves with a different study environment, for example, information on open days and opportunities to visit
Students seeking to withdraw or transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to establish cause of dissatisfaction • Refer to Student Services for independent advice on future options • Information on the implications for temporary withdrawal/transfer (finance, accommodation, future study, other options) • Information on mechanisms for temporary withdrawal and transfer, including contacting the local education authority (LEA)
Students seeking to withdraw temporarily or defer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss options which best suit their circumstances • Refer to Student Services for independent advice on options • Information on the implications for withdrawal (finance, accommodation, future study, other options) • Information on mechanisms for withdrawal, including advice to the LEA*
Students failing, or at risk of failing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all students are aware of assessment regulations and mechanism for appeal. This is particularly important for indirectly funded provision • Ensure additional support is available via Student Services and the students' union for students wishing to argue extenuating circumstances or seeking to appeal

* Care should be taken to help the student clarify his/her status with the LEA. If the student is recorded as having left the course, this may affect eligibility for future financial support.