



NW Higher Level Skills Pathfinder December 2006

During November work has continued to move on rapidly with the NW Higher Level Skills Pathfinder (HLSP) although to many of you this is likely to have been behind the scenes. I therefore hope that the following information will provide you with an update on the current position and on the activity planned for the next month.

The main activity for the HLSP during November was recruitment of the HLSP Team. We have now appointed an Administrative Assistant, Virginia Mitchell, who took up position on December 11th, and I am sure many of you will come into contact with Virginia over the coming weeks.

On January 2nd we will also be joined by our Senior Officer and the Specialist Advisors for Creative and Digital Industries and Construction. The Specialist Advisor for Business and Professional Services will join us during February and unfortunately we have been unable to recruit to the position of Specialist Advisor for the Advanced Engineering and Materials sector and so will be re-advertising this post in the New Year.

During November the following activities have also progressed:

- **Regional Initiatives** - the HLSP Project Manager, Dr Celia Brigg, has met with colleagues from LSC, NWDA, LLUK and the Cumbria DLN to discuss linkages and avoid duplication of activity. NWUA also presented at the University of Bolton's Bridging the Skills Gap event regarding the HLSP and linkages to the Advanced Engineering and Materials sector.
- **Regional Skills Partnership** – NWUA exhibited at the Sector Skills Event of the Regional Skills Partnership on November 3rd. This allowed us to raise the profile of HLSP activity with regional sector and skills related partners.
- **Construction Observatory** – NWUA attended a meeting of the Construction Observatory to gather intelligence on the skills needs of the construction sector over the next ten years. The event provided some helpful information and also allowed questions to be asked regarding more details in some of the areas of research.
- **Brokerage** – Dr Celia Brigg met with Kirsty Evans, Skills Development Director - Train to Gain, NW LSC, to discuss linkages between the two programmes especially regarding brokerage. It has been agreed that the Specialist Advisors will shadow the Skills Brokers as part of their induction to ensure a full understanding of the role and will then continue to work closely with the Skills Brokers to ensure strong links. NWUA and the LSC are now working together to ensure the development of a full HE module as part of the broker training. Discussions are ongoing with the NW LSC regarding including HLSP higher level brokerage requirements in the contract arrangements with the brokers (Business Link). NWUA and the LSC will also be working closely together on the marketing of Train to Gain and HLSP activity across the north west including ensuring coherence when speaking at regional events.

- **Intelligence Gathering** – NWUA attended a Proskills event which disseminated the research undertaken in parts 1 and 2 of their sector skills agreement work. Further work is also ongoing internally regarding the identification of higher level skills needs within national and regional research.
- **Sector Panels** – NWUA have contacted representatives of the SSCs, NWDA, SSPAs and LSC to be members of the four sector panels. The initial meetings of these panels will now take place in the first few weeks of January. It is therefore anticipated that guidance will be issued for the first of the sectors towards the end of January or in early February. This guidance will call for HE providers to submit full proposals for the development of provision against a set of detailed criteria and to meet identified skills needs.
- **HE Provider Meetings** – Celia Brigg has met with both the Open University and Edge Hill University over the last few weeks to discuss involvement in the HLSP from an individual institution viewpoint. If other HEIs or FECs would like to have a similar meeting please contact the HLSP team as detailed below.
- **Database of HE provision** – Development work is continuing on the development of a database to hold the HE provision data in a searchable format which can be made available to brokers and other partners.

During December NWUA will be working across the following areas:

- **Evaluation** – NWUA will be working on the evaluation strategy for the HLSP in preparation for discussion with the other two HLSPs (NE and SW), HEFCE, DfES and LSC at the Joint Pathfinder meeting on December 14th.
- **Brokerage** – NWUA will continue to develop the database of HE provision and will be contacting providers to discuss this in more detail. Further discussions around broker training are also planned and this again will be discussed by the three pathfinders when they meet in December as there is significant potential for collaboration on this aspect of the HLSP. NWUA also plan to meet with NWDA and Business Link to discuss the integration of the HLSP and brokerage in more detail.
- **Intelligence Gathering** – the work around intelligence regarding higher level skills needs within the four HLSP key sector will continue.

NWUA will continue to produce regular monthly updates on activity until all staff are in post and a formal communications strategy is developed. These will be available via the NWUA website at www.nwua.ac.uk

For further information please contact either:

Dr Celia Brigg, Assistant Director (Skills), NWUA on cbrigg@nwua.ac.uk or 0161 2348891

Virginia Mitchell, Admin Assistant – HLSP, NWUA on vmitchell@nwua.ac.uk or 0161 2348880