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# Demand for foundation degrees and engaging employers in the East Midlands

**Report to HEFCE by the Centre for Labour Market Studies, University of Leicester, and University of Derby**

Dr Arwen Raddon and Mr Martin Quinn  
Centre for Labour Market Studies  
University of Leicester

With assistance from  
Mr Jeff Braham and Ms Lisa Smoothy  
University of Derby

Centre for Labour Market Studies  
University of Leicester  
7-9 Salisbury Road  
Leicester  
LE1 7QR  
Tel: 0116 252 5949/50/51  
Fax: 0116 252 5953  
E-mail: [clms@le.ac.uk](mailto:clms@le.ac.uk)  
[www.clms.le.ac.uk](http://www.clms.le.ac.uk)

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## Executive Summary

This research involved gathering and analysing data from a number of sources regarding the demand for foundation degrees (FDs), and using this to focus on four key employment sectors where there appears to be a low demand and uptake of these programmes in the East Midlands region. The four sectors were: logistics, food and drink, construction and retail. Employer interviews were conducted in the four sectors to establish current demand and where gaps were felt to exist.

The central aims of this study were to:

- ❖ Assess the validity of the demand-led information provided as the basis for establishing FDs to meet the skills needs of specific sectors;
- ❖ Assess the reasons for the apparent lack of uptake for FDs in certain sectors;
- ❖ Gather good practice recommendations on the development of FDs;
- ❖ Make recommendations for a closer match between sector demand and educational provision.

### *Key Findings*

A range of factors can impact on the uptake and success of FD programmes. They include the institutional context for FDs, the area of study, the conditions of the labour market, and individual and employer motivations for engaging in further study. Although FDs related to the public sector are often perceived to be more successful than those related to the private sector, the picture was found to be more complex in this research. FDs are shown to have relevance to different areas of the labour market, in both the public and private sectors.

Demand-led information is an important basis for developing and evaluating courses. However, such information is not necessarily being used as the basis for FD development at present. There is also a role for *creating* demand through innovative or responsive approaches and through employers demonstrating the value of FDs and raising the profile of their own industry.

There is a very low level of awareness of FDs at present among employers and employees, and even where there is awareness their relevance is not fully understood. Nevertheless, where employers have heard of FDs and have employees studying on them, they are well regarded and provide a range of benefits to the business and the individual. Sector Skills Councils and other stakeholders can and do play an important part in raising awareness of education and training opportunities for their sector.

There is confusion about where FDs fit into the more established and recognised range of available qualifications. The perception of FDs being 'too academic' is also hampering recognition of their value to business. A particular challenge will be demonstrating to sectors with a large number of low-skills jobs how HE can bring benefits to employees and employers. Indeed, in some areas there is more demand for more generic and tailored programmes than for sector-specific programmes.

There is a lack of information among employers about the programmes available in the region and low levels of contact with providers. There appears to be strong potential for HEIs to make links with companies in all of these sectors via more tailored programmes, which can be later used by employees towards an FD.

### *Suggested Actions*

A number of suggested actions are presented based on these findings. These relate to the East Midlands but also have wider applicability within the UK.

In order to ensure that a clear and consistent picture can be provided on FD enrolment and the current position of FDs, data should be collated and held centrally by Foundation Degree Forward (FDF). Information on demand for FDs also needs to be brought together more centrally for providers. Equally, demand needs to be *created* through effective evaluation of gaps, and innovative or flexible approaches. Additional targeted funding may help providers to develop such approaches.

A more in-depth review is needed of the demand for generic rather than sector-specific FDs. Where sector-specific courses are found to have a good demand, their relevance can be enhanced through links to professional associations or accreditation where possible. This helps to build recognition and links to accreditation of prior learning and alternative pathways into HE. Demonstrating relevance is also key. Pamphlets or other marketing materials that make a clear business case for investing in FDs are needed to persuade employers of their relevance and value. Where recruitment is low, the title 'foundation degree' should be evaluated and perhaps marketed differently.

At the sectoral level, a broad and realistic picture needs to be developed of where higher education fits within each sector's career pathways and skills agenda. Sector Skills Councils can play a key role in ensuring that FDs are built into each sector's qualifications framework and career pathway. However, where HE is not necessarily the most appropriate response at this time, alternative courses or provision will need to be explored. Stakeholders may need to work with employers to improve the image of sectors where HE is perceived as not relevant, but where there is in fact a demand from employers.

An evaluation is needed of the institutional frameworks of higher education institutions and further education colleges delivering FDs, and how FDs fit into this, to assess the support that exists, where support is lacking and how this can be strengthened. In order to build awareness and to gain support, FDs need to be publicised and marketed both to employers and learners, but also within institutions. A monthly newsletter distributed across each institution could provide updates on relevant FD information from agencies or other stakeholders, including 'good news stories' and case studies that demonstrate success, as well as learning points. Building on the success of the Providers' Forum that formed part of this research, further joint activities would help to promote sharing of good practice and co-operation between institutions.

Awareness of FDs, as well as wider education provision, will benefit from the establishment of longer-term relationships between providers and employers. This should ideally involve a more incremental development approach, to engage employers at different levels of learning over time.

### *Further Research*

The report ends by identifying areas of investigation that were outside the remit of this project but which would support development of FDs in the East Midlands and more widely.

## 1 Introduction

This document reports on research undertaken by the Centre for Labour Market Studies (CLMS), University of Leicester, with assistance from the University of Derby, and funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). The research focus arose from discussions within the Lifelong Learning and Skills Group that met under the auspices of the East Midlands Universities Association.

The findings aim to inform the development of foundation degrees (FDs) in the East Midlands, and the policy directions taken in linking employer demand to the supply of appropriate programmes of learning by higher education institutions (HEIs) and other providers. The general findings and recommendations are also highly relevant to other UK regions.

The central aims of this project were to:

- ❖ Assess the validity of the demand-led information provided as the basis for the formation of FDs to meet the skills needs of specific sectors;
- ❖ Assess the reasons for the apparent lack of uptake for FDs in certain sectors of employment;
- ❖ Gather good practice recommendations on the development of FDs; and
- ❖ Make recommendations for a closer match between sector demand and educational provision.

### *Foundation Degrees and Employer Demand*

Foundation degrees were intended as a demand-led approach to meet the needs of employers and workers. In the East Midlands, demand was identified for FD programmes in areas such as retail, logistics and food and drink. Not only was there an apparent employer demand identified by stakeholders such as the Learning and Skills Council, and the related Sector Skills Councils, but there was also a perceived skills shortage in these sectors within the East Midlands. These factors would seem to bode well for FD programmes. However, regional colleges and universities continue to experience difficulty in recruiting students particularly to FD programmes related to the retail, logistics, food and drink and construction sectors.

This report aims to identify where the missing link may lie between the demand and the uptake of FDs in these four key sectors. It also provides examples of good practice, explores issues raised by a range of stakeholders related to these sectors and FD programmes, and makes recommendations for potential approaches to these complex issues.

The research started out by identifying three key hypotheses that could be made about this apparent mismatch between supply and demand, which will be explored in the following discussion:

- ❖ That the information on demand for FD programmes in specific sectors was incorrect;
- ❖ That the demand is there, but the programmes that were developed in response are in some way not meeting this demand;
- ❖ That employers would like to see such skills developed at the FD level, but there is low demand among individual employees.

The research consulted a range of stakeholders in order to gather information about perceived differences between demand and supply. In addition, in gathering data about the

mechanisms through which learning providers in higher education identify demand and develop courses, this project provides good practice recommendations.

## 2 Methodology

In order to explore these issues, and to identify other potential reasons for the demand gap, the research was carried out in three stages.

### *Stage 1: Review of Foundation Degrees in the East Midlands*

Two key sources of existing data on FDs in the East Midlands were reviewed. Firstly, a review was carried out of key documents about FD programmes in the region. This included previous research, and publicly available information from stakeholders at the regional level in brochures, leaflets and websites. Stakeholders included education providers, Foundation Degree Forward, HEFCE, the East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) and the East Midlands Universities Association. Relevant information was also reviewed at the national level, such as national studies of FDs and information available from the national Sector Skills Councils.

Secondly, recruitment data was collected from East Midlands FD providers, with additional information, where possible, on programmes that had failed to recruit students. This was a particularly time-consuming aspect of the research as it soon became evident that there was no central source for this data.

### *Stage 2: Interviews with Key Stakeholders: Reviewing Demand*

The next stage involved gathering views from three different groups of stakeholders. The aim was to explore a range of issues, focusing on the level of demand for FDs, what was working and what was less successful, and views on how this might be improved and other areas of provision that might be relevant. Firstly, an FD Providers' Forum was held with representatives from further and higher education institutions in the region. This was followed by interviews with employers in the four key sectors – logistics, food and drink, construction and retail.

In addition, stakeholders related to the four key sectors were interviewed, including the relevant Sector Skills Councils, Foundation Degree Forward, EMDA, the East Midlands New Technology Initiative and the regional representative of the Sector Skills Development Agency. These interviews were used to expand our knowledge of general issues related to FDs and to verify information gathered from employer interviews and the review of sectoral data.

In order to support these interviews and to provide a clear picture of each sector, skills profiles were prepared for each of the four sectors.

### *Stage 3: Analysis of Data and Preparation of Final Report and Recommendations*

*The data from the interviews and documentation was analysed using a thematic analysis and a SWOT analysis. This helped us to identify key themes within the interviews (e.g. current demand for skills, views of FD programmes, areas for future development), and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats faced by the failing FD programmes. This report discusses the data and draws on this to provide recommendations for the development of the FD programmes in the East Midlands.*

### **3 Reviewing Uptake of Foundation Degrees in the East Midlands**

This section reviews two sources of existing data: firstly, the existing research and documentation on FDs and, secondly, the data for recruitment on to programmes in the East Midlands.

#### **3.1 Existing Research and Documentation**

The existing research on FDs at both the national and regional level is relatively limited at this time. This partly reflects the stage of development reached with FDs in the UK. FDs have been in existence since 2001, and there is a range of material available from the Government and agencies related to FDs. However, the amount of information at the educational provider level, and in terms of research carried out, is still relatively low.

We now review the existing knowledge on FDs at the national level, before moving on to look at the East Midlands. The national work raises some important and relevant general themes and issues for consideration in this current research.

##### *3.1.1 Foundation Degrees: General Issues and Themes*

A considerable volume of general information on FDs is available on the Internet. This ranges from evaluations of individual degree programmes to advice for students, employers and institutions. Such literature can be found on government and agency websites, e.g. Foundation Degree Forward, [www.fdf.ac.uk](http://www.fdf.ac.uk); the Department for Education and Skills' FD site, [www.foundationdegree.org.uk](http://www.foundationdegree.org.uk); the Sector Skills Development Agency, [www.ssda.org.uk](http://www.ssda.org.uk); and HEFCE, [www.hefce.ac.uk](http://www.hefce.ac.uk).

We will focus here on the two strands of research literature that have emerged over the last five years. Two major research projects have been carried out on foundation degrees, one a national report for the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the other on FDs in the East Midlands by the East Midlands Universities Association for EMDA. There are also a number of academic articles on FDs that highlight themes that are of importance to this project.

##### *3.1.2 The Aims, Introduction and Development of Foundation Degrees*

The first plans to introduce FDs were announced in February 2000 by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. By July 2000, a prospectus had been launched outlining the key national policy aims of the new qualification (DfES, 2000). The FD was aimed at the intermediate level, to address skills shortages at both national and regional levels. It was designed not only to enhance the employability of students, but also to attract students from a non-academic background, thereby assisting with the broader government policy aim of widening participation in higher education.

Indeed, the new FD was part of a more general attempt by the Government to rationalise and improve the quality of the education and qualifications below undergraduate degree level (DfES, 2000). In the government White Paper *The Future of Higher Education* (DfES, 2003), it was announced that Higher National Diplomas and Certificates (HNDs and HNCs) were to be moved into the FD framework. Indeed, most HNDs were expected to be modified or replaced by new foundation degrees. This has particularly important implications for awareness of, and demand for, FDs among employers, since HNDs and HNCs have wide recognition amongst employers and are a recognised route into sectors such as construction.

In order to meet these policy aims, the FD would require unprecedented levels of employer involvement in the design and review of courses. The new FD programmes were developed with the intention that students would undertake a significant amount of work-based learning, making the new qualification attractive to those already in full-time employment, and with a curriculum tailored to suit specific sectors. The vocational element of these courses would be underpinned by academic learning and focus on improving both key and generic skills. The intended outcome was that, by the end of the course, the student should be in a position either to make progress at work and/or to move on to an honours degree (York Consulting, 2004).

To support the development of FDs, Foundation Degree Forward (FDF) was founded as part of the Government's White Paper. FDF was established to support high quality provision of the new FD qualification. This support was to be provided through a centre of expertise, partnership with the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) in the development of FD frameworks, and a validation and quality assurance service through a network of participating HEIs. FDF now plays a key role in promoting FDs nationwide and at the regional level, encouraging partnership between key stakeholders, disseminating information, establishing networks of expertise and good practice, helping to forge partnerships between higher and further education providers, and providing consultancy and commissioning research. The FDF journal *Forward* provides news, policy updates and examples of good practice in FD design, development and delivery (FDF, 2004). Employer engagement has proved to be a key theme since the first edition of *Forward*.

### 3.1.3 Employer Engagement

Employer engagement is a vital issue for foundation degrees. Improving the link between employer demand and the provision of courses in HEIs is a central tenet of the recent *Memorandum* between the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) and the higher education sector, with the aim of increasing 'the contribution of HE to the UK's productivity and international performance' (SSDA, 2004: 2). FDs potentially provide a key means through which to improve this link between demand and supply. The objectives set for FDs are:

- ❖ To contribute to the reduction in skill shortages at the associate professional and higher technician level by equipping students with a combination of technical skills, academic knowledge and transferable skills that are valued by employers and students.
- ❖ To expand the number and range of foundation degrees and contribute to widening participation by providing flexible and accessible progression routes for young people starting careers, those in employment, and those returning to work.
- ❖ To promote collaboration between employers, Regional Development Agencies, Sector Skills Councils, universities, higher and further education colleges in developing foundation degrees. (DfES, 2003: 6)

EMDA commissioned research on the potential for development of further FD programmes to support the development of its priority sectors and emerging clusters (EMUA, 2005).

Employer engagement with and support for FDs is not only vital to their uptake but, as Tierney and Slack (2005) note, can equally be vital in ensuring that individual learners are able to benefit from their investment in lifelong learning. If employers are not aware of the FD programmes on which individual employees wish to enrol, they are unlikely to recognise the benefits of participation or to reward the outcomes of the learning.

One of the first articles published in *Forward* outlined the experience of Leeds Metropolitan University (LMU) in engaging employers in an 'evolutionary' way (Stoney and Hudson, 2004). The article argues that the success of employer engagement, and thus of the FD itself, relies on the success of number of relationships while developing and delivering the course. LMU focused efforts on promoting a continuous dialogue between employers, institutions, prospective students, stakeholder groups and government bodies. Stoney and Hudson (2004: 4) emphasise that Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and SSCs are vital sources of information for course developers, and that maintaining a constant flow of information means that these bodies can act as 'intelligence points between education and businesses'. One means through which LMU developed this was to compile a monthly bulletin, which included updates on any issues arising amongst the RDAs and SSCs and which related to FDs. Indeed, RDAs, SSCs and the New Technology Initiative were all recognised as key brokers in the learning relationship within LMU's model for FDs. Among other measures, this was felt to lead to the development of successful and rewarding FD courses.

Another important element identified in LMU's approach was to consider different 'learning models'. The dialogue process involved looking at different options according to the needs of the learners and employers, such as embedding other national qualifications, such as City and Guilds, or professional certification, within the FD programme. Another option was focusing on more general programmes in management for technical staff who were moving into supervisory and management roles; or focusing on 'niche markets' where there was an identified skills shortage, for example FDs for the television industry. Finally, blended learning approaches were another model of learning that could be investigated in order to enhance access.

Stoney and Hudson also highlight the complex nature of the relationship between the educational institution and the employer, noting that there are a range of steps involved in employers coming to look at FDs. Part of this is about making the business case to employers to secure their involvement. Some of the benefits emphasised include: 'enhanced employability of graduates, financial and recruitment advantages, regional partnerships, ownership of the learning, goodwill and relevance' (2004: 5). Equally, an emphasis is placed on enabling employers to shape the programme, whether an FD or another programme. Above all, they stress that employers can, if they choose, be involved at every stage of the FD programme development:

*The framework enables the development of programmes that can facilitate employer involvement at all levels of design, delivery and assessment of foundation degrees in line with the type of business and the business objectives. At one end of the continuum they may only request specific training programmes but at the other end, they may be fully engaged in the design, delivery and assessment of a foundation degree. (Stoney and Hudson, 2004: 5)*

Equally, employers can select units of learning or full FD programmes.

*Within the framework, there is traditional development of foundation degrees for full and part-time students. However, the framework also accommodates the design and delivery of single units of learning that can lead to an award and meet employer specific need. (Stoney and Hudson, 2004: 5)*

This would appear to have major implications at the institutional level, given the extensive work that often goes into putting programmes together for course approval in HEIs. In order to make this work at the institutional level, LMU has established a strong, centralised approach to formulating and gaining approval for different FD programmes. As well as

sharing practice across the institution, to ensure that FD programmes meet university policy and requirements, LMU established:

*...a group of interested colleagues who meet on a regular basis and review, monitor and evaluate changes in the environment, design issues, quality and standards of programmes and the need for future development. (Stoney and Hudson, 2004: 6)*

Whilst this is a simple step for the institution, a key element that appears to underpin what is seen as a successful approach at LMU is institutional backing and cross-departmental/ cross-faculty collaboration to ensure that a flexible approach can be taken whilst meeting the stringent requirements of academic approval at the university level.

### 3.1.4 Evaluating Foundation Degrees

The DfES has commissioned two major research projects looking into FDs. The first of these by York Consulting produced an evaluation of the new qualifications in September 2004. The second project was undertaken by the National Centre for Social Research (NCSR) at the same time as this research and was published in November 2006. and looks at the implementation of FDs in the Early Years sector. NCSR conducted case studies at five different institutions as well as a longitudinal survey of students, who were interviewed at various stages of their studies and again once they have completed their degree.

The research by York Consulting (2004) was undertaken with the aim of providing an early understanding of the nature and range of FDs available and to inform short-term policy development. The research was conducted in three stages, with the first being an initial mapping of the extent of the uptake of FDs in the UK. The research team used databases from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, the Higher Education Students Early Statistics survey conducted by HEFCE, the Higher Education Statistics Agency and the Individualised Learner Records from the Learning and Skills Council. A major finding was that no dataset offered a comprehensive overview of the number of FD courses available or the number of students enrolled on them. Two years on we have encountered similar problems in the East Midlands when trying to collate data for this current project.

The second stage of York Consulting's research consisted of a combined postal and web-based survey of students from across the country, which attracted 841 responses in total. The third stage of the research involved conducting case studies in 15 institutions around the UK where FDs were running. The team interviewed a total of 68 members of staff during the course of these case studies. We now consider some of the key findings of the report.

Overall, it was suggested that FDs could be a useful means of allowing people in work to gain a qualification: 63% of the student sample were in full-time employment while studying. The main reasons given by the students for undertaking an FD were gaining a higher education qualification (31%), progressing to an honours degree (21%), and the opportunity to study whilst at work (16%). Indeed, the work-based learning element of many FDs proved to be popular but the standard of this element was mixed, as was the level of employer involvement, although there were positive examples of involvement.

In terms of the aim of replacing HNDs, which have been popular with industry, progress was seen to be mixed. There was greater impact where there was a gap in the HND provision, including areas such as qualifications for teaching assistants, which have proved to be one of the more popular subjects for FDs across the UK.

Recruitment levels were found to be high for FDs, but there were potential problems in terms of:

- ❖ over-supply
- ❖ backward migration — where a student is recruited after not gaining access to a higher qualification such as the honours degree, thus reducing places for target groups
- ❖ market erosion — where the FD programme potentially competes with and loses out to other similar programmes in the same institution (e.g. HNCs in a similar field).

The report stressed that these issues 'need to be monitored by institutions'. Notably, where FDs were seen to be successful, it was found that there was more likely to be good support from, and involvement of, employers and industry bodies.

An important finding was that FDs seem to work better in the post-1992 universities where they have become part of the institutional philosophy. Whilst pre-1992 institutions saw FDs as an area for development, it was also felt that a lot of work was needed in this area. The qualifications were, nevertheless, seen by institutions as a major opportunity to work towards their strategic aims of addressing skills shortages and widening participation in HE.

The report identified a number of key policy implications, and we highlight the following as having relevance to this current study:

- ❖ Important to ensure that the work-based element of the course is relevant to the degree and/or employment of the student.
- ❖ Essential that employers are involved in the design and review of FDs.
- ❖ Employer involvement is more effective when it takes place via an employer network, public sector body or stakeholder group.
- ❖ RDAs and SSCs have a crucial role in the understanding and success of foundation degrees.

There are also two regionally based reports of interest to this project. Firstly, One North East, the RDA for the North East, commissioned research into the demand for FDs in the North East (Step Ahead Research Ltd, 2004). It found low levels of awareness of FDs, echoing other research findings. One of the training providers interviewed particularly illustrated this point:

*Foundation degrees are an excellent idea but they are not marketed or publicised enough. If we're selling the concept we need to believe in it, and that means having more information ourselves. I went into a school recently and neither the pupils nor the staff knew about foundation degrees...And I have yet to meet an employer who's heard of them, yet we have over 1,000 trainees. (Step Ahead Research Ltd, 2004)*

Secondly, in relation to the East Midlands, the East Midlands Universities Association was commissioned by EMDA to carry out research into FDs in 2004 and presented its report in 2005. The research had two principal aims: firstly to carry out market research into employment fields that may be suitable for the development of FDs; and secondly to raise employers' awareness of FDs and the role that the new qualification could play in the training of staff. The research was based around EMDA's five priority clusters at the time, namely: high performance engineering, creative industries, environmental industries, clothing and textiles, and biosciences.

The research found that there were low levels of awareness of FDs across these sectors in the East Midlands, with particular confusion about the academic standing of the qualification.

Indeed, a number of employers did not understand how they differed from HNDs. A good deal of support was found for FDs among those employers who were aware of them. This support was based on a number of the qualification's characteristics including that:

- ❖ They are seen as a natural extension to the apprenticeship framework;
- ❖ They provide a pathway to an honours degree; and
- ❖ They combine traditional academic skills with the vocational needs of the workplace.

Larger companies were found to be more likely to be supportive of FDs than small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This was partly due to the lack of funding available to cover the course fees, especially when compared to apprenticeships. However, other factors were not specific to FDs but to the size of the company, including lack of resources to cover time off, and the fear that an employee with a new qualification would leave. These are common fears among SMEs when looking at any kind of training provision (Ashton *et al*, 2005). However, this new form of provision has clearly not overcome these issues among SMEs.

Interviews with students in the East Midlands echoed the findings of York Consulting (2004) when asking why they had undertaken an FD. Again, students cited the opportunity to gain a higher education qualification and the work-based learning elements as major factors, while the flexibility of delivery was a plus for many. The fact that the course prepared them for employment, due to its vocation-specific curriculum, was also an attraction for some respondents.

One of the key recommendations from the research by the East Midlands Universities Association was that the promotion of FDs needs to be improved in order to increase awareness amongst both employers and potential students.

A number of academic articles have also discussed the impact of FDs since their inception in 2001. While some of these articles were written too early on to give a full assessment of the success or otherwise of the new qualification, there are a number of salient considerations to be taken from them.

The new qualification has come in for some heavy criticism from some academic writers. For example, Gibbs (2002) sees the FD as a missed opportunity for British higher education. Coming from the stance of higher education's value in educating society for wider social reasons rather than purely economic ones, Gibbs' main criticism is that the broader and more worthy opportunity to use this new qualification to truly widen higher education participation across society has been missed. Rather than focussing on the needs of the student, Gibbs believes the FD is too geared to the future success of the organisation, consequently not offering the student a satisfactory or rewarding learning experience. Gibbs' further criticism of FDs alludes to the poor take-up of places at that point, and to the apparent lack of employer involvement, which was seen as crucial when the proposals for FDs were launched. Indeed, Gibbs asks:

*What employer will take a foundation degree student when similar skills are available from a degree student (with accredited employability skills) who may bring more potential at the same price? (Gibbs, 2002: 203)*

With the number of people going into higher education to study for undergraduate honours degrees continuing to expand, this is a question that needs tackling, and is certainly a question that is posed by employers interviewed in this current research.

Wilson, Blewitt and Moody (2005: 112) counter some of this criticism of FDs, pointing out that despite the initial slow take-up of places, the FDs 'represent a significant development in British higher education producing innovative and successful programmes'. They draw

comparisons with the more established intermediate level qualifications in France, Germany and the USA. Such programmes are seen to have produced positive results both in terms of individual skill levels and thus earning capacity, but also in increasing business productivity. Indeed, Levy (1998) points out that while graduates of the Associate Degree (FD equivalent) in the USA had not reached the skills and wages levels of university graduates, they had narrowed the gap in both measures significantly. Robinson (2002) concluded an early assessment of FDs by arguing that the 'UK's foundation degree is a ground breaking development in Europe'; but he considered it to be inferior to the Associate Degree in the USA. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering the relative newness of FDs compared to the more established Associate Degree. If a link with skills and wage levels and an impact on business productivity can be observed for those undertaking FDs in the UK, this may prove to be an important selling point for both individuals and employers.

At the wider level, attracting students from a non-academic background to higher education has been a key challenge for institutions and policy makers trying to widen participation. In many such cases, prospective students view the experience of higher education to be not altogether positive, even an anxious and alien one (Reay, 2001; Thomas, 2002; Archer, Hutchings and Ross, 2003). Despite the slow take-up of places on FDs, and criticisms about their role, Wilson *et al* (2005) argue that the work-based learning element of the FD is vital in attracting students from groups that would not usually consider a higher education qualification. As such, the FD can provide an effective means of supporting the widening participation agenda in higher education. Indeed, Wilson *et al*'s pilot research, exploring learners' motivations and experiences, found that the majority of respondents thought they would continue on to a full honours degree once they completed their FD studies.

Much of the criticism of FDs in the academic literature is based on the current poor levels of uptake and awareness of the new qualification amongst both employers and employees. Where recruitment levels have been good, however, writers such as Wilson *et al* (2005), Rowley (2005) and Robinson (2002) have seen enough in the FD to hail it a success.

This now brings us to a review of the current recruitment data for FDs in the East Midlands region.

### **3.2 Recruitment Data**

As has been found with previous research in this area, it proved a hard task to collate all of the relevant data on recruitment to FD programmes in the East Midlands. This data is not held centrally by any one agency. Whilst there was a list available from FDF of all the proposed FD programmes in the region, there was no data on uptake and no indication of whether such programmes had gone ahead, been renamed or new programmes added. Thus, each institution that had proposed an FD programme was contacted individually to request access to the data. This proved a lengthy and at times difficult process. Some delays were also experienced as the start date of the project unfortunately coincided with the busiest time of the year for the recruitment and admissions staff.

Eventually, data was collated for the majority of providers in the region. Where available, data was collected on what courses were running and any that did not recruit, which institution was accrediting and which institution was running the programme, how many people were enrolled and whether they were studying full-time or part-time. Clear data was not always available on each item required and for each year, so we have focused here on the comparable data. At the time, the latest data for 2005-06 recruitment was unavailable, since students were still being recruited, therefore the core data focuses on the 2004-05 intake of students. Many programmes were not up and running in 2003, so the best comparable data was the 2004-05 intake of students (students signing up in

September/October 2004). Appendix 1 shows the data across the different institutions and courses.

This data was used, in conjunction with information from our discussions with providers and other stakeholders, to identify four key sectors in which there was a noticeably lower uptake of sector-related FDs and, as such, an apparent lack of demand for FD programmes. Initially, the plan was to pinpoint two key sectors for further investigation. However, it soon became apparent that there was a generally low level of demand across these four sectors, and very little to distinguish between the level of demand. Discussion with a range of agencies and contacts related to FDs, to these sectors and to the region, showed that all four sectors were important to the region. Therefore, we decided to focus on all four.

Notably, this recruitment data is important, but does not show the full picture for FDs in the region. Courses that had not recruited any students were not always listed in the information sent back by institutions. It was therefore necessary to gather this information through informal discussions, searches within providers' course prospectuses and through the next stage of the research – gathering perspectives from different providers within the region.

## 4 Reviewing Demand for FDs in the East Midlands: Providers' Viewpoints

A Providers' Forum involving representatives from further and higher education institutions in the region was held in order to identify some of the current good practice, successes, issues and challenges with FDs in the region.

Twenty-six people attended the forum from colleges and universities across the region, all of them involved in working on and developing FDs in their respective institutions. Apologies were received from a number of people that were interested in attending such a session, but were unavailable on that day, and would be interested in any such meeting in the future.

In addition, the East Midlands New Technology Initiative (NTI) were unable to attend, so a separate interview was conducted with Hilary Whaley of NTI shortly after the forum. This enabled us to share some of our findings from the forum with NTI, and to gather their reflections on these.

The forum provided further evidence about the sectors and areas in which there has been a noticeably lower uptake of FD programmes in the region. The discussion at the forum also added value to the findings from the recruitment data. One of the major messages from this forum was that a range of factors can impact on the uptake and success of FD programmes, including the institutional context, the area of study, the conditions of the labour market and individual and employer motivations for engaging in further study. As such, any measures for tackling the low uptake of FDs in certain sectors of employment will have to be carefully considered at the local level. By focusing on specific examples here, we can highlight the contextual background underpinning these positive and negative experiences, as well as drawing out more general lessons.

### 4.1.1 *Foundation Degrees, Outcomes and Career Pathways*

On a national level, there is anecdotal evidence that FDs have seen a more positive uptake in areas related to the public sector than in the private sector. However, the forum highlighted that uptake has been variable both across employment sectors and institutions, and across courses related to the public and private sectors. It is important to highlight this complexity. Notably for this current research, FDs were shown to have relevance within a range of sectors and areas of the labour market, and demand is not limited to the public sector.

One particular challenge for FDs is demonstrating the value of a higher education qualification and, importantly, how it will impact on learners' careers or job progression. Even in the case of FDs for teaching assistants, where learners were already employed as assistants in schools and had been encouraged to undertake the qualification, a key question from learners was 'What is in it for me?'. They could see 'no clear progression or reward' as a result of gaining the qualification. Effectively, these working students felt that they would be 'in the same job, same conditions' after completing the FD. A similar situation was identified in health and other public sector areas. Although employers were seen to be demanding FD programmes, it was emphasised that it was just as important for the students and employees to see a clear link between the FD and career ladders and promotion in their organisations. Individual students were asking 'What is the pay off for me?', and it was felt that there was a need for employers that supported their staff to go through FDs to articulate jobs and skills in relation to the course, and to make a better link with professional status in the sector.

Even where employers are encouraging individuals to study on the FD, there is a need for employers to look at the infrastructure they provide for these learners to move forward in their careers.

Ensuring that FDs are seen as part of a clear training or career pathway can be particularly helpful in demonstrating their benefits to individuals and employers. As we have found in international research on sector-based training, showing how training programmes can form part of a career pathway can be an effective means of both promoting the benefits of training and development and of enhancing recruitment and retention in industries with a traditionally high turnover and perceived lack of career pathway (Sung *et al*, 2006).

Nottingham Trent University (NTU) emphasised that the popularity and relative success of its FDs was linked to its approach of building the FDs as part of a coherent framework of progressive degrees. The framework was developed through a strong range of FDs in the rural, environmental and animal sciences and subsequently used across NTU. Interestingly, rather than focusing on employer demand, NTU representatives viewed student demand as the most important factor and major challenge. Thus, NTU's approach has been to focus primarily on students and the outcomes for their employment prospects rather than on employer demand. Since 2000 when the first FD programmes started, the key challenge faced has been the decline in the number of people working in the land-based sectors, which in turn forms a decreasing part of the regional and national economy. As a result, a large growth in uptake is unlikely on such programmes. Nevertheless, the uptake has been steady and it is felt by NTU that 'we are holding our own'.

#### *4.1.2 Recognising and Creating Demand*

Employer and learner demand is an important element in promoting and gaining support for FDs. There was a feeling that those developing courses did not necessarily have access to information about whether or not there is a market for a new FD. One participant in the forum felt that most course developers were 'really in the dark on most courses about what demand there is'. Rather than basing the development of programmes on a sound knowledge of the demand, it was seen more as a matter of developing a course and then seeing what the uptake was.

The flow of information on demand is one of the key areas in which there appears to be a gap that could be addressed. Where information on demand is available, this does not necessarily translate into individuals or employers signing up for FD courses. For example, the FD in retail at the University of Derby was based on demand-led information, but this programme has had no uptake. However, a number of other factors can impact on uptake and there is a role both for recognising and gaining information on demand, and for creating a demand, a role in which both learning providers and employers can play a key part.

With some sectors, such as food and drink and construction, there was a feeling that the industry also needed to work to create demand for FDs by improving the way the sector is seen by people entering the labour market. In both of these sectors, it was felt that learner demand was low because people think that educational qualifications are not relevant for what are seen as low-skills jobs. The pay-off for an individual studying on an FD was therefore not clear. For example, NTU had worked with the food and drink industry and the New Technology Initiative to develop FD programmes, but had to emphasise to the industry and employer bodies that if they did not provide support to get learners on the programmes, the courses would not be able to continue. There was a similar view of the construction sector, with a need for the industry to promote and market itself to individuals and, thereby, increase demand for FD qualifications amongst those entering the sector. Of course, there is

equally a role for employers to build some kind of career pathway around FDs for existing employees.

However, many participants in the forum noted that few employers have heard of FDs, and stressed how much work is required simply to raise this awareness. We might therefore question the extent to which there is likely to be any great demand from employers for FDs at this time. Indeed, an important point arising from discussion at the forum was the role that providers have in creating the demand for FDs. The timing and approach of a course could be as important a factor in capturing the attention of learners and/or employers as the existing demand for a higher level of education in the sector. As such, it is not only the market demand for FDs that tells us how popular a programme will be, but also the approach of the individual institution in developing a programme. This can create a demand where one may not necessarily have been identified, or can miss out on tapping into an existing demand.

For example, how an FD is delivered can have a significant impact on uptake. The mode of learning for the many FD programmes is part-time or full-time attendance at on-campus sessions, with some work-based elements. This may be suitable for many learners, particularly those looking to have a 'university' experience during their studies. For example, the recruitment data showed that full-time FD programmes in Computing have proved popular.

However, FDs potentially have a major role in upskilling the existing workforce. Thus, to cater for groups of working adults, a more mixed-mode or flexible learning approach may prove useful. For example, the forum highlighted that one of the highest recruitments of students for a part-time FD was in Security Management at the University of Leicester. This was one of the pilot courses for the university and is offered by distance learning. It has a strong level of recruitment and much of this is explained by the mode of provision. The programme was developed in co-operation with the Security Industry Training Organisation, and the university is now working with Skills for Security. The growth in this course is seen as down to individual demand, since it is not necessarily demanded by the industry, which generally hires people from a security or Armed Forces background. It was emphasised that whilst this industry does demand qualified people, it is generally not willing to pay for them to study or to give them time out to do so, due to a strong concern about employees leaving the company or being poached. As will be seen in the next section, this sentiment is shared by many employers. In this case, a flexible and 'portable' distance learning programme has managed to fill the gap in learner demand. However, from an employer perspective, there would be little demand for this programme. Any provider that relied on information on employer demand would not have created this programme of learning. This highlights the range of information that needs to be built into developing any FD programme.

Similarly, an interview with Chesterfield College following the forum highlighted that the strong level of recruitment to its FD in Logistics was due to the e-learning mode of delivery. This new course has proved popular with learners and employers. The course, which is validated by Leeds Metropolitan University, was chosen by Chesterfield College (which has the status of Logistics Centre of Vocational Excellence, COVE) specifically because the flexible mode of delivery could not be offered by validating institutions in the East Midlands. Noticeably, other FD courses in logistics have not recruited. This will be discussed further as one of the sectors we focus on in the next section about employers' views of FD programmes.

Some providers have been able to work closely with local employers to see where there is a gap and to aim to fill it. FD programmes in policing appear to be growing in popularity due to a change in the kinds of training provided by the Police Force. At Broxtowe College, the

Criminal Justice (Police Studies) FD has proved popular among special constables. Indeed, this is the strongest full-time FD at Broxtowe, and primarily attracts mature adult students who are working. This partly reflects the fact that many of the police training premises are currently being closed, with much more emphasis on work-based learning. The college worked closely with local employers and Skills for Justice (the SSC) to identify the gap and develop the programme, and there has been a good level of employer engagement. The FD was identified to fill one key gap in training, namely that the age of recruits to the police has been rising. Therefore those interested in a policing career aged 18-21 may not be able to apply to the force, but can instead undertake the FD programme with the intention of entering the force at a later date.

In some sectors, the fact that there is already strong support for training and development has provided a good route in for FD programmes. For example, FDs related to voluntary and community work and to housing and regeneration have proved popular with learners and employers. A key factor was the importance that is placed on training within these sectors both by employers and learners. This has promoted good support and recognition of the FD programmes, which are being embraced as part of the training available for people working in or hoping to enter these sectors. Indeed, the profile of the learners on these FD programmes is primarily those already working full- or part-time in the sector and looking to gain a qualification related to their area of work.

#### *4.1.3 Tensions between Academic and Vocational Aims*

There was evidence of tensions between academic and vocational aims, whether this be in terms of academic institutions' willingness to provide FDs, questioning of the value of FDs, willingness of universities in the region to work with local further education (FE) colleges and vice versa, or employers' views of HE. Much research has highlighted the tensions between academic and more vocational programmes within the HE context, and the challenges that can occur when trying to integrate more industry-focused programmes into the often more traditional setting of the university, or the idea of creating 'useful knowledge' for the world of work (e.g. Jarvis, 2001).

As the study by York Consulting (2004) found, it may be more challenging to gain support for work- and demand-focused FDs in pre-1992 HEIs than with post-1992 HEIs and local FE colleges, which have historically tended to be more vocationally-oriented. Nevertheless, participants from a range of institutions felt that there was not always a great deal of support for FDs in their institution, both at the institution-wide level, and in their particular department. For example, a major challenge could be getting support from colleagues to teach on more flexible programmes, such as teaching in the evenings. The fact that HEIs and FE colleges have become much more pressurised workplaces in terms of teaching, administrative and research demands was felt to cause some of this lack of support. Moreover, some felt that whilst the value of FDs was questioned by colleagues or the institution, the resources would not be made available to ensure that FD programmes were successfully taken forward. As such, there would seem to be an argument here for a stronger institutional support and increased funding to ensure that FDs are not an added burden on teaching staff, but a new and exciting area for development.

There were also some tensions amongst employers regarding the academic nature of FDs. For example, despite strong interest in the programme, one interesting challenge faced by the Broxtowe Criminal Justice FD was that it could be 'hard to find a meeting place between academic and police minds sometimes'. Senior police officers that had worked their way up the ranks were not always positive about academic education as a preparation for the police force. Again, this will be highlighted as a particular issue in the next section.

One way to overcome this perhaps inevitable tension is to ensure that programmes demonstrate both academic rigour and practical relevance. For example, with the Public Services FD at the University of Derby, it was felt that 'retention is *great* once you get the students on the courses'; and that what made the programmes really work, once the students were on, is the mixture of hands-on experience and the rigour of the programmes.

#### 4.1.4 Working with Key Stakeholders

A potentially crucial element in gaining recognition for a more vocational programme of learning such as the FD is support from key stakeholders in the industry, including employer and training associations. Several of the above cases demonstrate the importance of links with professional institutes or related SSCs. Previous research has found that whilst SSCs have a potentially pivotal role in promoting FD programmes, they have not always been quick to embrace this role (York Consulting, 2004). A number of participants at the Providers' Forum had worked with SSCs related to their FD programmes, and this had been a fruitful relationship in some cases in terms of making better links with employer demand. For example, Chesterfield College had worked with the Skills for Logistics SSC, among other partners, in order to design the FD. Thus, the Logistics FD ties into the logistics 'stairway' or career framework, which clearly maps out levels of job task and required skills against the National Qualifications Framework.

Recognition by the professional body related to the sector can be another key element in creating demand for an FD programme. De Montfort University's Housing and Regeneration FD is validated by the Institute of Housing. This was felt to be very important in driving demand by providing recognition and validation, and giving confidence to learners and employers about the quality of the programme.

A strong connection with professional and employers' associations can equally serve to promote and support the FD programme as *the* programme of choice for those looking to build their skills through a more vocational higher education qualification. For example, the Dental Technology FD at the People's College in Nottingham has proved particularly successful, being considered by the college as an all-round positive experience, and gaining wide recognition in the sector. Importantly, it is linked to the statutory registration requirements for dental technicians. The FD was developed to form part of a framework for dental technician training which runs from GCSE through the National Diploma to the FD and then links directly to a vocational top-up BSc programme. This pathway has been supported by a number of stakeholders in the industry, including the SSC (Skills for Health) and the General Dental Council. As a result, the programme is recruiting well and expects to continue to grow.

Links with specific employers can also prove beneficial for recruitment to FD programmes. At the University of Derby, the Mechanical Engineering FD experienced good levels of recruitment. It was felt that the link with Rolls Royce – as both one of major groups that send people onto the programme and one of the employers they engage with – was particularly beneficial. Similarly, an FD in Volunteering at the University of Derby has formed an important connection with St John Ambulance, which has become the primary source of demand, and funds its volunteers to take the programme. At the time of the forum, 14 students were graduating to go on to BA and MA programmes. Again, we see here the importance of 'employer' support for FD programmes and the way in which such programmes can form an entry route into higher education. One aspect that this programme in the voluntary sector faced, however, was that some potential students may ask themselves 'Why do the FD if it's not linked to paid employment?'. The St John Ambulance volunteers are encouraged to study on the FD and the organisation pays or subsidises the course fees. However, in the long term the programme will rely on volunteers from other

areas signing up for the FD as well. Reliance on students coming from any one employer will raise the same challenges for any FD course.

Indeed, whilst a link with employers and employers' associations will bring important benefits for those running FD programmes, they may not necessarily bring greater numbers of students to the programme. For example, in the case of the FD in Working with Young People at the University of Leicester there has been a strong demand from employers; and the Workforce Development Group for the sector played an important role in creating the programme. Nevertheless, so far no students have entered the programme via this group, although the FD has been able to recruit from the general student body and from those already working in the field. This has raised questions about why this important connection has not appeared to impact directly on recruitment levels. Learners were deciding to focus on National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) instead of FDs because they could see the linkage with an established progression route. Thus, the providers felt that there was probably a need for the industry to 'come out and say that this is validated, this is what we want as a sector' before this impact would be seen.

#### *4.1.5 The Shift to HNDs and HNCs*

FDs are placed within the revised National Qualifications Framework at Level 5, which includes FDs, HNCs/HNDs and Level 4 NVQs. Therefore, these qualifications are complementary and there is clear potential to transfer HNDs over to FDs as suggested by the Government. Nevertheless, there was a strong feeling at the Providers' Forum that the role of FDs in relation to HNCs and HNDs was potentially difficult and could cause confusion and even competition among courses.

A number of programmes related to both the public and private sectors were being transferred from HNC/HND to FD programmes. As will be seen throughout this report, this can be an issue in some areas, with a loss of recognition among employers due to their lack of knowledge of FDs. Where programmes related to the public sector had been transferred from an HND/HNC course to an FD programme, understanding of the value of the programmes was unaffected in some areas, but had been affected negatively in others. When the Housing and Regeneration FD at De Montfort University was transferred from an HNC to an FD the recruitment was not negatively affected, rather it was seen as the 'same market and the same demand', but as offering a 'different kind of programme'. At Nottingham Trent University, it was felt that programmes transferred from HNC/HND had been a 'real success', primarily due to the strength of the overall framework in which FD programmes were organised and presented by the institution.

However, some providers had experienced problems since transferring their courses over. The programmes developed at the University of Derby related to public services have had a disappointing recruitment level since transfer to FD, although employers in the sector have been keen to get involved in the programmes and there has been evidence of a better uptake in the uniformed sector. Part of this challenge was regarded as linked to 're-badging HNC as FDs'. Similarly, the recruitment data on computing and IT is generally favourable. However, when changing such programmes from HNC/HND to FD programmes, De Montfort University found that it was unable to recruit students to the programme, with numbers going down considerably.

The programme has been developed and extended across different universities and colleges in the region, and was intended to stimulate a new demand in what has been a declining market. However, recruitment has not been positive and it was subsequently questioned whether there was a demand for this kind of programme. During the course of the forum, a number of possible reasons were identified for this. Firstly, it was felt that major IT sector employers are not necessarily based in the East Midlands, so there may be low

contact with the employers in this sector. Whilst it was also recognised that IT functions now form part of all companies, another factor identified was that most employers recruiting IT staff will look for someone with an honours degree, since there are a large number of IT graduates in the labour market.

The key learning point here is that, in transferring from HND to FD, it is vital to be clear about the reasons for transferring the course, and to both add to and emphasise the quality of the programme in making this transfer. Simply re-badging HNCs as FDs is likely to cause confusion, reduce recognition and potentially undermine the value of FDs.

#### *4.1.6 Conclusions from the Forum*

The provider experiences of FDs highlighted a number of important learning points. It is clearly important when introducing an FD to consider where it fits within the wider provision and aims of the institution. There was a view that FDs might be developed more for their novelty rather than in response to a careful assessment of the content of the programme and what support there is for FDs. As well as ensuring that there is strong institutional support for FDs, there needs to be a clear understanding of employer and learner demand for programmes, or – importantly – the potential to *create* a demand. This demand can be created through a range of means, as outlined above.

Having not only strong links, but two-way working relationships with employers and industry representatives is clearly beneficial to FD programmes. Nevertheless, there can be some tensions between the academic and vocational aims of different parties and it is likely that FDs will take time to be widely embraced in more traditional institutions. It is therefore vital that FDs are clearly built into the institution's framework of programmes.

Additional funding may be required to ensure that there is sufficient staff support if providers are to respond to the demand for more flexible FD courses. For example, distance learning may be popular in some areas, but this can take considerable resources to establish. The University of Leicester was fortunate in that it had experience of developing distance learning programmes at other levels. Additional resources may also be needed to ensure there is capacity to take less 'traditional' approaches to FD teaching. For example, such resources might help to ensure that teaching that takes place 'out of hours' is not negatively perceived by staff that already feel over-stretched. In addition, extra resources could be used to support the development of new formats of learning and ensure that there is sufficient time available to focus on tailoring programmes to meet specific needs.

## 5 Reviewing Demand for FDs in the East Midlands: Employers' Viewpoints

This section outlines employers' views of FDs, drawing on interviews with employers from organisations of various sizes within the region in four key sectors: logistics, food and drink, construction and retail. As noted above, these sectors were identified as target groups where there has been a lower uptake of FDs, both through the recruitment data and through subsequent discussions with regional providers and with regional and national stakeholders in the FD process.

A brief skills profile is also provided for each sector in order to highlight some of the contextual aspects that need to be taken into account when looking at the skills levels and needs of the sector. Whilst these help to explain some of the findings, a range of potential reasons for the low uptake of FDs in these sectors is analysed and discussed. Interviews with SSCs and other key stakeholders were drawn on to inform the analysis, to support, verify and expand on the issues, and to outline some of the different approaches to these challenges.

### 5.1 Sample and Data Collection for Employer Interviews

Contact details for the companies interviewed were identified via a number of means, including collating lists of East Midlands companies within the specific sectors concerned through the following means:

- ❖ The national FAME (Financial Analysis Made Easy) database (main source);
- ❖ Sector Skills Councils;
- ❖ Contacts suggested by Lisa Smoothy, University of Derby;
- ❖ Chambers of Commerce;
- ❖ Internet resources, e.g. Yell.co.uk, Touch, company pages.

The research aimed for good coverage of large and smaller enterprises within the four key sectors. The FAME database was particularly useful in this respect, since it provides numbers of employees as well as other data on each company. Specific details of companies have been anonymised to ensure confidentiality, but general information is given to indicate size and type of organisation.

Sector	Number of Interviews Completed	Total Number of Companies Contacted
Logistics	2 interviews completed (with many comments gathered when interviews were refused)	90 companies were contacted
Food and beverage	8 interviews completed	40 companies were contacted
Construction	9 interviews completed	30 companies were contacted
Retail	8 interviews completed	40 companies were contacted

Structured telephone interviews were used to gather data for this part of the study. The aim was to test out the different hypotheses proposed and to explore alternative reasons for the mismatch between demand and uptake of FD programmes. A number of relevant questions were prepared based on the review of demand and discussions with providers and other

stakeholders, and were used to structure the interviews. A copy of the Employer Interview Schedule can be seen in Appendix 2.

Different schedules were designed for those employers that had and had not heard of FDs, ensuring that even where there was no awareness we were able to gather data about what demand there might be. Whilst a structured approach was used, ensuring comparability across interviews by asking the same set of core questions, there was also opportunity to ask additional questions in response to answers from interviewees, and to follow up relevant issues. Respondents were also given the opportunity to identify other issues and to give feedback on the areas covered in the interview to ensure that any potential gaps were identified.

Interviews were conducted by telephone to lessen the burden on respondents, since the interviewer could cover all of the required areas within 8-15 minutes, although some respondents had more to say and were happy to talk for up to 30 minutes. Telephone interviews usually elicit a higher response rate than written requests for in-person interviews or surveys, which can be seen by busy managers as burdensome and time-consuming. Indeed, a number of respondents stated that they never respond to written questionnaires or letters asking them for interviews. Some companies appeared to have a 'research fatigue', having been contacted by many individuals researching their Masters dissertations or selling training programmes. This will inevitably have an impact on levels of response.

The majority of employers were identified from nationally and regionally collected data, therefore the contact with them was essentially 'cold-calling'. In order to identify someone within the company that might have some familiarity with FDs, and be willing to talk about training issues in the company and sector, the interviewer focused on contacting the Training Manager or other individuals responsible for training and development. The response rate was fairly low in some areas, and it proved fairly challenging to gain access for interviews. The 'cold-calling' approach may have had some impact on the level of response; although even with contacts recommended by Improve, the SSC for the food and drink industry, response level was very low due to issues such as lack of time, lack of availability of the recommended contact, organisational restructuring and so on.

Another reason for the low response rate that became apparent over the course of the research was that the very term 'foundation degrees' was often taken by companies to be immediately irrelevant to them, and even potentially alienating. The lack of awareness of FDs certainly compounded the perception that a degree is academic, and therefore, irrelevant to business. This response is, in itself, supporting data for this research on employer demand in these four key sectors. However, efforts were made by the interviewer to overcome this feeling by emphasising the importance of understanding levels of awareness of FDs among employers, and the aim of the project to identify level of demand. This did help in some cases to gain access to the relevant people in the company and to achieve a successful interview.

We now outline the key issues raised within each sector, with a skills profile for each sector to give some contextual background. To pull together some of the issues raised by each sector, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis is also provided for each sector.

## **5.2 The Logistics Sector**

The UK logistics sector currently employs around 1.7 million people in more than 65,000 companies. The freight element can be split into two distinct groups: those that manage their own distribution system and those that manage it on behalf of another company. The sector is worth £55 billion annually to the economy ([www.skillsforlogistics.org](http://www.skillsforlogistics.org)).

Within the East Midlands, the sector employs 73,100 people in 4,600 companies, the majority of which are SMEs. The proportion of females working in logistics in the East Midlands is considerably lower than the national figure for the sector (22 per cent compared to 46 per cent). The workforce is, in the main, educated to NVQ Level 2 or below, and therefore generally below the level of an FD. The hardest to fill vacancies in the region are for machine operatives and, reflecting a national trend, LGV drivers. Training levels are low, with a lack of time and resources being cited as reasons for not training staff. Some 58 per cent of employers in the region have no business or training plan and no budget for training (Grey, 2004).

The logistics sector provided the biggest challenge for this project in terms of conducting the research interviews, and is likely to provide one of the biggest challenges for FD providers for similar reasons. Out of 90 companies contacted, only two agreed to complete full interviews. Nevertheless, we were able to gather a range of comments from those 88 companies that refused to be interviewed and are able to draw on those here. Whilst the conclusions we draw here should be considered carefully, given the low response rate, discussions with other key stakeholders feed into and verify our findings. Further information was gained about the skills needs and current focus of the sector through discussions with Skills for Logistics, and Dr Raddon was invited to attend Skills for Logistics' regional meeting of educational and training providers and related stakeholders, which proved a useful source of supporting information. In addition, results were confirmed by further discussion with providers and general feedback from those many companies that declined our request for an interview.

Reflecting the low level of training provision within logistics companies, most simply responded that they did not provide any training and nor did they plan to. The standard response when asked if they would be willing to talk briefly with the researcher about their knowledge of FDs, or what kinds of training they did engage in, was that they expected employees to arrive with an LGV/SGV licence and they did not provide any training. As a deliveries company commented:

*Our drivers are experienced, they don't need training... Basically we don't have anyone who deals with training and development. We have office staff, but they don't need training. We have a lady who deals with salaries, and that's it.*

Similarly, a freight company firmly stated, 'We do no training whatsoever... We're not interested'. Given that the general level of skills demanded in this sector is below FD level, this response from the overwhelming majority of companies contacted would seem to suggest that the demand for such courses is likely to remain low among employers. Not only might FDs be seen as beyond requirements, but the pay-off for individuals of investing in such courses is likely to seem questionable. Nevertheless, Skills for Logistics, the SSC, has worked with the industry and skills providers to develop a 'stairway' – a careers pathway or 'roadmap' – for the industry (<http://www.thestairway.org/>). This maps out the kinds of jobs available in the sector, and the skills and qualifications required to carry out these jobs. This is likely to have a slow but measured impact on the recognition of skills development within the sector.

Only one of the two companies that completed interviews with us had heard of FDs. The second, a medium-sized courier company (with just under 60 employees), provides an interesting case of a logistics company that is slowly looking to develop its training function. The company had, to date, engaged in a fairly limited range of training at and below Level 2. This included the prerequisite driver training programmes and computer training programmes such as use of Microsoft Office. Having carried out a 'skills evaluation', the manager responsible for training was looking to develop new training options for staff.

Higher education was seen as potentially relevant to the company, and is likely to be one of the options for skills development in the future. However, it is interesting to note that where this company was supporting training, the main challenge was seen as winning over people who have worked in the business for many years and who were not very open to the idea of studying. This was particularly the case where training might have to be in their own time. Thus, the company felt that the main challenges when providing training for employees were 'getting them to go and being open to training...they don't feel they need it'. The company had developed links with the local college and formed a partnership with the college and another company to develop training programmes that met their requirements. The main considerations when providing training were the costs, and that the training should be provided locally. In the past, the company used LearnDirect and found this a useful way to access training provision online. In addition, it used day courses organised by the local Chamber of Commerce, one of the positive elements of which was that training costs were reduced in order to encourage employers to send trainees.

One particular concern among the two companies, and one of the explanations for the low response, was the view that 'academic education isn't relevant to what we do'. Since employers see the FD, like any degree, as essentially academic, even where they have not heard of it, there is an almost instantaneous 'turn-off' for employers. Interestingly, this experience was also found by Skills for Logistics when it worked with a provider to offer a diploma course for the sector. The word 'diploma' was found to be off-putting for employers, and there was a low uptake. Therefore, the title of the programme was changed to 'award', and the uptake increased rapidly. It would seem that the connection between FDs and university-level education can be off-putting for companies where there is little emphasis on education and training, or where people have traditionally worked their way up through the company.

We can see both in this case and in the above discussion some of the challenges for companies operating in the logistics sector. Even where there is company support for FDs and higher education, employees who have worked in the sector for many years will not necessarily see the need for, or benefits of, engaging in further education and training at any level. This is also likely to be the case for many company managers who have worked their way up without a background in HE. However, as will be seen below, such challenges are faced across the four sectors. In particular, this reinforces some of the implications from the Providers' Forum and emphasises the need for those promoting FDs to make a 'business case' to companies about the benefits of investing in education and training at this level.

In addition, there is clearly a need to engage individual employees' interest. This is particularly important where FD courses are aimed at 'upskilling' the existing workforce in sectors where the general level of qualifications is below FD level. There is a strong role for Skills for Logistics and the 'stairway' here in demonstrating to new entrants and current employees the ways in which training and qualifications can help them to develop their career and the different pathways open to them. Skills for Logistics already works with a number of representatives from local providers in each region, meeting regularly to share information about the sector and its needs, and issues raised by providers. Events are also held at the local level to inform employers about the kinds of training opportunities available.

However, much of the focus at this time is on achieving Level 2 qualifications and basic skills. Thus, while FDs have a role to play in the sector, and are part of the 'stairway', courses at pre-degree level may currently be more appropriate for many companies, and it may be some time before the value of HE is fully recognised among employers. Nevertheless, as seen when discussing provider perspectives on FDs, Chesterfield College has managed to get good recruitment on the Logistics FD. As well as working closely with key stakeholders within the COVE, the e-learning format of the course has proved vital in

meeting the demands of employers. This was a deliberate strategy by the college to widen access to FDs in the sector. Thus, whilst it will be challenging, there are certainly ways of creating a demand for FDs, even when companies may not have seen HE as immediately relevant.

### SWOT analysis of FDs for the logistics sector

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>Skills for Logistics is playing a strong role in developing a learning culture in the sector.</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>Main focus at this time is on Level 2 and basic skills, meaning that HE is not a key emphasis in the sector and there is a low level of further development.</p> <p>Significant work will be required to demonstrate the 'business case' for FDs.</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Strong working relationships between providers and SSC.</p> <p>Interest in e-learning among employers and learners.</p> <p>Providers may be able to forge links with employers by starting at a lower or more general level of training (e.g. basic skills, NVQ 1 and 2, general short courses).</p> <p>There may be a role for providing units of learning that can build towards an FD qualification if desired and provide an initial opportunity to demonstrate the 'business case'.</p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>Very low recognition and even outright rejection of the value of HE in the sector.</p> <p>Employers are 'turned off' by the idea of higher education and academic degrees before any of the details or benefits have even been outlined.</p>

### 5.3 The Food and Drink Sector

The UK food and drink sector employs 413,122 people across a diverse range of business types, with Improve, the SSC, covering 33 different Standard Industrial Classification codes (Quinn and Felstead, 2005). The largest sub-sectors are in bread and meat production, which account for a quarter of all employment in this sector. Recent years have seen a significant growth in niche markets such as ethnic and organic foodstuffs. The sheer range of business types in the sector, and the fact that many of the sub-sectors employ small numbers of people, could be an issue for further and higher education providers looking to set up a work-based FD, since each sub-sector has specific skills needs that would need to be addressed.

Incidence of training in the sector is below the national average according to Labour Force Survey figures, and there are proportionally fewer employees in the sector working towards a qualification than across the economy as a whole (Quinn and Felstead, 2005). Indeed, the workforce covered by Improve generally has a lower level of qualifications than that across the UK economy as a whole. Almost a fifth of employees hold no qualifications at all, which is nearly double the national average, and a sixth are educated to below NVQ Level 2 (Quinn and Felstead, 2005). Few members of the workforce have experience of higher education, which makes the sector a key target for widening participation through FDs.

Interviews were held with eight companies in the food and drink sector, and with Improve. The interviews with employers highlighted a range of issues.

There was a low level of awareness of FDs within these food and drink companies. Most had not heard anything at all about FDs or what was provided at the regional level. As one

company noted, 'We don't have any information, we just don't know what's on offer really'. Indeed, only two respondents had a general awareness of FDs. For a large meat production company, this awareness was gleaned from involvement in meetings organised by Improve to discuss training in their part of the sector. A respondent at a large poultry production company, who had heard very recently about FDs via membership of the local COVE, asked how long FDs had been in place, and was very surprised to find out that they started nationally in 2001. Despite links with local providers, contact with LearnDirect, and the training manager's membership of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, the company had only just heard about the existence of FDs.

There was little evidence of companies having received any promotional material about FDs. A respondent from a large meat production company felt that the local colleges and universities needed to ensure that relevant promotional information about courses such as FDs was directed to the right people within the company in order to ensure that it would be clearly understood. When information was sent to company directors, rather than the training department or training manager, the training department would not get the opportunity to explain the benefits of these kinds of courses to company directors and senior managers:

*It tends to enter the chain too high up and then it gets sent down the chain. By the time it gets to people like myself in the training department, decisions have already been made. And quite often the material is not clear enough to illustrate the potential benefits and, at the end of the day, it is all about money. If you're going to invest X amount of money in a person, you need to get a return.*

Several companies stressed that, whilst they might support the idea of FDs and higher education in general, it was often very difficult to make the case for investment in training where the company would not see the direct benefits for some time, such as with apprenticeships or higher education. As such, there did need to be better information about the potential benefits of FDs for the company. As the above respondent noted, 'It doesn't tend to promote itself'. As with all of the sectors examined in this research, the promotion of FDs will be more successful if it can make a clear business case to companies looking to invest in training.

Equally, there was a generally low level of communication between most of these companies and the local colleges and universities. Three companies had no links with local educational providers, since they focused on in-house and informal training. Of the remaining five companies, three had a low level of contact via trainees, and two had developed quite close working relationships with specific providers in the region to develop fairly bespoke courses that met the company needs via NVQ programmes. The most important aspects of these NVQ programmes were the ability to undertake the programme in the workplace, the recognition that it gave to prior experience and knowledge, and the ability both to build an interest in learning for the individual and to see direct benefits for the company. Indeed, these elements were emphasised by all of the companies as being what they were looking for in any training programme.

It soon became clear that, for the majority of these companies, formal education qualifications beyond health and safety and food hygiene certification were seen as irrelevant to daily operation in the food and drink industry. Typically, it was felt that higher education was beyond the requirements for most of the jobs in these companies, even where a company engaged in a fairly high level of training. Indeed, one company noted that anything above NVQ Level 3 was not really seen as relevant for the industry at this time, compounded by the fact that a good number of employees in the industry require more basic skills training such as literacy and numeracy.

As another respondent from a large poultry production company remarked, higher education was seen as 'a bit out of our league at the minute'. Instead, this company was making use of a bespoke, government-funded NVQ programme with a local college. The company also made use of a range of training for factory-floor employees, with the primary focus on basic health and safety and food handling skills. At management level, although there was little training, they were not sure that FDs would be relevant at this time. Engineering was identified as one potential area in which FDs might be relevant. Again, this reflects the fact that whilst some FDs are being developed with a more sector-specific focus, company functions may mean that FDs related to wider, more generic skills sets are more relevant. This will be an important consideration when raising awareness of FDs among employers in the sector.

Since higher education is not immediately recognised to have relevance to the industry, management buy-in will be vital. As the respondent from a large meat production company reflected, senior managers generally questioned the need to invest in any training, and particularly that which required a more long-term investment, such as higher education. Awareness of the importance of this kind of longer-term investment in staff development was suddenly raised in this company after an employee won a national prize on completion of a training programme. This gave the training manager the opportunity to explain what was involved and how the company would benefit by ensuring that their staff's practice was in line not just with company standards, but national standards. In addition, the example of this employee's success encouraged other employees to sign up for the programme. However, the respondent remained sceptical about the extent to which FDs would be recognised in a similar manner.

Employees in the sector may also be less keen to engage in higher education when HE qualifications are not in demand or recognised for many job roles in the industry. Thus, the food production companies had few highly qualified employees, and a strong emphasis on training to meet regulations, which, as research has shown, is the main reason for investing in training. Where more qualified staff were required, the interviews showed that these skills would often be brought in from outside, rather than developed through internal training and promotion. As the respondent from the meat production company reflected:

*One thing in the food and drink industry, and particularly the meat industry, is that we feel we train people up and then we lose them. So we tend to obtain people, if you like, that are already qualified, rather than actually putting our own people forward. I know it's not always the best way, but that's how it happens...it's how much you would invest for potentially losing your staff in the future.*

Similarly, as a respondent from a large food production company commented:

*We don't really do any training. Obviously when the MD employs people he expects them to have a good degree of education.*

This tendency to buy-in skills rather than train for them reflects the situation in many industries and demonstrates a clear market failure. This is likely to impact on the extent to which employers in the food and drink sector will invest in higher education. However, the level of skills required for most jobs in the industry may not immediately show the benefits of higher education. As companies commented, food production does not require a high level of qualifications, and the mechanisation of food production has lowered the skills levels required of employees, meaning that the role of education has become less clear to the sector and its employees.

The interviews consistently found that no specific gaps were identified in the current education and training provision of the regional colleges and universities. This was primarily due to the fact that, overall, most training within these food and drink companies was fairly

individualised, often ad hoc and in-house, focusing on task-specific skills, or the skills gaps an individual has compared to what they need to perform their job. There were exceptions, such as one confectionery company that focused primarily on supplier-provided training with some support from local colleges, and the two companies noted above that had developed NVQs with regional providers to be delivered in the workplace. As one seafood production company noted, however:

*We don't really look at training outside. It's definitely in-house and whatever helps them do that job.*

Indeed, it was emphasised by several companies that gaining accreditation to do in-house training for health and safety and food hygiene was a popular route in the industry, since this was seen as more cost effective than looking to external providers.

A food distribution company particularly emphasised that they found informal training approaches worked better than formal classroom-based learning, with less resistance from employees to the idea of learning new skills. Moreover, they saw in-house training as most effective in delivering this:

*There's not a great deal of training with colleges or universities. We try to get as much done in-house as possible, because we find it's easier to manage.*

Indeed, as we saw above, workplace training was recognised as effective in transfer of skills, and in meeting both company and individual needs. Importantly, the tendency to develop skills on the job and in-house is likely to shape management and company directors' attitudes to HE, both in terms of its relevance and in terms of support for this kind of development, since they themselves may have worked their way up without educational qualifications. All of these factors have significant impact on the role that FDs are likely to have in the industry.

Nevertheless, higher education was recognised as having a role in some limited areas, usually related to the more senior positions and specific functions. This included managerial roles, accounting, marketing, human resources, business management and engineering. This would seem to suggest that, until there is a change of mindset about the role of HE in the industry – and a clearer understanding of how HE benefits both companies and individuals – there is unlikely to be a strong demand for FD programmes on food and drink.

For senior level employees, FDs covering generic areas such as management and business skills are likely to prove most popular, with some interest in more specific areas such as engineering and food technician programmes among skilled worker groups. However, for lower-skilled employees, who may not have any background in FE or HE, there may be a need for other ways of raising an interest in higher education, and in building an understanding in the industry of how this can contribute to the company. Given the emphasis on in-house capacity, an 'apprenticeship' style of FD, where much of the learning is done in-house (where the quality of training is judged appropriate), with the support of theoretical learning from classroom- and portfolio-based approaches, is likely to be more attractive than a traditional lecture-focused degree style. Equally, there is likely to be a strong case for engaging companies in lower levels or different formats of training programme, with some bespoke elements to meet company needs. This could include starting with NVQs as part of a pathway to developing an interest in further learning and FDs, after making that first connection between the local learning provider and the company.

There is a high level of shift working in the food and drink industry, therefore flexibility is another key element that will help to support demand for FDs. Where companies had experience of training programmes that made use of e-learning and distance learning, these were judged as successful and were recognised as providing a useful way to access training

that fitted in with shift working patterns and busy production schedules. When used by the large poultry company, contrary to expectations, e-learning proved popular even among those employees who did not have particularly advanced computer skills.

To conclude, there is support for training amongst the companies interviewed in this industry, and some recognition that HE and FDs could play a role. However, there is need for better levels of information and for providers to ensure that a 'business case' is made about why employers should invest in FDs when their relevance is not immediately recognised. Given that the majority of jobs in the industry do not require a high level of qualifications, and are often low-skilled work, this will be a major challenge.

Whilst there is a role for FDs at more senior levels, and for technical and more highly-skilled roles, the kinds of courses that are relevant may not be focused specifically on the food and drink industry. Instead, more generic business management programmes, and specific technical programmes for engineers or food technologists, may prove to have more demand in the sector. The area in which a more sector-specific provision appears to be valued is in taking a more bespoke approach to company and individual employee needs. As such, there is a clear role for local providers to work with companies to develop NVQ programmes or other short courses and competence-based approaches organised in the workplace, and these may in time lead to an interest in HE. This assumes, of course, that HEIs will regard this longer-term, incremental approach as viable. At the institutional level, this kind of longer-term engagement may not always be positively viewed. Although there will be engagement in a range of courses over time, this may require some close work and time spent with employers by outreach staff from HEIs.

### SWOT analysis of FDs for the food and drink sector

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>Recognition of value of HE for more senior roles and people moving on to supervisory roles.</p> <p>Improve is working with employers to raise awareness of the benefits of training.</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>Sector-specific FD courses may not be seen as relevant.</p> <p>Lack of information about local education and training opportunities.</p> <p>The main emphasis in the sector is on lower level qualifications and statutory training such as health and safety and hygiene;</p> <p>Shift-working patterns can prove a challenge for part-time traditional mode courses.</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>FDs related to more generic skills and specific technical roles and functions appear to raise some interest and may generate demand once there is awareness of the different programmes available.;</p> <p>Working with employers to develop lower level, more tailored courses may provide a route to raise awareness of FDs.</p> <p>Potential for developing units that can lead to an FD if desired.</p> <p>Strong emphasis on in-house training that may be built into more tailored programmes.</p> <p>Strong interest in flexible modes of learning.</p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>The sector has many low-skilled and automated job roles, meaning that companies may deem FDs irrelevant and individuals may not see any pay-off or outcome from engaging in HE.</p>

## 5.4 The Construction Sector

The UK construction sector employs almost 2.5 million people with approximately 162,000 of those employed in the East Midlands, many in SMEs (Quinn and Felstead, 2005). Construction is a key sector in the UK economy: it is one of the biggest exporters and contributes 8 per cent of total GDP. The sector has been growing strongly over the last few years with output reaching £28 billion ([www.constructionskills.net](http://www.constructionskills.net)).

The vast majority of the workforce covered by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and Construction Skills, the SSC, is involved in building, demolition and earth moving. In addition, there are around 300,000 people employed in architecture and engineering consultancy nationally, according to Labour Force Survey figures. The sector has a far higher proportion of skilled trade employees (46.8 per cent) than the rest of the economy (11.3 percent) and, accordingly, has a higher proportion of employees educated to at least A-level or NVQ Level 3 standard than the UK economy as a whole (Quinn and Felstead, 2005). Employees from the construction industry do not, however, currently tend to be educated beyond A-level or NVQ Level 3, with a much lower proportion of people in construction going on to study for an HE qualification. Incidence of training and studying for qualifications while working are also lower in the construction sector than across the UK economy as a whole.

These figures could be interpreted in two ways. First of all there is an apparent gap in qualifications at a higher level in the construction sector and, as such, one may expect an interest in participation on construction-related FDs. Conversely the relatively low uptake of both training and studying for a qualification whilst working could suggest that people tend to enter the industry already holding their highest level of qualification, and tend to learn and train on the job or on non-HE courses from that point. Equally, it might suggest either a reluctance to study or that there are barriers to further education and training within the industry after initial professional training. Nevertheless, the generally higher level of education held by employees in this sector, and the higher skills level, does bode well for the role of FDs. Indeed, with the workplace emphasis of FDs, they may act to fill a gap in the industry as a next step after the traditional apprenticeship route.

Interviews were conducted with nine companies in the construction sector, spanning from very small local enterprises through to large, national corporations based in the region. In addition, an interview was conducted with Construction Skills.

Unlike in the logistics sector, higher education and FDs were recognised by employers as having an important role within the industry. There was generally a positive view of higher education and of training and continuous development in general. Indeed, a number of companies had employees engaged in further and higher education courses at the time of the interview. The role of FDs and HE varied according to the company, although those entering the industry with an FD or other degree, or engaging in HE as part of their continued development, were expected to be aiming for fairly specialised and/or managerial roles. Within this, higher education and further training were considered important at different stages depending on the specific company emphasis. For example, some companies focused on further and higher education for new recruits, such as an entry-level qualification for higher skilled or professional roles (e.g. chartered surveyor, architect). Others used higher education as further development for current employees who had a great deal of experience on the job, but either did not have qualifications to demonstrate this, or would benefit from training in management skills.

Nevertheless, overall there was a fairly low level of familiarity with FDs. It was generally felt that there was a lack of information about them. Whilst companies had received a range of information about local courses, FDs were not necessarily something they were familiar with.

Thus, some companies had heard of FDs because their employees were currently studying on them or they had received some marketing information. Others, however, had no idea what FDs were or were unclear about the distinction between a foundation degree and foundation level courses for other forms of professional accreditation. Nevertheless, there was strong interest in hearing more about FDs, as respondents could see relevance for their company.

There was some confusion about the range of courses available related to the construction sector. For example, one interviewee from a medium-sized construction and civil engineering company was confused about the difference between the FD and the new Diploma scheme that is being developed for 14-19 year-olds. As they stated:

*How does that work? Are they still at school? There's so much going on out there at the moment... We're probably not aware of foundation degrees then, as it's not the route that we do. We generally go through the HNCs, the HND and then straight to university for the degrees. So that's why I sound a little vague about it... It's very much a mêlée.*

Another interviewee from a major construction company emphasised that they could not see the relevance of FDs when their employees only required an HND, and were unclear about the benefit of going on to get an FD when this was not required for the job. Indeed, there was some confusion about how NVQs, HNCs, HNDs and FDs fit together. NVQs and HNDs were popular courses, and it was not clear where the FD would fit in with, or replace this. This reflects some of the concerns raised by providers at the forum.

There are currently three recognised routes into the construction industry and a range of courses related to these routes. These are the craft, technical and graduate routes. The following definitions are from the Construction Skills web-site. [www.citb-constructionskills.co.uk](http://www.citb-constructionskills.co.uk):

**Craft**

Most new entrants train and gain qualifications as they work, through an apprenticeship, although there are other kinds of training schemes. To enter the industry in a craft occupation, a good basic education is needed. Craft trainees develop skills using their hands and specialist equipment whilst learning about construction materials and production methods. You will also have the chance to do qualifications that can take you into technical, supervisory or management occupations.

**Technical**

To train in a technical occupation four good GCSE passes (or in Scotland, 4 good Standard grades), A levels, or an equivalent vocational qualification, are needed. There are two main options: either you can work and go to college part-time through an apprenticeship, or you can get full-time college qualifications before joining the industry. You will have the opportunity to complete further vocational and professional qualifications and move to supervisory or management roles.

**Graduate**

People with a foundation degree or degree, in a subject such as civil engineering, building, and construction management, can expect a high level of responsibility when they enter the industry and develop relevant skills. Graduates will be trained for highly specialised or management positions and will have the opportunity to gain professional qualifications such as chartered status.

One way in which skills are recognised within the industry is via the national Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS). In 2010, the CSCS card will be required to work on-site at construction projects, and many companies are making the CSCS or membership of affiliate schemes a prerequisite for employees. The card shows qualifications and training and health and safety awareness. There are different levels of card according to the type of work the individual undertakes. However, a potential area of confusion was raised in the link between FDs and the CSCS. Accreditation for CSCS can be given based on competence and qualifications, but whilst NVQs/Scottish Vocational Qualifications can be used for

accreditation, a medium-sized construction and civil engineering company was concerned that the scheme does not give recognition to degree-level qualifications. Given the workplace-focused nature of FDs, ensuring that they are tied to this national scheme may help to promote FDs in the sector.

There appears to be a key role here for the CITB in clarifying some of the confusion over qualifications and where FDs fit into the sectoral career pathways. As the medium-sized construction and civil engineering company noted:

*There are already too many options out there, and probably it if anything needs honing, to make it far clearer how people can progress in this industry and also have it linked into the CSCS scheme...CITB are looking at qualifications routes. So hopefully we are going to have some clarification and recommendations, because at the moment the question is do we go to HNC, do we go to foundations, do we go straight to degree? Or are we better off going NVQ because that will help us with the CSCS.*

Higher and further education programmes were seen as covering most of the skills areas companies required and no specific gaps were identified. Nevertheless, as well as clarifying how the many different courses fit into sectoral career pathways, there was concern about some difficulties accessing relevant courses in the local area. Indeed, the above company felt that communications with universities were not always positive, as employees had difficulty getting information about the kinds of courses they might apply for having gained their HND or similar level qualification.

A number of companies had formed close working partnerships with specific education and training providers both within and outside the East Midlands region. For other companies, however, the only connection with universities or colleges in the region was via employees that were attending courses. One company found that colleges and universities were not necessarily keen to develop close links and bespoke approaches with employers, although this would be a welcome development. None of the companies had been involved in either developing or promoting FD programmes, despite representing some of the major construction employers in the region.

In terms of the format of training, popular approaches were work-based learning and competence-based accreditation in the workplace. Day-release programmes were a popular option, with the employee working in the firm four days a week and attending an HEI or a training centre one day a week. Along with the match between training and the requirements of the job, it was emphasised that academic courses needed to fit in with working hours and workloads. As such, in companies where higher education was less of an emphasis, short courses were particularly popular. Notably, there was little mention of e-learning or distance learning within this sector, but a strong emphasis on hands-on learning in the workplace and on-site.

The major challenge in providing training was identified as the transfer of learning to the workplace. In-house training capacity and on-site and work-based learning were seen as essential in order to aid this transfer. There was significant in-house training provision within most of the companies, and one respondent commented that this was often much better than the training they could access through local colleges. Ensuring that on-site learning is a central part of FDs is thus clearly a key priority for the construction sector.

Where companies were aware of the FD, they were not necessarily making use of these programmes as part of their training. Thus, wider recognition and use of FDs in the construction industry is likely to take some time. As one large national construction company reflected:

*I think it will be a slow education process to get people to buy into looking at options like that...the company from a funding point of view, but the employee from the view of an awareness that it adds value for them...My main question is how long it will take for employers to understand their value and for individuals to understand enough to want to put the time and effort into doing the study. That's going to be a long-term thing in terms of awareness.*

Interestingly, in all cases, there was a strong emphasis on individual training and development plans and ensuring that training met not only company needs, but individual training needs. Thus, while companies formed partnerships with regional universities and colleges, they did not necessarily send all of their trainees to the same course. Indeed, the medium-sized general construction and civil engineering company had two people on FDs by day-release, both at different universities, and another person who was attending training at the CITB's Construction Training Centre at King's Lynn.

FDs are unlikely to be adopted as the core training programme for all employees of a certain level or in a particular role. Instead, they are likely to become one of a range of options provided as part of a trainee's or employee's individualised training plan. This has a number of implications for the way in which FDs are promoted to the construction sector and highlights three target groups among which to raise awareness of FDs. Firstly, it will be important to target employers in terms of raising awareness and – most importantly – making the business case for investing in FDs as opposed to other kinds of courses at a similar level. Secondly, there will be a need to raise awareness and interest among existing employees in the construction sector who may be considering a shift towards managerial roles. The core skills relevant to this group are likely to be similar to general management-focused FDs. Thus, there may be a case for taking a slightly different approach to FDs for those entering the industry and for those looking to build on and gain recognition of their existing skills. Thirdly, it will be important to demonstrate to those individuals considering a career in the industry where the FD fits in and what opportunities it might lead them to.

Overall, within the construction sector there is clearly a strong support for training and for higher education. Nevertheless, there is a general lack of awareness of FDs and some need to clarify where they fit within the wide range of courses available to those entering or employed in the sector.

### SWOT analysis for FDs in the construction sector

<p><b>Strengths</b> High level of skilled trades and qualified workers.</p> <p>Strong interest in education and training; and positive view of higher education.</p> <p>Recognition of value or potential value of FDs for new entrants and current employees.</p> <p>Day-release is a common mode of education and training provision, so more traditional part-time formats potentially pose fewer attendance problems in this sector.</p> <p>Individualised approach to training.</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b> Lack of information about local education and training opportunities.</p> <p>Confusion about what FDs are and what they involve.</p> <p>Individualised approach to training, so even with large companies FDs will not be the course of choice for a particular career path.</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b> Strong potential for developing more tailored programmes and accredited units that can lead to an FD if desired.</p>	<p><b>Threats</b> The perceived academic nature of FDs may be off-putting.</p>

<p>Interest in generic skills development for those taking on supervisory and management roles.</p> <p>Strong emphasis on in-house training that may be built into more tailored programmes.</p> <p>Strong interest in flexible modes of learning.</p> <p>Ensuring that FDs are recognised as part of CSCS.</p> <p>Partnership between providers and Construction Skills/ CITB to ensure that it is clear for the industry how qualifications routes are linked to career pathways in the sector.</p>	<p>A lot of confusion about where FDs fit in with the range of qualifications already known to the companies and established in the sector, particularly NVQs and HNCs/HNDs.</p> <p>Not clear why someone would choose an FD rather than a bachelor degree.</p> <p>FDs are not currently recognised as part of the CSCS.</p>
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## 5.5 The Retail Sector

The retail sector employs just under 3 million people in 293,000 businesses, constituting 11 per cent of the UK workforce. The sector is a significant contributor to the UK economy with sales of £219.4 billion in the year to December 2001, accounting for 5.6 per cent of the UK's gross value added, GVA (Skillsmart, 2004). Nevertheless, the sector's contribution lags behind those made by the retail sectors in France, Germany and the USA in terms of labour productivity (Quinn and Felstead, 2005). Since the American equivalent of the FD, the Associate Degree, has resulted in a significant rise in productivity amongst its graduates (Wilson *et al*, 2005), it would seem that FDs should be a welcome addition to the retail-related qualifications framework.

The retail sector workforce is unique in some aspects due to the very high numbers of part-time employees (Skillsmart, 2004) and the fact that, proportionally, an employee in this sector is five times more likely to still be in education when compared to the UK workforce as a whole (Quinn and Felstead, 2005). This is because many college and university students take jobs in the sector while they complete their studies. However, this does not lead to a highly qualified workforce since most leave the sector once they graduate. Indeed, the retail workforce as a whole has a lower level of qualifications than the national average and incidence of job-related training is lower than in other sectors.

Interviews were conducted with eight companies in the retail sector, and with Skillsmart, the SSC for the industry.

Awareness of FDs among these companies was low, with most having heard little or nothing of them. Generally, there was felt to be a low level of information about the programmes available within local colleges and universities. This was even the case for a large mail order company that had contact with the Learning and Skills Council several times a week.

The response to FDs amongst retail employers was mixed. For example, it was quite a common sentiment that FDs were 'a few years beyond us!' at this stage. There was a general recognition of the role of further development, and potentially FDs and higher education, particularly at management level or for specific job roles such as in HR, accounting and marketing functions.

A medium-sized food retailer was the only employer to have direct experience of the FD in terms of supporting their employee to study on the programme. This company was very positive about the whole experience. Whilst they found that FDs related to retail and food and drink were less relevant to the company and to the individual employee, the strong logistics and distribution element of the company meant that an FD in logistics fitted well with

what they did. Most importantly, the company could see clear benefits and were very pleased with the outcomes for the employee and the company:

*He's come an awful long way, he communicates better with other people of his level also senior managers than he did in the past, and he's also more on board with ideas etc. So from that, we're getting more as a company than we were out of him six months ago.*

In most cases, however, the relevance of FDs was not at all clear. Indeed, a chemist retail group was concerned that if they sent their hourly-paid retail staff on FDs, they 'would be in danger of over-training people and then not being able to meet their aspirations'. One of the large national retail companies in the sample emphasised that 'we recruit for personality, not for skills'. At the management level, there was some use of in-house leadership training. However, beyond very basic in-house safety and hygiene training, they claimed not to train most employees. As is often the case when interviewing employers about training, it is likely that respondents are thinking of formal training and qualifications, since they evidently had an in-house induction programme and went on to say that they were beginning to enrol a number of employees on 'very basic skills training' at a local college. As they emphasised however:

*The skill they need isn't necessarily literacy and numeracy. It's an interest in what they are doing and the motivation to smile and help customers. So educating them to a further standard wouldn't necessarily always be in our interest...we're not necessarily looking for intelligence, we're looking for people that can sell and that are good with customers. So in terms of looking at courses that develop people skills that way [foundation degrees/ HE], we're not really interested.*

Potentially, having sent employees on the basic skills course, this employer might have their interest in training raised and individual employees may start to look at the next level of learning. This was found to be the case in the retail sector in New Zealand, where the Industry Training Organisation (the equivalent to the SSC) aims to use this progressive learning to develop a sense of career pathway in an industry which often lacks one (Sung *et al*, 2006). Nevertheless, this major company felt that formal education and training was not really relevant to what they did as a business and, moreover, the business was thriving without any great investment in this area. A good proportion of companies will have a business strategy that works without any major investment in training, and it will be a major challenge, and a potential misdirection of resources, to try to persuade such companies to change their business model and invest in higher levels of people development (Sung and Ashton, 2006).

However, even where a company expressed some tentative interest and had sought out information, there was clearly a lack of full awareness of what FDs are and what role they might play. As a mail order retail company emphasised:

*...in terms of understanding where this is really supposed to fit. I mean I read the website, and I'm still not sure what foundation degrees are supposed to plug the hole for. Probably because we've managed to plug all the holes without using foundation degrees, I don't know how we really would use them.*

Indeed, as with the food and drink companies, there was a strong concern that development and investment in an individual's future might lead to them leaving the company or being poached. Again, this can create a market failure – where employers are left to create a demand for skills and to invest in training, but a gap will appear when companies worry that their staff will be poached. In such cases, the business case for investment in training is considered weak, since the company feels it may lose out. Moreover, there was a strong feeling that retail was a sector where many people had progressed without qualifications.

Those who had worked their way up to senior positions, and were in a position to decide whether a company sent employees on the FD, may therefore not be favourable to what was seen as essentially academic education.

The mail order retailer reflected that:

*I think retail is an unusual industry, and I hesitate to say 'typically British', but in the sense that what's valued more is what you achieve rather than the qualification.*

Similarly, the large car retailer felt that FDs would be 'viewed suspiciously from the top' due to the fact that many managers had worked their way up, and that 'academic study, as a consequence, will always be challenged'. In essence, there was a need for a clearer understanding of what the impact on the business was going to be and where the benefits from that investment in course fees and study time would be, particularly when there was a fear that the employee would then leave the company. So, again, the main challenge for employers is seeing the business case for investing in FDs and higher education more generally. The fact that FDs are seen as primarily academic in nature, despite placing emphasis on learning in and for the workplace, means that before even making a business case for investing in FDs, providers will have to overcome the barrier of being labelled 'academic' and, therefore, not clearly relevant.

Another major barrier is the cost of investing in education and development and this was regularly commented on. FDs were considered to be expensive. The large, national confectionery retailer noted that whilst FDs could be relevant at the management level, financial resources were limited, and this had a major impact on what they could offer. This meant the emphasis was on in-house training and short courses.

*The big problem we've got is budget ... we literally can't afford for people to do those. So if they could make them free, great!*

The mail order company felt that there needed to be a clearer link between FDs and funding sources. Nevertheless, as the chemist retail company noted, cost was important, but what mattered most – and what balanced out the financial cost – was understanding the other benefits accrued:

*The return doesn't have to be monetary, the return could be recruitment, retention, but there has to be a business case for us to do it. I wouldn't be into training for training's sake.*

Equally, several companies reflected that, if they were going to invest in HE, it seemed to make more sense to invest in a bachelor degree or a postgraduate diploma, which was considered to have a better standing and, in the case of the postgraduate diploma, to cost less. Nevertheless, this assumes that the individual learner has the necessary qualifications and educational experience to gain entry to these programmes. The FD provides a route into HE for those without a traditional educational background. Indeed, the food retailer was full of praise for this aspect of FDs:

*I think they're a good idea...particularly for people who've not got anything, like the girl I was telling you about, she came out of school with nothing, a few GCSEs that were really poor grades... We've put her on an NVQ course and she's sailed through that, because she's enjoyed it so much. And she wants to go further. And I think for people like that, to be able to develop them and find their niche at the skills training etc, it's doing her an awful lot of good and it's also good for the company, because we're getting more out of it as a company. And sales have gone up in that area, not just because of her, because of all the people working in that area. But she's been a great part in that. So, from our point of*

*view, foundation degrees, for people that have nothing, and there are a lot of people that come out of school, and have been considered daft or dumb at school, now have got somewhere where they want to feel they can carry on with their education and get something out of it, and foundation degrees are great for that.*

Thus, for this company, FDs not only provided a beneficial development programme, but could be about building commitment and motivation when people really enjoyed their job and realised that they wanted to develop themselves within that company.

There were relatively few links with local colleges or universities in the region for most companies, although NVQ accreditation was one means through which some level of working relationship had been built in a number of companies. The large car retailer emphasised that they had not investigated what local colleges or universities might offer simply because they were not sure what the relevance would be and where 'the impact' would be for the company. Two gaps identified by companies in local provision were courses in leadership skills, which were seen as distinct from general management skills, and more bespoke training designed to fit the needs of the company.

A number of companies emphasised that one way to make FDs more attractive to employers in the retail sector would be the development of a closer working relationship between providers and employers, with the aim of ensuring that the outcomes of the FD were going to meet the needs of the specific employer. This was also highlighted by Skillsmart as one area of particular demand. Skillsmart have taken on a key role acting as a broker between employers interested in investing in FDs and providers that can work closely with them to achieve their aims, and this more tailored approach was seen as particularly successful. As the large car retailer also emphasised, from the employer perspective external courses tended to focus on 'the needs of the course' and the provider, rather than the specific needs of the learner and the company. They argued that a more tailored approach was required:

*But I think that's a contradiction that's always going to be very, very difficult to overcome until colleges, academic bodies, recognise, well okay then, we've got a 30,000 employer down the road. Instead of offering them courses, let's find out what they want and let's build courses around their needs that also map across the qualifications which a) achieve the criteria of award bodies and b) achieve the funding which makes the world go around. This would be the way to progress with us. We opt out because we feel well there's more loses than wins out of this frankly.*

Nevertheless, it was also recognised the bespoke programmes can be expensive. In order to share the costs of this kind of approach, there does seem to be a role for the development of partnerships between different retail companies in the locality. This is likely to be particularly useful for small enterprises with limited resources. However, this will mean that companies must be willing to work together in this way rather than seeing each other as competitors. This would seem to be a useful approach to tailoring an FD to ensure that employer needs are catered for, whilst avoiding prohibitive costs. However, as noted above, a degree curriculum often requires a lot of pre-planning, and approval by the awarding body can be a lengthy process. The providing institution will therefore need to have a very flexible model to provide highly tailored programmes of this nature. Where this is not possible, there may be a greater role for short courses or a strong element of company-based learning within the FD which is able to build in the more tailored aspects of the programme alongside the core, generic curriculum.

As with the other sectors, flexibility of delivery was a major factor in whether the company might consider making use of FDs as part of their employee development programme. Working patterns were seen as an issue, since retailers often operate six or seven days a week with long working hours and shift working. As such, flexibility was a key issue in any training provision. The company that had an employee attending an FD in logistics found that the flexibility of the part-time course taught one evening per week worked well, particularly as this could be fitted around the shift working patterns of the business. There was some interest in more 'blended learning approaches' such as e-learning, and this was considered a factor that might raise interest.

In conclusion, a key challenge for those aiming to promote FDs to the retail sector will be that some of the leading companies in the sector are already highly profitable without investing in high levels of training, so it will be difficult to persuade such companies that they need to upskill their workforce and invest in higher education. For retail companies more widely, the low level of skills and investment in training is likely to impact on the level of recognition of benefits of investing in FDs both for the individual and for the company. Nevertheless, there is some interest in more general FDs for senior level employees and more general skills, and the one case where the company had encouraged their employee to take up an FD had proved highly successful.

### SWOT analysis for FDs in the retail sector

<p><b>Strengths</b> Where FDs are used, they are very positively viewed.</p> <p>Skillsmart working with the industry to act as a broker between providers and interested employers to develop more tailored approaches.</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b> Lack of information about local education and training opportunities; lack of awareness of FDs generally and the benefits and outcomes of FDs.</p> <p>Lack of clarity about the reasons for choosing an FD over a bachelor degree or postgraduate diploma.</p> <p>Shift-working and long working hours may impact on ability to attend FDs.</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b> Strong potential for developing more tailored programmes and accredited units that can lead to an FD if desired.</p> <p>Interest in generic skills development for supervisory and management roles or general senior level skills.</p> <p>Strong emphasis on in-house training that may be built into more tailored programmes and in flexible modes of learning.</p> <p>Potential to emphasise role of FD in providing entry to HE for those with experience but lacking a traditional educational background.</p>	<p><b>Threats</b> The perceived academic nature of FDs may be off-putting.</p> <p>FDs seen as expensive.</p> <p>Low level of investment in training within the sector.</p> <p>Fear of poaching or employees leaving is creating a market failure.</p> <p>Many jobs in the sector are low-skilled, hourly-paid and lack a sense of a career path.</p>

## 6 Conclusions and Implications

This research set out to examine and review the demand for FDs within a number of sectors in the East Midlands where there has been a low uptake of them. It aimed to identify what demand there was for FDs, why uptake might be problematic and what gaps employers saw in the current provision. Current documentation and recruitment data were reviewed before gathering data from a Providers' Forum. This led to the identification of four key sectors in which there was deemed to be a low uptake of FD programmes and, therefore, a question as to the demand for FDs. Interviews were carried out with employers in the logistics, food and drink, construction and retail sectors, identifying a number of important issues. The data from these interviews was supported by interviews with other key stakeholders involved in the sectors and in FDs more generally.

We will now summarise some of the key issues raised in this research, before moving on to identify possible actions for future practice. This research has focused on demand in the East Midlands region, but the findings have implications for practice more widely in the UK.

### 6.1 Key Issues Identified in the Research

#### 6.1.1 Reasons for Lack of Demand

It was found that a range of factors could impact on the uptake and success of FD programmes. They include the institutional context for FDs, the area of study, the conditions of the labour market, awareness of programmes, and individual and employer motivations for engaging in further study. Thus, a range of factors will need to be considered in depth when reviewing the demand and (potential) uptake of any FD programme.

FDs related to the public sector are often anecdotally perceived to be more successful than those related to the private sector. Given some of the data collected in this research, we might initially question the value of running FDs related to some areas of the private sector. However, we found that both public and private sectors have experienced challenges and successes. Thus the picture is somewhat more complex than is often seen to be the case, and there is certainly a role for FDs in the private sector. Indeed, within the four sectors examined in this research, a good number of employers were potentially interested in FDs even where they had not heard of them before.

There are specific challenges in each sector, but the most common issues that shape a lack of demand across the four sectors are:

- ❖ Lack of awareness;
- ❖ Alienation due to the idea of 'academic' education and the title 'degree';
- ❖ Confusion about the range of qualifications available;
- ❖ The need to see a clear business case for investing in training; and
- ❖ Cost.

In terms of sector-specific challenges, these are shown in the table below.

Sector	Key Challenges in Tackling Low Demand for Foundation Degrees
Logistics	FDs are relevant (as evidenced by the success of the Chesterfield programme) but there are going to be significant challenges for providers and other stakeholders in persuading employers – and employees – of this. At the moment, logistics companies provide low levels of training and HE is not recognised as having relevance by most.

Food and drink	FDs are relevant but the low skills levels of many jobs in the sector means that employers and employees do not see the relevance of HE. There is potential with supervisory and management roles, where higher education may be recognised as having relevance. More generic FDs may have more appeal and more recognition. Shift-working patterns mean that traditionally-delivered programmes are likely to be less appealing. Most training is in-house and to abide by regulations. Thus, other lower level programmes may be more suitable initially.
Construction	There is a good level of interest in education and qualifications, with fairly clear routes for qualified people in the industry. However, employers are not aware of FDs and there is confusion about the difference between HNC/HND and FD and where FDs fit in generally. FDs are not part of the national CSCS.
Retail	FDs are relevant but the low skills levels of many jobs in the sector means that employers and employees do not see their relevance. More generic FDs may have more appeal and more recognition. Market failure with employers clearly worried about employees leaving after training. There is also a high level of in-house training, so other lower level programmes may be more suitable initially. Shift-working and long hours mean that more traditionally-delivered programmes are less appealing.

### 6.1.2 Understanding Demand

Understanding the demand that exists for a particular FD programme is important, and this information is not necessarily being accessed before courses are developed. Information from SSCs, Learning and Skills Councils and other key stakeholders, such as the Regional Development Agency, can help to identify areas of existing and forecasted skills shortages and potential employer interest in FDs, and can give a general picture of the current shape of the sector and the role of educational qualifications. This will help to identify any potential gaps in current educational provision, entry points or niche areas for providers to tap into, and the kind of course content that is likely to attract learners and employers.

Nevertheless, as has been stressed within this research, whilst demand-led information is important in developing FD programmes, there is also a role for *creating* demand. There are areas of demand among employees/ learners that will not be identified by employers. This means that potentially successful courses might not be developed if providers rely solely on information about employer demand. We have seen that market failure in training can occur where employers fear they will lose their investment in training if an employee leaves or is poached. Equally, where individual employees are keen to develop new skills and qualifications, employers may not immediately see the value of higher education, or may be put off by the need for employees to leave the workplace during normal work hours. Thus, demand can be created among both learners and employers through innovative and responsive approaches by providers.

Employers also have a role to take in creating demand, particularly where the image of their sector leads to perceptions that educational qualifications are not needed, and there is no clear career pathway linked to educational development and qualifications. In such cases, employers have a clear role to play in demonstrating the value of FDs and higher education within their industry.

### 6.1.3 Areas of Success

Where employers had heard of FDs and had employees studying on these courses, they were highly regarded. Some of the benefits outlined included:

- ❖ Development of skills relevant for the business and the individual

- ❖ Individual's personal development such as motivation, confidence and ability to deal with others in a professional manner
- ❖ Retention of staff and career building
- ❖ Useful route into HE for non-traditional learners.

The Providers' Forum also highlighted that a range of FD programmes have been successful in recruiting, and have adopted different approaches according to the group of learners/employers being targeted. Support from the key stakeholders in related sectors can impact positively on recruitment and recognition of the FD. Flexible modes of delivery were also found to be successful incentives in some areas.

#### *6.1.4 Future Challenges Identified*

There is a very low level of awareness of FDs. Even where there is awareness, their relevance is not fully understood. There is also confusion about where FDs fit into the more established and recognised range of qualifications available. The transition from HNC/HND to FD has not always proved as simple as foreseen. Indeed, employers are particularly confused about the situation with HNDs, which are well recognised in industry, becoming FDs.

The new FD programmes were developed with the intention that students would undertake a significant amount of work-based learning, making the new qualification attractive to those already in full-time employment, and with a curriculum tailored to suit specific sectors. However, the perception of an FD as being 'too academic' is hampering recognition of their value to business and even alienating employers.

There appears to be some mismatch between educational supply and employer demand. The employer interviews demonstrated that it is particularly challenging to demonstrate the value and benefits of higher education to sectors with a large number of low-skills jobs. Where many jobs require very low skills, the apparent return on investment is not evident; basic skills training or NVQs may be seen as more relevant in such cases. Moreover, individuals are unlikely to invest in HE where opportunities for progression are not clear. This was a particular issue with the logistics, food and drink and retail sectors and puts the value of FD programmes specifically related to these sectors into question. Nevertheless, there were examples of programmes that had succeeded in recruiting. Innovative and flexible modes of delivery were seen as the key to this success. Again, this highlights the need for demand to be created afresh, as well as being measured based on the current situation.

Another mismatch is that sector-specific FDs are not necessarily attractive to employers in these sectors. Rather, there is interest in, and demand for, generic FD programmes. This was particularly the case for more senior employee training or those beginning to take on supervisory roles, as well as for more specific technical roles and specific job functions. Equally, programmes that appear to be related to other sectors may be of more interest to a company – as we saw with examples of retail companies interested in logistics FDs.

In addition, rather than FD level programmes, which signify longer-term investment, there is a strong interest in more tailored courses and the ability to study discrete units and short courses. These might lead eventually to an FD, but there is resistance to signing up initially for FDs and HE more generally. This is partly related to cost, but also to the view that the skills developed through externally provided courses do not necessarily transfer to the workplace.

Education providers, SSCs and other stakeholders play a key role in raising awareness of education and training opportunities for the sector. However, there is still a lack of

information among employers about the programmes available in the region, and low levels of partnership between employers and local providers.

## 6.2 Suggested Actions for Future Practice

We now outline some of the key areas in which actions can be taken to enhance uptake of FDs in the region, and areas of good practice that have been identified in this research.

### 6.2.1 *Getting a Clear Picture of Demand*

Sector-specific courses have been raised as an issue, suggestions for which will be tackled below. Nevertheless, examining demand along sectoral lines can be a useful way to gather information and examine new opportunities for FDs.

This research shows that providers and other stakeholders need to develop a good understanding of the local context – be it at the company or sectoral level – when evaluating the demand for FDs or the outcomes of existing programmes. This is not always the case at present. Such information will never be absolute, since demands can change or differ according to many factors. Nevertheless, the demand for HE in any given sector can be gauged in a general way, and this will provide a better platform for individual FDs to be created, adapted or suspended. There are many sources through which to gather this information. Partnerships between providers and sector-related stakeholders form a good basis for this. Suggested actions include:

- ❖ To get a clear picture of FD activity, **data on FD enrolment figures** across the region must be held centrally in order to be accessible and informative. Given its role and position in relation to FDs, this should be collated and held by FDF.
- ❖ **To provide a broad, realistic picture of sectors and their requirements**, FDF should work with the SSCs to provide a 'snapshot' of each sector and the current role of qualifications within it, clearly highlighting where HE fits into sectoral career pathways and skills frameworks. This should be shared with education providers in order to inform decisions about course planning and the feasibility of sector-specific FDs. Regional dimensions can be built into this, drawing on the SSC's regional knowledge and working with the RDA, in this case EMDA.
- ❖ SSCs can act as a broker between the education and company representatives, but there is also a vital role for **SSCs to ensure that FDs are clearly built into the sector's qualifications framework** and that the value of the qualification is understood in the sector and by those looking to enter the sector. It needs to be clear to employers, learners and providers, what the outcomes are for someone with an FD and what career paths people can expect to follow.
- ❖ **A clear qualifications framework for the sector** (such as in the logistics sector and as being developed in construction) facilitates the work of providers and the decisions of employers and learners. SSCs are at different stages of development and may not have such frameworks in place. Therefore, DfES, HEFCE, SSDA and FDF should work with SSCs to encourage development of such frameworks for each sector. These frameworks not only help providers to plan for viable courses, but also demonstrate to learners and employers where qualifications fit into sectoral career opportunities.
- ❖ Stakeholders such as EMDA, SSDA and FDF regularly examine employer demand for skills, training and qualifications and can provide a vital source of information. **This information on demand needs to be brought together more centrally for providers** - suggestions for this are given below under 'Institutional Frameworks'.

### 6.2.2 *Balancing Real and Aspirational Demands, and Creating a Demand*

Although SSCs and other stakeholders may have aspirations for a sector to engage in higher education, in some cases, as seen here, large-scale engagement in HE is beyond many companies' current capacity and business model. If companies make money without investment in training, they will ask themselves, 'why invest?'. Thus, **a balance is needed between realistic evaluation of where FDs fit into the sectoral framework at this time, and using FDs to work towards aspirations for the sector**, e.g. raising skills levels, increasing qualifications, enhancing staff retention and commitment. At present, where the skills required for most jobs are at a very low level, higher education is likely to be regarded as irrelevant by employers and learners/ employees. These issues will inevitably affect the attractiveness of FDs for such companies, and different kinds of engagement may be required in order to ensure that time and resources are spent where they are likely to have an impact.

In order to get a fuller understanding of the current and potential situation for any sector-related course, key questions that need to be understood before a programme is created or when evaluating an existing programme should include:

- ❖ Where does HE fit into the sector currently?
- ❖ How is HE regarded - is it valued and by whom? (It might be that learners value HE and employers do not.)
- ❖ What kinds of job roles are HE relevant for, and what jobs could learners progress to if they gain such a qualification?
- ❖ If HE is not relevant for many of the low skills jobs, are there other job roles that FDs are relevant for e.g. technical, supervisory and management roles, or specific functions such as human resources and accounting?
- ❖ If HE is not relevant, are there other courses that could be more suitable, to which resources could be channelled? E.g. NVQs, tailored short courses, taster sessions to gain interest.
- ❖ How can a business case be made to persuade employers that HE is relevant?

Demand also needs to be created. Some opportunities for course development may be overlooked if demand-led information is relied on too heavily. Thus, three additional and important questions to ask are:

- ❖ If no significant demand is currently evident, can one be created through innovative approaches?
- ❖ What approaches might appeal to the target group and why?
- ❖ Is there a 'niche' market that FDs can tap into?

Furthermore, employers have a role to play in creating demand, particularly where the industry has an image that suggests that higher education is not relevant to the sector and that there is no clear career pathway. Suggested actions are:

- ❖ SSCs could encourage employers to develop the image of the sector and attract more skilled workers by building clearer career pathways in their businesses and linking these to skills sets and qualifications, and to the sectoral qualifications and career framework. At the regional level, this could also be promoted by EMDA and regional SSC representatives.
- ❖ FDF and EMDA could work with SSCs to gather and publicise 'success stories' of companies supporting employees through FDs and discussing the benefits gained

for the individual and the company, and where FDs fit into the industry. These could appear on the SSC, EMDA and FDF websites and promotional materials.

- ❖ Regional case studies could be gathered by FDF, EMDA and the East Midlands Universities Association and publicised via the websites and regional promotional activities and shared with providers.
- ❖ If funds allowed, these success stories and cases could also form the basis of a promotion day for regional foundation degrees.

### 6.2.3 Institutional Frameworks

To be successful, FDs must be part of a strong, centralised institutional framework that is both recognised and valued across the HEI or FE college. Thus, **institutional frameworks of HEI and FE colleges delivering FDs need to be evaluated in order to assess the support that exists for FDs and how this can be strengthened.**

Whether at the university or college level, a centralised approach to gathering information, promoting and developing programmes, and agreement on their aims, contributes to the success of FDs. Without real institutional backing, FDs are likely to be treated as the 'poor cousin' of bachelors degrees, and staff will feel undervalued or demotivated. Some may avoid involvement in FD provision if it is not well perceived. Conversely, where there is strong institutional backing, and where FDs are clearly supported as part of a broader framework of provision, staff are likely to invest their time and energies to develop more innovative and exciting programmes. **So there is a clear role for institutions to promote and ensure adequate resourcing of FDs internally if they do support these programmes.**

HEI structures can be slow to change, and approval for new courses can be time-consuming. There can also be tensions between the aims of an academic institution, and the idea of delivering to meet business demand. For FDs to adapt with individual employer and learner needs and objectives, ensuring both a high standard of academic education and approval, and the ability to run tailored programmes in-house, strong backing is needed at the institutional level. Thus, in order to create more flexible, innovative and tailored programmes, **institutions need to develop a highly flexible model within which FD programmes and curricula are designed and accredited.** As outlined by Stoney and Hudson, this will facilitate learner-focused programmes and more tailored courses to meet employer demands.

### 6.2.4 Sharing Information about Demand Across the Institution

Once information is gathered about demand, it is important that this is shared across an institution, be it an FE college or an HEI, rather than simply within those departments where FDs are in place or being planned. This helps to promote FDs and shows the level of institutional support. It may also help to break down some of the negative views that institutions and individuals hold of FDs, and resistance to forging links between higher education and employers.

One very practical approach to sharing information across departments or divisions delivering FDs, following Stoney and Hudson, would be **a monthly newsletter distributed across the institution with updates on relevant FD information from agencies or other stakeholders.** To be most effective, this requires the time of an individual or group of people based in a central position to investigate and collate relevant information.

As well as ongoing discussions with stakeholders, there are easy ways to access and compile this kind of information, such as signing up to email bulletins from relevant

stakeholders and national bulletin boards for FDs, and conducting simple Internet searches. If an institution is serious about making FDs a central part of its learning provision, then this should be recognised as an investment rather than a cost. It could both improve the institutional approach to FDs, by providing vital information, and enhance institutional and individual views of FDs by helping to promote FDs across the institution and, therefore, staff commitment to making them a success.

**Inclusion of 'good news stories' and case studies that demonstrate successes, as well as learning points**, can promote wider support within the institution among staff who may then get involved and more generally raise the profile of FDs at the university/college administration level. Departments that have not considered FDs as an option can begin to see an opening for them. Equally, staff currently involved in FDs who may feel undervalued due to general lack of support will feel more recognised across the institution.

#### 6.2.5 *Sharing Information across the Region*

As well as sharing information across each institution, FDs will benefit from a stronger regional co-operation. Although various activities and meetings are held in the region, there appear to be few opportunities for those delivering FDs to get together. The Providers' Forum proved a popular activity, and there was strong interest in future activities, even among those who could not attend. Such meetings will provide new ideas and learning and will help to forge co-operation across institutions. Suggested actions to draw on this interest and the wish to share learning include:

- ❖ Organising a second Providers' Forum to discuss the findings of this research.
- ❖ Regular Providers' Forum meetings (e.g. quarterly or biannual) to share good practice and discuss specific topics, enhanced with invited speakers, workshops, and round tables. This could be funded by HEFCE or FDF, and organised via FDF or the East Midlands Universities Association.
- ❖ Discussion at the institution level about areas of co-operation between institutions to avoid duplication, to take a more integrated regional approach to FDs, and to ensure that capacity for innovative approaches is held within the region rather than providers needing to collaborate with institutions elsewhere. Part of this will be about ensuring that there is willingness within institutions to work together at the regional level, and for HEIs and FE colleges to forge better working relationships, as these can be subject to tensions and negative perceptions.

#### 6.2.6 *Evaluating Sector-Specific Programmes*

Many sector-specific programmes are recruiting well and have gained recognition. Courses that have been developed by working closely with the industry can even become a 'programme of choice' for the sector, providing national and regional recognition and a vital means of recruiting students. Ideally, **any sector-specific programme should aim to become the regional FD of choice for the sector**. A clear way to promote sector- or role-specific FD programmes is to ensure that they are **tied into existing national professional accreditation or associations**. This should involve learners either gaining accreditation as part of the FD, or using their professional certification as an alternative entry route into the FD, with potential for accreditation of prior learning. This is one means for FDs to become the programme of choice for the industry and has clear benefits for providers, employers and learners, demonstrating the value of FDs and raising individual employability. **A clear course of action for the construction industry is to ensure that FDs are embedded within the CSCS**. SSCs need to work with industry and providers to ensure that this can happen.

Sector-specific programmes are not problematic in themselves but there are diverse factors that shape demand. Where problems have been identified in this research, however, there appears to be a mismatch between what the sector is looking for and what is being provided.

One area that is clearly identified in this research is the **urgent need to review the demand for generic rather than sector-specific FDs**. Where a sector-specific FD has not recruited, it may be more effective to focus energies and resources on promoting more generic courses, such as management, leadership or business skills. Alternatively, it may be possible to move away from broad sector-related courses to develop courses in specific technical areas or business functions, with roles as food technicians, and in HR, accounting and engineering roles being identified in this research.

**Sector-specific courses need to be carefully evaluated** in terms of:

- ❖ Sector-specific and generic elements. Could courses be titled to reflect both elements, e.g. an FD in Food and Drink and Business Skills? Is it more effective to market generic courses such as management or business skills FDs? Or are they better focused on specific job roles that tie into industry requirements?
- ❖ Course longevity. Is there a long-term demand for a sector-specific course? Where is the sector going in the future in terms of skills development and HE?
- ❖ Wider demand. Can sector-specific courses be broadened to create a wider demand, appealing to those in other sectors with similar skills bases?
- ❖ Does the course have recognition from the sector? If not, how can this be gained?
- ❖ What impact would a change in sector skills policy (e.g. regulatory changes in qualifications necessary for the sector) or skills trends (e.g. qualifications inflation) have on the FD, and how would it be dealt with?

However, programmes such as the FD may not be the most effective way of engaging employers in these and other similar sectors. **Alternative provision also needs to be investigated when FDs have not recruited successfully**. Although the employers interviewed for this research are not always looking for sector-specific FD programmes – since they feel they already ‘know the sector’ and can provide in-house training for many skills – there is a strong potential to make links with companies via more tailored programmes. There are cost implications with tailored programmes, and these would have to be carefully assessed. However, this more long-term approach, in which providers build a relationship with employers, is likely to have many benefits. Suggested actions where this is the case are:

- ❖ Providers need to look at the feasibility of starting at a lower level than the FD, such as an NVQ. Alternatively, they can take an incremental approach, such as providing units of assessment or short certified courses, which can be built up in a portfolio-style programme towards an FD, if required.
- ❖ Tailored programmes of learning should tap into areas in which companies feel there are gaps in their own training programme or in-house capability, or where certification is valued. This will require close co-operation with companies and should be part of existing outreach programmes, but may be most effective (given the view of higher education) if organised through other stakeholders such as the Chambers of Commerce, SSCs and RDAs, or through FE colleges. As well as meeting a demand from employers, this approach would help to make the first step for many companies to considering an FD programme, and start to demonstrate the value of the FD to the sector and the business. Equally, given the low level of contact with providers at the moment, if training can be tailored to the company's objectives and

individual needs, this would help to forge better links with local providers and lead to longer-term working relationships and entry to more generic courses.

- ❖ Costs of training are a major issue for employers. Therefore, providers and stakeholders need to identify sources of funding to develop and deliver FDs or more tailored programmes. This will be a strong incentive to employers.
- ❖ SSCs, EMDA and the NTI can play a role by identifying companies that are willing and interested to work together to form a training cluster around more tailored FDs, thus sharing the costs of developing more bespoke courses.

### 6.2.7 Reducing Resistance to Higher Education

Perceptions of FDs as ‘academic’ have a clear, negative impact on many employers’ attitudes. This can alienate businesses that might otherwise support such programmes.

**Local providers need to form longer-term relationships and take an incremental development approach with employers**, as outlined above. Once managers have built a relationship with providers and are assured of the benefits of other courses to the company, they are likely to change their perceptions of higher education. For example, seeing an impact on individual motivation and levels of engagement at work can radically change perceptions of how HE can impact on everyday practice in the workplace. Site visits organised for employers to other local businesses that have employees attending FDs may be useful here.

Managers can be dismissive of HE when they themselves learned their skills ‘on the job’ and where this is traditionally the case in a sector. In such cases, **a business case for investing in FDs must be made** in order to persuade them that HE has any relevance. In addition, if the programme is closely tied to activities in the workplace, this can raise employer confidence that skills will be transferred to the business.

As noted above, **outreach programmes should aim to engage employers in these sectors on a range of levels, first understanding the context of the particular business**. If most jobs have low skills levels in a sector or company, forms of education and training other than the FD are likely to be more immediately recognised as relevant, whilst FDs are likely to be rejected outright as lacking relevance. Having engaged the company in lower level training, however, it will then be easier to introduce the notion of FDs without the automatic assumption that academic means irrelevant.

**Where recruitment is low for sector-specific programmes, the title ‘foundation degree’ should be evaluated or marketed differently** given the alienating nature of the word ‘degree’ for some employers. Assessment needs to be made as to whether re-titling these courses as an ‘award’ or other less ‘academic’ title is feasible. This would, of course, have implications for where the programmes fit into the National Qualifications Framework and the need to simplify rather than complicate matters by adding another programme of studies. An alternative route, touched on above, is to offer units of accredited study and short courses, which could lead eventually to an FD if the learner chooses to carry on and complete further units. Marketing short courses or units of study, rather than an FD, may help to avoid the immediate ‘turn off’ of the word ‘degree’, which can be introduced at a later stage.

### 6.2.8 Engaging the Public and Private Sectors

FDs are clearly relevant to both the public and private sectors, although different issues may be driving employer demand. Therefore, **future development of FDs should aim to cover both public and private sectors but should bear in mind the specific conditions that**

**might attract or deter learners/ employees and employers from investing in this level of education.**

In the public sector, FDs appear to be more easily recognised if they are closely aligned with government skills policies, in which case they are likely to attract support from employers and learners. At the same time, when government policy shifts, other courses may be seen as more appropriate, and interest in FDs can decline. Courses that are more broadly relevant and attractive to a range of learners/sectors may more easily weather such change.

In the private sector, considerations of profit and impact on the organisation are uppermost in employers' minds when looking to invest in education and training for staff. Thus, when developing FDs for the private sector, more emphasis is needed on marketing and promotional activities that demonstrate the business case for investment. A clear case needs to be presented to capture the interest of employers. Two relatively simple actions can be taken here:

- ❖ Development of a pamphlet or other marketing material that makes a clear business case for FDs (taking into account regional issues and focus). This would articulate the range of benefits that employers can expect when they invest in FDs for their staff, covering both financial costs and benefits, and wider benefits of engagement in HE, with some reference to regional skills issues and any funding that is currently available to facilitate their engagement.
- ❖ Development of a pamphlet or other marketing material that makes a clear business case for each individual FD programme that is targeting employers as part of its marketing strategy (taking into account sector or discipline-specific issues and focus). This would articulate the range of benefits that employers can expect when they invest in particular FDs for their staff, covering both financial costs and benefits, and wider benefits of engagement in HE, with reference to sector-specific skills issues and any funding or support that is currently available to facilitate their engagement.

#### *6.2.9 Modes of Delivery and Creating Demand*

The form of course delivery and content can also raise interest and create a demand where there may not have been one. This research has shown that, in order to increase demand, **flexible and innovative modes of delivery need to be investigated and developed.**

Flexible modes of delivery – such as blended learning approaches, e-learning and distance learning – can significantly enhance course uptake. When used effectively, they can facilitate development of more tailored approaches, e.g. module-based learning where learners select topics and build these towards a portfolio of learning. However, these more flexible approaches initially require resources and may require specific expertise.

Relevant stakeholders, such as HEFCE, FDF and the NTI will need to review whether there is:

- ❖ Support within the wider institutional infrastructure;
- ❖ Sufficient resources to develop new capacity and expertise;
- ❖ Need for additional development funds to promote innovation and new approaches;
- ❖ Potential for partnerships to develop new resources.

Providers will need to review whether HEIs and FE colleges are willing to work together, and whether flexible modes of learning are:

- ❖ Feasible with current resources and if not how they can be developed;

- ❖ Attractive to the target group and why;
- ❖ Supported by the wider institutional infrastructure, e.g. can they learn from others in the institution? Are resources already in place to support innovative approaches?
- ❖ Supported by staff (balancing the new demands they create with the value they can add to teaching);
- ❖ Most effectively developed internally or through partnership with other institutions.

Where these approaches are not currently available and there is a lack of expertise, or resources are already allocated, or where there are challenges providing 'out of hours' teaching, there can be reluctance to move into these areas and lack of support from staff. Therefore, **additional development funding may be required to promote innovation and new approaches**. This could be achieved in co-operation with the NTI, HEFCE and FDF, with potential for awards to be developed to give recognition to exciting new projects. Additional resources will help to develop current FD provision further in order to respond to demands for tailored and flexible approaches, and to ensure that staff are willing and able to back these developments.

As already noted, **there must also be flexibility within FDs to provide units of learning that may or may not lead to FDs**. This will be vital in engaging employers in the longer term and in raising understanding of the benefits of this level of education. This of course relies on a strong and flexible institutional framework as outlined above.

#### *6.2.10 Reducing Confusion and Raising Awareness about the Value of Foundation Degrees*

**Clarification is needed as to where FDs fit both within each institution's provision, and for learners and employers regionally and nationally.**

FDF is working at the regional level with British Chambers of Commerce in order to provide information for their members. This may be particularly useful in accessing small companies that are less likely to have current links with providers.

However, in order to raise awareness about FDs, there is a strong case for a regional and national campaign. This should be organised both by DfES, HEFCE and FDF as a general national campaign for FDs, and by FDF and specific SSCs as a sector-specific campaign. At the East Midlands level, a regional campaign could be organised between learning providers, EMDA, FDF and regional representatives of the SSCs and SSDA.

Employers receive a lot of written information, and this is not always taken in, with evidence of some 'information overload'. Therefore, a paper-based campaign is likely to duplicate previous information and efforts. Another potentially more wide-reaching approach could be the use of a television advertising campaign that appeals to both learners and employers. For example, in Canada, TV advertising campaigns have been used to raise awareness of apprenticeships within both traditional and new sectors, and to demonstrate that these training programmes and these sectors are open to all groups of learners, including women and ethnic minorities (Sung *et al*, 2006). Given the rather low level of awareness of what FDs are and where they fit into the range of qualifications already established amongst employers and learners, a TV-based campaign could be a useful way of bringing them into the spotlight as an option for further investigation by companies or individuals.

As well as promoting sector-specific FD programmes, employers need to be made aware of the full range of programmes that might cover their different business functions, including courses at other levels. This will enable them to identify areas that fit with their particular needs, since sector-specific programmes and FDs might not be as relevant as those

covering other areas that are outside the business' expertise or in-house capacity, or different kinds of qualifications.

### **6.3 Areas for Further Research**

In order to support the actions outlined above, a number of areas that were outside the remit of this current investigation would benefit from further research and gathering of good practice examples:

- ❖ Case study research to explore the short- and long-term benefits of FDs to business and individuals, which would form a good basis to develop the business case material to promote FDs to employers and case studies to promote FDs to learners.
- ❖ Modes of delivering FDs, including in-depth case studies of innovative and flexible approaches, examining those that worked and those that faced challenges and why, from the perspectives of providers, learners and employers.
- ❖ Learner demand for FDs, including perceptions of FDs, understanding of where they fit into the overall qualifications picture, what impact they might have on career opportunities and personal development, individual motivations for studying on FDs or reasons for not taking up FDs.
- ❖ Employers' experiences of FDs, including in-depth case studies of companies that have supported employees on FDs and the benefits they perceive from this, supported with investigation of individual employee perspectives.
- ❖ Institutional frameworks to support FDs, including examination of the current system, where FDs fit into this, the support provided, resources and perspectives from both administrative and teaching staff.

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## Appendix 1: Foundation Degrees Recruitment in the East Midlands

Courses	Validating Institution	Provider	Course mode	Student Numbers							
				2004-5		2004-5		2004-5		2004-5	
				Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4	
				FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT
<b>Environment and Sciences</b>											
Environmental Cleaning Management	University College Northampton		DL	-	16	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wastes Management	University College Northampton		DL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UFD Applied Sciences	Nottingham Trent University			1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UFD Biological Sciences	Nottingham Trent University			-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-
UFD Biology	Nottingham Trent University			44	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UFD Chemistry	Nottingham Trent University			8	14	-	-	-	-	-	-
UFD Physics	Nottingham Trent University			10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Information Technology</b>											
Electronic Computing	University College Northampton		DL	-	8	-	1	-	-	-	-
IT for Business	University College Northampton			3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
ICT Systems Support	University College Northampton			-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Business Computing	University College Northampton			1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Business Information Technology	De Montfort University	Boston College		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Computing	De Montfort University	Boston College		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Applied Computing	Sheffield Hallam University			105	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Business Information Technology	Sheffield Hallam University			117	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Information Technology Networks	Sheffield Hallam University			76	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Information Technology Software	Sheffield Hallam University			73	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Engineering and Automotive</b>											
Lift Engineering	University College Northampton		DL	-	18	-	-	-	-	-	-
Motor Sports and High Performance Engineering	University College Northampton	Northampton College		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Motor Sports and High Performance Engineering	University College Northampton	Stephenson College		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Motor Sports and High Performance Engineering	University College Northampton	Tresham Institute of Further and Higher Education		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Motor Sports and High Performance Engineering	University College Northampton			-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-

Motorsport (Resource Management)	University College Northampton			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Motor sport technology (FdSc)	University of Derby			25	3	17	8	-	-	-	-
Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering	University of Derby			-	24	-	-	-	-	-	-
Motorsport and High Performance Engineering	De Montfort University	Tresham Institute of Further and Higher Education		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Construction, Architecture and Built Environment</b>											
Built Environment (Architecture)	University of Derby			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Built Environment (Construction)	University of Derby			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Built Environment (Civil Engineering)	University of Derby			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FDSC Environmental Conservation and Ctry Management	Nottingham Trent University			9	9	-	-	-	-	-	-
UFD Building Design and Construction FT	Nottingham Trent University			4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UFD Civil Engineering Construction	Nottingham Trent University			25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UFD Construction Surveying	Nottingham Trent University			1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Agricultural and Land-based</b>											
Land Management	University College Northampton	Moulton College		7	5	8	1	-	-	-	-
Equine Management	University College Northampton	Moulton College		11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Equine Management	University College Northampton			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Arboriculture	University College Northampton	Moulton College		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FDSC Animal Studies	Nottingham Trent University			28	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
FdSc Horticulture	Nottingham Trent University			53	23	-	-	-	-	-	-
FdSc Sports Horse Management and Training	Nottingham Trent University			32	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
FdSc Wildlife Conservation FT	Nottingham Trent University			12	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
UFD Animal Studies	Nottingham Trent University			-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
UFD Conservation and Countryside Management	Nottingham Trent University			10	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Business and Finance</b>											
Accounting Principles and Practice	University College Northampton			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Accounting Principles and Practice	University College Northampton	Northampton College		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enterprise (Business	University College Northampton	Northampton College		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Development)				-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Office Administration and Management	University College Northampton	Northampton College		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Business	University College Northampton			-	-	1	1	6	-	-	1
Business (Marketing)	University College Northampton			6	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Enterprise (Business Development)	University College Northampton			6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
International Trade	University College Northampton			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Security and Risk Management	University of Leicester		DL	-	108	-	86	-	30	-	-
Business	De Montfort University	Broxtowe College Nottingham		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Business and Management	De Montfort University			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enterprise	De Montfort University	Broxtowe College Nottingham		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Community Development, Health and Personal Care</b>											
Oral Health	University College Northampton			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alcohol and Drug Counselling	University of Leicester			-	11	-	-	-	-	-	-
Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations (Leicester)	University of Leicester			-	17	-	10	-	-	-	-
Health and Illness	University of Leicester			-	7	-	6	-	-	-	-
Assistant Practitioner in Health Care	University of Derby			4	-	-	10	-	-	-	-
Imaging - Assistant practitioner in Health Care	University of Derby			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Community Regeneration and Development	University of Derby			16	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hairdressing and Salon Management	University of Derby		Online	-	16	-	-	-	-	-	-
Beauty and Spa services	University of Derby			-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mammography - Assistant practitioner in Health Care	University of Derby			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Osteoporosis - Assistant practitioner in Health Care	University of Derby			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Radiotherapy - Assistant practitioner in Health Care	University of Derby			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dental Technology	De Montfort University	The People's College Nottingham		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Families, Parenting and Communities	De Montfort University	Grantham College		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Housing, Communities and	De Montfort University			-	22	-	-	-	-	-	-

Regeneration											
Pharmacy	De Montfort University	The People's College Nottingham		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Public Sector Management</b>											
Public Services Management	University of Derby	High Peak College		6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Voluntary Sector Management	University of Derby	High Peak College		3	19	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Logistics</b>											
Logistics	University College Northampton			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Hospitality, Leisure, Tourism, Travel and Heritage</b>											
Heritage Management	University College Northampton			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel and Tourism Management	University College Northampton			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Outdoor Activities management				-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hospitality Management	University of Derby			-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel and Tourism Operations	University of Derby	High Peak College		1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Football Studies	University of Derby			1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sports Coaching and Development – Derby	University of Derby			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sports Coaching and development	University of Derby	Buxton		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Applied Sport and Exercise Science	De Montfort University	Grantham College		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel and Tourism	De Montfort University	Broxtowe College Nottingham		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Education</b>											
Teaching and Learning	University College Northampton			54	-	59	-	-	-	-	-
Sure Start Sector Endorsed Early Years	University College Northampton			19	23	-	22	-	-	-	-
Learning and Teaching (Classroom Assistants)	University College, Northampton	Broxtowe College Nottingham		12	-	9	-	-	-	-	-
Learning and Teaching (Classroom Assistants)	University College, Northampton	Milton Keynes College		11	-	20	-	-	-	-	-
Teaching Assistant (Leicester)	University of Leicester			-	24	-	21	-	18	-	6
Teaching Assistant (Lincoln)	University of Leicester	Bishop Grosseteste College		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Teaching Assistant (Peterborough)	University of Leicester		DL	-	15	-	13	-	16	-	-
Teaching Assistant (Stafford)	University of Leicester			-	8	-	10	-	11	-	14
Educare and Early Childhood	University of Derby			1	80	-	29	-	-	-	-

Education Studies for Teaching Assistants	University of Derby			2	40	3	8	-	-	-	-
Supporting Learners	University of Derby	Derby College		-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-
Post-Compulsory Education	De Montfort University	Broxtowe College Nottingham		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Teaching in Post-Compulsory Education	De Montfort University	The People's College Nottingham		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UFD Childhood Studies	Nottingham Trent University				23						
<b>Food and Beverage</b>											
Culinary Arts Professional	University of Derby	High Peak College		4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Food and Beverage Studies	University of Derby			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FdSc Food and Nutrition	Nottingham Trent University			20	21	-	-	-	-	-	-
UFD Food Studies	Nottingham Trent University			1	1						
<b>Creative Arts and Media</b>											
Video and Photography – Commercial	University of Derby			8	2	10	-	-	-	-	-
Typography	University of Derby			5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Video Production	University of Derby			6	1	10	-	-	-	-	-
Photography – Commercial	University of Derby			12	2	5	-	-	-	-	-
New Media Design and Production	University of Derby			6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fashion Design for Industry	University of Derby			7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fashion and Costume Craft	De Montfort University	Leicester College		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Interactive Media	De Montfort University	Leicester College		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Performing Arts	De Montfort University	Tresham Institute of Further and Higher Education		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Photography and Video	De Montfort University	Leicester College		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Justice and Security</b>											
Criminal Justice (Police Studies)	De Montfort University	Broxtowe College Nottingham		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FdA Youth Justice	Nottingham Trent University			-	14	-	-	-	-	-	-β

## Appendix 2: Employer Interview Schedule

Are you aware of the range of foundation degrees that are being developed in the East Midlands region?

### IF YES:

- ❖ Do foundation degrees form part of the training provision for your company? Might they in the future?
- ❖ How do/ would your company generally make use of foundation degrees? E.g. primarily to raise the skills of the existing workforce or as an entry-level qualification?
- ❖ Has your company had any involvement in the development of foundation degrees for your sector?
- ❖ Are your company involved in the promotion of FDs either in the East Midlands or the UK overall?
- ❖ What is your view of foundation degrees? (prompt if needed: generally, sector-level, company-level)
- ❖ Do you have any specific links with colleges or universities in the region?
- ❖ Could you tell me about any particular successes that you have seen in terms of foundation degrees in the East Midlands? (If necessary follow up to find out why they found that example so good)
- ❖ What challenges or problems do you feel there have been with foundation degrees, either in the East Midlands or more generally?
- ❖ Where would you like to see FDs going/being developed in the future?
- ❖ That is my last question. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

### IF NO:

- ❖ What is your knowledge generally of foundation degrees?
- ❖ Do your staff engage in other kinds of training with colleges or universities?
- ❖ What kinds of information have you received about the courses at local colleges and universities that are relevant to your sector?
- ❖ Would you like to know more about the different kinds of higher education programmes that are available? (Do they see this as relevant to their company?)
- ❖ Do you have any specific links with colleges or universities in the region?
- ❖ What kinds of programmes would you like to see developed by local colleges and universities? – What would be most useful to your company or sector?
- ❖ What are your main considerations when looking at providing training for your employees?
- ❖ What have you found most successful when providing training for your employees?
- ❖ What are the main challenges when providing training for your employees?
- ❖ That is my last question. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

### Appendix 3: List of abbreviations

CITB	Construction Industry Training Board
CLMS	Centre for Labour Market Studies (University of Leicester)
COVE	Centre of Vocational Excellence
CSCS	Construction Skills Certification Scheme
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EMDA	East Midlands Development Agency
FAME	Financial Analysis Made Easy database
FD	Foundation degree
FDF	Foundation Degree Forward
FE	Further education
GVA	Gross value added
HE	Higher education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher education institution
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
LMU	Leeds Metropolitan University
NCSR	National Centre for Social Research
NTI	New Technology Initiative
NTU	Nottingham Trent University
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
RDA	Regional Development Agency
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SSC	Sector Skills Council
SSDA	Sector Skills Development Agency

