



North West Higher Level Skills Partnership

Communications Strategy

JULY 2008

Introduction

The North West Higher Level Skills Partnership (NW HLSP) involves a wide range of partners both within the HE sector and externally. Internal HE partners include the 15 NW HE Institutions (HEIs) and all NW FE Colleges (FECs) offering HLS provision as well as other initiatives such as the Lifelong Learning Networks, Aimhigher and Foundation Degree Forward. Critical to the success of the pathfinder are a number of external partners including Sector Skills Councils, NW LSC, NW Business Link, NWDA, AoC, NW Providers Network, GONW and other sectorally related organisations in the region. This wide range of partners means there is a significant need for effective communication of activities and progress as well as issues arising and barriers encountered in order to ensure the success of the NW HLSP.

Good communication is essential to collaborative activities such as the NW HLSP in order to achieve the aims and objectives outlined in the business plan. Different strategies may be required for effective communication with internal and external partners as the type of information required will vary and the NW HLSP will also wish to communicate key messages arising from activity to key funders and policy makers nationally. These differing needs for the NW HLSP have resulted in the development of this Communications Strategy to ensure effective delivery of project activities.

Principles

The communications strategy has been formulated on the following principles:

- Communication processes must be clear and known to all partners.
- Communication must be purposeful and timely, particularly in relation to consultation and decision making.
- Information will be made available on an open basis.
- Communication will be multidimensional: up and down between the Steering Group, Sector Panels, providers and other partners as well as horizontal communications at all levels and between groups such as the Sector Panels or provider networks.
- Communication mechanisms will be easy to use, accessible, robust and reliable.
- The HLSP Team will take responsibility for communication mechanisms.

- Communications mechanism developed will be cost effective and maximise the use of ICT.

Aims

The communications strategy will support the aims and objectives of the NW HLSP, promoting activities undertaken both within the brokerage and the development of provision elements of the project.

The key strategic aims of this strategy are to:

- Promote the NW HLSP and related activities in a coherent way.
- Establish and maintain a high standard of communication between the NW HLSP Team and the relevant partners.
- Ensure information on NW HLSP activities and events is easily accessible to all.
- Establish links with key funding and policy organisations to ensure understanding of the activity being undertaken as part of the NW HLSP and any key issues arising from this activity.

Objectives

The following objectives identify the means of achieving the above aims:

- To organise a number of events such as seminars, conferences and workshops to disseminate information on the activities of the NW HLSP and development projects funded through the NW HLSP as well as facilitating collaboration between HLS providers and partners for future activity.
- To attend relevant events organised by partners to showcase NW HLSP activities as required.
- To maintain the NW HLSP website as a source of current information on the project. www.nwua.ac.uk/pathfinder
- To produce a quarterly newsletter on NW HLSP activities for circulation to all contacts and publication on the website.
- To produce regular articles for inclusion in partner newsletters such as those of the SSCs, RCOs, NWDA and providers.
- To provide regular briefings for funders and policy makers on the achievements of the NW HLSP and to highlight current issues and barriers to activity.
- To establish senior management contacts in all NW HLS providers to be used as a channel for communication of key NW HLSP information.
- To establish sector networks for both providers and external partners to be used as communication channels for appropriate information.
- To facilitate regular feedback between the NW HLSP Steering Group and the Sector Panels updating all groups on relevant decisions and developments. To ensure feedback on all relevant information from these groups to the wider partners.
- To produce a series of publications relevant to NW HLSP activity to meet the needs of all partners.
- To utilise the wider NWUA groups and networks for wider dissemination of NW HLSP activity within the NW HEIs, and to work with the AoC and NW LPN to achieve similar dissemination across the FEC and WBL Provider networks.

- To utilise the NWDA logo (and HEFCE logo if appropriate) on all NW HLSP communications (in accordance with guidelines and following approval from NWDA) to ensure recognition of the project funder alongside promotion of the key partners.

Key Audiences

- NW HEIs (Senior Management, Departmental and Marketing contacts)
- NW FECs offering HEFCE funded HE (Senior Management, Departmental and Marketing contacts)
- NW WBL Providers (Relevant Senior Management and sectoral contacts)
- LLNs – Greater Manchester; Greater Merseyside and West Lancashire; Cheshire and Warrington; Lancashire; Cumbria
- Aimhigher
- AoC
- Foundation Degree Forward
- Sector Skills Councils
- NWDA
- Regional Cluster Organisations
- LSC NW
- Business Link NW
- GONW
- Regional Skills and Employment Board
- Professional Bodies
- IoD, CBI, Chambers of Commerce
- HE Academy
- Universities UK and Guild HE
- HEFCE
- Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills