



North West Higher Level Skills Pathfinder Business Plan – Executive Summary

The NWUA has developed this business plan for a NW Higher Level Skills Pathfinder in conjunction with the NW HEIs and FECs, AoC, NWDA, LSC, GONW and SfBN. The activity detailed in the plan builds on the existing partnerships between the HE sector and these regional organisations established over the last two years through the work of the NW RSP.

The aim of the Pathfinder is to increase demand from employers for higher level skills provision and therefore increase employer engagement with skills provision (development and delivery) in NW HEIs and FECs. In order to achieve this the Pathfinder will also aim to increase capacity in the NW HEIs and FECs to respond quickly and effectively to employer demand for higher level skills. These aims will assist in achieving the HEFCE objectives for this Pathfinder as well as the objectives of the NW RES 2006-09.

The NW Model will be driven by demand and the encouragement of employer investment in skills. Therefore the model is based on two aspects: brokerage and the development and delivery of new and existing provision which meets employer demand. These two areas will be the focus for activities undertaken through the pathfinder and will ensure that the pathfinder is both proactive and reactive.

The brokerage will be fully integrated with the Information, Diagnosis and Brokerage (IDB) service run by NWDA, this service is also being used by the LSC as the Train to Gain Skills brokerage and therefore this will ensure a fully integrated approach to brokerage in the region. The work of the pathfinder will ensure that the existing brokerage offer includes the HE higher level skills and wider knowledge transfer capability by providing training for brokers combined with Specialist Advisors to support the brokers.

The development of provision also has two aspects, the first is the proactive development of provision which is described below and will be carried out in conjunction with the SSCs and regional sector partners. The second aspect is the reactive development of provision in reacting to needs identified through the brokerage work. NWUA will focus the reactive provision developments through the HE Specialist Advisors who will liaise with both the brokers and the providers to try and identify a suitable solution to meet the identified employer need.

Through the activities outlined in this business plan to Pathfinder hopes to achieve a step change in employer engagement with higher level skills. This will ensure that there is a significant increase in the proportion of the NW workforce with higher level skills and therefore an improvement in the knowledge economy of the region.