

Study of the role of Foundation Degrees in Wales

A report to the Higher Education Funding
Council for Wales

March 2007



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Executive Summary

Context and background

1. The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) commissioned SQW Ltd to undertake a study of the role of Foundation Degrees (Fds) in Wales. The study commenced in early February 2007 and reported at the end of March 2007.
2. The main purposes of the project were to undertake market research and to develop an evidence base on the contribution which Foundation Degrees might make to fulfilling skills needs in the Welsh policy context. The study has comprised a range of activities, including:
 - desk-based research on the market and policy framework for foundation degrees;
 - mapping current Fd provision in Wales and comparing/contrasting this with other sub-degree provision, such as Higher National Diplomas (HNDs);
 - obtaining the views of a sample of higher education institutions (HEIs) and further education institutions (FEIs) in Wales (including some with little or no Fd provision); and
 - gathering the views of other stakeholders with an interest in Fd provision (including representative organisations for students, employers and the HE/FE sectors in Wales and other stakeholders from across the UK).
3. The study needed to be completed in a relatively short period of time and inputs were, therefore, restricted to desk-based research and a range of selected, semi-structured interviews with a sample of institutions and other key stakeholders.

Key findings

4. A summary of key findings from the study is set out below with cross-referencing to relevant paragraphs within the main report:
 - most HEIs/FEIs and employer bodies would value a more overt and positive policy steer from the Welsh Assembly Government and HEFCW on the role of Fds in meeting Wales' strategic priorities (and especially in relation to the Leitch agenda); ideally this should include additional funding to support development costs and the provision of additional student numbers (see paragraphs 3.3, 3.14, 3.15, 3.16 and 4.9);
 - the promotion of the Fd is seen as an important future priority for Wales; many interviewees would support proportionate investment by HEFCW in Foundation Degree Forward or a similar body to facilitate good practice and to broker further developments (see paragraphs 3.14, 3.15, 4.6, 5.8 and 5.11);

- Foundation Degrees are seen by many HEIs/FEIs and employer organisations as an important ‘stepping stone’ qualification, particularly suited to part-time learners in work; fast-track, part-time Fds are proving attractive to this market (see paragraphs 3.8, 3.10, 3.17, 4.4, 4.11, 5.3 and 5.10);
- the Fd model of working in genuine partnership is seen as distinctive and adding value when compared to other provision such as HNCs/HNDs; interviewees have highlighted the flexibility of the qualification, the combination of vocational and academic content, future progression opportunities, cost-effectiveness, and the central importance of work-based/workplace learning as particularly attractive features (see paragraphs 3.11, 3.13, 4.5, 4.11 and 5.10);
- in general, HEIs value the professional expertise of FE partners and FEIs value the academic quality and standards brought to the Fd by the validating HEI. Some FEIs saw the Fd as an important signature qualification for HE in FE and would welcome greater autonomy in delivering the qualification. More direct funding of HE places in FE was mentioned by many FEIs as a factor which would provide them with greater stability in developing current and future provision. There was limited support for the possibility of granting FEIs the power to award their own Fds (see paragraphs 3.11 and 3.17);
- many interviewees (both from HEIs/FEIs and stakeholder/employer organisations) have raised issues about whether there is sufficient demand within Wales to develop Fds in highly specialised sectors/sub-sectors. Our interviews have identified a range of successful practice including: provision for key public sectors (eg health and social care; education; police); specialised provision tailored to the particular needs of a sector within a local area/sub-region (in these cases often working pro-actively with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) within key local sectors); niche provision which recognises the particular expertise or location of an HEI/FEI and/or is able to be rolled out across Wales (see paragraphs 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 4.10 and 5.4);
- in the broader UK context, it was felt that Fd developments in England were likely to have more of an impact on Wales than on Scotland. Wales could potentially lose students if it was not seen to be as competitive with England in offering the same range of qualifications. It may be easier for Scotland to take forward its own particular approach as there is less cross-border flow of students between England and Scotland and a longer history of educational difference between those two countries (see paragraphs 5.6-5.8);
- in the context of European developments, interviewees agreed that it was important for the Fd and other short-cycle or intermediate qualifications to be explicitly recognised within the Bologna process and related developments. In some sectors, there are high numbers of workers from other EU countries who might benefit from Fd study while working in the UK. Within England, there are the beginnings of interest in Fds in niche areas by international and EU students (see paragraphs 3.18 and 4.14).

Options and recommendations for the future

5. The study has found a high level of consensus amongst interviewees across institutions, employers and other stakeholders on the potential benefits of further development of Foundation Degrees within Wales. On that basis, we recommend that:
- HEFCW should ask the Welsh Assembly Government to review its current policy stance on Foundation Degrees, explicitly within the context of the recommendations of HM Treasury's Leitch Report and the ongoing *Independent Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales*. Any new strategy should also take better account of related Welsh Assembly Government strategies on knowledge transfer and innovation;
 - additional student numbers should be provided to support the further development of Fd programmes within Wales;
 - programmes awarded additional student numbers should:
 - demonstrate that they meet the QAA Fd benchmark;
 - include evidence of market demand and longer-term sustainability of provision;
 - build in employer engagement throughout the development and delivery of programmes;
 - provide clear progression routes;
 - HEFCW should review current funding mechanisms to provide greater stability of funding and allocation of Fd student numbers to FEIs;
 - additional funding should also be provided to recognise the costs of development through the partnership model;
 - proportionate investment should be provided to promote Fds across Wales to employers and prospective students and to support/enhance good practice developments across the sector;
 - further consideration should be given to particular sectors or niche areas for future development of the Fd within Wales, including key public sectors (such as health, education and police services) and paying particular attention to the sectors identified in *Wales: A Vibrant Economy* (high technology, automotive, aerospace, agri-food, tourism, financial services and the creative industries);
 - further consideration should be given by HEFCW to whether particular modes of study or types of partnership should be encouraged within any incentivised funding programme;
 - employer organisations should give further consideration to additional resources they might commit to support Fd developments (such as jointly-funded places on Fd programmes).

1: Context and background

Context and background to the study

- 1.1 The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) commissioned SQW Ltd to undertake a study of the role of Foundation Degrees (Fds) in Wales. The study commenced in early February 2007 and reported at the end of March 2007.
- 1.2 The main purposes of the project were to undertake market research and to develop an evidence base on the contribution which Foundation Degrees might make to fulfilling skills needs in the Welsh policy context. The study has comprised a range of activities, including:
 - desk-based research on the market and policy framework for foundation degrees;
 - mapping current Fd provision in Wales and comparing/contrasting this with other sub-degree provision, such as HNDs;
 - obtaining the views of a sample of higher education institutions (HEIs) and further education institutions (FEIs) in Wales (including some with little or no Fd provision); and
 - gathering the views of other stakeholders with an interest in Fd provision (including representative organisations for students, employers and the HE/FE sectors in Wales and other stakeholders from across the UK).

Methodology

- 1.3 The study needed to be completed in a relatively short period of time and inputs were, therefore, restricted to desk-based research and a range of selected interviews.
- 1.4 The desk-based elements of the study have comprised:
 - a review of key policy documents relating to the development of the Fd and taking account of the relative policy positions adopted by Wales and other countries across the UK (see section 2 and the Bibliography at Annex A);
 - an analysis of data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) on Fd students in Wales. This includes some comparative analysis of students on other intermediate undergraduate level programmes in Wales and also draws on the larger pool of data available on Fd students in England. Key points from the data analysis are set out in section 2 of the report, with the data tables in Annex B.
- 1.5 Semi-structured interviews have been carried out with an agreed sample of HEIs and FEIs and a range of other stakeholder and representative organisations (listed at Annex C). A series of linked aides-memoire were developed to explore the range of issues from the perspectives of:
 - Fd providers;

- employers; and
 - other stakeholders with an interest in Fd development.
- 1.6 Copies of the aides-memoire are attached, for information, as Annex D.
- 1.7 The majority of interviews were conducted by telephone. Two face-to-face interviews were held (one with an HEI and one with an FEI). Amongst employer representatives, all Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) were contacted via the Sector Skills Development Agency to provide views for the study. A facilitated discussion meeting was attended by representatives of three SSCs, telephone interviews were held with a further three SSCs and written comments were provided by two others.
- 1.8 In broad terms, the interviews have explored:
- the fit between Fds and institutional strategies;
 - the relative attractiveness of Fds compared to alternative programmes;
 - the main obstacles and barriers encountered in Fd development to date;
 - target markets and the relationship of Fds to FE-HE progression more broadly; and
 - perceived opportunities for future developments in Wales and constraints to their realisation.
- 1.9 In undertaking this study, we have particularly valued the positive engagement and input of all respondents and the support and advice of the HEFCW project steering group.
- 1.10 The remainder of the report is structured as follows:
- Section 2: the policy review and key points from the data analysis;
 - Section 3: Findings from HEIs and FEIs;
 - Section 4: Findings from employer organisations;
 - Section 5: Findings from other stakeholders and students;
 - Section 6: A summary of key findings;
 - Section 7: Options and recommendations for the future.

2: Policy review and data analysis

Introduction

- 2.1 The first part of this section provides an overview of the policy context in which Fds emerged and explores the development and delivery of this new qualification. It summarises:
- a range of policy documents which outline the objectives of Fds and how they align with Government strategic policy in HE;
 - developments to date in Wales, compared to other countries in the UK; and
 - some other recent evaluation and research reports of relevance to the topic.
- 2.2 A list of the documents reviewed in this section is included in the Bibliography at Annex A.
- 2.3 The second part of the section comprises an analysis of existing data on Fd students in Wales, alongside some comparative data about students on other intermediate HE qualifications and Fd data from England. The data tables are provided in Annex B.
- 2.4 The policy review and analysis of existing evidence and data sources on Fds helped to inform our consultations, and to determine the potential demand and future role for Fds in Wales.

Foundation Degree definition

- 2.5 Foundation Degrees are the first new higher education qualification to be developed for over 25 years. They are located within the intermediate (I) level of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) as set out by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in September 2001¹. A copy of the FHEQ is provided below, for information, in Table 2-1:

Table 2-1 Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Qualification type	FHEQ level	Example of qualifications
1 Certificate	C level	Certificate of Higher Education
2 Intermediate	I level	Foundation degrees, ordinary (Bachelors) degrees, Diplomas of Higher Education and other higher diplomas (eg HNDs)
3 Honours	H level	Bachelors degrees with Honours, Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas
4 Masters	M level	Masters degrees, Postgraduate Certificates and Postgraduate Diplomas
5 Doctoral	D level	Doctorates

Source: FHEQ in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, QAA, September 2001

¹ Quality Assurance Agency (September 2001), *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*

- 2.6 Within the National Qualifications Framework² (September 2004), Foundation Degrees are recognised as an award equivalent to level 5, with an honours degree being set at level 6 of the Framework. The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales³ defines the Foundation Degree as having a minimum of 240 credits across levels 3, 4 and 5 (with a minimum of 90 credits at level 5 and a maximum of 30 credits at level 3). Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) and Diplomas of Higher Education have the same credit ratings and are also recognised within the intermediate level of HE qualifications. The Higher National Certificate (HNC) is defined at Certificate level in the FHEQ and equates to 150 credits across levels 3, 4 and 5 (with a minimum of 30 credits at level 5 and a maximum of 30 credits at level 3). By comparison, an honours degree equates to 360 credits across levels 3-6 (with a minimum of 90 credits at level 6 and a maximum of 30 credits at level 3).

The development of Foundation Degrees

- 2.7 The emergence of Fds was associated with growing concern about the perceived skills deficit at the intermediate (associate professional and technical) level. This fuelled a new emphasis on the skills agenda and on reforming existing provision. In particular, there was a focus on restructuring intermediate HE provision which was perceived as being of low status and having little capacity to deliver the expansion that was considered necessary to address the skills agenda. In parallel with the decline in enrolment numbers on higher national certificates and diplomas in England, Fds emerged in 2000 as an attempt to deliver new forms of provision in a wider strategy of bringing education and employment closer together.
- 2.8 In 2000, the then Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) launched a consultation on the development of Fds. The proposals were subsequently taken forward by the Foundation Degree Group (later the Foundation Degree Task Force), with the Government in England announcing that it would support the piloting of 20 prototype Fds from September 2001. Initial funding was set at £5.2 million for 2,123 additional student numbers for these 20 prototype programmes⁴. Following this announcement, the Higher Education Funding Councils for England (HEFCE) and Wales (HEFCW) both published prospectuses describing the objectives of Fds and outlining the framework of core features which define them.
- 2.9 The main objectives of Fds were identified as follows:
- to help address a national skills shortfall by supplying graduates equipped with intermediate level skills;
 - to expand higher education whilst making it more affordable to a wider range of students;

² The Framework covers qualifications that have been accredited by the three regulatory authorities for England (the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority), Wales (the former Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, whose functions are now part of the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills) and Northern Ireland (the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment).

³ HEFCW (June 2004), *Higher Education in Wales Credit Specification and Guidance: Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales*

⁴ Gallacher, Ingram, and Reeve (2006) *Differing national models of short cycle, work-related higher education provision in Scotland and England*

- to bring institutions of higher and further education and employers together in partnership for the design and delivery of provision to promote social inclusion;
- to extend the routes of lifelong learning.

2.10 It was appreciated early on that introducing a new type of qualification would be challenging and complicated. Great efforts would have to be made to ensure that Fds would become fully embedded within the HE offering and would represent a recognised progression route. The HEFCW Prospectus states that,

If the new qualification is to become firmly established and respond successfully to labour market needs, it must be widely respected and its value must be understood by employers and prospective students alike. To that end, all Foundation Degrees should share a readily identifiable and distinctive set of core features.

2.11 The core features of the Fd can be summarised as follows:

- **employer involvement:** employer bodies should be actively engaged in the design, promotion and review of Fd programmes, and employers themselves should be active in their delivery to ensure that the qualification reflects the changing needs of the economy;
- **development of skills and knowledge:** programmes should comprise a combination of skills and knowledge to make a more versatile and adaptable workforce – and should include specialist technical skills, key skills and other generic skills, underpinned by rigorous and broad-based academic learning;
- **application of skills in the workplace:** students have to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills but also need to have applied this in the workplace, either through existing employment or a secured work placement. The prospectus encouraged the close integration of study and work through work-based learning and project work addressing real business needs;
- **credit accumulation and transfer:** Fds should attract a minimum of 240 credits, with consortia agreeing and applying credit accumulation and transfer arrangements. Accreditation of prior and work-based/experiential learning should be fully accommodated within programmes. Each consortium offering programmes should consider how best to maximise both entry and progression numbers and to promote lifelong learning;
- **progression:** the routes for progression should be both occupational and academic and these options should be clearly articulated through the course programme and prospectus.

2.12 Since the launch of the Fd, Government policy in England has advocated the further expansion of provision, notably in the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) 2003 White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education*. It proposed that Fds should become the standard two year HE qualification with higher nationals incorporated into the Fd framework. Responsibility was also given to the new Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to raise awareness,

establish demand and develop frameworks in collaboration with institutions to enable Fds to target the key employment sectors.

- 2.13 The recent report of HM Treasury's Leitch Review⁵ has added weight to the role of the Fd in meeting intermediate skills needs. The recommendations in this review call for an increase in adult skills across all levels, with a particular emphasis on a lead role for vocational qualifications. The review also advocates an increase in employer engagement including training in the work place, for example, through initiatives such as the *Train to Gain* programme in England⁶. Leitch calls for a system more attuned to the needs and demands of employers:

Building a demand-led system is the only way in which to increase employer and individual investment in skills and ensure that increased investment delivers economically valuable skills. (Para 23: Leitch Review, 2006).

- 2.14 In specific relation to Fds, the Review clearly states that:

...new higher education growth should not be 'more of the same', based on traditional three year honours degrees. Rather provision should be based on new types of programme offering specific, job-related skills such as Foundation Degrees (Para 84: Leitch Review, 2006).

- 2.15 The Leitch Review sets ambitious targets for the UK to become a world leader in skills and proposes how systems need to change in order to achieve these targets. In summary, the Review recommends a new employment and skills service to deliver economically valuable skills. Furthermore, the Review proposes a demand-led system with greater funding power in the hands of employers and individuals and money routed through initiatives such as *Train to Gain* and Learner Accounts. It highlights the strategically important role of FEIs in delivering 'employer facing learning at levels 4 and 5' (including Fds). In a separate but relevant development, the Further Education and Training Bill currently before Parliament also proposes that FE colleges in England be eligible to apply to the Privy Council for powers to award their own Fds (the Welsh Assembly Government is not currently considering this option for Wales).

Policy context of Foundation Degrees in Wales

- 2.16 At the time of writing, the Welsh Assembly Government is considering its response to the Leitch Review. Later in 2007, Sir Adrian Webb will publish his *Independent Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales*, which is likely to set the pattern for post-14 education and lifelong learning in Wales for many years to come. Taking account of the Leitch Report, the Webb Review is taking a broad, system-level view of future needs and structures. In a statement to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee on 22 November 2006, Jane Davidson AM, the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, said:

⁵ Leitch (2006) *Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills, Final Report*

⁶ The Train to Gain initiative provides a brokering service to enable businesses to access training. The initiative was extended to include some high level skills pathfinder projects in HE in September 2006. Further information is available at www.traintogain.gov.uk and www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/employer/path/.

The review will be holistic and incorporate an analysis not just of Further Education Institutions, but an evaluation of the wider role of the sector in relation to post sixteen developments, 14-19 Learning Pathways, higher education, workplace learning, and the Leitch review.

- 2.17 The Welsh Assembly Government publication, *Reaching Higher: Higher Education and the Learning Country*⁷, sought to provide a strategy to take the Welsh HE sector forward to 2010. It was foreshadowed by *Putting Wales First: A Partnership for the People of Wales* (October 2000) and *The Learning Country* (September 2001).
- 2.18 The *Reaching Higher* Strategy sets out some key objectives for the HE sector in Wales:
- to create top quality HEIs for learning and teaching, progressively attracting more students from disadvantaged communities and marketing themselves more effectively both at home and overseas;
 - to meet workforce development needs in health and other services that matter most to people's lives in Wales. In addition, to develop the ability for HE provision to reflect the regional needs of Wales by institutions having the freedom to specialise;
 - to encourage HEIs to become globally competitive in research and scholarship across a wide range of disciplines, as well as forging closer links with businesses –greater reflecting their needs;
 - to support the development of the knowledge economy through embracing targeted investment in research, in its application, and in knowledge transfer.
- 2.19 More generally, a theme running throughout the strategy is the development of 'networks of excellence' and the overall reconfiguration of HE in Wales on a more collaborative basis. Creating shared missions through geographic or functional and subject-based clusters is seen as bringing greater strength to the HE offering. Institutions should not be restricted from collaborating with other clusters or institutions; instead, the intention is to create a more dynamic and fluid system of interaction with each cluster aligning provision in order to reflect the key growth sectors in Wales.
- 2.20 A second theme is widening access to HE. The *Reaching Higher* strategy set a target for the percentage of full-time and part-time Welsh-domiciled undergraduate new entrants to HE courses at UK HEIs and FEIs who are domiciled in the Communities First areas (equivalent to the 100 Most Deprived Electoral Divisions) to increase from its 2000/01 percentage (8.9%) to 11.4% by 2010/11. To widen access, institutions would need to encourage more people into higher education, who historically either would not have had or would not have taken up the opportunity. Academic qualifications could not therefore be the sole route into HE and instead there needed to be flexible delivery of courses and credit systems to allow students to transfer more easily between different types of provision and to undertake learning at times and in places that would suit them. It is pertinent to note at this point that higher education in Wales is funded on the basis of credit, with qualifications articulated within the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales.

⁷ Welsh Assembly Government (2002) *Reaching Higher: Higher Education and the Learning Country*

2.21 These themes are carried forward in *The Learning Country: Vision into Action* (2006) which looks specifically at what progress has been achieved to date and what further work needs to be done. The document considers the schools sector as well as the post-16, HE, and lifelong learning sectors. In reference to the FE and HE sectors, the document highlights the need to

*Explore the introduction of Foundation Degrees, through HE/FE partnerships, linked to our agenda for skills and vocational learning.*⁸

2.22 The document recognises the progress already made by the Welsh HE sector in working towards its target for widening access and its success in graduate employability. It refers to the *Reaching Higher* targets of increasing the numbers of Welsh-domiciled students at Welsh HEIs and seeing the proportion of students studying at least part of their programme in the Welsh language rise to 7% by 2010.

2.23 *Vision into Action* also states that, despite improvements, the skills and qualifications of working-age adults are still too low overall. It notes that, in certain key growth areas of the Welsh economy, there are insufficient workers with the required skills. Further improvements are needed in the quality of work-based learning and in ensuring that post-16 education and training provide an appropriate range of courses to help to improve participation rates.

2.24 There is little reference to the cluster formations and networks spoken of in *Reaching Higher*, but *Vision into Action* clearly supports widening access and encouraging more flexible methods of delivery through collaboration and partnerships between FE, HE and employers, in order to better meet skills needs in Wales. Before comparing the differences in funding and franchising arrangements for Fds in Wales with the rest of the UK, it is useful to explore briefly the broader skills policy context in Wales.

2.25 In 2003 a Skills Concordat was developed for Wales⁹, designed to focus partnership working to address the key issues of skills development, learning and sustainable economic development. The Concordat has been agreed by the Welsh arms of the Confederation for British Industry (CBI) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and by the Welsh Assembly Government. It also has the general support of the whole Skills for Business Network and the Future Skills Wales Partnership.

2.26 Many of the priorities identified in the Concordat are addressed in the *Skills for Employment Action Plan for Wales* (SEAP) in 2005¹⁰. The specific objectives of the plan, which builds upon the one from 2004, are to:

- improve the mechanisms for workforce development;
- supply new entrants to the labour market with the skills needed for employment;
- work with employers and employees to improve skills; and
- help more people into sustained employment.

⁸ Welsh Assembly Government (2006) *The Learning Country: Vision into Action*

⁹ ELWa and Welsh Assembly Government (2003), *Skills Concordat*

¹⁰ Welsh Assembly Government (2005) *Skills for Employment Action Plan for Wales*

- 2.27 In specific reference to Fds, the 2005 SEAP recognises that these programmes have had limited impact so far but that they could play a key role in encouraging more students into higher education, in a vocational or work-based learning context in the future:

Foundation degrees offer potential for flexible, work-based vocational learning at higher education level. Presently they have only have limited availability in Wales (2005:25).

- 2.28 In terms of future progress, SEAP action B12 intends to develop better learning progression routes from Foundation Level to Higher Level including more flexible Modern Apprenticeships, and expanding the provision of Fds across Wales. In doing this, the SEAP outlines the need to work more closely with SSCs to ensure that the content of these new learning frameworks align with employer skills demands and the economic needs of Wales.
- 2.29 A study by the Institute of Employment Studies (IES), published by HEFCW in 2006¹¹, supports the need for further research into employment and skills needs in Wales. The main findings from the report suggest that Wales remains an overall exporter of graduates, although no more so than many other UK regions (with London being the only net importer of graduates). However, the significant cross-border flow of HE students into Wales from England suggests there is a potential missed opportunity to retain non-Welsh-domiciled graduates within Wales. Despite Wales being attractive to graduates, there are low levels of awareness of what the Welsh economy can offer in terms of work opportunities which can make England seem a more attractive graduate destination. This leads to a perception that opportunities are limited within Wales and detracts from the fact that graduates who stay, or move into Wales, do well with regard to employment rates and skills utilisation.
- 2.30 The report suggests that HEI and employer collaboration is becoming well established and is worthy of recognition in Wales. This is, however, currently more prevalent in the public sector - a large recruiter of graduates. More needs to be done to encourage smaller, private sector employers to recruit graduates. IES recognised that the HEFCW GO Wales¹² initiative had helped HEIs to make and strengthen employer links but that this work needed to be expanded further to enhance progression routes.
- 2.31 Smaller employers may have different needs to a larger employer, and the same applies when considering different employment sectors. *The Impact of Further Education Institutions on the Economy of Wales* report (2007) by the Regeneration Institute of Cardiff University¹³ supports these findings with research from a survey of selected FEIs in Wales. It reports that interactions between FEIs and business generally became easier as firm size increased. Engaging smaller or 'hard-to-reach' employers and ensuring that students develop employability skills through placement learning remain a challenge.
- 2.32 The IES report concludes that there is a strong case for continued investment in the higher education sector in Wales. Producing and employing graduates is seen to be of real benefit to

¹¹ IES (2006) *Welsh Graduates and their Jobs: Employment and Employability in Wales*

¹² HEFCW manages the Graduate Opportunities Wales (GO Wales) programme, which helps students and graduates from Welsh universities to find work - or work experience - in Wales, and encourages Welsh businesses to look to home grown talent to meet their high level skills needs.

¹³ Morgan et al (2007) *The Impact of Further Education Institutions on the Economy of Wales*

the Welsh economy but further work needs to be done to maximise future opportunities for graduate employment.

The Quality Assurance Agency and Foundation Degrees

- 2.33 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has played an important role in assuring the quality and standards of Fd programmes. It developed the Fd qualification benchmark¹⁴ in consultation with the HE sector and has carried out a programme of reviews and related evaluation activities in England and Northern Ireland throughout the period 2001-2005.
- 2.34 The QAA publication, *Learning from reviews of Foundation Degrees in England carried out in 2004-05*¹⁵, provides some useful indications of the current strengths and weaknesses of Fd programmes. It highlights the strengths of partnership working and, in particular, the effective team working practices apparent across partner FEIs and HEIs. Providers have also worked hard to involve employers and programmes were seen to incorporate a wide range of high quality and imaginative approaches to work-based learning. Notwithstanding this, the review does highlight the need for further support in the monitoring and quality assurance of students' work-based learning experiences.
- 2.35 The majority of programmes were seen to have clear and appropriate aims and intended learning outcomes (ILOs). Particular good practice was noted where ILOs were specified at the module, as well as the programme, level. An effective range of learning and teaching methods were deployed and reviewers also recognised the positive benefits of flexible programme design, the integration of experiences gained from work and the development of highly relevant content. Assessment and feedback were, however, identified as areas which would benefit from further support and development.
- 2.36 Overall, the review report concludes that Fds in England are meeting the defining characteristics of the award. They are also contributing to a strengthening of partnership arrangements between HEIs, FEIs and employers, and are bringing in some new entrants to HE. Foundation degrees are seen as encouraging more flexible and innovative responses to the diverse range of higher level skills needs across England.

Funding and delivery structures for Foundation Degrees across the UK

- 2.37 While the understanding behind Fds is much the same across the UK, there is a divergence in the delivery structures and arrangements between different countries. This section summarises key differences in the approaches taken by England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It also considers the different environment and arrangements within Scotland where a decision was taken not to introduce Fds.

¹⁴ QAA (2004) *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*

¹⁵ QAA (2005) *Learning from reviews of Foundation Degrees in England carried out in 2004-05*

England

- 2.38 Significant additional funding has been provided in England to encourage these new programmes. The DfES document, *Foundation Degrees: meeting the need for higher level skills* (2003)¹⁶ built on the commitment within the HE White Paper to focus expansion of HE in England at the Fd level. Investment of £32 million has been made to assist in further development of Fds during the period 2003-06. In parallel, HEFCE issued a bidding document for Additional Foundation Degree places (AFds) in October 2003 which recognised that Fd places were expected to rise to about 50,000 by 2006. An additional 10% funding premium has subsequently been attached to Fd funding to recognise the development costs of these programmes.
- 2.39 A major promotional campaign was launched in 2003 in England to increase awareness amongst business/public sector employers and prospective students. This did have some success in raising awareness and at the beginning of 2004 student awareness of the name and the concept of Fds had risen to 41% and employer awareness to 38%. The HE White Paper also led to the establishment of Foundation Degree Forward (*fdf*)¹⁷ to offer a dedicated support and brokerage service for Fd providers.
- 2.40 In the *Foundation Degree Task Force Report to Ministers* (2004)¹⁸, the Task Force recommended that HEFCE should allocate the majority of any additional student numbers either to Fds or to students progressing onwards from Fds onto honours programmes. The Report reiterated the position of the 2003 DfES report and saw the target of 50,000 full-time-equivalent Fd students by 2005/06 as realistic. The Task Force also suggested that, given the projected demand and the support measures that are in place, it would support the aim of working towards at least 100,000 full-time-equivalent Fd students by 2010, a figure which has subsequently been adopted as a target by HEFCE and DfES. Fd numbers in England for 2006/07 stand at 61,000 FTEs, requiring a further increase of 64% on current numbers to reach the 2010 target. The latest HEFCE recurrent grant announcement¹⁹ includes an additional 12,600 full-time equivalent student numbers (FTEs) for Fds in 2007/08 to assist in working towards this target.

Wales

- 2.41 By contrast, the HEFCW announced development funding of £200k for Fds in Wales in 2001/02. Seven HEIs were awarded funding in 2001-02 to develop up to 110 new Fd programmes. No additional student numbers for Fds have been funded in Wales and raising awareness of Fds has been seen as a lower priority. The HEFCW Foundation Degree Prospectus stated that the Council did not have the scope to make additional funded places available for the Fd at present, and interested institutions would therefore need to accommodate the Fd within their existing student numbers. This is one factor contributing to the differential situations in Wales and England.

¹⁶ DfES (2003) *Foundation Degrees: meeting the need for higher level skills*

¹⁷ Further information about *fdf* is available at: www.fdf.ac.uk

¹⁸ DfES (2004) *Foundation Degree Task Force Report to Ministers*

¹⁹ HEFCE (March 2007/06) *Recurrent Grant Announcement*

- 2.42 The remit letter of the Welsh Assembly Government to HEFCW in February 2006 highlights the growing importance of the interface between FE and HE in developing higher skill levels and enhancing competitiveness within Wales. The letter includes a specific reference to Fds, as follows:

*I also want the Council to develop an evidence base concerning the contribution which foundation degrees might make towards fulfilling these skills needs. This will involve linking with Sector Skills Councils and other key stakeholders and taking account of the primary sectors identified in Wales: A Vibrant Economy (i.e. including high technology, automotive, aerospace, agri-food, tourism, financial services and the creative industries).*²⁰

- 2.43 New approaches to collaboration and partnership arrangements have been discussed in the Welsh context in relation to the delivery of Fds. The KPMG report *Evaluation of relations between HE and FE institutions in the delivery of HE in Wales* (2003)²¹ supported the need for radical new approaches to collaboration and co-operation across Wales and in the delivery of Fds by FE and HE institutions. While the report highlighted the potential for a greater focus on local partnerships, it also concluded that, in some situations, it might be more appropriate for a particular HEI to act as a centre of excellence for a specific curriculum area throughout Wales. Another major conclusion of the report was that any future expansion of HE in FE should be undertaken through franchising by HEIs rather than providing direct funding to FEIs. It was felt that HEIs could provide a high level of support to FEIs under franchise arrangements and there would be benefits for the student in terms of access to HEI facilities and potential progression arrangements.
- 2.44 The report found that HEIs in Wales had taken a cautious approach to the development and delivery of Fd programmes. Nevertheless, there was said to be considerable enthusiasm within the FE sector for the development of Fds. FE institutions saw themselves as the main providers, but without a strong policy steer and with uncertainty surrounding their role and acceptability, were likely to maintain the same cautious approach as the HEIs.
- 2.45 Building on the findings of the KPMG report, HEFCW subsequently consulted the sector on future arrangements for the delivery of HE in FE. The HEFCW *Outcome of Consultation (Higher Education in Further Education Colleges)*²², published in October 2004 concluded that any future expansion of HE in FE should be undertaken through franchising from HEIs, rather than via any expansion of directly-funded provision (reiterating the recommendation within the KPMG report).
- 2.46 The outcomes of the consultation were taken forward in the HEFCW publication, *Guidance on Partnership Arrangements between Higher and Further Education Institutions* (2006)²³. This discussed arrangements where provision is franchised from an HEI to an FEI. In this Guidance document, the delivery of HE through FE is fully recognised as an important element in widening access to HE. Alongside HNCs and HNDs, Fds offer the potential for

²⁰ Welsh Assembly Government remit letter to HEFCW, February 2006

²¹ KPMG (2003) *Evaluation of relations between HE and FE institutions in the delivery of HE in Wales*

²² HEFCW (5th October 2004) Circular W0460HE [Available at http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/WideningAccess_Docs/W0460HE.pdf]

²³ HEFCW (2006) *Guidance on Partnership Arrangements between Higher and Further Education Institutions*

further progression to honours degree level courses, sometimes at the providing FEI but more usually at an HEI.

Northern Ireland

- 2.47 Since 2001, seven further education colleges in Northern Ireland have been directly funded to provide Fds on an in-year basis from earmarked funding. The level of funding was based on the FE Funding Formula principles but a decision has been taken to increase this for 2006-07. The future funding methodology for all HE courses delivered in FE is currently under consideration as part of the Department for Employment and Learning's HE in FE Review.
- 2.48 Many of the programmes offered in Northern Ireland to date have focused on the priority skill area of information and communications technology (ICT). A joint survey in 2003 by the QAA and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) on the provision of pilot Fds in the seven colleges²⁴ concluded that:
- there was good evidence of involvement by employers in the early design of the courses, but the ETI inspection found that these links were not well sustained; there was a need to strengthen such links, especially in the development of work-based case study material, assessment strategies and course reviews;
 - Fds had facilitated learners in accessing higher education but the marketing of the courses had been inadequate and the provision less flexible than it needed to be, to meet the needs of part-time students;
 - colleges needed to rationalise their provision of higher education to avoid duplication and the dissipation of valuable staff resources;
 - the quality of the students' learning experiences and their achievements was mostly good. Further work was needed on the effective use of work-based learning and student retention. The progression routes for most students wishing to articulate to full-time honours degree courses were seen to be variable across the two validating universities (Queen's Belfast and the University of Ulster). The articulation routes for those students wishing to progress to part-time honours degree courses were seen as inadequate;
 - the QAA reviewers confirmed that both validating universities were collaborating sufficiently with their respective partner colleges in a) the emerging academic standards and emerging achievement of the students and b) the emerging quality of the student learning opportunities, including monitoring and enhancement arrangements.
- 2.49 The Department for Employment and Learning has recently decided to provide funding towards Foundation Degree Forward so that institutions in Northern Ireland can benefit from its services and support.

²⁴ QAA/ETI (2003) *The Provision of the Pilot Programme of Foundation Degrees in Seven Colleges of Further and Higher Education*

Scotland

2.50 Scotland presents a different model altogether as a consequence of its decision not to develop Fds. A recent paper on *Differing national models of short cycle, work-related higher education provision in Scotland and England*²⁵ concludes that historical differences in education systems are at the heart of diverging policy developments in England and Scotland within recent times. In Scotland, the role of FE colleges as providers of higher nationals (HNCs/HNDs) has strengthened since the 1980s. FE colleges are funded directly by the Scottish Funding Council and are seen as significant providers of HE in Scotland. Higher national qualifications are only awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) within a clearly defined national framework. These arrangements, and the higher national qualifications themselves, are considered successful despite little direct involvement by HEIs. In contrast, the role of FE colleges in England in providing HE qualifications has in the past been both more diverse and limited and Fds represent a more radical change to this type of delivery.

The challenges ahead

2.51 Fds are going ‘against the grain’ in terms of challenging strongly-embedded patterns of supply in HE. Not only is the Fd another attempt to raise the status of vocational learning, it also has to prove itself credible as a qualification completed in two years (full-time). This is illustrated in the *Evaluation of Foundation Degrees* (2004) report by York Consulting²⁶, conducted on behalf of the DfES, which suggests there are differences in approach between older/pre-1992 and newer/post-1992 institutions. In the former, Fds seem to be considered as an area for potential development and more progress needs to be made in embedding the programmes into their offering. Post-92 HEIs are seen as further ahead in integrating Fds into their delivery strategies; this partly reflects the track-record and greater experience of these institutions in offering more vocationally-based courses.

2.52 The Task Force Report, York Consulting evaluation, and the review by Gallacher, Ingram and Reeve together indicate the challenges for developing Fds in the future as outlined below:

- whether initiated by supply or demand, HEIs and FEIs need to ensure that the qualifications are recognised and valued by employers and students if they are to embed the programmes into HE and make a noticeable impact on graduate employment. As mentioned there are already differences in the acceptance of Fds amongst individual HEIs;
- some institutions will be much more accustomed to developing consortia and partnerships than others. The extensive time and resource inputs demanded by partnership working need to be recognised and acted upon by the Funding Councils if pro-active consortia are to be developed;
- developing a ‘joined-up’ and employer-focused approach to the design and delivery of Fds is a challenge for institutions and therefore the Government and Funding

²⁵ Gallacher, Ingram, and Reeve (2006) *Differing national models of short cycle, work-related higher education provision in Scotland and England*

²⁶ York Consulting (2004) *Evaluation of Foundation Degrees*

Councils have a responsibility to provide and increase the motivation for institutions, students and employers;

- HEIs in particular, will have to demonstrate they are taking account of local and regional economic needs in the design of Fds. The report by York Consulting found through case study research that Fds had worked best when demand driven;
- the Evaluation of Foundation Degrees report raised a concern about institutions recruiting students who had failed to gain a place on an honours degree course at the university. This suggested that, in some cases, the Fd had not necessarily focused on new student markets and the possible displacement effect could lead to the crowding out of students from alternative entry routes;
- retention issues were also highlighted as a problem in some of the early programmes, mainly because some students were missing the underpinning knowledge necessary to complete the qualification. Balancing work and study can cause students to struggle, leading to early drop-outs. However, this may only be a temporary problem which can be addressed through better recruitment ‘screening’ processes;
- there are associated problems with the design of Fd frameworks running in parallel with HNDs or HNCs, which can negatively impact on take-up numbers for Fds. Although HNDs and HNCs have shown decline in England and are likely to continue falling (as highlighted in the Task Force report), further Fd provision should be actively marketed as a distinctive and flexible route for a wider age group;
- comparing funding arrangements in Scotland and England highlights the more complex funding system of Fds in England. While the Scottish Funding Council continues to fund FE Colleges directly to provide higher national qualifications, funding Fds in England involves more complex relationships between FE Colleges and HEIs.

2.53 Generally research has found positive responses towards Fds. There are areas for improvement, primarily in increasing employer engagement, ensuring programmes are targeting the right people and skills shortages, improving partnership working between HEIs and FEIs, and raising the overall awareness of Fds.

Data analysis

2.54 Data collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) were supplied to SQW by HEFCW for this study. These data contained records for all students registered on Foundation degree (Fd) programmes at the higher education institutions (HEIs) in Wales in the 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06 academic years. The data are presented in ten tables in Annex B. We have also drawn on published HESA data for 2003/04 and 2004/05²⁷ on the overall HE student population in Wales; data for 2005/06 were not available at the time of writing. Some data relating to Fd students in England have also been included for

²⁷ HEFCW (2007) *Welsh Higher Education Statistics: 2004/05* and HEFCW (2006) *Welsh Higher Education Statistics: 2003/04*

comparative purposes.²⁸ Given the relatively small numbers of students involved in Fd provision to date in Wales, the data can only provide an indicative picture.

2.55 The following are the key findings from this analysis of the Fd student population in Wales:

- there were 1,306 Fd students in Wales in 2005/06, 825 (63%) of whom were in their first year. These made up 3.2% of all undergraduate, non-degree students in Wales;
- Fd student numbers in Wales grew substantially between 2003/04 and 2005/06, when the annual intake rose by 58%. Over this same period, student registrations on HNC, HND and HE diploma/certificate programmes decreased;
- Fd students in Wales were registered with ten HEIs. The University of Glamorgan and the North East Wales Institute of Higher Education (NEWI) were the largest providers, together accounting for 62% of Fd student enrolments in 2005/06;
- Fd students were enrolled on a diverse range of subjects, with the most common being education (18%), subjects allied to medicine (16%), business and administrative studies (14%) and engineering (12%);
- in 2005/06, 60% of the annual intake of Fd students studied part-time. This proportion was low compared with other undergraduate, non-degree programmes and trends indicated that the prevalence of full-time Fd students was increasing;
- just under three-quarters of Fd student entrants in 2005/06 were aged 21 and over. Over time, the average Fd student had got younger, bringing the age profile of Fd students closer to that of the overall HE student population in Wales;
- by a small margin, the majority (56% in 2005/06) of Fd students were women. This had not changed over time and was similar to the profile of the total HE student population in Wales;
- the available data suggest that ethnic diversity was relatively low among Fd students in Wales, compared to the overall HE student population. The data suggest that ethnic diversity has reduced over time, but should be treated with caution as very small numbers are involved;
- the contribution of students with disabilities to the Fd student population had grown between 2003/04 and 2005/06, although it was still marginally below the average HE student profile in Wales;
- in 2005/06, 11% of Fd students resided in Community First Areas. This proportion had grown each year from 2003/04 to 2005/06.

²⁸ HEFCE (2007) *Foundation degrees: Key statistics 2001-01 to 2006-07*

Foundation Degree student registrations

- 2.56 The first of the data tables, Table B-1, shows that in 2005/06 there were 1,306 students registered on an Fd programme in Wales. Of these, 63% (825) were in their first year while the remainder (37%, 480) were in their second (or subsequent) year.²⁹
- 2.57 Tables B-2 and B-3 compare the number and percentage of Fd students with those on other undergraduate non-degree programmes in Wales from 2003/04 to 2005/06. Overall, Fd students accounted for 3.2% of undergraduate non-degree students in Wales in 2005/06, suggesting that Fds are currently of relatively minor importance in the Welsh HE environment. This compares with a figure of 5.9% of all undergraduate non-degree enrolments across the UK in 2004/05. Nonetheless, in Wales this proportional contribution of Fd students was an increase on the previous two years from 1.7% in 2003/04 and 2.6% in 2004/05. This finding reflects the year-on-year absolute growth in the number of Fd students in Wales which is discussed further below. Over the same period, in terms of enrolments, HE diplomas/certificates decreased both in absolute and relative terms (46% to 35%), as did HNDs and HNCs. Apart from Fds, institutional credits (or other HE provision with no formal qualification) were the only notable source of increase in enrolments (among these undergraduate non-degree programmes).
- 2.58 The 1,306 Fd students enrolled in 2005/06 were registered at ten HEIs across Wales, including three 'pre-1992' institutions³⁰ as well as the Open University in Wales³¹ (Table B-1). More than 60% of the Fd students were registered at just two HEIs (both 'post-1992' institutions); these were the University of Glamorgan, at which 31.9% (417) of all Fd students were registered, and the NEWI, where 29.7% (388) were registered. Of the remaining eight HEIs, only the University of Wales, Newport had more than 100 registered students (114, 8.7%). The other HEIs with Fd students were:
- University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (85, 6.5%)
 - Trinity College, Carmarthen (78, 6.0%)
 - Swansea Institute of Higher Education (68, 5.3%)
 - University of Wales, Lampeter (55, 4.2%)
 - University of Wales, Bangor (48, 3.7%)
 - The Open University in Wales (38, 2.9%)³²
 - University of Wales, Aberystwyth (14, 1.1%).
- 2.59 As indicated above, there was a sizeable absolute growth in Fd student numbers between 2003/04 and 2005/06 (Table B-4). Compared with an annual intake of 523 Fd students across Wales in 2003/04, there were 825 in 2005/06, representing a 58% growth in two years.

²⁹ For one student, the year of entry was unknown.

³⁰ The University of Wales, Lampeter, The University of Wales, Aberystwyth, and The University of Wales, Bangor.

³¹ Which cannot be included in the pre- and post-1992 categorisation.

³² NB: the Open University has only been funded to provide Fds in Wales from 2005/06.

Student numbers grew in each of these two years, but most of this expansion occurred between 2003/04 and 2004/05 when the annual intake grew by 274, equating to a 50% year-on-year growth rate.

- 2.60 Over the three years, the predominance of the University of Glamorgan and NEWI in the Fd student 'market' lessened. Although Fd student registrations increased in absolute terms at both these HEIs between 2003/04 and 2005/06, their proportional contributions to Fd student registrations across Wales diminished: the University of Glamorgan's contribution to the annual intake of Fd students decreased from 46% in 2003/04 to 38% in 2005/06, while NEWI's contribution dropped less substantially from 32% to 29%. This is explained by the higher growth rates of Fd student numbers (in absolute terms) at some of the other HEIs in Wales, especially the University of Wales, Newport, and also the introduction to the Fd market of two HEIs.
- 2.61 Two HEIs – Swansea Institute of Higher Education and the University of Wales, Lampeter – entered the Fd market for the first time over this period, both with their first intakes in 2004/05 – thus contributing to the sizeable year-on-year growth in that year. Furthermore, three HEIs – the University of Wales, Newport, the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff and the University of Wales, Bangor – experienced a notable increase in student registrations on their 2003/04 intake. However, there were also two HEIs – the Open University in Wales and Trinity College, Carmarthen – at which Fd student registrations experienced a decline over these years.

Foundation Degree subjects and student characteristics

- 2.62 The broad subject areas for which Fd students in Wales were registered are shown in Table B-5³³. These data reveal that Fd students in Wales studied a diverse range of subjects. The four subject areas accounting for the largest number of Fd student registrations in 2005/06 were:
- Education (150, 18.2%);
 - Subjects allied to medicine (129, 15.6%);
 - Business and administrative studies (116, 14.1%); and
 - Engineering (100, 12.1%).
- 2.63 After these, there were three subject areas with more than 50 Fd student registrations in 2005/06:
- Social studies (72, 8.7%);
 - Creative arts and design (68, 8.2%);
 - Architecture, building and planning (52, 6.3%).
- 2.64 By comparison, figures for Fd registrations in England in 2004-05 show that nearly half of all students (47%) were studying Education, Business or Art and Design programmes.

³³ There may be some incorrect coding of subjects by institutions.

- 2.65 As Table B-6 shows, most Fd students studied their course on a part-time basis. In 2005/06, 60% of new entrants on Fd programmes were part-time students, although this proportion had fallen from 69% in 2003/04. This indicates that the growth in Fd students between 2003/04 and 2004/05 was made up increasingly of full-time students. In England, data for 2005/06 show that 58% of Fd students were studying full-time.
- 2.66 Compared with the overall picture for HE provision across Wales, these figures reveal a substantially greater proportion of part-time students on Fd programmes than the average: the proportion of the overall HE student yearly intake who studied part-time was 44% in 2003/04 and 45% in 2004/05. However, compared with other undergraduate non-degree programmes, part-time students were relatively uncommon on Fd programmes: 63% part-time on Fd programmes in 2005/06, compared with 89% for all undergraduate non-degree programmes (Table B-3).
- 2.67 Table B-7 shows the split between 'young' (under 21) and 'mature' (21 and over) Fd students. In 2005/06, just under three quarters (73%) of the annual intake of Fd students in Wales were aged 21 or over at the start of the academic year. In previous years, however, this proportion had been higher still, accounting for 83% in 2003/04 and 82% in 2004/05, indicating that the increase in Fd students over this period was made up increasingly of younger students. Also, these figures indicate that the age profile of Fd students is getting closer to the overall age profile of HE students across Wales, wherein students aged 21 or over made up 67% of HE enrolments across Wales in 2004/05. Data for 2004-05 on Fd students in England show that 64% were aged 21 or over.
- 2.68 The gender split between Fd students in Wales was more equal than the age profile, although the majority were women in all three years for which we have data (Table B-8). In 2005/06, 56% of new Fd students were women, compared with 55% in 2004/05 and 56% in 2003/04. This gender profile was very similar to the overall gender profile of HE students across Wales: for example, in 2004/05, 57% of all HE students in Wales were female. Data from England for 2004/05 are also consistent with this picture, with 57% of Fd students being female.
- 2.69 Data on the ethnicity of Fd students in Wales show that 92% of the annual intake of Fd students in 2005/06 was ethnically white. These probably indicate a relatively low level of ethnic diversity among the Fd student population, compared with the overall profile of HE students across Wales, among whom 84% were known to be white in both 2003/04 and 2004/05. However, it is not possible to draw this conclusion decisively because of the proportion, particularly for all HE in Wales (6%), for whom the ethnicity was not known.
- 2.70 Returning to trends in the Fd student population, the data suggest a marginal reduction in ethnic diversity among Fd students in Wales over time, shown by the 87% and 93% who were classified as White in 2003/04 and 2004/05 respectively. As above, however, these should be treated cautiously bearing in mind the proportions (between 1% and 5%) of Fd students for whom the ethnicity was recorded as unknown. Nonetheless, the available figures indicate that the proportions of Asian (from 3.4% to 1.0%) and Chinese (from 1.1% to 0.2%) Fd students diminished between 2003/04 and 2005/06, while the proportion of Black students rose (from 0.6% to 1.2%). Comparing these figures with the overall profile of HE student enrolments across Wales, Black Fd students in 2004/05 were marginally overrepresented (1.8% compared

with 1.5%) and Asian Fd students (1.7% compared with 5.9%) were underrepresented.³⁴ These figures should, however, be treated with caution, given the small numbers of students within particular minority ethnic groups. Figures for England in 2004-05 show that 89% of Fd students were White and that White and Black Caribbean students represented a bigger proportion of Fd entrants than they did for undergraduate provision as a whole. The English data also reveal that a higher proportion of ethnic minority students are entering full-time Fd study rather than part-time. This is also true for undergraduate provision as a whole.

- 2.71 In terms of the disability levels among Fd students in Wales, Table B-9 shows that 6.2% of the 2005/06 intake was recorded as having a disability, while for a further 1.8% of Fd students this information was not known. Over the three years, the proportions of Fd students with a disability were lower both in 2003/04 (4.0%) and 2004/05 (4.4%, plus 3.6% for whom the information was not known), indicating an increasing prevalence of Fd students with disabilities over time. At the time of writing, figures for comparison with the overall profile of HE students across Wales were only available for 2004/05 when 6.9% were recorded as having a disability. This indicates that, in 2004/05, students with a disability were under-represented in the Fd student population; although the increase in 2005/06 would suggest that the proportions were coming closer together. In England, disability figures for Fd students are broadly consistent with figures for the student population as a whole, with 7% of Fd students recording a disability in 2004-05.
- 2.72 Finally, Table B-10 shows the numbers of Fd students who resided in a Community First Area. In the 2005/06 intake, 94 Fd students lived in these Areas. Over the three years, the proportions of the annual intake from Community First Areas increased from 8.0% in 2003/04 to 9.8% in 2004/05 to 11.4% in 2005/06, indicating a clear trend towards increasing student numbers from these more deprived areas. The equivalent data for the student population as a whole across Wales show that 11.5% of all students in Welsh HEIs in 2005/06 came from Community First areas.
- 2.73 Table B-10 also shows this information for each of the ten HEIs in Wales at which Fd students were registered. Each of these HEIs had at least one Fd student from these Areas, but their proportional contribution to the overall Fd student body at each HEI varied substantially. The highest rate in 2005/06 was found at the Swansea Institute of Higher Education, where these students accounted for more than a fifth (21%) of the annual Fd student intake. This was followed by the University of Glamorgan, where 16% of Fd student entrants in 2005/06 were from Community First Areas. On the other hand, four HEIs had proportions below the national average (for the Fd student population): namely the NEWI (8.3%), the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (7.1%), the University of Wales, Bangor (5.9%) and Trinity College, Carmarthen (3.7%). The geographical location of individual HEIs may be a factor when considering these proportions, given that the majority of Community First areas are located in south east and south west Wales. English data on distance to study also shows that most Fd students (excepting those on distance learning provision) live close to their campus of study. Some Fd partnerships are more dispersed, however, so the geographical factor may not always be relevant.

³⁴ Figures were not provided separately for the proportion of Chinese students within the overall HE student population.

Comparative conclusions between Wales and England

- 2.74 The data for Welsh Fd students reveal many similarities with the more established data sets available in England. In both cases, the majority of students is aged over 21 and more likely to be female. Data on disability and Community First/disadvantaged neighbourhoods reveal a broadly consistent pattern of participation which is similar to the overall student population in both countries. White and Black Caribbean students are found to represent a bigger proportion of Fd entrants than they do for undergraduate provision as a whole. In Wales, the proportion of part-time Fd students is currently much higher than in England (although there has been a marked growth in part-time provision in England during 2006/07). Much of the later growth in Fd numbers in Wales has been in full-time provision.

3: Findings from HEIs/FEIs

- 3.1 As set out in section 1, semi-structured interviews were held with an agreed sample of higher education institutions (HEIs) and further education institutions (FEIs). The interviews explored a range of issues including: the rationale underpinning institutions' decisions to offer (or not offer) Fds; target markets for Fd provision; student characteristics; progression opportunities; relationships with employers and other partners; current successes and failures; barriers and constraints to Fd development; and the likely future development of the qualification within Wales.
- 3.2 Responses have been generally consistent and reveal many shared views across institutions on the development of Fds in Wales. Key points for both HEIs and FEIs are set out below. Some brief, illustrative examples of current provision are included, where relevant.

Overall involvement in Foundation Degrees

- 3.3 Overall, there has been relatively modest engagement with Fds to date by HEIs and FEIs in Wales, with a few exceptions. Most institutions did, however, suggest that there was considerable potential for future development of the qualification. As there was no clear policy steer from the Welsh Assembly Government or any significant additional funding or student numbers to develop Fds, most institutions were taking a relatively cautious, incremental approach at present.
- 3.4 Many institutions have a number of Fd programmes 'on the books' but do not necessarily run them every year if there is insufficient demand. While there had been some initial re-badging of HNDs as Fds, institutions had taken the partnership aspects of the Fd very seriously and were continuing to review and restructure provision to meet employer needs and to provide a range of flexible options for students.

Rationale for offering Foundation Degrees

- 3.5 Institutions offering Fds felt that the qualification fitted well with their own missions and strategic aims. Interviewees highlighted their commitment to: widening participation in HE; developing vocational HE; engagement with employers and developing employability skills more generally; linkages with their wider support of business through knowledge transfer, applied research and other third stream activities; support for older learners and for recognising and valuing work-based or workplace learning.
- 3.6 Institutions demonstrated a good understanding of their key sectoral and skills markets. Validation of new Fds required at least local or regional analysis of potential market demand. There was less linkage with broader strategic priorities for Wales as a whole (partly due to institutions' sense of a policy vacuum in this particular area).

Target markets

- 3.7 Most institutions saw their key target markets as people operating at technical or para-professional grades within a given sector. Most also highlighted the particular relevance of the Fd for part-time learners in work although there were some successful full-time programmes. Many institutions cited the Leitch Review as an important driver for further expansion of opportunities to study at HE level within the workplace and the need for greater investment in organisational and people development more generally. Key sectoral areas varied to some extent according to the location and expertise of the individual institution, but the range of subject areas included: health and social care; education and early childhood studies/childcare; police studies; management/business areas; creative arts sectors; the energy sector; the legal sector; retail; hotel and hospitality management; tourism; sports management; engineering; building and construction.
- 3.8 Fds were most clearly successful where there had been a significant engagement with a key employer or employment sector and where the employers had been actively involved in the design and curriculum development of the new programme. Some institutions had developed fast-track, part-time Fds, delivered over two full calendar years, which were proving to be successful.

Bespoke provision for a major employer

Young engineers at Airbus UK's wing manufacturing plant in Broughton complete a Higher Modern Apprenticeship (HMA) programme linked to a Foundation Degree designed by NEWI to meet the company's specific requirements. NEWI began working with Airbus UK and SEMTA (the SSC for science, engineering and manufacturing technologies) in 2001 to develop a bespoke programme to meet the company's needs for engineers with skills and knowledge over and above the outcome of the standard national modern apprenticeship programme. The company began implementing the HMA in Engineering Technology in 2002.

The HMA programme provided the basis for further collaboration between NEWI's Engineering Department and senior training and manufacturing engineering staff at Airbus, to develop a Foundation Degree clearly mapped to professional engineer status progression routes, and to the stages of the HMA programme (including academic progression from National Certificate provision at the local Further Education College (Deeside)).

The Foundation Degree framework offers clear benefits for Airbus. The company has been able to influence the specific content of the programme, for example in aircraft systems such as fuelling and de-icing, quality assurance, and higher level maths, and the way in which the programme is delivered. The highly structured learning, integrated with the periods of work experience apprentices spend in a range of departments (for example, quality, design, manufacturing engineering), enables them to complete the programme in only 2 years. For those who progress to an Honours Degree on completion of the apprenticeship, the Foundation Degree route reduces by 50% the number of days required for study leave, compared to the previous HNC route.

The first cohort of apprentices began the FdEng³⁵ in Aeronautical Engineering (Manufacture) in 2005. Since then the number of students benefiting from the programme has grown each year, and Airbus is considering introducing the same model at its Filton plant. The success of the Manufacture programme has promoted further collaboration towards developing a Logistics foundation degree.

Student characteristics

- 3.9 Institutions generally felt that it was too early to know whether there were any significant differences between Fd students and those on similar intermediate HE programmes (or within the institution as a whole). Some institutions highlighted the flexibility of the Fd approach and the need for students to be self-motivated and comfortable with this type of tailored provision.

³⁵ Foundation Degree in Engineering

Progression opportunities

- 3.10 Most institutions felt that the option of an Fd did encourage learners to progress from studying at FE level to undertaking an HE programme. In many instances, it had enabled learners to progress at their local institution which was a particularly important consideration for those who did not wish to move to continue their studies or who wished to access other Welsh medium provision. There was growing evidence of subsequent progression on from the Fd to 'top-up' to full honours level, although for some institutions it was too early to identify. Some institutions were currently considering any additional programmes they might need to add to their portfolio better to enable future progression.

Progression

80% of respondents to a survey of Foundation Degree graduates in 2004-05 at NEWI indicated that they had gone on to some form of further study. Of these, 95% were undertaking an honours degree, 2.5% a professional qualification and a further 2.5% some other qualification. The survey had an overall response rate of 87% of eligible graduates.

Statistics for Foundation Degree graduates in England³⁶ show that 54% went on to study an honours degree programme in 2004-05.

Partnerships

- 3.11 In most cases, institutions had built on or cemented existing relationships with partner institutions and individual businesses or sectors. Many current Fd programmes in Wales were being delivered by HE/FE partnerships³⁷. In general, HEIs valued the professional expertise of FE partners and FEIs valued the academic quality and standards brought to the Fd by the validating HEI. In some cases FEIs commented that Fds had facilitated improved network arrangements with HEIs when compared to similar, existing networks. While the partnership element of the Fd was valued, it was also recognised that it placed considerable demands on all parties and was resource-intensive to develop. In some cases, the ability to offer an Fd had brought in new partners. Specific examples included work with police services, the health sector and a new programme for tourist guides in Wales.

Foundation Degree in Tourist Guiding

The Wales Tourist Board, the Tourism Training Forum for Wales and the Wales Official Tourist Guide Association recognised that a shortage of Blue Badge Guides in Wales was beginning to impact upon the economy in Wales and its image to visitors. To meet the shortage, English Blue Badge Guides were being used.

Coleg Llandrillo and the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff were approached to investigate how this gap could be filled. They developed a Foundation Degree which incorporated the Blue Badge qualification within it and also offered the opportunity for students to progress on to a BA (Hons) Degree.

The FdA in Tourist Guiding is delivered through 12 residential student weekends and at different geographical locations across Wales to cover the extensive product knowledge requirements.

³⁶ HEFCE (2007) *Foundation degrees: Key statistics 2001-02 to 2006-07*

³⁷ NB: in England, figures for 2004/05 show that 46% of Fds were taught wholly or partly by HEIs and 54% wholly by FE colleges. Distance learning was the main means of study for 15% of part-time students (*Ibid*, p4).

Working with employers

- 3.12 Employer engagement varied across the range of subjects and sectors and was recognised as a key challenge by HEIs and FEIs. The particular economy within Wales, with few large companies and many SMEs, was also seen as challenging. Some felt that employers, and especially SMEs, would benefit from a similar incentive to the *Train to Gain* initiative currently running in England. It was relatively easier to work with larger organisations in the public and private sectors as they had a clearer sense of their particular needs and were able to be more ‘hands on’ in the development and delivery of Fds. There was a feeling that where large employers were engaged, the resulting Fds could be better tailored to the needs of both employers and individual students. Smaller employers were seen as wary of too much paperwork or bureaucracy.

Identifying new areas of provision

By 2010, it is projected that about 29% of the UK's energy supplies will come through Pembrokeshire. Pembrokeshire College is in discussion with local, major energy companies about developing Fds, building on its current Modern Apprenticeships provision. A first cohort of students is planned for the 2008/09 academic year.

Advantages and disadvantages

- 3.13 The main advantages of the Fd over other similar provision were seen as: the flexibility of the qualification; the combination of vocational and academic content; the requirement to build in future progression opportunities; cost-effectiveness for learners; and the central importance of work-based/workplace learning within the programme. Many institutions felt that the use of the word ‘degree’ in the title was helpful in attracting students and also in bringing in some new employers. The Fd was seen as helpful in promoting greater parity of esteem for vocational HE and instilling a sense of pride in their achievements in its students.
- 3.14 Key disadvantages included the lack of policy and funding support for Fd developments and for the marketing/promotion of the new qualification more generally within Wales. There was some ambivalence about the title of the qualification and the use of the term ‘foundation’ (indicating to some an entry level route into HE study), notwithstanding the generally positive comments about the use of the word ‘degree’ in the title. Many institutions felt that employers took a long time to become aware of and recognise new qualifications and that their understanding was likely to be based on their own educational experiences. In some sectors, employers were seen as reluctant to invest in employee development as they were fearful that more highly qualified employees would leave them to work elsewhere.

Barriers and constraints

- 3.15 The main barriers and constraints to Fd development were seen as the lack of policy and funding support by the Welsh Assembly Government and HEFCW. Many institutions also mentioned the lack of infrastructure for brokering developments and sharing good practice and would support some proportionate investment by HEFCW in Foundation Degree Forward or a similar service. The sharing of good practice in work-based learning and assessment

across subject areas was highlighted in terms of future staff development needs by some institutions.

Future developments

- 3.16 Institutions felt that future development of the Fd would be enabled by a more positive policy and funding position, as mentioned above. Some institutions saw the Fd as an important part of their current and future portfolio. At the same time, institutions also emphasised that there needed to be a good strategic fit between the institution and its decision to offer Fds; it was not necessarily appropriate for all HEIs and FEIs to offer them. Other institutions were cautious about switching some of their current provision from HND to Fd without a clearer policy steer from the Welsh Assembly Government. Many institutions highlighted the need for more serious engagement in extending work-based learning opportunities as part of the Leitch Review agenda and saw the Fd as a helpful model to assist in further expansion of HE opportunities for people in work.
- 3.17 As mentioned above, partnerships between HEIs and FEIs to deliver Fds were generally working well. Interviewees felt that the Fd framework enabled the particular strengths of partner FEIs and HEIs to be recognised. Some FEIs saw the Fd as an important signature qualification for HE in FE and would welcome greater autonomy in delivering the qualification. More direct funding of HE places in FE was mentioned by many FEIs as a factor which would provide them with greater stability in developing current and future provision. There was limited support from HEIs or FEIs for the possibility of granting FEIs in Wales the power to award their own Fds.

European dimension

- 3.18 Most respondents were supportive of the need for the Fd and other intermediate or short-cycle qualifications to be fully recognised within the Bologna process of modernising and harmonising HE qualifications across the European Higher Education Area³⁸. They did not foresee any particular difficulties given that the Fd was clearly located within the HE qualifications framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Some respondents were also aware of similar short-cycle qualifications within other European countries.

³⁸ The Bologna Process is an intergovernmental initiative which aims to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010 and to promote the European system of higher education worldwide. It now has 45 signatory countries and it is conducted outside the formal decision-making framework of the European Union. Decision-making within the Process rests on the consent of all the participating countries. Further information is available at www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna/.

4: Findings from employer organisations

- 4.1 Interviews were held with a range of employer organisations, including Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and the CBI Wales. An open invitation to provide views was sent to all SSCs via the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA). Representatives of 3 SSCs were interviewed, a further 3 participated in a facilitated discussion meeting and 2 other SSCs provided written comments.
- 4.2 Understanding of and involvement with Fds varied considerably across organisations and some interviewees had little specific understanding or experience of developments in Wales. Key findings are set out below.

Employer awareness

- 4.3 Where employers were aware of the Fd, it was generally seen as a useful qualification. In some cases, however, there were concerns that the provision was not specific to meet particular specialised needs and there was some scepticism about whether some programmes have had sufficient employer input.

Meeting strategic priorities for Wales

- 4.4 There was general support for the view that the Fd could play a more significant role in helping to meet Wales' own strategic priorities and to contribute to workforce development more generally. At the same time, some sectors remained highly supportive of current HNCs/HNDs and would only want to make a wholesale move to Fd provision if this clearly provided added value. The Fd was seen as a useful bridge over the current divide between craft areas and management. In some sectors, it could also assist honours graduates to improve their technical/vocational skills as part of their transition into work.

Employer engagement and involvement

- 4.5 SSCs particularly emphasised the importance of employer involvement in Fds as a key requirement if they were to endorse the programmes. In some cases, SSCs referred to the Fd being 'employer-led' as the defining characteristic, rather than as a partnership between employers, FE and HE.
- 4.6 Some interviewees felt that some HEIs were still ambivalent about employer engagement more generally. SSCs also emphasised that there needed to be more of a 'selling job' to employers and would welcome a clearer policy steer from the Welsh Assembly Government. There was an opportunity for Wales to learn from the developments in England to date. Employers were also responsive to approaches which emphasised the business benefits to them of engaging with HEIs/FEIs more broadly.
- 4.7 Progress with and involvement in Fd development varied considerably across sectors (to some extent, this reflected the different stages of development of particular SSCs). Some

SSCs have done a lot of work in assessing the demand for Fds; others are in the process of mapping existing Fds in their sectors. In some cases, professional bodies were seen as a constraining factor.

- 4.8 Some SSCs were very actively involved in bringing employers together to help to develop new provision. Examples of particular successes in Wales included work by EU skills and some good practice in Construction where FE and HE were working well together.

EU skills

With the support and assistance of Foundation Degree Forward (fdf), Energy & Utility Skills has developed a “live” Fd Framework Document. This provides guidance and indicates what Energy & Utility Skills views as good practice in developing Fds for the energy and utility sectors. As a “live document” it is designed to provide support to employers and academic institutions and will be updated on an ongoing basis following further employer and academic consultation, and the identification of ongoing best practice.

Barriers and constraints

- 4.9 The main barriers and constraints were seen as:
- lack of clarity in the policy environment;
 - the need for additional funding to support developments; and
 - recognition of the particular challenges of the Welsh employment base.
- 4.10 Some interviewees questioned the extent to which sustainable provision could be developed in highly specialised areas (these might be low in potential volume but provided high value for employers). Others flagged the potential for institutions to work together in clusters either within a region or across Wales to deliver Fds in particular sectors. It was also suggested that the sector fora established by the Welsh Assembly Government might provide a framework to aggregate overall levels of demand within a given sector in Wales and to co-ordinate future efforts.

Wales e-Training Network

The Wales e-Training Network is a collaboration between HE and FE institutions across Wales developing e-Training solutions for SMEs.

It has identified, in consultation with the Sector Skills Council e-Skills Wales, the development of ICT skills as a key priority to improve business performance. A range of on-line modules at NVQ level 3 were developed in the first phase of the project and are now being successfully delivered as a nationally-recognised qualification, validated by EDEXCEL.

The most recent development phase of the project, completed in 2006, resulted in the production of a range of on-line modules at NVQ level 4 which are currently being validated by the University of Glamorgan as a Foundation Degree in e-Commerce. The Foundation degree will be piloted with a range of SMEs across Wales during 2007.

The Wales e-Training Network is also providing development support for the Consortia for Industrial Training (CITs), an initiative funded by the Knowledge Exploitation Fund of the Welsh Assembly Government. The Network has a core team of e-learning specialists with skills in instructional design, multimedia and web programming, who are available to assist the CITs with any on-line learning content required in their support for companies.

Advantages and disadvantages

- 4.11 Advantages of the Fd included: the need for employer involvement in development and delivery; the strong need for more people to be educated to level 4 or above in the workplace; and the belief that the qualification was flexible enough to suit several target markets (18+ full-time, part-time and mature learners in the workplace, graduates needing professional/technical expertise in particular niche areas).
- 4.12 Disadvantages cited by employer organisations included: the title of the qualification which was seen as potentially misleading; the resource-intensive nature of the development phase; and the possibility that the Fd might compete with existing industry-recognised qualifications. In addition, there were issues about the extent to which Welsh partners should develop programmes that were Wales-specific or should tap into bigger UK markets.
- 4.13 Some interviewees highlighted the potential for distance-learning provision as the preferred choice for employers in the future.

European dimension

- 4.14 Interviewees generally supported the need for Fds and other intermediate qualifications to be recognised within the European context. The challenges of a more mobile European workforce were also highlighted. Some respondents also mentioned that some current Fds (in England) were beginning to attract EU and international students in niche areas (wider interest in environmental technologies was specifically mentioned).

Specific issues from Sector Skills Councils

- 4.15 SSCs were generally cautious about endorsing or supporting particular Fd programmes unless there had been significant employer involvement in developing and delivering the curriculum. The need for some incentives to encourage more employers to get involved was also recognised. There was support for an extension of the Basic Skills Employer Pledge in Wales³⁹, as mentioned in the Leitch Review. Incentivised funding to support SME engagement in particular was also raised (the extension of the *Train to Gain* initiative in England was cited as a possible approach).
- 4.16 Many SSCs gave examples of untapped markets within their sector. These ranged from highly specific examples (such as professional site supervision or technical surveying) through to a more widespread need within a sector. For example, the financial services sector had undertaken consultation on the potential of the Fd which highlighted many key target markets in the retail side of the sector (including team leaders, junior and branch managers in banks, financial advisers, paraplanners and administrative and operations staff).⁴⁰

³⁹ The Basic Skills Employer Pledge has been developed as part of the National Basic Skills Strategy for Wales to reduce the substantial number of adults in Wales with poor literacy and numeracy skills. It is intended for all private and public sector companies and organisations, whatever their size. Further information is available at www.basic-skills-wales.org.

⁴⁰ FSSC (2006), *Foundation Degree Framework: Consultation Report*

5: Findings from other stakeholders and students

- 5.1 Findings from other stakeholders and students again echo many of the themes from the earlier sections. Interviewees for this section included staff from departments within the Welsh Assembly Government, the representative organisations for HEIs and FEIs, careers specialists and student representatives. A broader UK perspective was obtained from interviews with representatives of the higher education funding bodies in England and Scotland and Foundation Degree Forward. Key points are summarised below.

Strategic priorities for Wales and the role of the Foundation Degree

- 5.2 Stakeholders within Wales generally identified a current policy vacuum and lack of joined-up thinking on whether Fd development can have a positive impact across a range of linked strategic priorities for Wales. For some, this was related to the overall lack of opportunities for the HE sector to expand, given the current policy emphasis on widening access without additional growth. The unit of resource for HE in Wales was also mentioned as a constraining factor.
- 5.3 This group of interviewees tended to reinforce earlier views about the role of the Fd in enhancing progression opportunities and the linkages to social justice and widening access strategies in Wales.

The Welsh dimension

- 5.4 The challenges of the economic mix in Wales were also highlighted by Welsh stakeholder organisations. For many, there was an opportunity for Wales to learn from and hopefully capitalise upon the lessons from English developments to date. Respondents also favoured the collaborative, partnership-based approach and saw this as applicable more broadly to HE within the Welsh context.
- 5.5 Some interviewees highlighted the need for the Fd to be seen as delivering to a high and recognised HE-level standard and thought it was important that the Fd in Wales be assessed by the Quality Assurance Agency to the agreed Fd benchmark statement.

Comparisons across the UK

- 5.6 Decisions on whether to develop Fds in England and Scotland had been determined by a mix of policy steer and particular circumstances within countries. Within England, there had been a significant fall-off in HND numbers even prior to the development of the Fd. To some extent, this may be a consequence of the greater number of opportunities to move straight into honours level programmes, rather than using the HND as a means of access.

- 5.7 The market for HNCs/HNDs remained strong in Scotland. The model of delivery was more stratified than in England, with HNCs/HNDs largely provided by FE colleges. Colleges in Scotland were directly funded and all HN qualifications were awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority. This was seen as a distinct advantage in establishing a clear strategic direction when compared to the more complex arrangements for higher nationals within England and Wales. There was little direct engagement of HEIs in the provision and it was acknowledged that this may constrain opportunities for subsequent progression in a small number of cases, although 30% of HND students in Scotland do progress on to honours degrees. Many respondents felt that it was easier for Scotland to set its own agenda in this respect, as it had a long-established, different education system and was less engaged in cross-border flows of students with England. Some large, multi-location employers were beginning, however, to call for Fd provision to be available on a UK-wide basis.
- 5.8 It was noted that there was potential for Wales to 'buy into' the support provided via the Foundation Degree Forward initiative in England. The Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland had recently agreed to provide specific funding to support the involvement of its institutions with *fdf*.

The student perspective

- 5.9 We have tried, where possible, to gain access to student views on Fd developments within Wales both via interviews with institutional representatives and in some direct conversations with students. Given the tight timescale for the study, the invitation to tender precluded the commissioning of a market survey. We have also drawn on the analysis of student feedback on the quality of programmes contained within the HEFCE publication on *Foundation degrees: Key statistics 2001-02 to 2006-07*⁴¹.
- 5.10 Evidence from the interviews with HEIs and FEIs suggests that existing students value the overall flexibility of Fd provision. The programmes were seen as particularly attractive for those returning to study after a period away who also appreciated the focus on recognising learning and achievement within the workplace. There was anecdotal evidence that studying on an Fd programme had raised aspirations and re-awakened some students' wider engagement with the benefits of learning. Some institutions had also developed intensive, part-time Fds (available over two full calendar years) which were proving to be particularly popular with mature, part-time entrants.
- 5.11 Student and institutional representatives felt that awareness of the Fd amongst potential students was currently low and would benefit from enhanced marketing and promotion across Wales. This view was echoed in discussions with careers service representatives. The ability for Fd students to learn and earn was seen as an attractive feature, as was the requirement for Fds to build in progression routes on to honours degree level. The ability to study locally and to access provision in the Welsh language was also mentioned by some interviewees.
- 5.12 The HEFCE analysis of student feedback on the quality of Fd programmes serves as a useful proxy for overall student views on these new qualifications. This shows that National Student Survey responses from Fd students are generally positive, with 76% expressing satisfaction

⁴¹ HEFCE (2007) *Foundation degrees: Key statistics 2001-02 to 2006-07*

with their course (compared to 80% for the student body as whole). Foundation Degree students have also used the opportunity to make specific comments about their programmes; some examples of these are set out in the box below:

Comments from Foundation Degree students (drawn from the 2006 National Student Survey)

'The work experience has helped me in choosing a career. The course has helped me get my life on track and given me so many more job prospects.'

'With the course (TV and film production) [we] have direct contacts with local production companies that allow us to gain personal contacts into the industry.'

'You can work and study at the same time, as work and studies are related.'

'... learnt new things that have helped me in my job.'

'The course has offered me the opportunity to gain a degree ... and will hopefully allow me to further my career from teaching assistant to teacher ...'

Source: HEFCE (2007) *Foundation Degrees: Key statistics 2001-02 to 2006-07*

- 5.13 The overall response from Fd students is similar to that of other students, and especially those on HND programmes. It does, however, include some less positive views on the organisation of programmes. While 52% of respondents agreed or definitely agreed that their course was well organised, a large minority of 29% disagreed with this statement. Further analysis done by HEFCE (and drawing on the results of the Surridge report into the National Student Survey (NSS)⁴²) suggests that Fd programmes have more demanding students in terms of course organisation and are also, on average, less well-organised than other programmes. This is likely to reflect some of the challenges in developing more innovative and flexible provision and the 'teething' problems faced by new programmes (and especially those being developed without prior HND or honours degree provision in a particular subject area).

⁴² Surridge (2006) *The National Student Survey 2005*, available at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/2006/rd22_06/

6: Key findings

6.1 A summary of key findings from the study is set out below with cross-referencing to relevant paragraphs within the main report:

- most HEIs/FEIs and employer bodies would value a more overt and positive policy steer from the Welsh Assembly Government and HEFCW on the role of Fds in meeting Wales' strategic priorities (and especially in relation to the Leitch agenda); ideally this should include additional funding to support development costs and the provision of additional student numbers (see paragraphs 3.3, 3.14, 3.15, 3.16 and 4.9);
- the promotion of the Fd is seen as an important future priority for Wales; many interviewees would support proportionate investment by HEFCW in Foundation Degree Forward or a similar body to facilitate good practice and to broker further developments (see paragraphs 3.14, 3.15, 4.6, 5.8 and 5.11);
- Foundation Degrees are seen by many HEIs/FEIs and employer organisations as an important 'stepping stone' qualification, particularly suited to part-time learners in work; fast-track, part-time Fds are proving attractive to this market (see paragraphs 3.8, 3.10, 3.17, 4.4, 4.11, 5.3 and 5.10);
- the Fd model of working in genuine partnership is seen as distinctive and adding value when compared to other provision such as HNCs/HNDs; interviewees have highlighted the flexibility of the qualification, the combination of vocational and academic content, future progression opportunities, cost-effectiveness, and the central importance of work-based/workplace learning as particularly attractive features (see paragraphs 3.11, 3.13, 4.5, 4.11 and 5.10);
- in general, HEIs value the professional expertise of FE partners and FEIs value the academic quality and standards brought to the Fd by the validating HEI. Some FEIs saw the Fd as an important signature qualification for HE in FE and would welcome greater autonomy in delivering the qualification. More direct funding of HE places in FE was mentioned by many FEIs as a factor which would provide them with greater stability in developing current and future provision. There was limited support for the possibility of granting FEIs the power to award their own Fds (see paragraphs 3.11 and 3.17);
- many interviewees (both from HEIs/FEIs and stakeholder/employer organisations) have raised issues about whether there is sufficient demand within Wales to develop Fds in highly specialised sectors/sub-sectors. Our interviews have identified a range of successful practice including: provision for key public sectors (eg health and social care; education; police); specialised provision tailored to the particular needs of a sector within a local area/sub-region (in these cases often working pro-actively with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) within key local sectors); niche provision

which recognises the particular expertise or location of an HEI/FEI and/or is able to be rolled out across Wales (see paragraphs 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 4.10 and 5.4);

- in the broader UK context, it was felt that Fd developments in England were likely to have more of an impact on Wales than on Scotland. Wales could potentially lose students if it was not seen to be as competitive with England in offering the same range of qualifications. It may be easier for Scotland to take forward its own particular approach as there is less cross-border flow of students between England and Scotland and a longer history of educational difference between those two countries (see paragraphs 5.6-5.8);
- in the context of European developments, interviewees agreed that it was important for the Fd and other short-cycle or intermediate qualifications to be explicitly recognised within the Bologna process and related developments. In some sectors, there are high numbers of workers from other EU countries who might benefit from Fd study while working in the UK. Within England, there are the beginnings of interest in Fds in niche areas by international and EU students (see paragraphs 3.18 and 4.14).

7: Options and recommendations for the future

7.1 The study has found a high level of consensus amongst interviewees across institutions, employers and other stakeholders on the potential benefits of further development of Foundation Degrees within Wales. On that basis, we recommend that:

- HEFCW should ask the Welsh Assembly Government to review its current policy stance on Foundation Degrees, explicitly within the context of the recommendations of HM Treasury's Leitch Report and the ongoing *Independent Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales*. Any new strategy should also take better account of related Welsh Assembly Government strategies on knowledge transfer and innovation;
- additional student numbers should be provided to support the further development of Fd programmes within Wales;
- programmes awarded additional student numbers should:
 - demonstrate that they meet the QAA Fd benchmark;
 - include evidence of market demand and longer-term sustainability of provision;
 - build in employer engagement throughout the development and delivery of programmes;
 - provide clear progression routes;
- HEFCW should review current funding mechanisms to provide greater stability of funding and allocation of Fd student numbers to FEIs;
- additional funding should also be provided to recognise the costs of development through the partnership model;
- proportionate investment should be provided to promote Fds across Wales to employers and prospective students and to support/enhance good practice developments across the sector;
- further consideration should be given to particular sectors or niche areas for future development of the Fd within Wales, including key public sectors (such as health, education and police services) and paying particular attention to the sectors identified in *Wales: A Vibrant Economy* (high technology, automotive, aerospace, agri-food, tourism, financial services and the creative industries);
- further consideration should be given by HEFCW to whether particular modes of study or types of partnership should be encouraged within any incentivised funding programme;

- employer organisations should give further consideration to additional resources they might commit to support Fd developments (such as jointly-funded places on Fd programmes).

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Annex B: Data analysis

Table B-1: Number of Foundation Degree Students in 2005/06 by Higher Education Institution

2005/06 Higher Education Institution	Not first year entrants		First year entrants		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Swansea Institute of Higher Education ⁴³	40	8.3%	28	3.4%	69	5.3%
North-East Wales Institute of Higher Education	147	30.6%	241	29.2%	388	29.7%
The Open University in Wales	23	4.8%	15	1.8%	38	2.9%
University of Wales, Lampeter	30	6.3%	25	3.0%	55	4.2%
University of Wales, Newport	37	7.7%	77	9.3%	114	8.7%
Trinity College, Carmarthen	51	10.6%	27	3.3%	78	6.0%
University of Glamorgan	103	21.5%	314	38.1%	417	31.9%
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff	29	6.0%	56	6.8%	85	6.5%
University of Wales, Aberystwyth	6	1.3%	8	1.0%	14	1.1%
University of Wales, Bangor	14	2.9%	34	4.1%	48	3.7%
Grand Total	480	100.0%	825	100.0%	1,306	100.0%

Source: HESA Student Record: 2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06

* represents values which are not available for data protection reasons.

Table B-2: Number of enrolments on undergraduate non-degree programmes

Qualification enrolled on	Number of enrolments								
	2003/04			2004/05			2005/06		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Foundation Degree	248	415	663	408	659	1,067	484	822	1,306
Diploma/certificate of HE	1,854	16,514	18,368	652	12,365	13,017	550	13,970	14,520
Professional/health/social care qualification	1,021	2,207	3,228	789	2,058	2,847	376	1,925	2,301
HND	3,305	438	3,743	2,823	381	3,204	2,714	316	3,030
HNC	124	3,088	3,212	158	2,921	3,079	188	2,672	2,860
NVQ	-	109	109	-	135	135	-	286	286
Institutional credits/no formal qualification	310	10,332	10,642	253	18,021	18,274	228	16,456	16,864
Total	6,862	33,103	39,965	5,083	36,540	41,623	4,540	36,447	40,987

Source: HESA Student Record: 2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06

⁴³ For one student enrolled at Swansea Institute of higher Education, the information about the year of study was not defined in the data set. This explains why the total number of Fd students of this institution is one greater than the numbers of 'not first year' and 'first year' entrants.

Table B-3: Percentage of enrolments on undergraduate non-degree programmes

Qualification enrolled on	Number of enrolments								
	2003/04			2004/05			2005/06		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Foundation Degree	3.6%	1.3%	1.7%	8.0%	1.8%	2.6%	10.7%	2.3%	3.2%
Diploma/certificate of HE	27.0%	49.9%	46.0%	12.8%	33.8%	31.3%	12.1%	38.3%	35.4%
Professional/health/social care qualification	14.9%	6.7%	8.1%	15.5%	5.6%	6.8%	8.3%	5.3%	5.6%
HND	48.2%	1.3%	9.4%	55.5%	1.0%	7.7%	59.8%	0.9%	7.4%
HNC	1.8%	9.3%	8.0%	3.1%	8.0%	7.4%	4.1%	7.3%	7.0%
NVQ	-	0.3%	0.3%	-	0.4%	0.3%	-	0.8%	0.7%
Institutional credits/no formal qualification	4.5%	31.2%	26.6%	5.0%	49.3%	43.9%	5.0%	45.2%	41.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: HESA Student Record: 2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06

Note: Percentage of enrolments in this table is based on the figures presented in Table A-1.

Table B-4: New entrants on Foundation Degrees by Higher Education Institution

Higher Education Institution	2003/04		2004/05		2005/06	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Swansea Institute of Higher Education	-	-	50	6.4%	28	3.4%
North-East Wales Institute of Higher Education	169	32.3%	186	23.6%	241	29.2%
The Open University in Wales	24	4.6%	16	2.0%	15	1.8%
University of Wales, Lampeter	-	-	54	6.9%	25	3.0%
University of Wales, Newport	6	1.1%	61	7.8%	77	9.3%
Trinity College, Carmarthen	43	8.2%	30	3.8%	27	3.3%
University of Glamorgan	238	45.5%	345	43.8%	314	38.1%
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff	29	5.5%	18	2.3%	56	6.8%
University of Wales, Aberystwyth	*	*	8	1.0%	8	1.0%
University of Wales, Bangor	11	2.1%	19	2.4%	34	4.1%
Grand Total	523	100.0%	787	100.0%	825	100.0%

Source: HESA Student Record: 2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06

* represents values which are not available for data protection reasons.

Table B-5: New entrants on Foundation Degrees by subject

Subject Area	2003/04		2004/05		2005/06	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Architecture, Building and Planning	28	5.4%	44	5.6%	52	6.3%
Biological Sciences	39	7.5%	13	1.7%	14	1.7%
Business and Administrative studies	187	35.8%	229	29.1%	116	14.1%
Creative Arts and Design	13	2.5%	40	5.1%	68	8.2%
Education	83	15.9%	140	17.8%	150	18.2%
Engineering	122	23.3%	123	15.6%	100	12.1%
Historical and Philosophical studies	-	-	51	6.5%	25	3.0%
Linguistics, Classics and related subjects	-	-	*	*	-	-
Mathematical and Computer Sciences	20	3.8%	42	5.3%	47	5.7%
Physical Sciences	1	0.2%	13	1.7%	14	1.7%
Social studies	6	1.1%	22	2.8%	72	8.7%
Subjects allied to Medicine	21	4.0%	41	5.2%	129	15.6%
Technologies	-	-	18	2.3%	30	3.6%
Veterinary Sciences, Agriculture and related subjects	*	*	8	1.0%	8	1.0%
Grand Total	523	100.0%	787	100.0%	825	100.0%

Source: HESA Student Record: 2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06

* represents values which are not available for data protection reasons.

Table B-6: New entrants on Foundation Degrees by mode of study

Mode of Study	2003/04		2004/05		2005/06	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Full-time	163	31.2%	292	37.1%	334	40.5%
Part-time	360	68.8%	495	62.9%	491	59.5%
Grand Total	523	100.0%	787	100.0%	825	100.0%

Source: HESA Student Record: 2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06

* represents values which are not available for data protection reasons.

Table B-7: New entrants on Foundation Degrees by age group

Age group	2003/04		2004/05		2005/06	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Under 21	87	16.6%	141	17.9%	218	26.4%
21 and over	436	83.4%	646	82.1%	605	73.3%
Grand Total	523	100.0%	787	100.0%	825	100.0%

Source: HESA Student Record: 2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06

* represents values which are not available for data protection reasons.

Note: 'Under 21' students were aged under 21 at the start of the academic year (1st August) in which the programme started

Table B-8: New entrants on Foundation Degrees by gender

Gender	2003/04		2004/05		2005/06	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Female	291	55.6%	428	54.4%	463	56.1%
Male	232	44.4%	359	45.6%	362	43.9%
Grand Total	523	100.0%	787	100.0%	825	100.0%

Source: HESA Student Record: 2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06

* represents values which are not available for data protection reasons.

Table B-9: New entrants on Foundation Degrees by disability

Disability	2003/04		2004/05		2005/06	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Recorded disability	21	4.0%	35	4.4%	51	6.2%
No known disability	502	96.0%	724	92.0%	759	92.0%
Not known	-	-	28	3.6%	15	1.8%
Grand Total	523	100.0%	787	100.0%	825	100.0%

Source: HESA Student Record: 2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06

* represents values which are not available for data protection reasons.

Table B-10: New entrants on Foundation Degrees from Community First Areas, by Higher Education Institution

Institution	% of all new entrants on Foundation Degrees		
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
	%	%	%
Swansea Institute of Higher Education	-	12.0%	21.4%
North-East Wales Institute of Higher Education	7.1%	5.4%	8.3%
The Open University in Wales	-	12.5%	13.3%
University of Wales, Lampeter	-	-	-
University of Wales, Newport	16.7%	6.6%	11.7%
Trinity College, Carmarthen	7.0%	3.3%	3.7%
University of Glamorgan	9.7%	15.4%	15.6%
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff	10.3%	5.6%	7.1%
University of Wales, Aberystwyth	-	-	12.5%
University of Wales, Bangor	-	-	5.9%
Grand Total	8.0%	9.8%	11.4%

Source: HESA Student Record: 2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06

Annex C: List of institutions and organisations consulted

HEIs/FEIs

Bridgend College
Cardiff University
University of Glamorgan
Coleg Gwent
Coleg Llandrillo
Coleg Menai
University of Wales, Newport
North East Wales Institute
Pembrokeshire College
Coleg Sir Gâr
Swansea Institute of Higher Education

Employer organisations

CBI Wales

Sector Skills Councils:

- Asset Skills
- Construction Industry Training Board
- Energy and Utility Skills (EU skills)
- E-Skills UK
- Financial Services Skills Council
- GoSkills
- Skillset
- SummitSkills

Other organisations

Careers Wales Cardiff and Vale

fforwm: the representative organisation for further education institutions in Wales

Foundation Degree Forward

Higher Education Funding Council for England

Higher Education Wales: the representative organisation for higher education institutions in Wales

St David's Catholic College, Cardiff

Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council

Welsh Assembly Government, Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS)

Welsh Assembly Government, Department for Enterprise, Innovation & Networks (DEIN)/Knowledge Exploitation Fund

Annex D: Copies of aides-memoire

Aide-memoire for interviews with HEIs/FEIs

1. If applicable, what foundation degrees do you currently offer and for how long have these been run?
2. Alternatively, have you ceased any Fd provision and if so, why?

Decisions about Fds

3. Why did you initially decide to offer (not to offer) foundation degrees?
4. How does your decision link to the broader strategic mission of your institution?
5. Was your decision based on any analysis of potential market demand or particular skills needs in Wales? If yes, please elaborate. If no, then on what basis did you make the decision?
6. Was your decision to offer/not offer Fds influenced by any particular Welsh Assembly Government policy or strategy? If so, please specify.

Fd learners and provision

7. What are the key target markets for current and future Fd provision in your institution?
8. Have particular programmes and approaches been more successful than others? If so, why?
9. What do you see as the key characteristics of Fd students in your institution (to include whether they come from previous learning or from employment)? Do these differ from those of students on other sub-degree programmes and, if so, how?
10. In your experience, does Fd provision facilitate FE-HE progression more generally (this can include progression from FE level provision into Fd programmes or progression on from Fd provision to full honours degree level)?
11. Have you developed new partnership/consortia arrangements to deliver Fds? If yes, how did you decide on the key partners and who are they?
12. Please describe the employer engagement with the foundation degrees you offer.
13. What can you tell us about employability outcomes for your Fd graduates? To what extent has your Fd provision had an impact on employer engagement with your institution?

Success/failure of Fds

14. What do you see as the main advantages/disadvantages of Fd (both for learners and institutions) when compared to other similar sub-degree provision?
15. What have been the main barriers and obstacles to Fd development within your institution (eg: securing employer engagement; staff development; programme design; developing partnership arrangements, validation, funding etc.)?

16. What do you see as the likely future development of Fds: (i) within your institution; and (ii) within Wales more generally?
17. Do you have any specific views about the provision of Fd within the context of European developments such as the Bologna process?

Aide-memoire for stakeholders in Wales

1. What is your view of foundation degree development to date in Wales?
2. To what extent do you think that Fd provision can help to meet Wales' strategic priorities?
3. What type and level of involvement in foundation degree development have you had? If you are representing a particular sector, please comment on the extent to which Fd development has taken account of your sector's particular needs.
4. Are you aware of particular successes/good practice in Fd development in Wales?
5. What do you see as the main barriers or constraints to current and future Fd development in Wales?
6. What do you perceive as the main advantages and disadvantages of Fd provision compared to other, similar sub-degree provision?
7. Are there lessons to be learnt, for example, from: the development and support of Fd provision in England; and/or from the Scottish decision not to develop Fds?
8. Do you have any specific views about the provision of Fds within the context of European developments such as the Bologna process?

[Additional questions for Sector Skills Councils only

9. How would you characterise employer involvement in Fds in your sector?
10. Are there major untapped markets for Fd provision in your sector? If yes, what are they and on what do you base this view?]

Aide-memoire for stakeholders in the rest of the UK

1. How aware are you of Fd developments in Wales?
2. How would you compare/contrast developments in Wales with what has happened in your own country to date?
3. To what extent is Fd/sub-degree provision in your country meeting specific strategic priorities or needs?
4. Are there particular lessons for Wales to be learnt from the approach to sub-degree provision which you have taken in your country?
5. To what extent is sub-degree provision in your country reaching previously untapped markets for higher education?
6. What is your view of the role of sub-degree provision in the context of European developments such as the Bologna process?

Annex E: Glossary

Accreditation of Prior Learning/ Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APL/APCL/APEL): accreditation of prior learning (APL) is the award of credit on the basis of demonstrated learning that has occurred at some time in the past. This may take the form of accreditation of prior certificated learning (APCL) as the result of a course or self-directed study, or the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) as the result of experience either at work or in leisure pursuits, which has not previously been assessed and/or awarded credit.

Credit framework: a set of minimum specifications for valuing, measuring, describing and comparing achievement.

Credit and qualifications framework for Wales (CQFW): The CQFW embraces all post-16 education in Wales. It brings together the concepts of volume of learning achievements (credit) and the demands made of that learning on the learner (level) within a framework that incorporates all types and styles of learning and all qualifications within a single, unifying structure.

Department for Employment and Learning (DEL): the Government department responsible for funding further and higher education and skills and employment initiatives in Northern Ireland.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES): the Government department responsible for education and skills policy in England.

Department for Education and Employment (DfEE): former name for the DfES.

Foundation Degree (Fd): a higher education qualification at Intermediate level in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Foundation Degree Forward (fdf): the body established to support the development of Foundation degrees in England.

Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ): the frameworks describe the achievement represented by higher education qualifications. Two frameworks have been developed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) on behalf of the HE sector – one for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and one for Scotland.

Higher National Diploma (HND): a higher education qualification at Intermediate level in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Higher National Certificate (HNC): a higher education qualification at Certificate level in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs): SSCs are independent, UK wide organisations that have been charged to lead the skills and productivity drive in industry or business sectors recognised by employers. They bring together employers, trade unions and professional bodies working with government to develop the skills that UK business needs. There are 25 individual SSCs which are listed below:

Asset Skills (Property services, housing, cleaning services and facilities management)
Automotive Skills (Retail motor industry)
Cogent (Chemical, nuclear, oil and gas, petroleum and polymer industries)
Construction Skills (construction industry)
Creative and Cultural Skills (Advertising, crafts, cultural heritage, design, the Arts and music)
Energy & Utility Skills (Electricity, gas, waste management and water industries)
E-skills UK (Information Technology and Telecommunications)
Financial Services Skills Council (Financial services industry)
GoSkills (Passenger transport)
Government Skills (Central Government)
Improve Ltd (Food and drink manufacturing and processing)
Lantra (Environmental and land-based industries)
Lifelong Learning UK (Employers who deliver and/or support the delivery of lifelong learning)
People 1st (Hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism)
Proskills (Process and manufacturing industries)
SEMTA (Science, engineering and manufacturing technologies)
Skillfast-UK (Apparel, footwear and textiles and related businesses industry)
Skills for Care and Development (Social care, children and young people)
Skills for Health (Health sector)
Skills for Justice (Custodial care, community justice, court and prosecution services, policing and law enforcement)
Skills for Logistics (Freight logistics industry)
SkillsActive (Active leisure and learning)
Skillset (Audio visual industries)
Skillsmart Retail (Retail)
SummitSkills (Building services engineering)

Work-based learning (wbl): learning that an individual derives from the experience of work and from reflecting upon it.

Workplace learning: learning undertaken in the workplace.