



NW Higher Level Skills Pathfinder Summer 2007 Update

There has been a significant amount of Pathfinder activity over the Spring and Summer months. The major developments are summarised below.

- **Brokerage**

The HE module of training for Skills Brokers is now completed and has been piloted in the North East. The information has now been circulated to all regions and will be delivered in the North West by NWUA in conjunction with the LSC. NWUA are now working with the LSC and NW Business Link to discuss the exact format of this.

NWUA have also been in discussion with NW Business Link about the HLSP Specialist HE Advisors joining Train to Gain sector team meetings, shadowing brokers and generally building relationships with the Train to Gain team. Mechanisms for these links are being drafted.

Encouragingly, although the broker training has yet to take place, the Pathfinder has already received a number of referrals from Train to Gain brokers. This suggests that the relationship building which has taken place to date has been successful and bodes well for the future.

Most of the HE data for the database of provision has been updated and data on HE provision by Further Education Colleges is currently being captured. It is anticipated that an initial model of the database will be tested in mid September 2007.

- **Development of Provision**

The first round of funding for development of provision took place in April/May 2007. A total of 9 proposals were funded by the HLSP Sector Panels:

- 5 Advanced Engineering and Materials
- 2 Digital and Creative Industries
- 1 Construction
- 1 Business and Professional

The successful applications will fund the development of a range of HE provision including Foundation Degrees, postgraduate qualifications and 'bite size' CPD. Both HE and FE institutions received funding. All successful applications demonstrated a high level of employer engagement in the development of provision. Final approval letters have now been sent to the successful projects following some minor amendments to bids requested by the panels. The first programme will start recruitment in September 2007 with the majority of developments piloting delivery by January 2008. 6 projects will be complete by September 2008 and the remaining three by September 2009. Full details of the funded projects are available on the pathfinder section of the NWUA website at http://www.nwua.ac.uk/pathfinder/round1_funded_projects.aspx

The Construction Panel chose to launch a second round for funding immediately and a call was issued on June 15th with a closing date of July 30th. The panel will meet in August to assess bids received.

A call has also been launched for a second round in the Business and Professional Services sector, more detailed information on the sector footprint has been issued to providers and the deadline for submissions is October 15th, the panel meets at the end of October to agree funding. Full details of Round 2 are on the pathfinder section of the NWUA website at

http://www.nwua.ac.uk/pathfinder/downloads_business_and_professional_services.aspx

The AEM Panel will launch a call in September following their next panel meeting in August and the DCI Panel have agreed to wait until November to allow for more detailed work to be undertaken regarding the exact needs of the sector. This slight delay will allow CC Skills to utilise the outcomes of Stages 1-3 of their SSA and the panel are also considering a more specific commissioning role for the panel.

- **Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) and HE**

NWUA have been working with colleagues at SSDA in relation to building stronger links between Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and HEIs. The SSCs spoke strongly in favour of projects such as the NW HLSP which offer them the opportunity to engage with a group of HEIs on a regional basis to meet the needs of their industry.

SSDA are undertaking an analysis of all SSAs to collate the higher level needs of the sectors. This reflects the work undertaken by the NW HLSP Sector Panels but on a national basis and across all SSCs. It is hoped that this will provide a useful tool for HEIs working on the employer engagement agenda. SSDA are also producing a guide to HEIs for SSCs and a guide to SSCs for HEIs. This reflects a need which has been identified through the NW HLSP activity and as a national issue and one relevant to all sectors the SSDA agreed to undertake this activity. NWUA has fed into the production of the guides.

The work is currently on hold, pending the decisions regarding the future of SSDA in light of the new Commission for Employment and Skills but NWUA will work with colleagues to further this activity when the new structures are in place.

- **unionlearn**

The Pathfinder has sought to make links with unionlearn, the learning arm of the TUC. There is particular interest in ensuring that union members are aware of HE opportunities via union learning representatives in workplaces and aggregating the demand for HE provision in different sectors.

A briefing for unionlearn project workers and union learning representatives was held in June 2007 and meetings with unionlearn officers have also taken place. To progress work with sectors, the Specialist Advisors will run sector specific workshops in the Autumn which it is hoped academic colleagues will also attend. The workshops will enable the Advisors to determine the needs of union members in their sector and, if necessary, work with institutions to address these.

NWUA is also considering how it can work with HEFCE to effectively support unionlearn's Regional Fund.

- **NWUA Annual Dinner/Skills Brochure**

NWUA's Annual Dinner was held on 17th July 2007 at the Reebok Stadium. The theme of this year's event was higher level skills and the keynote address was delivered by Steven Broomhead of NWDA. The Dinner also saw the launch of NWUA's latest publication **Stepping Up – Meeting the Challenge for Higher Level Skills**. This brochure details the current links between HEIs and employers on the skills agenda and showcases activity by member institutions in the area. The brochure also highlights the

work of the HLSP as a key element of implementing the skills agenda. The brochure can be downloaded at www.nwua.ac.uk. Alternatively, hard copies can be requested from NWUA.

- **Staffing**

Claire Lowe came into post as the Specialist Advisor (Advanced Engineering and Materials) in early July on a 0.6FTE basis. Claire is currently meeting with institutions and other partners in the sector to appraise them of her role. She can be contacted on 0161 234 8885/07824 820535 or clowe@nwua.ac.uk.

Contact Us

Previous updates are available on the NWUA website at www.nwua.ac.uk along with full details of the NW HLSP.

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