The Colleges–University of Leicester Network (CULN) is a partnership of 18 colleges and 3 higher education institutions. Founded in 2001, it is the largest grouping of further education (FE) and higher education (HE) in the Midlands. Its college membership is diverse, ranging from vocational to sixth-form colleges. The three higher education institutions are Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln, Newman University College Birmingham and the University of Leicester.

The Network aims to foster good co-operative relationships between educational institutions and to greater promote collaboration. In particular, CULN aims to:

- Widen access to, and increase and enable participation in, further and higher education;
- Bring to bear differing perspectives on common issues such as foundation degrees;
- Champion learner progression through different institutions and programmes;
- Create improved links with businesses and local communities;
- Promote co-operation between the CULN members on all matters of common interest.

CULN has a two-tier structure consisting of a main strategic committee, which debates policy and oversees the activities of the operation tier of working groups. The CULN Committee is chaired by Professor Robert Burgess, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leicester, and is attended by the college principals or their representatives. Each CULN partner also has an assigned contact or ‘champion’.

The working groups are set up according to identified needs. There are currently 18 working groups, some of which are based on subject and curriculum needs (such as English, Geography, Chemistry) while others focus on cross-cutting themes (for example, FE/HE research, sustainable development, and libraries and resources). The groups help to identify how the different sectors can work together to share good practice, enhance students’ learning, and organise appropriate continuing professional development for staff.

The number of CULN events for staff and students has been increasing each year since its inception. Recent highlights include a major enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days.

In 2007–08, Colleges–University of Leicester Network activities involved 446 students and 576 staff. The evidence indicates that CULN student activities encourage various students to apply for a higher education course, who might otherwise not do so. The Network creates a supportive community of educators and learners.

To find out more please contact the CULN office at the Institute of Lifelong Learning, University of Leicester, 128 Regent Road, Leicester, LE1 7PA – telephone: 0116 252 5920 or 0116 252 5966; email: jl172@le.ac.uk or kmm11@le.ac.uk or yd24@le.ac.uk; website: www.le.ac.uk/culn.

The University of Leicester has a long history of providing a wide range of adult education courses. The Institute has students at every level of study, from taster courses and access provision through to Masters’ degrees and PhDs, with nearly 3,500 enrolments each year. In addition, over 4,000 people attend events, workshops, performances and other activities organised within the Institute.

Leicester Institute of Lifelong Learning (LILL) was established on 1 August 2000. It encourages and enables other University departments to develop their own lifelong learning activities, delivering their research and expertise to businesses and the wider community.

LILL also offers its own extensive programme of continuing professional development, part-time degrees, diplomas and certificates, liberal adult education courses, and social, cultural and artistic events, as well as a large programme of courses in counselling and psychotherapy. Two foundation degrees are run by the Institute – one in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations, the other in Drug and Alcohol Counselling – as well as the popular BA (Hons) in Humanities.

The Institute works closely with partners in the region, including further education colleges, private companies, public-sector organisations and voluntary bodies, to meet their education and training needs and to disseminate research findings. It aims to ensure its programme is accessible, flexible, versatile and innovative.

The activities of the Institute take place in a variety of places in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire and sometimes further afield. The main locations are Vaughan College, Leicester, the Northampton Centre and the Richard Attenborough Centre on the main campus.

LILL leads the University’s work in the field of continuing professional development and engagement with employers. The Leading Edge is a dedicated unit in LILL working with businesses to provide accredited training courses and qualifications tailored to their individual needs. The Institute also hosts the Skills for Sustainable Communities Lifelong Learning Network which involves all the universities and colleges in the sub-region. It works with employers and others to widen opportunities for vocational learners.

The Institute of Lifelong Learning also has an extensive programme of research in risk, crisis and disaster management, counselling and psychotherapy, and issues in lifelong learning. Work in the last field includes studies of the benefits of learning in later life, including two European projects, studies of knowledge transfer and public engagement, and work looking at mentoring, as well as ongoing research into successful foundation degrees and the role of employers.

More details are available from the Institute of Lifelong Learning, University of Leicester, 128 Regent Road, Leicester, LE1 7PA – telephone: 0116 252 5911 or 0116 252 5919; email: lifelonglearning@le.ac.uk or eb72@le.ac.uk; website: www.le.ac.uk/lifelonglearning.
March 2009


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ES Executive Summary

ES1 Introduction

ES1.1 The Institute of Lifelong Learning at the University of Leicester was awarded a grant in October 2007 by Foundation Degree Forward (fdf) to undertake a study looking at the factors influencing the success of foundation degrees developed locally by members of the Colleges – University of Leicester Network (CULN). The research was particularly interested in exploring the role of employers in successful foundation degrees.

ES1.2 The CULN group is a dynamic partnership of 19 further education and sixth-form colleges and 3 higher education institutions (HEIs) in the East and West Midlands. They work together to promote co-operation between members and to increase access for learners and progression into higher education. It has a two-tier structure with a committee chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leicester and 18 operational working groups.

ES1.3 The two CULN working groups most closely identified with the project, the Employer Engagement and Foundation Degree groups, were brought together to form the Steering Group for the project. As well as receiving regular updates on the progress of the project, the Steering Group has been closely involved in influencing the direction of the study and the research methods and instruments.

ES1.4 The project was carried out in three phases. The first involved a review of major documentary sources and a survey of all CULN members about the foundation degrees in which they were involved. The survey collected key information on both active and non-active foundation degrees that had been developed over the past four years. Phases 2 and 3 of the project entailed detailed action-based research into five case studies of foundation degrees, including focused interviews with employers, college staff and students. The interviews asked about the role of employers, from first initial concept through to shared delivery of programmes, and provided an opportunity to reflect on how employers’ involvement may have changed over time.

ES1.5 ‘Successful’ foundation degrees were taken to mean courses with viable numbers of students enrolled, where the majority of students completed their programme of study, and where students had access to effective progression routes.

ES1.6 The research took place between November 2007 and September 2008. There have been two interim reports produced in June 2008 and September 2008 respectively. This summary is for the final report.
ES2    Research methods

ES2.1    Literature review

ES2.1.1    A number (23) of key periodicals, articles, research reports and journals relating to the development of foundation degrees were examined. These provided a national picture of the distinctive features of foundation degrees and views on how employers contributed to their success.

ES2.2    Survey of CULN partners

ES2.2.1    A short questionnaire was prepared, piloted and discussed with the Steering Group. After agreement, it was circulated to all CULN members to gain an overview of the types of foundation degrees that had been developed, their key statistics, the role of employers, and their success. After some follow-ups by email and phone, a response rate of 67 (73%) was achieved. The survey provided much valuable information.

ES2.3    Case studies

ES2.3.1    The 67 completed questionnaires that were received were each analysed to assess their suitability for further investigation. A number of criteria were applied to select the case studies and these included:

- Availability of at least 3 years of data on the foundation degree;
- Student numbers of above 10 per intake over a three-year period;
- A fully completed survey;
- Scores of 3 or higher (out of 5) in the employer involvement section.

ES2.3.2    The following five case studies were selected:

Phase 1  – *FdA in Families, Parenting and Communities* – Leicester College
(Pilot Case Study)

Phase 2  – *FdSc in Sport and Exercise Development* – Lincoln College

*FdA in Leadership and Management (Late-Night Entertainment)* – Loughborough College

Phase 3  – *FdSc in IT and Technical Support* – Newman University College, Birmingham

*FdA in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations (MVCO)* – University of Leicester
ES3  Research findings

ES3.1  Employers’ involvement

ES3.1.1 The role of employers in foundation degrees emerged as a complex and varied theme. The survey showed that active foundation degrees had significantly higher employer involvement than those that were not running, indicating a correlation between employer involvement and viable courses. Employers were mainly involved in the provision of work experience and were involved relatively little in course delivery or assessing student work.

ES3.1.2 There were exceptions, though, including the FdA in Leadership and Management (Late-Night Entertainment) and the FdA in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations. The former was jointly delivered by Loughborough College and the employer (Luminar plc) and the latter employed specialists from the voluntary sector to assist in delivering the course. There was only one example where the first approach had come from an employer and that was the FdA in Leadership and Management (Late-Night Entertainment). 20 per cent of survey respondents said that they had ongoing employer participation, but only six per cent said that they had more involvement at the point of the survey than when the course first started.

ES3.1.3 Once involved, the employers in the case studies were highly positive about foundation degrees. They reported that the content of the curriculum was relevant to the needs of their businesses and they were consistent in their praise of how the course was of benefit to their employees. Few employers were involved in marketing activities and it emerged from the case studies that marketing was often a neglected area.

ES3.1.4 Although employers generally enjoyed good relations with colleges and universities, there did appear to be a number of missed opportunities for improved contact with employers. Many of the employers interviewed wanted more contact, such as feedback on the progress of their employees who were students on a foundation degree. Many employers received no regular information from the college or university. They were not asking for meetings, but informal phone or email contact and brief written reports.

ES3.1.5 Feedback from the Steering Group suggested that a sensitive approach was needed when contacting potential employers, who were often overloaded with contacts from different training agencies. It was suggested that it was better to talk to them about their continuing professional development requirements rather than initially trying to engage them in a full foundation degree. The case studies showed that modular validation was often not available, and some colleges and employers found the process of making changes to courses, once they were developed, difficult and cumbersome.
ES3.1.6 Many students who were on part-time foundation degrees benefitted from employer financial support or assistance in other ways, such as time off for study and help with travel expenses. In the case studies, the proportion of students receiving support from employers ranged from 18 per cent to 100 per cent.

ES3.2 Course/programme viability and sustainability

ES3.2.1 One of the measures of success of a foundation degree is the number of students enrolled on the programme. The survey data provided the opportunity to examine this and showed that the number of courses with 11 to 50 students enrolled on them had increased year-on-year since 2004. However, there were still a number of courses with between six and ten students enrolled (10 courses out of 67 in 2007–08), which raised questions about their viability.

ES3.2.2 The survey data revealed that it was common for course numbers to fluctuate year-on-year. In some cases there had been a ‘honeymoon period’ during which numbers had initially been robust but had then tailed off, possibly after many of those needing or wanting the qualification had enrolled on the course. In other cases, legislative or occupational changes had affected the relevance of the course, and there were also examples of competition affecting student numbers. One foundation degree had introduced a distance-learning mode of study and had recruited students on an international basis. This was proving successful and helpful in combating reducing student numbers on the original face-to-face course.

ES3.2.3 The survey showed that 28 per cent of the courses developed by CULN members were not currently active – either not running yet, or abandoned and not likely to run. The main reasons provided were poor enrolment, that the course was not yet validated, or that the course was still in development. Some subject areas posed a higher risk of not being active than others, with courses in media and business running the highest risk and sport and education the lowest risk of not running.

ES3.2.4 The data showed that student non-completion of foundation degrees could be quite significant. Some of the case studies provided examples of the measures that had been put in place to try to reduce this. These included providing enhanced student support systems at the first stages of the foundation degree and dividing early modules into short assessed blocks. Increasing the flexibility of a foundation degree was shown to help with retention, but there was an inevitable trade off between flexibility and viability as sometimes it was not cost-effective to offer a wider range of delivery modes, venues or times of study.
ES3.2.5 The proportion of students on full-time foundation degrees nationally was considerably higher than on foundation degrees run by CULN members. This could be indicative of greater flexibility provided by CULN members than is available nationally:

HEFCE 2006–07 – 58 per cent full-time
CULN 2006–07 – 21 per cent full-time

ES3.2.6 A common theme that emerged was that there were considerable variations in the ability and knowledge levels of students enrolling on foundation degrees. Many students fitted the profile of not having undertaken any academic study for several years and being unsure of how they would cope with academic study. Some course managers were developing strategies to cope with groups of such mixed ability and knowledge levels.

ES4 Conclusions

ES4.1 The study found that developing and delivering a successful foundation degree requires considerable ongoing management. There can be no room for complacency. If a course is to be responsive to the needs of employers then it is likely to require fairly frequent changes to the curriculum. Colleges and universities need to keep ahead of new requirements and be alert for new markets if they are to maintain viable student numbers.

ES4.2 The research demonstrated that the benefits of foundation degrees for both employers and students were considerable. Many students said that studying for the foundation degree had been a life-changing experience for them. They praised the quality of teaching and facilities and the increase in their technical expertise.

ES4.3 Both employers and students particularly singled out how the course had improved their levels of confidence and employability. There were many examples of students taking on new roles or getting promoted as a result of undertaking the foundation degree. One employer found that having students on the course had dramatically reduced staff turnover which had previously been a major issue.

ES4.4 In summary, the research concluded that successful foundation degrees share a number of common features, both in terms of outcomes and inputs:

- Improved confidence levels of graduates
- Positive effects on the workplace and improved employability
- Life-changing experience for many students
• Employers who are engaged with foundation degrees are highly supportive of their benefits
• A curriculum that is highly relevant to the world of work brings success
• Evidence of considerable workplace improvements
• Reduced turnover of employees
• Good student evaluation of the quality of the teaching and facilities
• Flexible approach to the design and delivery of programmes
• Onward progression of graduates, both academic and work-related
• Effective, fully-functioning partnerships between the employers and education providers usually lead to successful foundation degrees

ES5  Recommendations

ES5.1 The study made a number of generic recommendations which were aimed at maximising the sustainability, viability and success of foundation degrees.

1. It is important to develop and embed an employer–education provider communications strategy that facilitates regular, ongoing communication between the college and the employer(s).

2. Wherever possible, it is advisable to establish employer–education provider partnerships with an agreed minimum number of students to be sent by an employer(s) on a regular basis.

3. Regular updating of the curriculum content should be undertaken to ensure that it is meeting changing employer and environmental needs.

4. It is desirable to have flexible timetabling to allow for varying work and family commitments, making use of student and employer feedback.

5. It is a good idea to develop new modes of study, such as distance learning, where appropriate. The FdA in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations is a good example of this, with the distance-learning mode of study enabling the recruitment of students on an international scale.

6. It is recommended that colleges should work with the validating partner to explore the possibilities of offering a modular approach that enables students to study ‘small bites of learning’.
7. It is advisable to establish a comprehensive marketing and publicity strategy and to ensure that it is continued on an ongoing basis each year.

8. It is recommended that, where appropriate, a stimulating delivery of the curriculum should be provided by professionals who have relevant industry experience.

9. Care should be taken to develop and embed support systems for students, particularly to cover study support at the beginning of the course.

10. A clearly defined ladder of progression should be available from level 3 courses through foundation degree to honours degree level.

11. Providers should respond to student and employer feedback and show sensitivity in the pitching of fee levels to take account of market tolerance.
1. Introduction

1.1 In September 2007 Foundation Degree Forward (fdf) awarded funding to the Institute of Lifelong Learning at the University of Leicester to undertake a research project to investigate the key factors, particularly the role of employers, which influence the success of foundation degrees. The research team comprised Professor John Benyon, Belinda McKee and Elain Crewe and they were joined by Katie Morris in the summer of 2008. The project began in early October 2007. The researchers are pleased to present this final report on the project.

1.2 The project has been undertaken in collaboration with the Colleges – University of Leicester Network (CULN). This is a partnership of 19 FE Colleges and 3 HEIs in the East and West Midlands. Founded in 2001, it is the largest grouping of further education (FE) and higher education (HE) in the Midlands. It has a remit to:

- Bring to bear differing yet complementary perspectives on common issues such as foundation degrees;
- Champion learner progression through the development of relationships between diverse institutions;
- Widen, increase and enable participation in FE and HE using a range of direct and indirect means;
- Promote co-operation between the FE and HE members on all matters of common interest.

1.3 CULN has a two-tier structure consisting of a main strategic committee and an operational tier of 17 working groups. The CULN Committee is chaired by Professor Robert Burgess, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leicester, and is attended by the college principals or their representatives. The Committee meets three times a year and has had a big influence in promoting the development of foundation degrees. The 16 operational working groups meet regularly and their activities and achievements include working on a variety of foundation degrees.

1.4 The research project originated as a result of suggestions and requests from CULN partners, many of whom are engaged in running foundation degrees. They felt that it would be of real benefit for their foundation degrees to be analysed to identify the key factors leading to successful courses, and also to improve co-operation between the partners yet further to enhance future developments.

1.5 Following the confirmation of funding from fdf in September 2007, the two CULN working groups most closely identified with the project, the Employer Engagement and Foundation Degree groups, were brought
together to form the Steering Group for the project. As well as receiving regular updates on the progress of the project, the Steering Group has been closely involved in influencing the direction of the study and the research methods and instruments.

1.6 The combined group met five times during the life of the project. The first meeting was held on the 10 October 2007 with nine attendees from colleges and SSCs. At this meeting the Steering Group subjected the proposed research design and methods to critical scrutiny and played an important role in the development of the questionnaire which was then used to survey all CULN partners on their views and experiences in setting up and running their foundation degrees.

1.7 The second meeting was held on 17 January 2008 with 15 people present, from a variety of institutions in CULN. There were also three sector skills councils represented. The attendees were provided with a progress report and an account of the literature review. This was followed by a full discussion, particularly focusing on ways of engaging effectively with employers and the problems of reaching small and medium-sized employers. The Steering Group received the draft survey results and provided comprehensive advice on the interview questions and research design to be used in the case studies.

1.8 The third meeting took place on 14 March 2008. There were 16 members present, including three people from sector skills councils and also Mark Mabey from fdf. The group received and discussed the updated survey results, the pilot case study and the draft interim report. In particular, the Steering Group considered each of the five the emerging issues and themes and selected the foundation degrees for the four detailed case studies.

1.9 The fourth meeting took place on 9 June 2008. The group received the final version of the interim report and information on the case studies. It also discussed dissemination of the results of the project and ways to take it forward.

1.10 The fifth meeting took place on 9 October 2008 and was attended by 19 people representing a wide range of colleges and sector skills councils. This meeting received reports on the remaining case studies and discussed the key issues which arose from them. The meeting also discussed the final report and the main themes it included. In addition, the Steering Group discussed how best to disseminate the results of the project and how to take the work forward.

1.11 The Steering Group has provided great support for the project and has played an important role in the research process itself. The numbers attending its meetings have exceeded expectations and the contributions
have been valuable. Many members of the Steering Group have been involved in running foundation degrees and their own personal experiences have fed into the study, helping to enrich it and steer it in the right direction. The loyalty that CULN members have for the network has helped to ensure that the project has gone well, for example with a high response rate (73 per cent) to the survey of foundation degrees.

The research team would like to end this introduction by thanking everyone who has assisted with the project, especially the members of the Steering Group, and staff in the colleges and higher education institutions who have participated in the survey, case studies and in other ways. Particular thanks are owed to the staff, students and employers involved in the five case studies selected for the project:

**Phase 1 – Pilot Case Study**

FdA in Families, Parenting and Communities – Leicester College

**Phase 2 – Case Studies**

FdSc in Sport and Exercise Development – Lincoln College

FdA in Leadership and Management (Late Night Entertainment) – Loughborough College

**Phase 3 – Case Studies**

FdSc in IT and Technical Support – Newman University College

FdA in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations (MVCO) – University of Leicester

The team would also like to thank all the staff in the Institute of Lifelong Learning at the University of Leicester who have helped with the project, especially Isobel Woodliffe, Jackie Dunne, Jo Leadbetter and Tracy McGhie.

Finally, the researchers wish to thank Foundation Degree Forward for funding the study and those who have assisted the project in other ways, particularly Professor Derek Longhurst, Gay Bligh, Susan Hayday, Esther Lockley and Mark Mabey.

The research team has received high levels of co-operation and help from everyone involved in undertaking the study.
2. **Project Synopsis**

2.1 The project was designed to investigate the key factors, particularly the role of employers, that have influenced the success of foundation degrees (FDs) offered by members of the Colleges–University of Leicester Network (CULN).

2.2 The expression 'successful foundation degrees' has been taken to mean courses with viable numbers of student enrolments, where a significant majority of students complete their programmes of study, and where students have access to effective progression routes in education and employment.

2.3 The study was undertaken in three phases as shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.1: The three phases of the project</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1 of the project involved four components</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 Research into FDs that have been developed by CULN members since 2001 through a short survey collecting and analysing key information on active and non-active FDs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Literature review of relevant documentary sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Pilot case study of a successful FD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Interim report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Phase 2 of the project involved two components | |
|-----------------------------------------------|
| 2.1 Action-based research on two FDs that included employer and FE/HE focus, a statistical analysis and students' views. The research was carried out through interviews and meetings with appropriate personnel. Questions were asked about the role of employers, from initial concept through to shared delivery of programmes, with opportunities to look at how employer involvement may have changed over time | March – June 2008 |
| 2.2 Interim report | August 2008 |

| Phase 3 of the project involved four components | |
|-----------------------------------------------|
| 3.1 Action-based research on two further FDs covering similar aspects to phase two with employer and FE/HE focus, a statistical analysis and students' views | June – August 2008 |
| 3.2 Evaluation of the project outcomes from all phases | August – December 2008 |
| 3.3 Final report | March 2009 |
| 3.4 Dissemination of findings | January – June 2009 |
3. Research Methods

3.1 In order to obtain a thorough understanding of the key factors that influence the success of foundation degrees, a variety of research methods were selected to provide both qualitative and quantitative information.

3.1 Literature review

3.1.1 25 periodicals, articles, research reports and journals relating to the development of foundation degrees were examined in connection with the project. A number of key words and phrases were utilised to refine the search for suitable documentation:

- Distinctive features of foundation degrees
- Role of employers in the development of foundation degrees
- Employer engagement
- Employer demand for foundation degrees
- Criteria for successful foundation degrees
- Case studies of successful foundation degrees
- Creating demand for successful foundation degrees
- East Midlands research into foundation degrees
- Work-based learning in foundation degrees
- Flexible learning in foundation degrees

3.2 Foundation degrees survey

3.2.1 One of the key milestones of the project was to create a short questionnaire that could be sent to CULN members to gain an overview of the types of foundation degrees that had been developed by partners and to find out information and statistics on them.

3.2.2 A draft survey instrument was discussed at the Steering Group meeting on 10 October 2007 and a number of significant changes were made which increased the scope of the questions and asked for information on all foundation degrees that had been developed, whether or not they were running. The full survey instrument is reproduced in Appendix 1.

3.2.3 The information held by fdf showed that there were 88 foundation degrees that had been set up by CULN members, though this number slightly increased to 92 during the course of the project with four additional foundation degrees identified, data for which were not on the fdf system.
3.2.4 As a result of prompts and follow-ups by phone and email, and discussions at meetings of the Steering Group, a total of 67 responses were received, constituting a response rate of 73%. The survey resulted in a great deal of valuable information. It has not been possible to investigate all the avenues of research raised by the information contained in the completed surveys – for example non-active courses and reasons for their non-activity were beyond the scope of this project.

3.3 Case studies

3.3.1 The project also involved five detailed case studies of successful foundation degrees. Using the following selection criteria the information on the 67 surveys was analysed to assess their suitability for investigation as a case study.

**Essential**

- Students numbers of above 10 per intake over the past 3 years
- Course active for at least 3 years and therefore data available for this period
- Survey fully completed

**Desirable**

- Interesting comments in the additional information sections
- Scores of 3 or higher in the employer involvement section
- Varied modes of attendance

**Range**

- Selected surveys to cover a range of different occupational sectors and different courses/programmes
- Selected surveys to be offered at different colleges

3.3.2 Using these criteria, a pilot case study was selected and the Steering Group was involved in the selection of the remaining case studies.

3.3.3 A series of open-ended questions were developed in three categories that could be asked in both face-to-face and telephone interviews. The Steering Group played an important part in developing the interview questions.
Table 3.1: The aims of the case-study questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Aims of the Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Education practitioner</td>
<td>To provide an opportunity for practitioners to reflect on the development of their foundation degree programme from initial concept through validation to the current position. Practitioners were encouraged to feel involved in the research and to utilise reflections to support the continued professional development of their team and the dissemination of findings to a wider audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Employer</td>
<td>To explore the role of the employer in the foundation degree being studied, and to identify how they contributed to the success of the programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students</td>
<td>To provide an opportunity for students to comment and reflect on their experience of the foundation degree, from their reasons for selecting the programme, their satisfaction of the programme and the ways the FD had assisted with the advancement of their career.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.4 Following the pilot case study a number of amendments were made to the methodology:

- It was found that the questions had generally worked well though the employer questions were often too long for some circumstances, such as a telephone interview on a tight timescale, and needed to be adapted.

- It was agreed that when students were to be interviewed in a group it would be useful to give them a short questionnaire to obtain more detailed information on their reasons for selecting the course, any concerns they had and comments on whether the course was of benefit to them – and if so in what ways. This questionnaire was introduced for the remaining 4 case studies.

- Questions were also added for education practitioners about course viability.

3.3.5 The questions used in the case studies are provided in Appendix 2.
4. **Literature Review**

4.1 **Distinctive features of foundation degrees**

4.1.1 The defining characteristics of foundation degrees are set out by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark* statement (FDQB), published in October 2004 (QAA 2004a). This information is used by providers when developing programmes and by reviewers when carrying out assessments of FDs.

4.1.2 The FDQB states that FDs should integrate the following within a single award (QAA 2004a):

- employer involvement
- accessibility
- articulation and progression
- flexibility
- partnership

4.1.3 Employer involvement is seen as particularly important and employers should be fully involved in the design and regular review of FD programmes, as well as in the delivery and assessment of the programme and the monitoring of students in the workplace where possible.

4.1.4 Work-based learning is seen as an integral part of the programme and the FD should increase opportunities for students to ‘earn and learn’. FDs should provide flexible delivery modes and study patterns for students so that the study best suits the needs of learners.

4.1.5 Foundation degrees are intended to provide the knowledge and skills that are necessary to enable employees to be versatile and adaptable in progressing to and within work. Employability is a key aspect in foundation degree programmes and its inclusion should equip and assist learners to enhance their employment opportunities, and/or allow them to prepare for a career change.

4.1.6 Institutions awarding FDs should guarantee progression to at least one Honours degree, but should also include requirements of professional bodies, where possible. It is anticipated that students will progress on to FDs from different starting points and therefore institutions should have in place arrangements for accreditation of prior experiential learning and/or certificated learning.
4.1.7 Areas of innovation, good practice and strength identified by the 68 reviews of FDs carried out by QAA reviewers (QAA 2005a) during 2004–05 included:

- Employers playing a central role in early discussions and continuing to be engaged throughout the development of the FD, despite the challenges this may bring.
- Effective team-working practices between staff from FE colleges and staff from HEIs.
- Clear programme aims.
- Design and organisation of the curriculums a strength, especially flexibility in programme design and highly relevant content that meets the particular needs of the profession and employers.
- Learning and teaching are major strengths utilising a variety of methods.
- Well-qualified, enthusiastic and dedicated staff.
- Highly effective academic and pastoral support.
- High rate of progression to Honours degree programmes.

4.1.8 Areas where further supported development was required included:

- High-quality and imaginative approaches to work-based learning (wbl) especially establishing monitoring and assurance systems for wbl.
- Assessment and feedback to students.
- Implementation of accreditation of prior learning (APL) policies:

Many reports note that where APL policies are in place, they have not been implemented. Students often reported that they were not aware of the policies. There is scope for development in making admissions processes more accessible to students entering from non-traditional backgrounds and establishing APL procedures to support admission of a wider range of students (QAA 2005a).

4.1.9 The QAA review of 2004–05 used information from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to provide a profile of students enrolled on FD programmes.

Two distinctive student enrolment patterns emerge that appear to be particular to FDs. One group of students study full-time; they are primarily male, under 25 years of age, with traditional entry qualifications at level 3 on the National Qualifications Framework. The other group studies part-time, is predominantly female, mature, employed and holds a greater diversity of entry qualifications (QAA 2005a).
4.2 Employers’ role

4.2.1 The predominant view in the literature is that the role of employers in contributing to the success of FDs is vital. A key part of the government’s skills strategy is to expand employer engagement at FE/HE levels and increase employer-led learning and employer investment in qualifications. FDs play a major part in this strategy and improving and building links between employers and education is an essential, and often time-consuming, element for all involved.

4.2.2 The QAA review of 2004–05 noted that:

Providers have worked hard to involve employers and employer representative groups in FD programmes. In examples of good practice, employers play a central role in early discussions about the need for graduates at the intermediate/higher technician level. They then continue to engage in the design and development of the programme, as well as in the teaching and assessment of students. Employers contribute to the FDs in a wide variety of ways, including the design and commissioning of live briefs and projects; WBL opportunities; student support (including mentoring); and formative (and sometimes summative) assessment. Sustaining an effective level of employer engagement continues to present challenges for some providers. In these cases, employers’ lack of involvement in regular monitoring and development, assessment practices and student feedback, and in their support for WBL, can limit the professional currency and credibility of the FDs (QAA 2005a).

Around 75 per cent of FD providers are involving employers and mentors in the monitoring and review process, but to a varying extent. It is also clear that there is scope to develop strategies for their more formal involvement and to include a broader range of employers. Around half of the providers reviewed have organised employers’ groups or forums, or have devised other means of obtaining employer contributions to the programme monitoring process (QAA 2005a).

4.2.3 Some studies that have surveyed the views of employers on FDs and on investing in qualifications. Matthews, Maynard and Krafti in their report Sustainable Foundation Degrees: A Case Study of Northamptonshire (2007) and Raddon and Quinn in their report Demand for Foundation Degrees and Engaging Employers in the East Midlands (2007) identified a number of similar challenges from the perspective of employers:

- Lack of awareness of FDs and lack of information on them.
- Employers unconvinced of the merits of FDs.
- Alienation from an ‘academic’ qualification.
- Costs seen as outweighing benefits.
• Fear of employee leaving after investment in training.
• Confusion over range of qualifications available – status of the FD compared to HND and questions about where a FD fits into the qualification structure.
• Need for a clear business case for investing in training – some concerns that FD development is driven by education rather than business and not convinced that education has skill capacity to deliver.
• Two-year course seen as too long – employers would prefer flexible delivery, on site or e-learning to be considered.

4.2.4 Research undertaken by EMUA on behalf of emda in 2004 looked at employer demand for FDs in the East Midlands and reached similar conclusions regarding the low level of awareness of FDs and general confusion over the academic status of an FD (Emda 2005). It was also felt that there was a real industry interest in FD, but clarification was needed over which organisation(s) should take on the role of brokerage between employers and HEIs/FECs.

4.2.5 To gain the views of employers, Raddon and Quinn (2007) contacted approximately 200 employers in four key sector areas of logistics, food and beverages, construction and retail. In all cases they received a poor response rate from employers willing to participate in the survey and generally a low awareness of FDs.

The reason for the low response rate that became apparent over the course of the research was that the very term ‘foundation degrees’ was often taken by companies to be immediately irrelevant to them, and even potentially alienating The lack of awareness of FDs certainly compounded the perception that a degree is academic and, therefore, irrelevant to business (Raddon and Quinn 2007).

4.2.6 Participants at a providers’ forum noted that ‘few employers have heard of FDs, and stressed how much work is required simply to raise this awareness. We might therefore question the extent to which there is likely to be any great demand from employers for FDs at this time’ (Raddon and Quinn 2007).

4.2.7 Matthews, Maynard and Krafti (2007) followed up 128 employers who were willing to be a part of their survey and found a similarly negative picture from many. Quotations from interviews with employers show that they found it difficult to see what the benefits would be either for the employee or the company. Many employers had concerns that encouraging staff to take a FD would not be cost-effective for their business.
4.2.8 However, the evidence does show that employers who were already involved in FDs tended to have a high regard for them (Raddon and Quinn 2007). Some of the perceived benefits included:

- Development of skills relevant for the business and the individual.
- Positive personal development for individuals, such as increased motivation, confidence and the ability to deal with others in a professional manner.
- Improved retention of staff and more effective career building.
- FDs offered a useful route into higher education for non-traditional learners.

4.2.9 Findings from this and other studies indicate that many employers liked the flexibility of FDs with the combination of academic and vocational skills. Larger companies were often more supportive than SMEs. There is also considerable agreement that employers’ involvement should be encouraged from the outset, including assessment, accreditation and a commitment to employing FD graduates (Matthews, Maynard and Krafti 2007).

4.3 Creating demand for foundation degrees

4.3.1 Raddon and Quinn (2007) concluded that whilst demand-led information is important in developing FD programmes there was also a role for creating demand.

*With some sectors, such as food and drink and construction, there was a feeling that the industry also needed to work to create demand for FDs by improving the way the sector is seen by people entering the labour market.*

4.3.2 This is part of a complex position. Identifying areas of employer interest and areas of skills shortages is a key requirement for the early development phase of any FD, and programme developers are strongly recommended to derive information from SSCs, LSCs and other key stakeholders, such as regional development agencies (RDAs), as well as individual contact with employers, to gain a comprehensive picture of employers’ needs. However, it was suggested that there are areas of demand among employees and learners that will not be identified by employers and opportunities could be lost if providers rely solely on information from this source. The approach will need to be particular to the programme under development and should be an effective partnership between key stakeholders.
4.3.3 One suggestion is that a business case needs to be made with supporting marketing materials to counter employers’ low levels of awareness and understanding of FDs. The case should be set out in a straightforward, jargon-free manner, with reference to real world examples (Matthews, Maynard and Krafti 2007). The timing of the business plan should fit in with the employers’ annual business planning cycle, rather than to fit with the academic calendar.

4.3.4 The University Vocational Awards Council identified a number of benefits of FDs to employers that could form a part of a business case (UVAC 2005, p. 24):

- Flexible – tailored to employer needs.
- Motivated, highly-skilled employees.
- Better-qualified workforce.
- Higher staff retention.
- Meeting skills shortages.
- Fuelling business growth.
- Work-based learning – little time off the job.
- Projects directly related to the business.
- Employer is more closely involved in delivery.
- Mentor and assessment support from the provider.
- Extremely good value compared to private-sector training.
- Direct links to further qualifications and CPD.

4.3.5 The UVAC also reported it is important to demonstrate to potential learners the value of an HE qualification and to answer their key question ‘what is in it for me?’. Potential learners need to be able to see a clear link between the FD and career promotion opportunities in their organisations. Employers may also need to provide encouragement to staff to take up qualifications if the perception in that sector is that educational qualifications are not needed for progression.

4.3.6 There has been anecdotal evidence that the uptake of FDs has been more successful in the public sector. However, the position is more complex as uptake has been variable across all sectors. The Quality Assurance Agency reported that the subject with the largest number of foundation degree students is education studies. The next largest subject is business and management, then hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism, art and design, social policy, administration and social work. Mode of attendance varied with approximately one third of the programmes delivered full-time only, one third part-time and one third both full and part-time (QAA 2005).
4.3.7 Raddon and Quinn (2007) suggest that there needs to be an evaluation of FE and HE institutional frameworks showing how FDs fit in and can be strengthened. The concern is that without real institutional backing, FDs could be treated as the ‘poor relation’ whereas with good support staff could be encouraged to develop more innovative programmes and institutions could look to develop more flexible models of accreditation and validation. Investment in staff working on FDs could also counter employers’ concerns that academic staff lack professional credibility and understanding of work-based learning. They report that in the longer term this will increase FE/HE capacity to deliver programmes that meet employers’ needs.

4.3.8 It is important to provide employers and employees with customer service quality standards from the point of first inquiry, through information, advice and guidance, on to processing applications and enrolment.

Successful employer engagement depends upon the provision of a professionally conceived delivery service that begins from the moment a first call is received… Too many HEIs perform poorly at this crucial front line (Matthews, Maynard and Krafti 2007).

There are many examples of employer and employee frustration that their initial inquiry was not dealt with in a timely or satisfactory manner.

4.3.9 Together the 25 Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) cover most of the workforce of the UK. They are employer-led, independent organisations that each focus on a specific employment sector across the UK. SSCs provide employers with a unique forum to express the skills and productivity needs that are pertinent to their sector. Each SSC has its own, or is developing its own, framework of qualifications and National Occupational Standards (NOS). The role of the SSCs as brokers between education and employers is important as is their joint working with organisations such as Foundation Degree Forward (fdf) to ensure that FDs are included in the qualifications framework.

4.3.10 Raddon and Quinn (2007) report that their research indicates that there is an urgent need to review demand for generic FDs in areas such as management, leadership and business skills which may have a broader, longer-term appeal than some sector-specific courses which struggle to recruit. However, at the same time the research shows that employers have a strong interest in shorter, modular courses that fit in with their in-house training and which enable students to study discrete units. It is also desirable, where possible, to accredit professional qualifications within the FD to provide strong vocational outcomes and gain employer interest.
4.3.11 Although one of the key QAA criteria for FDs is their flexibility, there are still many examples of where the course is designed to fit the needs of the academic institution rather than the learner or the employer. Consideration needs to be given to multiple start dates, flexibility over mode of attendance and the ability to increase or decrease the intensity of study as required.

4.3.12 The pricing structure of FDs should be sensitive to the business community. As well as the necessity of providing clear information ‘up front’ on the cost of modules, providers should be aware of circumstances where the costs could be perceived to be prohibitive, for example SMEs and voluntary and community groups.

4.3.13 All the research has emphasised the need for education to develop longer-term relationships with employers and, although there are no easy answers, there are some obvious pointers to take into account, as explained by Hearsum (2005) from fdf:

- Target employers with whom providers have already engaged, either currently or in the past.
- If employers are already buying short courses from a provider, could these form the basis for developing a FD?
- Contact and listen to local employers – try to understand how they are developing their organisations.
- Don't sell FDs as a ‘product', but as a solution to satisfy the needs of employers.
- Check on the sustainability of any proposed FD.
- Choose employers that understand the need to support workforce development.
- Successful employer engagement should be born out of brokering new learning relationships that have benefits for all.
- Do not use a rigid modular approach to delivery, but embrace open learning outcomes that capture any relevant learning that takes place in the workplace.
- Find ways to take the pressure off busy managers by helping learners to manage their own learning.

4.3.14 Matthews, Maynard and Krafti (2007) stated:

_There are many ways in which employer engagement can be developed, through a variety of interventions... (such as)... targeting clusters rather than individual companies... Early involvement of SSCs can overcome many of the barriers particularly associated with SMEs._
5. Foundation Degrees Survey

5.1 Scope of the survey

5.1.1 With support from the project Steering Group, a short survey instrument was developed and sent out to CULN partners to capture key details of all foundation degrees they had developed (both active and non-active). The survey questionnaire asked for information on enrolments, reasons for any non-active courses, the extent of employer involvement, the relationship with the validating institution, and what factors the college or HEI felt had influenced the success of the FD. The survey instrument is reproduced in Appendix 1.

5.1.2 A total of 67 responses were received from 14 colleges and HEIs out of a total of 92 potential replies, representing a response rate of 73 per cent.

Table 5.1: Survey of foundation degrees: responses from CULN members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College or higher education institution</th>
<th>Number of replies received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bournville College</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooksby Melton College</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicester College</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln College</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loughborough College</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moulton College</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newman University College, Birmingham</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Warwickshire and Hinckley College</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton College</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephenson College</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Leicestershire College</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Leicester</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyggeston and Queen Elizabeth College</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Base: number of foundation degrees** 67

5.1.3 Of the 67 courses for which information was received, 48 (72%) were running, 11 were not running yet and a further 8 were unlikely to run, were not known by the college, or had been abandoned. Only two of the inactive courses had been delivered in a previous year.
Table 5.2: Number of foundation degrees running

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Status</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course running</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course not running yet</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course abandoned/not likely to run</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Base: number of foundation degrees</strong></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Analysis of ‘course not running yet’ and ‘not likely to run’ was made by the research team on the basis of comments on the questionnaire.

5.1.4 Appendix 3 provides a full list of courses by institution, both active and non-active, for which a survey response was received. The courses were grouped by subject area using fdf’s classifications of subjects. The results in Table 3 show the considerable differences in whether courses were active according to subject area. It would appear that courses developed in business and media have a much higher risk of being inactive than courses in sport or education. Appendix 4 provides a full list of subject titles under each heading.

Table 5.3: Active and inactive courses, grouped by subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject area</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Inactive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community and Social Studies</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality and Tourism</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport and Logistics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing Arts and Music</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Nursing and Animal Studies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, environment and land based</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and Design</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5.4: List of validating organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Validating institution</th>
<th>Number of courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coventry University</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Montfort University</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derby University</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicester, University of</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln University</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loughborough University</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Validation Council</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton, University of</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nottingham Trent University</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield Hallam University</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warwick University</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcester University</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not decided yet</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Base: number of foundation degrees** 67

### 5.2 Reasons for courses being inactive

5.2.1 A total of 19 courses were inactive, with 17 of the 67 courses (25 per cent) not having recruited any students. Two further courses had recruited students in the past, but it had been decided not to continue offering the courses.

5.2.2 Table 5 shows the reasons respondents gave for the FD being inactive. The main reasons were poor enrolment, that the course was not validated or that the course was still in development. No enrolment or poor enrolment accounted for 31% of courses with this figure potentially higher where some of the ‘other reasons’ also relate to enrolment.

### Table 5.5: Reasons for course being inactive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not validated</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No enrolment or poor enrolment</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No employer support</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No tutor</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not financially viable</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New course still in development</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other reasons</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Some respondents gave more than one response*
5.2.3 Other reasons included students not returning for the second year because of the fees, the validation being too late for the course to run this year, employers not supporting the mode of delivery, and the college having no record of the degree course referred to. The two respondents who said the course was inactive due to lack of enrolment said it was due to poor enrolment from potential students who were in suitable employment.

5.3 Numbers of students enrolled

5.3.1 The total number of students enrolled across the 67 respondents is shown in Table 5.6 and Figure 5.1. Numbers had increased from 424 in 2004–05 to 1,006 in 2006–07 but had fallen slightly to 844 in 2007–08, although it must be noted that the survey was conducted half way through the academic year. The drop could have been accounted for by courses with two enrolment points during the year.

Table 5.6: Student numbers by year by mode of study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of study</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
<th>2005/06</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
<th>2007/08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of students</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>1006</td>
<td>844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time students</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time day/employer release students</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time evening/own time</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance-learning students</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time, day or evening, not specified</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time/part-time break down not given</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Some organisations only provided the total number of students
5.3.2 Table 5.7 shows the proportion of students who were full-time or part-time. Taken overall, just over one in four of all students (27%) were full-time, 38% were part-time, on day release or employer release. Just under one in five of the students (19%) attended part-time in the evenings or their own time. A total of 13% of students studied by distance learning, but the great majority of these students were from one course. A total of 5% of the students attended in a mix of their own time and their employer’s time.

5.3.3 One example given of the way a course operates was one evening each week from 4.30 pm to 8.30 pm. The course takes three years to complete.

Table 5.7: Study mode: proportion of students in each year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of study</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
<th>2005/06</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
<th>2007/08</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time day/employer release</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time evening/own time</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance learning</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time, day or evening, not specified</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Some organisations just provided the total number of students.
5.3.4 The number of students enrolled on an individual course varied greatly from just one student to 270, as shown in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8: Numbers of students enrolled on individual courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numbers of students on the course</th>
<th>Numbers of courses 04/05</th>
<th>Numbers of courses 05/06</th>
<th>Numbers of courses 06/07</th>
<th>Numbers of courses 07/08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 or 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 and over</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The above Table shows that in 2004–05, for example, four courses had an enrolment of 6–10 students, 8 had enrolled 11 to 20 students and two had over 50 students.

5.3.5 Figure 5.2 shows how the number of courses and the number of students per course has increased over the past four years. It is a positive factor that the number of courses with 21 to 50 students has increased in 2007/08, but there are still 10 courses with only between 6 and 10 students enrolled on them, that must raise questions about their viability. Appendix 5 provides a list of courses that recruited over 20 students in 2007–08.

Figure 5.2: Number of students enrolled on courses (cohort size)
5.4 Degree of employer involvement

5.4.1 The survey asked respondents to score the level of employer involvement in their foundation degree on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was no involvement and 5 was intensive involvement. The results are reported in Figure 5.3. The data exclude respondents who gave no response to a question. As Figure 5.3 shows, the degree of employer involvement varied considerably. One in six to one in five respondents did not reply or said ‘not applicable’ to each of the areas where employers may have been involved. This can reasonably be interpreted as ‘no involvement’.

![Figure 5.3: Degree of employer involvement in the foundation degree](image)

- **Initial concept of the FD**: 7% No involvement, 32% Limited or occasional, 16% Medium level involvement, interaction at functional level, some meetings, 32% High level of involvement, regular interaction, 14% Intensive involvement - in depth interaction, frequent meetings, named contacts.
- **Curriculum design & development**: 16% No involvement, 36% Limited or occasional, 21% Medium level involvement, interaction at functional level, some meetings, 17% High level of involvement, regular interaction, 10% Intensive involvement - in depth interaction, frequent meetings, named contacts.
- **Ongoing employer participation**: 24% No involvement, 27% Limited or occasional, 29% Medium level involvement, interaction at functional level, some meetings, 15% High level of involvement, regular interaction, 5% Intensive involvement - in depth interaction, frequent meetings, named contacts.
- **Provision of work experience**: 19% No involvement, 13% Limited or occasional, 20% Medium level involvement, interaction at functional level, some meetings, 20% High level of involvement, regular interaction, 28% Intensive involvement - in depth interaction, frequent meetings, named contacts.
- **Shared delivery of programme**: 37% No involvement, 18% Limited or occasional, 14% Medium level involvement, interaction at functional level, some meetings, 14% High level of involvement, regular interaction, 7% Intensive involvement - in depth interaction, frequent meetings, named contacts.
- **Delivery of work based modules**: 47% No involvement, 9% Limited or occasional, 30% Medium level involvement, interaction at functional level, some meetings, 6% High level of involvement, regular interaction, 8% Intensive involvement - in depth interaction, frequent meetings, named contacts.
- **Assessment of students**: 41% No involvement, 23% Limited or occasional, 20% Medium level involvement, interaction at functional level, some meetings, 4% High level of involvement, regular interaction, 13% Intensive involvement - in depth interaction, frequent meetings, named contacts.

5.4.2 In summary, excluding no replies, the survey revealed the following:

- 46% of respondents said there was a high or intensive level of employer involvement in the initial conception of the foundation degree;
- 27% said there was a high or intensive level of involvement in the curriculum design and development;
- a smaller proportion (20%) said there was a high or intensive level of ongoing employer participation;
• 48% said there was a high or intensive degree of involvement in providing work experience. A few respondents commented this was not applicable as all their learners were employed;

• there was little employer involvement in the delivery of the programme with only 11% saying this was high or intensive;

• 14% said there was a high or intensive degree of employer involvement in the delivery of work-based modules;

• 17% said there was a high or intensive degree of involvement in the assessment of students.

5.4.3 Whilst the survey replies show that employers are an integral part of many foundation degrees, only 20% of respondents said that they had ongoing employer participation, and employers would appear to have comparatively little involvement in the delivery of programmes or the assessment of students.

5.4.4 A number of respondents made observations about their experience of employer involvement and the following are a selection of these comments:

• All assessments are based on students’ work experience as all students are employed or volunteers.

• Sure Start involvement and endorsement has been important.

• Employers are involved in the provision of work-based mentors and record keeping of meetings.

• One employer is heavily involved; the other employers to a lesser extent.

• Employer involvement is unknown at the present time.

• Provision of work placements is not relevant as all learners are employed.

• This is year 1 of the course and so we are working hard to network with employers and build up contacts etc.; in 12 to 18 months I would anticipate a strengthening of employer involvement.

• The majority of our students are employees in schools. LEAs/LAs had involvement regularly whilst we had pilot scheme funding (2001–05), not so much now. Schools have involvement with individuals rather than with the programme.

• Although high employer involvement has been noted, this is only some employers; with voluntary-sector employers this can vary considerably.
5.4.5 Section 5.6 includes a number of other comments on how employer involvement had contributed to the success or otherwise of the foundation degree. Figure 5.4 shows the level of employer involvement broken down by whether the foundation degree was active or inactive.

**Figure 5.4: High and intensive levels of employer involvement, comparing active and inactive foundation degrees**

Base: All respondents, including those giving no response to the question

5.4.6 Figure 5.4 shows that employer involvement is higher in every category with active courses. This correlation is particularly noticeable in categories such as the first one indicating that if employers are involved in the initial stages of development a foundation degree is more likely to be successful.

5.4.7 As shown in Figure 5.5, a total of 57% of respondents to the survey said the extent of employer involvement had remained unchanged, with 15% saying it had decreased and 6% that it had increased. There could be various reasons for the decrease but it tends to suggest that efforts are needed by providers to maintain the involvement of employers.
### 5.5 Nature of the relationship with the validating institution

#### 5.5.1 Respondents were asked about the quality of the relationship they had with their validating institution and the results are shown in Figure 6 and Figure 7.

#### Figure 5.6: The nature of the relationship with the validating institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>1 Very poor service</th>
<th>2 Poor service</th>
<th>3 Fair</th>
<th>4 Good service</th>
<th>5 Excellent service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest / awareness of FDs</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing quality assurance</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed of validation</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared delivery of courses</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to HEI facilities, such as libraries</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modules updates and accreditation</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: Those giving a response to each question (varies from 44 to 50)

#### 5.5.2 In summary, excluding those who did not reply, the survey revealed the following about the nature of the relationship between the provider of the foundation degree and the validating institution:

- 66% said communication with the validating body was good or excellent;
• 70% thought the validating institution’s awareness and interest in foundation degrees was good or excellent;
• 84% thought the implementation of quality assurance was good or excellent;
• 81% thought the speed of validation was good or excellent;
• 18% said the shared delivery of courses was good or excellent;
• 66% thought access to HEI facilities such as libraries was good or excellent;
• 73% thought module updates and accreditation was good or excellent.

5.5.3 This is generally a positive picture of the relationship between the foundation degree provider and the validating institution, with overall 65% rating the service they receive as good or excellent. There are particular strengths in validation and quality assurance and the only low score – shared delivery of courses – may be due to relatively few courses having a shared delivery.

Figure 5.7: Good and excellent levels of service received from the validating organisation, comparing active and inactive foundation degrees

5.5.4 The following are a selection of comments made about the relationship with the validating organisation. It should be noted several respondents commented that they had no knowledge of the relationship.

• Good attendance at management, steering and examination boards by college staff.
5.6 Factors contributing to the success of a foundation degree

5.6.1 Respondents were asked to say on a scale of 1 to 5 the extent to which various factors contributed to the success of the foundation degree. The results are shown in Figures 8 and 9.

Figure 5.8: Factors contributing to the success of a foundation degree

![Bar chart showing factors contributing to the success of a foundation degree.

- Fee subsidy from employer: 59% (very significant), 11% (significant), 7% (moderate), 2% (insignificant), 20% (very insignificant)
- Fee subsidy other source: 52% (very significant), 13% (significant), 4% (moderate), 13% (insignificant), 26% (very insignificant)
- Level of fees: 19% (very significant), 13% (significant), 33% (moderate), 17% (insignificant), 19% (very insignificant)
- Active employer encouragement: 23% (very significant), 26% (significant), 21% (moderate), 17% (insignificant), 13% (very insignificant)
- Time off / study release: 26% (very significant), 22% (significant), 20% (moderate), 11% (insignificant), 22% (very insignificant)
- Employer role in marketing: 54% (very significant), 17% (significant), 15% (moderate), 4% (insignificant), 9% (very insignificant)
- Effective progression routes: 10% (very significant), 6% (significant), 23% (moderate), 31% (insignificant), 29% (very insignificant)

Base: Excluding those giving no response to a question (44 to 48 respondents)

1 very insignificant  2 insignificant  3 4 significant  5 very significant

5.6.2 As shown in Figure 5.8, which excludes all those giving no response to this question, the survey revealed that the factors which made the greatest contribution to the success of the degree were effective progression routes, with 60% saying this was significant, the level of fees (36%), and time off/study release (33%). Other significant factors were support with the cost of fees (30%) and active employer encouragement (30%).
5.6.3 The categories for this question had been agreed by the Steering Group as capturing the most significant information on what factors contributed to the success of a foundation degree, so the low positive scores for a number of the factors are perhaps unexpected. It would appear that many employers have surprisingly little role in marketing foundation degree courses and the level of fees is only significant in one third of courses.

5.6.4 The significance attached to providing effective progression routes might also be seen as unexpected and shows how the foundation degree needs to be embedded in a ladder of progression from level 3 to honours degree.

5.6.5 Many respondents made comments about the factors that contributed to the success of a foundation degree. These included the following views:

- Individual mature students have a will to succeed at this level and gain support from each other.

- An important factor was support from one employer who provided all 10 candidates in the first cohort.

- The vocational nature of the course was important.

- Many students apply on the recommendation of colleagues who are studying on the foundation degree or have in the past. Students are all employed in the security industry and feel that they require a FD in order to advance their careers.

- It is a well-delivered course with effective support.

- These students have largely been funded through Sure Start/CWDC.

- The eight students we have are really committed and said what a difference the course has made to their confidence in the workplace and their ability to understand what they are doing.

- This programme has been amazingly successful in terms of workforce and individual development.

- Fees for students, particularly those in voluntary or low-paid employment, are always an issue. Employer engagement is varied due to the nature of the work and time of the programmes.
5.6.6 The following were among the comments made by respondents:

- The Early Years foundation degree is unique in its status as Sure Start sector endorsed and continues to be well supported as part of the government strategy towards workforce reform.

- Fees are a major problem and so is time off from work; Sure Start was initially an active partner – but no longer.

- Local government and voluntary-sector involvement varies considerably. When high this can include student support with study skills as well as providing fieldwork supervision.

- Association of Accounting Technicians students gain exemptions from the foundation degree, but don’t see it as an attractive progression route preferring professional accounting qualifications.

- Students who have taken this course have enjoyed the content and its relevance to their work. It is disappointing that it has not yet received the recognition from employers that it deserves.

- Extensive marketing work is undertaken – for example: mail shots, cold calling, adverts in the press etc. This is a big investment by the college.

- Initially there was lots of interest, but it has not been possible to recruit from outside the host institution.

- Student recruitment continues to be healthy despite the increase in competition.
5.7 Assessment of the success of the foundation degree

5.7.1 Respondents to the survey were asked to rate the success of the foundation degree on which they were reporting. The results are shown in Figure 10 and Figure 11. Some people surveyed felt the course was too new for this type of assessment to be made while others could not respond as the course was inactive.

Figure 5.10: Levels of success of the foundation degree

5.7.2 As shown in Figure 5.10, the most successful aspects were adjudged to the overall quality, with 79% saying this was successful or very successful, student employability (76%), and student progression (71%).

5.7.3 The least successful aspects were reported to be the conversion rate from initial enquiry to enrolment, with 31% saying successful or very successful, student recruitment (33%), student retention (41%), and course viability (54%). These figures indicate that the education providers have some concerns over the sustainability and viability of their foundation degrees, with the categories that relate to this area scoring comparatively low. Providers were much more optimistic about the quality of the product they offered and its positive effects on students’ employability and progression.
5.7.4 The following comments were among those made by respondents in relation to the overall success of the programme.

- **This is a new foundation degree, with the first cohort now in its second year, but all wish to progress to the BA degree.**

- **Positive comments were made by the external examiner about the quality of work and the standards of the marking and assessment.**

- **The course is viable as it fits in with other courses, even though the enrolment is only one person. Progress, completion and employability do not apply as we have not yet had graduating students - and all students are currently in employment.**

- **The college could help more with advertising/marketing but this course provides a spring start, complementing university provision.**
6. **Pilot Case Study – FdA in Families, Parenting and Communities at Leicester College**

6.1 **Case study selection**

6.1.1 All 67 responses from the survey of foundation degrees, offered by CULN members, received an initial assessment to see if they met the selection criteria for further study. The selection criteria were as follows:

**Essential**
- Student numbers of above 10 per intake over past 3 years.
- Course active for at least 3 years and therefore data available for this period.
- Survey fully completed.

**Desirable**
- Interesting comments in the additional information sections.
- Scores of 3 or higher in the employer involvement section.
- Varied modes of attendance.

**Range**
- Selected cases to cover a range of different occupational sectors and different courses or programmes.
- Selected cases to be offered at different colleges.

6.1.2 The Foundation Degree in Families, Parenting and Communities, offered by Leicester College and validated by De Montfort University, met the essential selection criteria. There were also a number of comments on the survey relating to employer involvement and course fee issues which suggested interesting areas that could be followed up.

6.2 **Methodology**

6.2.1 A series of interviews was conducted with key employers, course team leader and students from across the years, using the open-ended interview questions agreed with the Steering Group as the basis for discussion. The interviews were recorded.
Table 6.1: Interviews conducted with different respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of respondent</th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Team Leader</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students on FdA in Families, Parenting and Communities – years 1 and 3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students on BA in Health Studies (who completed FD in 2007)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3 Key statistics

Table 6.2: Students numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Student numbers on enrolment</th>
<th>Student numbers on progression to HE level 2</th>
<th>Student numbers on completion of FdA</th>
<th>Students numbers on top-up to BA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004/5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4 Structure of the foundation degree

6.4.1 The foundation degree is made up of 16 modules worth 15 credits each. Four modules are delivered in year 1 and six modules in years 2 and 3. The programme is delivered by staff from Leicester College. When the course was first established the majority of the students came from Sure Start centres, but this is no longer the case and students come from a range of occupational backgrounds such as social services and the Health Service, as well as staff from Sure Start centres.

6.4.2 The course lasts three years and incorporates a University Certificate in Continuing Education (UCCE). Students can progress on successful completion of the FdA to the BA in Health Studies at De Montfort University. There are six colleges in the region running this FdA and the staff meet once a year to discuss the course and their experiences. The focus of this case study was the Leicester College Foundation Degree in Families, Parenting and Communities and all comments from staff, students and employers relate to this course.
6.5 Students’ highest qualifications on entry

Table 6.3: Qualifications of students on entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Level 4 qualification or above, e.g. FD or BA/BSc</th>
<th>1 or more ‘A’ levels</th>
<th>Vocational level 3 qual. such as BTEC ND, AVCE</th>
<th>4 or more GCSEs grade C or over</th>
<th>No recorded academic qualifications</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004/5 cohort</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/6 cohort</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/7 cohort</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.6 The origin of the foundation degree

6.6.1 The initial conception of the foundation degree arose from a partnership project between Leicester College, Sure Start centres and De Montfort University. It was developed over a period of two years and the meetings were generally held in Sure Start centres. The original intention, which has been met, was to develop a degree-level qualification that would lend itself to integrated working, covering childcare, but also providing a holistic approach to working with families and their communities.

6.7 Curriculum design and development

6.7.1 The curriculum design was undertaken by the two educational institutions, working together, with Sure Start writing some general ideas about what content would be appropriate, particularly contributing ideas around work-based practice.

6.7.2 In the main, De Montfort University staff wrote the drafts of the modules, which they then brought to discussions with staff from Leicester College. The partnership between De Montfort University and Leicester College has been considered positive and productive.

6.7.3 Leicester College staff attempted to integrate an NVQ 2 in child care into the work-based practice unit, to give students a professional vocational qualification at NVQ level 2. However, this did not prove possible as the requirements of the two different awarding bodies did not match. The possibility of integrating the Advanced Practitioner status into the qualification is currently being examined.
6.7.4 There have been no modifications to the course so far, but there are changes in progress in response to experiences with the first cohort which has progressed into the third year of De Montfort University's BA in Health Studies. Student feedback and course tutors have confirmed that there are some gaps in provision at the foundation degree level, such as a lack of a research methods unit. From the students' perspective this has caused problems. One of the students on the BA in Health Studies noted:

The one thing that we said that we struggled with when we went to De Montfort was the research methods. For the first five weeks it was a foreign language and suddenly there was the exam. We had no background information, while the full-time students had a background in research methods.

6.7.5 With hindsight, the course team feel that the design of assignments could be approached differently. They are creative, but tutors and students feel that it is difficult to meet the academic standards of higher education when students are being asked to do a poster or a booklet. Student feedback has shown that they would often prefer to write an essay rather than design a poster as they want to practise and improve their skills at writing reports and essays.

6.7.6 The first year was set up as a discrete certificate in its own right – the University Certificate of Continuing Education (UCCE) – and this has been of great benefit to students as it gives them a taste of higher education with 60 credits. A market that was not anticipated is for sixth-form leavers who are not sure about university and just want to experience higher education with minimum expense. The UCCE has allowed some young people, mostly from schools, to study for a year while continuing to live at home, so they are not committing to a lot of expense.

6.7.8 These students are able to work four days a week, coming into college one afternoon and one evening. Most of those who have done this have gone on to full-time higher education as a result of their year’s experience. This is an attractive option for young people who do not want to get into the debt that is associated with higher education. A part-time foundation degree enables them to live at home, and work and earn some money, whilst getting a university-level qualification. However, as yet there has been no targeted publicity undertaken to expand this market. There have also been quite a few enquiries about e-learning, but this is not available.
6.8 Mode of attendance

6.8.1 The course is delivered as a part-time course requiring attendance one afternoon and one evening a week. It is possible for students to take years 1 and 2 together, which enables them to be counted as a full-time student and so be eligible for a student loan. There are demands for the course to be more flexible to adapt to individual student needs. This could be achieved by students registering for a module rather than the full course, but this creates a number of issues including added administrative difficulties for the College enrolment systems.

6.8.2 The College has offered taster modules to attract potential students and is keen to develop these into a 15-credit free-standing unit run over 18 weeks, which could be taken into the community.

6.9 Relationship with the validating institution

6.9.1 The staff from the College feel that the relationship with the validating institution is good with regular meetings, excellent administrative support and regular contact by email and phone.

6.9.2 There is no shared delivery of the programme, but there is a member of staff from De Montfort University who comes to meet and talk to the students, once or twice a year, to obtain their views on the course.

6.9.3 Access to the University's facilities is very good. First-year students have a welcome from De Montfort University and an introduction to the University. The second and third-year students go regularly to the De Montfort University campus with a library task, and then they are expected to go at least once a week in their own time to use the resources. The third-year students are taught at the University, which is considered important as it cements the relationship and increases students' confidence in using the facilities. The close proximity of the College to the University enables a degree of regular contact that is not possible for other colleges running this foundation degree at much greater distances.

6.9.4 Students from the BA top-up degree commented that there needed to be a greater connection between the FdA and the BA:

*A lot of students on the BA course seemed to think that we had just walked in off the street and started in the third year so I think there needs to be a bit of linking, so that it flows in.*
6.10 **Employers' involvement**

6.10.1 **College–employers' relationship**

6.10.1.1 In the first two years of the course it was delivered at Sure Start centres across the City of Leicester. The involvement of centre managers was very good but many of the students wanted greater access to college facilities, and to feel that they were college students. There were also issues around the size of student groups and their viability.

6.10.1.2 There were various implications to the change of teaching venue as pointed out by Geraldine Connor, the Manager of the Braunstone Sure Start Centre:

> One of the key factors was the change of venue. Not so local and easy to access – and that was really one of the reasons why we wanted it to have it available in local areas to begin with ... We were sad to lose it but also recognised the fact that anything you do has got to be viable – you can't tie up a tutor for two students, as much as you may want to do that, it is not the real world ... people from Braunstone are not brought up to consider themselves as university material, so getting that first step in the door to actually do a degree course in the community is, I would say, of much greater importance depending on your geographical location.

6.10.1.3 Despite the changes in venue, Sure Start managers have continued to be very supportive of their staff, providing funding and allowing students time off, with pay in some instances, as well as providing books and other resources for students to use. As a student who had been awarded the foundation degree said:

> For me that was the key thing that kept me going: my employer really supported me because if they hadn't it would have been a really difficult battle.

6.10.1.4 However, the personal relationships with the managers do not exist now in the same way as they did when the courses were taught in the centres. Further, they are in the process of major changes in workforce development. This has led to reduced contact between Leicester College and Sure Start, other than visits to students. There is a perceived need for a mechanism to enable regular contact between employers and college staff, who are knowledgeable about the subject area, so that they can discuss what the employer needs and also how best to market the course.

6.10.1.5 Some also feel that if the advanced practitioner status could be included in the qualification this would make the foundation degree more attractive to employers. Geraldine Connor, Manager of the Braunstone Sure Start Centre, commented:

> This would certainly make a difference in terms of sustainable funding for students wishing to undertake (the FD) because it has been brought in as one of the government criteria for the workforce.
6.10.2 Course impact

6.10.2.1 Employers interviewed were highly positive about the effects the foundation degree had on their staff. They commented that they could see improved productivity and efficiency, professional development, improved motivation, and an increased training and education culture. The Manager of the Belgrave Sure Start Centre said:

*I have seen a huge transformation in how the ones that have been on it the longest, and have actually gone on to the BA now, have developed in confidence, particularly in things like presenting information and relating theory to practice ... Because they have all done training in behaviour management, they do parents’ groups but they didn’t understand the theory behind it before taking the foundation degree, which has really highlighted how it impacts on the service and service delivery so, yes, presentation and confidence, you can definitely see the confidence that has been developed.*

6.10.2.2 The same manager felt that her individual staff had benefited greatly from the foundation degree and had learned a lot of practical use:

*R. was saying that when she actually looks at what she has learned through the course, and what she has learned here, she is amazed at the amount of information that she has taken in and how much she can use.*

6.10.2.3 The employers felt that the integration of academic learning with the work-based learning was effective. As one manager said:

*I think the course has been good because most of the stuff they do they can apply to what they are doing here, like child development and working with parents and the community ... and the importance of engaging the community, so what the course does is give them that underpinning knowledge and tells them why they are doing it.*

6.10.2.4 There were few issues voiced by employers, and those that were mainly centred on a concern that some students who were combining work with study were struggling at times to balance the volume of study with the demands of work. This was particularly evident for some members of the cohort who were undertaking the BA in Health Studies on a full-time basis. There was some variation in how enthusiastic employers were about the course and how active they were in promoting the course to their own staff. In part this was a reflection of their knowledge of the course – the greater their knowledge and understanding of the course the more they supported and promoted it.
6.10.3 Employers’ contribution

6.10.3.1 All the employers interviewed welcomed the suggestion that they could become more involved in the foundation degree and have a greater opportunity to contribute. One of the Sure Start managers, who had been involved with the initial development of the course, commented:

*I am tremendously proud of the students, and of my involvement in getting the whole thing established, because several of those people who started off in the first cohort are about to graduate. If it never did anything else it would be enough for me. I really would be committed, and I’m sure I could speak for all of the Sure Start centres in the City, to maintaining a partnership with De Montfort University and to really keep that engagement in partnership alive and work towards tailoring the FD to make it an even better fit.*

6.10.3.2 During the interviews, there were also offers from employers to become involved in some aspects of course delivery such as assessment, family support, and community involvement. This could provide the College with a real opportunity to rebuild its relationships with the Sure Start centres that has somewhat eroded in the last few years.

6.10.3.3 Students were aware of the reduction in publicity over the past couple of years and the potential for this to affect student numbers adversely. One student said:

*The weak point about this foundation degree is its publicity. When we signed up they did a lot of publicity for it. They came and had open days in the building where parents came in and they even had the Head of Faculty for Health and Science talking to people, but now they are not doing this and I think they need to go back to that to boost the intake.*

6.11 Students’ experiences of the foundation degree

6.11.1 Initial selection of students

6.11.1.1 Students were motivated to study for a foundation degree both by the advent of new regulations in child care, which require employees to be educated to level 5, and by wanting to return to study at a higher level. The reasons for selecting this particular foundation degree centred on its breadth, with the opportunity to progress on to a range of careers, and also the convenience of the teaching arrangements, which fitting in with their working hours.
6.11.1.2 Posters displayed in their workplace had proved successful in bringing the course to students’ attention and several students had received encouragement to apply from their managers. Students reported that they found the interview process helpful and informative and there was a useful pack of information from De Montfort University.

6.11.2 Students’ experiences on the course

6.11.2.1 Finance was, and continues to be, a major problem for some students. There were variations with some students having their fees paid by their employers each year, but this was more typical of students nearing completion of the course. Students in the first year had more financial concerns as it appears that without the title ‘Early Years’ in the foundation degree it was not being recognised for funding support by local authorities as it was not on their ‘transformation list’. This issue needs to be addressed by the validating institution and the College as a matter of urgency.

6.11.2.2 In addition, students in years 2 and 3 of the course were experiencing a shortfall in the funding provided by local authorities as the fees for 6 modules are higher than the local authority maximum.

6.11.2.3 Although the course is advertised as modular it is not possible to meet individual student needs when they need to take a term off for illness or pregnancy, for example. A change in the registration arrangements, whereby students could register for a module rather than the whole course, could help with this.

6.11.2.4 Many students were anxious about returning to a different style of studying and to formal education. Understandably, they worried about the standard required after a long gap since formal education. Some students found English and literacy skills were a potential barrier. As one student said:

\[
\text{It sounded very good but I was a bit dubious – it's a long time since I was at school or college.}
\]

6.11.2.5 However, the students found that the course helped them to develop more confidence and they gained much support from each other. As one student put it:

\[
\text{We support each other, and ask questions like 'you know that assignment, how have you done it?' and I think when there is someone else in the building doing it at the same time it offers more support.}
\]
6.11.2.6 A lot of effort has been put into the management of the course by the College, with the course team leader encouraging the social aspects of the course as well as the academic. Students have had trips to the theatre and cinema and have set up a book club. All this helps to build good relationships amongst the students.

6.11.2.7 In interviews, students were highly positive about the course. They said they were enjoying the stimulation it provided, although they found the work hard at times, and also found time management difficult. One of the main complaints was about the teaching accommodation and this had caused at least one student not to continue into the second year. The position should be resolved during the next academic year (2008–09) when Leicester College will move into a new building.

6.11.2.8 Access to books and other resources was considered easier at De Montfort University than at the College. Students had lost access to the virtual learning environment (VLE) that they had used previously and the new VLE was not up and running. This had previously been an excellent way for tutor and students to keep in touch.

6.11.3 Course benefits for students

6.11.3.1 Students in the first year of the course said that they could see that the course was already changing their working practices, giving them a deeper knowledge, and improving their career prospects.

6.11.3.2 They said that they had improved at work and increased their skills in report writing. They had also developed their ability to be critical and analytical and their general education. In some cases, the reports that they had written as an assignment had been used in the placement.

6.11.3.3 Students who had progressed to the BA in Health Studies were able to reflect on how the course had benefited them in a number of ways. They felt that the broad base of the course was advantageous and had enabled them to gain a more rounded perspective on their work. This they thought was important to future ways of working, where staff working in the community needed to approach things holistically to be able to help families with a range of different needs. One student, who has been awarded the foundation degree, said:

*I think with this FD we did, it had sociology, psychology and it had biology, so it gave us a range of approaches that you can use. Especially dealing with families, and human beings in general, you need to look at all their environmental needs, you need to look at it in different ways and I think that the course gave an approach to every side of things.*

6.11.3.4 The students reinforced the employers’ comments that the foundation degree had greatly helped their levels of confidence. As another student put it:
The studies have helped me understand and have given me confidence and knowledge. I understand a lot of jargon now, because I am doing a number of modules that deal with different areas of health and this has helped me understand what the health professionals are saying.

The students were clear that the course was relevant to their working life and that they had opportunities to put theory into practice. They gave examples of where they had found themselves using the theories they had learned. One student said:

I put my theory into practice. There was a case meeting about a child's behaviour and I said they needed to look at the social psychology dynamic, don't look at it just psychologically that that child is behaving like that. But sociologically how are they? So you mix the two. So, initially we were debating about the theories and we are talking another language. Now I don't just look at things in a narrow-minded way.

Students' progression

All the students in the first cohort who completed the foundation degree in 2007 have continued to De Montfort University on to the third year of the BA in Health Studies. However, a number of students left after the first year for a variety of reasons including financial pressures, personal issues, and changes at work. Several students left to go to university full-time. This last reason is a success for the student, but does not help the statistics for the College or University who need students to complete the full FD award to be counted as successful completers.

Students' experiences after the course

Several employers were able to give examples of students who had been promoted or changed jobs following successful completion of the foundation degree. They felt that a real difference could be seen with their employees who were on the course. The Manager of the Belgrave Sure Start Centre said:

One of them has actually got a new job recently ... she is working from school with families trying to get the children into school. So this requires a lot of family support and a lot of creativity, working with a range of people, and, I have to say, a year ago I don't think she would have done that. I think she has got so much more confidence after doing the course. Generally the staff are enjoying taking the course.

A number of students spoke of people who had completed the foundation degree, or were close to completion, who had changed jobs or who had been able to expand their role as a result of undertaking the FdA. The course had also changed their relationships with their families. One student who had been awarded the foundation degree said:
The more I have done the more confident I have become with my role. I have been in Sure Start for quite a while but recently my work has changed and I am going out doing parenting assessment. A family’s whole future can depend on what you write in your report. I said to my manager that if I hadn’t have gone on this degree course, I would not have been able to do this. I have got much greater knowledge now so there is not one part of that assessment that I look at and think I really don’t know if I can do this bit. Also I am now saying to my manager that a pack wants updating. The next thing is – ‘you do it!’ It has been a life-changing experience. Even my family has changed, because me going back to education has given a different role model for my children.

6.11.5.3 Some of the students who were on the BA top-up degree confirmed that they were looking for new jobs now that they had completed the foundation degree. One said:

Yes, we are looking for new jobs. You find that you have got more opportunities in life and more confidence. I am going to take some time to think, you don’t want to rush into something and regret it, but then it has opened more career opportunities and with the new structure, especially with the children’s centres, even the managers are being questioned about the qualifications they have. There are some posts that are demanding a degree while a manager doesn’t have it.

6.11.5.4 Overall, student completers were highly positive about foundation degrees in general, and the Foundation Degree in Families, Parenting and Communities in particular. One student said:

If anyone around the College mentions the foundation degree I could be talking for ever to them, saying how good it is.

6.12 Conclusions and recommendations

6.12.1 Course viability and sustainability

6.12.1.1 The Foundation Degree in Families, Parenting and Communities recruited reasonable numbers of students over a three-year period and, of those that completed, there was good progression to the BA top-up degree. However, there are some students who start the foundation degree and do not complete. Evidence from tutors, and from students themselves, suggest that there are various reasons for people dropping out and not completing. The following reasons were cited:

- Students straight from school or college were testing higher education to see how they got on before committing to a three-year degree programme. They did not intend to complete the whole programme when they started. This applied to some adult students who were only interested in taking the first modules to receive a University Certificate in Continuing Education.
• Venue changes: some students who had attended the course when it was run at Sure Start centres found it difficult to continue when it moved to the College. There were also criticisms of the College venue.
• Some students had their fees paid in the first year of the course only and did not continue when they had to pay their own fees.
• There were examples of changes to students’ employment or family circumstances that meant they were no longer able to continue.
• There were comments that the course was not as flexible as it could have been and there were requests for the enrolment process to be changed to a modular basis.

6.12.1.2 Students who are only interested in completing specific modules will still be counted as non-completers as they are enrolled for the full foundation degree. Modular enrolment would also provide greater flexibility for students, but does have disadvantages as students can find it difficult to ‘gel’ as a group when they enrol at different times.

**Recommendation 1:** It would seem sensible to investigate changing the enrolment process so that students can enrol on a modular basis instead of enrolling for the full foundation degree.

6.12.1.3 Initially various marketing initiatives were undertaken to support and develop student recruitment. These included posters and open days held in Sure Start centres. Many of these have not been continued and students and employers commented that the reduction in the active marketing of the foundation degree has had a detrimental impact on student numbers. Extra resources would need to be provided for marketing activities, but the benefits in terms of additional student numbers would probably offset costs.

**Recommendation 2:** It is recommended that a number of marketing activities should be reintroduced, such as open days in Sure Start centres and other employment and community venues across Leicester. The new market of students from schools and colleges could also be explored with education partners.

6.12.1.4 A major threat to the course viability is resulting from local authority employers who no longer recognise the foundation degree, which means that they will not pay students’ fees. This could be remedied by the College and the validating institution working together to introduce advanced practitioner status into the FD and possibly include ‘early years’ in the title.
Recommendation 3: It is recommended that an early meeting should be arranged between the College and the validating institution to discuss the changes necessary to introduce advanced practitioner status so that employers can assist students with their fees.

6.12.1.5 It would appear from discussions with the course team leader and with employers that employment needs have changed since the course was introduced in 2004–05 and that some changes and updating are required on a regular basis to maintain course viability. This seems to be one of the key points of difference between foundation degrees and other qualifications. It suggests that if a course is going to be responsive, there needs to be both a good relationship with relevant employers and also a mechanism to make any changes required without a lengthy and difficult revalidation process.

6.12.2 Employers’ involvement

6.12.2.1 Employers were highly supportive of the foundation degree and its positive effects on their staff. Those who had been involved since the beginning commented on how the close working relationships between the College and employers had declined when the course was no longer delivered on Sure Start premises. However, managers all expressed an interest in becoming more closely involved in the foundation degree and in some cases in contributing to the delivery of the course. There would seem to be an opening for rebuilding and strengthening contacts.

Recommendation 4: It is suggested that resources should be provided to enable College staff to visit Sure Start centres on a regular basis and to develop a deeper ongoing relationship with the managers.

6.12.3 Students’ feedback

6.12.3.1 The greatest ambassadors for the foundation degree are the students. Without exception they were enthusiastic and complimentary about the course, with some students fulsome in how it had helped to transform their lives. This is a credit to the course team in delivering an excellent programme and to the effort that has been put in to course management. Amongst other things, this enables students to support each other and take part in a wider range of curriculum-related activities outside of course hours.

6.12.3.2 It is worth reiterating how positive the students were about their studies on this foundation degree. As one graduate from the foundation degree put it:

*It has been a life-changing experience.*
7. Case Study – FdSc in Sport and Exercise Development at Lincoln College

7.1 Methodology

7.1.1 A series of interviews were conducted with the following employers who are involved in the foundation degree:

- Grimsby Town Study Support (Grimsby Town Football Club)
- Sports Outreach UK (Leisure Connection)
- Swim Time – LA Fitness
- Alleyn Court School

7.1.2 Interviews were also conducted with the course team leader and a small number of students from across the years, including students who had completed the foundation degree and were in employment or on the BSc in Sports Development and Coaching. Open-ended interview questions were used that had been agreed with the Steering Group as the basis for discussion. Students were asked to complete a short questionnaire. The interviews were recorded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Team Leader</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students on FdSc in Sport and Exercise Development – year 1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students on FdSc in Sport and Exercise Development – year 2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student on BSc in Sport Development and Coaching – year 3 (following completion of FdSc)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student in employment (following completion of FdSc)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.2 **Key statistics**

Table 7.2: Students numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Student numbers on enrolment</th>
<th>Student numbers on progression to HE level 2</th>
<th>Student numbers on successful completion of FdSc</th>
<th>Students numbers on top-up to BSc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004/5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/6</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3 **Structure of the foundation degree**

7.3.1 The foundation degree is run as a full-time programme over two years, though a part-time variant over three years is also available. The full-time programme is structured over three days to allow students to work part-time. The programme is made up of 12 and 24 credit-based modules – however this will change to 15 credit modules when the programme goes through revalidation in September 2009. At the time the case study was undertaken, the part-time route had not yet recruited, though there were plans to market this in the near future. The same course is also run at North Lindsay College, Scunthorpe.

7.4 **Students’ highest qualifications on entry**

Table 7.3: Qualifications of students on entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Level 4 qualification or above, e.g. FD or BA/BSc</th>
<th>1 or more 'A' levels</th>
<th>Vocational level 3 qualification, e.g. BTEC, ND, AVCE</th>
<th>4 or more GCSEs grade C or over</th>
<th>No recorded academic qualifications</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004/5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: some students had achieved more than one type of qualification.*
7.5 The origin of the foundation degree

7.5.1 Before the foundation degree was introduced in 2004 there had been an HND in Sport and Exercise run at Lincoln College for about 16 years. The decision was made to take the strengths of the HND and integrate work-based learning to create a foundation degree. The College was keen to develop a foundation degree in sport because of the practical nature of the subject area and a desire to produce learners with practical skills they could apply in the workplace. Lincoln College had a long history of running programmes up to degree level in sport and other related disciplines and this well-known reputation helped to build strong employer links. Employers were involved in the first validation of the foundation degree, though the course was initially designed by the College who then asked employers for comments and suggestions.

7.6 Curriculum design and development

7.6.1 The successful elements of the HND were taken forward to form part of the new foundation degree to produce a course that is very different from its predecessor. The College wanted to keep the practical elements in performance and coaching and to reflect the reasonably fast-changing aspects of the industry by covering the main topics of sport, exercise science, physiology, psychology, bio-mechanics, anatomy and sociology in a vocationally-orientated, up-to-date way. Minor amendments to the programme of up to 20% are possible on a year-by-year basis, and the College has made some changes to assessment methods and content each year. There is a slight concern in the College that leaving the revalidation until September 2009 with its change in credit ratings will make the foundation degree out of step with the rest of the University of Lincoln.

7.6.2 As the majority of students study on the course full-time, the College structures the course to allow blocks of time for students to undertake work-based learning experiences from the outset of the course. This prepares students well for the second-year 80-hour vocationally-based learning unit. The College also integrates work-based learning into all aspects of the course. The higher education manager from Lincoln College explained:

*The assessments in performance and coaching are work-related in that they will lead sessions. In the second year they act more as consultants so they will go to a sports team and support that team, doing filming and match analysis, those sorts of things. We try with all the assessments, we make them vocationally based so they are doing less testing here at college and more out and collecting real live data ... the old HND would do lab testing or sports science test in the labs, but just to a lesser degree (than an honours degree), we have got round that now, if it is lab tested it is for an external client so it is realistic, it is helping somebody. Ideally they will be out conducting a live project.*
7.6.3 The implication here is that the skills taught and tested on the foundation degree are different, rather than lesser, than for a full honours degree.

7.7 Relationship with the validating institution

7.7.1 Staff described the relationship with University of Lincoln as effective. When the degree courses in sports and exercise transferred to University of Lincoln in 2006, several sports and exercise staff transferred with them, so there is a good knowledge of tutors at the University, and the College benefits from having high-quality equipment that was originally used by students on the degree programme. In addition the College has a link tutor at the University who is easily accessible. The University provides a method of electronic validation for making minor changes which is quick and effective and full validations usually can be completed within an academic year.

7.7.2 Access to University facilities was described by staff and students as a more problematic area. The College receives direct funding from HEFCE for the foundation degree and is expected to provide all the facilities for students on the foundation degree. Students find this difficult to understand, as they are given University of Lincoln tracksuits yet cannot access any of their facilities. This applies to both library and specialist facilities.

7.7.3 The students acknowledge that the College has good specialist accommodation, but would very much like access to the University library. They have raised the issues at group meetings and explain that they are based in university accommodation, yet cannot access the University library and instead have to travel to the College to take out a book. The University library also provides longer opening hours and is more comprehensively stocked. The proximity of the College to the University makes this more of an issue than might be the case with a college offering a foundation degree from further afield. Students felt that the College was becoming more separate from the University.

7.7.4 There are arrangements in place to encourage students to consider continuing on to the University after the foundation degree. In the first year staff from the University come in during induction week to give a talk and to give students a tour round the University. In the second year this is repeated. If students want to progress on to the third year of a degree programme at the University they are required to take a bridging course in the summer.
7.8 **Course viability**

7.8.1 Student numbers continue to be as strong on the foundation degree as they were on the HND offered previously. However, the higher education manager is well aware of local competition and, despite the high reputation of the course and its longevity, feels that the expansion of the degree programme at the University of Lincoln, which is now recruiting approximately 160 students a year, will cause a steady erosion of numbers to the foundation degree. The College draws students from local and regional groups with a strong representation from Barnsley and Mansfield.

7.8.2 Student completion rates are good with an average of 80% completion, and 100% in one year. It was felt by staff at the College that the recent changes to the BTEC level 3 qualification were not helpful in preparing students for what was required of them on the foundation degree.

7.9 **Employers’ involvement**

7.9.1 **College–employers’ relationship**

7.9.1.1 The College has a long-standing relationship with many employers in the region, but finds that maintaining contacts is challenging as there are few large employers in the area of sport and leisure and so contacts have to be kept up with many SMEs. Each year work is done to link students’ sporting and subject interests with potential employers which can bring new people into contact with the course. Employer involvement had remained at similar level since the course first started. One of the employers interviewed had himself completed the HND some years previously and his experience and knowledge of the programme prompted him to become closely involved in supporting students.

7.9.1.2 The College produces a higher education newsletter which is sent to employers and it also keeps in general contact with employers through telephone, postal and email contact. An employer forum has been tried in the past, but the response was low. There is not a formal mechanism whereby employers are able to feedback comments on the course to the College, but their views are sought when contact with them is made.

7.9.2 **Course impact**

7.9.2.1 When asked about the impact the course was having on their employees, the employers were highly complimentary about the calibre of students and how the course was extending and developing their abilities. The manager from Leisure Connection explained:
One of the guys has taken on relief duty manager work so we leave him in charge of the centre on a Sunday which most people think it is a quiet day, but it is one of our busiest because people have leisure time. He is a very good competent lad and, if he wanted to pursue it further, and I had a full time position available later on, then I would definitely try and feed him into it.

7.9.3 Employers’ contribution

7.9.3.1 One of the main ways employers are involved in the foundation degree is through the provision of work-based learning for students. The College helps students by helping them to find placements that suit their backgrounds and skills. Employers are also involved as guest lecturers, especially in units such as sport organisation. In the vocational-based learning unit employers contribute toward the assessment by providing an employer’s report.

7.9.3.2 Employers interviewed were very positive about their involvement and the quality of the students who had worked for them. The manager from Swim Time LA Fitness said:

Whereas at the beginning she was following my instructions and not really working on her own, towards the end she was taking individual children and giving more of a one-to-one tuition, so she was using the skills that she had learned, using her initiative and I got to a point where I didn't need to say very much to her. She was as good as any swimming teacher I had ever met.

7.9.3.3 And the manager of Grimsby Town Study Support agreed:

She was an excellent role model, she got something from us and we got something from her.

7.9.3.4 As students are full-time there is little need for employers to be involved in fee subsidies. They have not been directly involved in marketing the course or sponsoring courses, but they do assist with publicity by distributing leaflets and flyers. One student who worked throughout his degree commented on the support he had received from his employer in changing shifts to accommodate examinations and other college demands and another employer explained that his organisation offered study leave for student employees.

7.9.3.5 When employers were asked if the skills covered by the foundation degree were appropriate to their needs, the manager from Grimsby Town Study Support said:

Very much so, yes. With H studying sport, and because we are linked with the sport here, the children would have an hour and a half in the ITC suite and then they would go outside for an hour and play football with ‘football in the community’ – it’s not football but football-based activities so we don’t play football, because that doesn’t turn the girls on at all, and to have H with them was a really good example for them.
7.9.3.6 Most of the employers interviewed were not interested in expanding their connection with the foundation degree and found their current involvement appropriate, though they were all more than willing to be considered for continued student placements. One employer did have some suggestions on how his organisation and the College could be more closely involved. As his organisation had been asked to try and increase the participation levels of 16–19 year olds, and he had a number of youth teams utilising his facilities, it could be of mutual benefit for students on the foundation degree to help publicise the facilities and work with the youth teams. In exchange the students would be able to access specialist facilities such as outdoor pitches and swimming that the College did not have.

7.10 Students’ experiences of the foundation degree

7.10.1 Initial selection of students

7.10.1.1 Students heard about the Foundation Degree in Sport and Exercise Development through a variety of routes. Several students knew that they wanted to return to education but needed guidance on courses and what they could access with their qualifications. Those who received this guidance from the University and the College described it as accurate and spoke of the helpfulness of staff. Less positive was the experience received from careers guidance agencies such as Connexions. Personal contacts through work or sporting activities were also a significant feature in providing students with information and role models.

7.10.1.2 The admissions process was generally a positive experience. A student on the second year of the foundation degree said:

_They really guided me through how to apply. I had to go through UCAS and they made it really easy for me to do that, so they told me where I had to apply, how I had to do it and then at each point checked to see if I had done it correctly._

7.10.1.3 The need for a higher-level qualification was strongly recognised by students. The majority of those interviewed knew it was needed to enhance or further their career in their chosen area, and some had a definite career goal in mind, such as becoming a PE teacher.

7.10.1.4 Students had not necessarily heard of foundation degrees, but when it was explained to them they thought it was a good idea and looking back felt it had been the right choice for them. A student on the first year of the FdSc explained:

_I think to go straight to university (from work) is a massive step. I would not change my decision even if I was offered a place. I did get an offer from Bath University through football, I sat back and thought it is alright going through football, but there have got to be academic sides and high standards that they have and I am not going to be able to be on top of them._
7.10.2 Students’ experiences on the course

7.10.2.1 The majority of students cited financial problems and concerns as being an issue at the start of the course and a continuing concern for some. As many students had worked prior to starting the course they could not expect support from parents and had been used to earning an income. Where finance was less of an issue it was because students had been able to balance part-time working with the demands of the course.

7.10.2.2 Once on the course students were very positive about its strengths, many saying that it had exceeded their expectations. The helpfulness of staff in providing individual feedback and support was a significant factor in making students feel confident in what they were doing and enabling them to adapt to the requirements of studying. Students from both years of the foundation degree were positive:

*I think it is really good. It is nice to have the support – I didn’t think we would have this much support and it is really nice. It gets you ready to go on to Level 6. The lecturers are absolutely wonderful, very knowledgeable.*

*From a personal point of view, it is brilliant. It meets my needs academically – I couldn’t go to university for my background reasons and so definitely needed a lot of support. When I came here, I thought – referencing, college – hello! They look after you and so it makes me want to go on to university. The way I see it if my plans do change I can leave here with a FD whereas if I went to university after and left two years, for whatever reason, I would have nothing.*

*I have learned so much I don’t know where to begin really. The first two or three weeks I just sat there on anatomy and physiology and didn’t understand any of it, but then you start to read and one thing links into the next and you start to put it all together and before you know it it’s stuck in the memory. It is brilliant, fantastic. The bio-mechanics as well – I thoroughly enjoy that. It has broadened my knowledge base really and the background into sport, how things work, how things move.*

7.10.2.3 One student who was juggling work with study said:

*The College was really good with me. Some of the tutors would stay behind with me, if I had missed any lectures during the day time then the tutors would say ‘well come and see me and I’ll go through the lecture’ like a one-on-one, and they couldn’t have been more helpful.*

7.10.2.4 Students were particularly enthusiastic about the structure of the course, the support of the staff, the high standard of the resources to which they had access, and the quality of the staff:

*Some of the lecturers I had at Lincoln College were really top notch.*
7.10.2.5 The organisation of the course was thought to work well with laboratory work in small groups supporting the input from lectures. First-year students explained:

*It's not just a case of just sitting there listening – it is a case of 'you have had your lecture now you are going to carry out these activities and get a bit of a hands-on experience' which is always useful.*

*The lecturers like you to respond. They actually get you involved and make sure you understand it fully and if you don’t then they are there to help.*

7.10.2.6 There were few negative comments about the course, apart from the communications with the University. One student remarked that the environment for the course was very FE biased rather than HE, though this seemed more of an issue for those students who had progressed directly from a level 3 course at the College. There were the usual comments from students that they thought the work load was heavy particularly at certain times of the year.

### 7.10.3 Course benefits for students

7.10.3.1 When students were asked to rate the course, on a scale of 1 – 5 on how it was improving their skills, knowledge and confidence, 50% rated it as a 5 and 50% as a 4. The comments they made expanded on this and showed how the course had not only provided excellent grounding for technical skills, but had raised students' confidence and succeeded in opening up their understanding of a far wider range of career opportunities after completion. A student on the second year of the foundation degree said:

*Before I did the course I was doing some temporary work. I was at home and after leaving Sixth-Form my confidence just went down the pan; I was just awful – I was quiet and not great. When I came here there were a lot more people around and I came out of my shell a bit and it has really helped in that sense. Also, the knowledge base, the amount of different topics that the course covers, it's not just specific to one thing – you just learn so much and it is also really good if you are not sure exactly what you want to go into. Because there are so many different branches you are made aware of so many more opportunities.*

7.10.3.2 In some cases the opportunity to try out the requirements of different jobs had led to students being able to see what they preferred doing. A student on the second year of the foundation degree explained:

*When I started the course I was really set on doing PE teaching which is what I have wanted to do since early on at school but never got round to. Since coming here I have learned lots of different things and done different topics and I have become more interested in the sports therapy side, massage, physio. Also, from my work as a coach I have realised I am not so keen on that, so maybe teaching is not for me.*
7.10.3.3 Students were complimentary on the scope of what was covered on the foundation degree and one commented:

*It was more than expected – there was a lot more theory to it than I thought, which was good because a lot of the stuff I knew, as I had been a professional footballer, but I didn’t have any formal qualification for it. I knew bits, but they went into more depth and then there were other bits that I had never done before, like the physiology side of things and the anatomy which was really interesting.*

7.10.3.4 Responses to the students’ survey showed that the majority thought that the course was relevant to the needs of their current or future job, with one stating that he used the knowledge gained on the course on a daily basis.

7.10.4 Students’ progression

7.10.4.1 The majority of students interviewed said that they were considering going on to the BSc top-up degree at the University of Lincoln. Course statistics show that the numbers progressing are increasing with more than 50% from each year of completers continuing to university.

7.10.4.2 Students currently on the second year of the course thought that they would be well prepared for going on to University of Lincoln:

*We had a talk from a couple of the guys who had just recently finished our course and gone to the University. They said ‘don’t be afraid when you get there, don’t be frightened of the degree, because it is not as bad as you think and the fact that you have done this course is going to stand you in better stead than some of the people who have been in the University for two years. Your knowledge is going to be a broader and we have found we are in the top of the groups for some subjects’. We were absolutely amazed.*

7.10.5 Students’ experiences after the course

7.10.5.1 Students who had completed the course felt that it had significantly helped with their career progression and had broadened their career aspirations:

*I think that because my employer knows what I have done I can speak with all departments on a daily basis, and I have a better understanding of what is being discussed.*

*The content of the course has been extremely useful. Sports development has helped me a lot with coaching and sports injury work which is excellent.*

7.10.5.2 Looking back, they had positive views of the foundation degree:

*The level of the teaching of the course was excellent, the facilities were very good, and the staff there were so approachable and helped you out and there was never too much bother to have a one-on-one and taking up their time. Yes, they were excellent and the staff facilities were excellent.*
7.11 Conclusions and recommendations

7.11.1 Course viability and sustainability – successes and challenges

7.11.1.2 The Foundation Degree in Sport and Exercise Development at Lincoln College provides an example of a course that has been successfully transformed from an HND into a foundation degree. Although initiated and developed by the College with only moderate employer involvement, it is highly thought of by employers and has a good track record for viable student numbers. It owes this success to a number of factors:

1. Complete transformation of the curriculum from the HND to produce a very different course with extensive practical elements and good integration of work-based learning.

2. Excellent staffing, with teaching at a high standard and staff who are prepared to go out of their way to support students on a one-to-one basis.

3. Consistently good working relationships with relevant employers.

4. Very good level of specialist facilities.

5. Flexible timetabling of a full-time programme enabling part-time working for students.

6. Electronic validation by the University of Lincoln provides an easy mechanism for minor programme changes.

7.11.1.2 These factors have led to the course establishing an excellent reputation with many word-of-mouth recommendations. The good reputation of the previous HND has also helped to cement this.

7.11.1.3 However, there continue to be challenges and vulnerabilities. There is a strong element of local competition with student numbers showing a slight decrease and there is some concern that the increasing numbers on the BSc offered by the University of Lincoln might be responsible. The relationship with the University of Lincoln, the validating institution for the foundation degree, is described as effective, but students were concerned about access to facilities, such as the library, and this is an issue that the College could discuss with its partner to see what access could be available.

Recommendation 1: The College could look at precedents for library access and sharing of other facilities across institutions – the Skills for Sustainable Communities Lifelong Learning Network might be able to assist with this process – before inviting the University of Lincoln to discuss how student access could be improved. Could there be any reciprocal agreements?
7.11.1.4 There is internal progression available from the BTEC ND to the foundation degree, and there could be opportunities to strengthen these links by developing a progression agreement between the two courses. Staff commented that recent changes to the BTEC curriculum were not helping to prepare students for a foundation degree and this could be assessed by undertaking a curriculum mapping exercise. Any agreement developed could then be extended to other feeder institutions to provide more guaranteed student places.

**Recommendation 2:** The College might consider developing progression agreements between level 3 feeder courses and the foundation degree, starting initially with an internal agreement. This would require both course teams to work together and map their curriculum to assess synergy and then make any possible modifications.

7.11.2 **Employers’ involvement**

7.11.2.1 Employers contacted during the research were highly supportive of the course and the high calibre of students who were combining work with study. They were united in commenting that the skills taught on the foundation degree were relevant to their employment.

7.11.2.2 The long-standing relationships that the College has developed are a very positive aspect to the course, but it is not easy for the College to maintain regular contact with many small employers, nor to expand its contacts. Staff rely on the quality of their relationships with employers to enable open feedback on the foundation degree and formal feedback mechanisms from employers to the College are limited. This can mean that the College misses opportunities for hearing relevant comments on curriculum content and misses opportunities to extend employer involvement – for example, the employer who had suggestions for how students could work with his youth teams and access his specialist facilities.

**Recommendation 3:** The College might consider putting in place a more formal feedback mechanism for employers that is not too onerous for either employer or College, but allows for regular two-way dialogue. This could involve email and phone contact and be agreed as part of the setting up of any work placements.
7.11.3 Students' feedback

7.11.3.1 Students were hugely enthusiastic about the foundation degree. They rated the course highly for improving their skills, knowledge and confidence and were particularly complimentary about the help and support they received from staff. They recognised that the course they were on was providing them with an excellent grounding in technical skills and had also opened up a far wider range of career opportunities than they had known about at the start of the course.

7.11.3.2 As well as the important technical skills it was a great credit to the course team that the students felt empowered with improved levels of confidence to take on new challenges. Student completion and success rates are very good and the majority of students progress on to the BSc top up degree at the University of Lincoln.

7.11.3.3 Finance continues to be a major concern for some of the students interviewed and it is important that the College continues to be as flexible as possible in its timetabling of the full-time programme, to allow students to undertake part-time work, if necessary. There are two advantages for students who are studying full-time:

1. If they are eligible they can apply for student loans towards student fees and maintenance awards which means they do not have to pay the fees until they have completed the degree and are in work.

2. They can complete the foundation degree in two years.

7.11.3.4 However, the marketing and introduction of the already validated part-time programme would increase the options for students who are not able to commit to full-time study.

Recommendation 4: The College might consider developing a marketing campaign to raise awareness of the part-time foundation degree for people already in work, and those looking to make a career change. This could be offered in conjunction with local key employers.
7.11.4 Models of good practice

7.11.4.1 This case study provides a number of models of good practice that could be utilised by other institutions offering foundation degrees. These include the following:

1. Good example of updating and transferring an existing programme, such as an HND, into a foundation degree.
2. Excellent teaching styles and delivery.
3. Flexible timetabling for full-time programmes
8. Case Study – FdA in Leadership and Management (Late-Night Entertainment) at Loughborough College

8.1 Methodology

8.1.1 This foundation degree is jointly run by one main employer (Luminar Group Holdings plc, afterwards referred to as Luminar) and Loughborough College. It is validated by Nottingham Trent University.

8.1.2 Luminar is a UK-wide, owner, developer and operator of themed bars, nightclubs and restaurants with over 200 venues. The company is involved in late-night entertainment and it employs approximately 500 managers.

8.1.3 To undertake the case study, interviews were conducted with:
- Training managers for Luminar
- Project managers for Luminar
- Loughborough College Project Manager
- Students drawn from different years of the foundation degree

8.1.4 Open-ended interview questions agreed with the Steering Group were used as the basis for discussion. Due to the nationwide aspect of the programme it was not possible to conduct face-to-face interviews with all students. 12 students were interviewed at a group session and the remainder via telephone interviews.

8.1.5 Students were also asked to complete a short questionnaire, which was an amended version of the questionnaire used for the other case studies, so as to be applicable to Luminar employees. There were two students who did not return this information. The interviews were recorded.

Table 8.1: Interviews conducted with different respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training Manager, Project Manager, Luminar</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Managers Luminar</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Managers (aspire, Loughborough College)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students (Luminar employees) on FdA in Leadership and Management (mixed years 2 and 3)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Questionnaires completed | Students (Luminar employees) on FdA in Leadership and Management (mixed years 2 and 3) | 14 |
8.2 Key statistics

Table 8.2: Students numbers

Title of foundation degree: FdA in Leadership and Management (Late-Night Entertainment)

College/university: Loughborough College; validating institution: Nottingham Trent University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Student numbers on enrolment</th>
<th>Student numbers on progression to HE level 2</th>
<th>Student numbers on completion of FdA</th>
<th>Students numbers on top-up to BA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004/5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/6</td>
<td>62 (72)</td>
<td>115 (116)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/7</td>
<td>80 (36)</td>
<td>32 (83)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/8</td>
<td>56 (12)</td>
<td>12 (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures from May 2008; the numbers in brackets show students who had left the programme, mainly because they had left employment with Luminar.

8.2.1 The foundation degree has been running since 2005–06, but students are enrolled on a continually rolling basis, rather than at set points in a year, which makes it difficult to align them to annual statistics. The numbers in the table are from May 2008, and relate to active students. The numbers in brackets show students who had left the programme, mainly because they had left their employment. The programme runs over 3 years and the first cohort were due to complete the foundation degree in July 2008 and then to progress on to the BA top-up degree.

8.3 Structure of the foundation degree

8.3.1 The foundation degree is highly individualised. As it was designed for one main employer (Luminar) to encompass their management development programme, it has been structured to fit their training needs. As a result the programme is run on a part-time basis over three years and is divided into three levels approximately corresponding to each year. Students attend on a block release basis at any of the sites across the UK. There are 27 possible sites, though in practice 6 main venues are used – in Leeds, Preston, Birmingham, Bristol, Basildon and Milton Keynes.

8.3.2 The taught modules usually take place over 3 days and wherever possible students attend the course nearest to their place of employment, but they often travel if it is a different module they need to attend next. At the conclusion of each level, students are required to attend an assessment centre and pass a set assessment.
8.3.3 The foundation degree is run from February to November so that students are not distracted at their busiest time of the year over the Christmas period. The course components are either 10 or 20 credit modules and include professional qualifications such as IOSH (Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) and NCPLH (National Certificate for Personal Licence Holders).

8.4 Students’ highest qualifications on entry

8.4.1 98% of managers at Luminar who make up the student cohort for this foundation degree have few academic qualifications, and formal academic qualifications are not used as a condition for entry on to the FD programme.

8.4.2 With the numbers of students enrolled on the programme it was not possible to ascertain details of students’ existing qualifications.

8.5 The origin of the foundation degree

8.5.1 In 2005 the new Training Manager for Luminar, Mr Bill Wiseman, assessed the available training and decided that it was rather variable and disparate. It was a catalogue of training courses that only ran when enough people had booked places. There was little measurement of how the training worked and it was difficult to pitch courses at the correct level as staff from various different levels could be in attendance. He came to the view that what was needed was a tailor-made management development programme that was based round particular modules to meet the needs of managers at different levels, with assessment centres to measure what they had learned before they progressed to the next level.

8.5.2 The aim, as explained by Mr Geoff Tonge, lecturer at Loughborough College, was to develop a suite of modules:

To enable people working at an operational level, who have little management experience and are self taught, to move to ones who will eventually become senior managers with the company. So the design of the degree is totally locked up with the progression of those people.

8.6 Curriculum design and development

8.6.1 Although not familiar with foundation degrees, the Training Manager at Luminar knew about HNDs and had heard of foundation degrees, so he approached Loughborough College with his ideas for tailored modules. Loughborough College responded by working jointly with Luminar to develop the curriculum. The development phase was just a few months – remarkably short considering that it included not only curriculum development but also the development of an infrastructure to manage large numbers of students.
8.6.2 Staff at Loughborough College were able to look at the ‘knowledge and understanding’ components of some of their existing courses in leadership and management and utilise these in combination with the module ideas provided by Luminar. Thus, it was not necessary to reinvent a totally new programme. Luminar found that the revised programme showed great synergy with their existing management development programme and they were able to keep assignments and style similar to what had been done previously, but with the added value of more rigour and the bonus of an externally-recognised qualification.

8.6.3 The modules include what is needed for each of three levels of management: assistant managers, senior managers and deputy managers. Once students have taken all the modules at one level they are measured at an assessment centre, using a competency-based framework, before they can proceed to the next level. Passing the assessment also means that they are eligible for promotion to the next level of management. Employees do not progress through the degree together, but move forward depending on their own pace and circumstances.

8.6.4 The programme is jointly delivered by the company and the College. Lecturer Geoff Tonge explained:

*At the design stage we agree what resource facilities are required in terms of training facilities, so Luminar, who are responsible for providing those resource materials, understand that there have to be flip charts, projector, slide etc. etc., suitable seating and it is their responsibility to provide these.*

8.6.5 Staff with professional qualifications are utilised to deliver some specialist modules and all Luminar trainers are required to take a Certificate in Training with Luminar before they can carry out any training. Some adjustments to numbers of Luminar trainers have been made during the three years, though generally there have been few issues and cooperation with Loughborough staff has been very good. Loughborough has developed a pool of trainers, some of whom have been with them since the start of the course and, with the organisation of each course planned many months in advance, there are few issues of availability of trainers.

8.6.6 Assignments are generally work-based so that employees are able to relate them to their business – for example an assignment on standards of performance at a night club will look at policies and procedures and how they work in practice. Mr Tonge acknowledged that it has taken time for employees to appreciate how rich the data are to which they have access. Students nearing completion of the foundation degree reported that they found the assignment structure helpful, clearly formatted and laid out. However, many other students struggled with the 2,000-word essay format and the Project Manager at Luminar said he was in the process of looking at the design of assignments to make sure that they are simple and meaningful.
8.6.7 Relatively few changes have been needed to the programme since its development. There have been some legislative changes, for example the smoking ban, which have required changing elements of the curriculum, but often this can be done by changing the emphasis rather than requiring a revalidation. When there is a major change, such as a new appraisal scheme that Luminar introduced, then a revalidation process is undertaken.

8.6.8 Mr Wiseman from Luminar noted that there needs to be regular shifts in delivery to reflect the current environment within which his staff work. For example, the impact of the credit crisis in the UK will need them to change some of the marketing and promotion aspects of the course. It has been a steep learning curve for all involved and in some cases it has take time for the implications of what appears to be a small change to be understood. This applies to ‘small’ changes to modules that have sizeable software and logistical implications. There were plans in place in 2008 to go through the whole suite of modules to revise them as necessary, as some were in need of refreshment and updating.

8.6.9 An introductory module has been added which does not carry any weighting but introduces employees to the course, provides them with some basic skills and helps induct them back into academic study. Experience since the foundation degree was established has led Loughborough and Luminar to realise the types of issues that regularly crop up with new recruits to the programme, such as how to write an assignment and how to get the most out of the courses. Many students start the course with relatively low levels of literacy and IT skills and need more support than was realised when the programme was first started.

8.6.10 As the Project Manager Nicole Lewis explained:

*One of the biggest things is to identify where people have had learning difficulties in the past. I think it's been a very difficult process and managers have been resistant because they have been embarrassed or unaware of what their difficulty actually is. So now we are trying to catch the people as they come through so if they've got any learning difficulties that need identifying we can support them.*

8.6.11 New developments include applying APEL for staff through a bridging unit which will allow general managers to become involved with the programme. They will be required to bring to an assessment centre examples of their work, such as marketing plans and business plans. They will then be assessed over a two-day period to see if they can progress on to the top-up degree or whether they need to complete some of the foundation degree modules first.

8.6.12 Students have the opportunity to feedback on each course they attend and this information is acted on by Luminar and Loughborough College staff. However, some students said they felt inhibited about handing in a form with personal details.
8.6.13 One suggestion from a general manager who was interviewed was that a new course on managing poor performers and disciplinary procedures would be useful in helping staff to deal with problems before they became cases for dismissal.

8.7 **Relationship with the validating institution**

8.7.1 The relationship with the validating institution is described as very good. Geoff Tonge from Loughborough College explained that Nottingham Trent University were:

*Amazingly good in terms of support, ease of access, language, they talk very straightforwardly. There was a worry they might be very academic-orientated but they are pragmatic. And certainly the help – anytime we need access to them, the response is generally within 24 hours...*

8.7.2 The only slight down side was the low number of formal panel meetings where submissions and changes are required to be submitted. This had the effect of extending the time it takes to make changes to modules to up to six months. However, the College had experienced a lot of support when putting forward curriculum change requests with the University providing all necessary feedback to make sure the request proceeded successfully.

8.7.3 The experience of working with internal and external verifiers had also been positive. The College had found them to be supportive, relaxed and helpful with opportunities for informal meetings as well as the formal requirements.

8.8 **Course viability**

8.8.1 The foundation degree is compulsory for most groups of managers working for Luminar. This has led to large numbers being enrolled on the course from the outset, with student numbers of over 350 in the first year. Some of these are working their way through the whole programme whilst others were exempt from certain modules, either because they already had the required professional certificate, or they were accredited for previous qualifications or experience under APEL procedures.

8.8.2 It is clearly a tremendous feat of organisation to deliver jointly a programme on this scale at locations across the UK. It required the vision of senior management to recognise the investment needed to enable this to happen successfully. Both Loughborough College and Luminar expanded their staffing to cope with the work and Loughborough utilised their ‘aspire centre for leadership and management’ which is dedicated to delivering full-cost, off-site training to employees. The administration centre at Loughborough has had to put in place complex systems to manage the organisation of courses across the UK for large numbers of students taught in groups of 15 to 20. These have to be organised many months in advance of delivery.
To support the work, Luminar and Loughborough introduced a dedicated server and Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for students, which is hosted by Loughborough College and accessible by both institutions. With hindsight the Training Manager from Luminar says that he would have liked a larger department from the outset to be able to listen more to feedback and respond directly, but of course there would have been a greater cost element to this. By contrast, Loughborough employed three staff from the beginning who were dedicated to administration and support for this foundation degree, and have found this level of staffing to be essential.

The statistics show a large drop-out rate from the foundation degree. This is largely a result of staff leaving the employment of Luminar, though some students have failed to complete modules and assignments. This high turnover, and the consequent number of students who drop out from the foundation degree, does pose the College difficulties, though their validation partner is sympathetic to the problems. Employees leaving on completion of all level 1 units can be awarded a Certificate of Higher Education, but there are no awards given on a modular basis.

Student numbers will inevitably decline as members of staff complete the foundation degree, though the staff turnover and resulting new recruits will continue to provide new students. The College also has plans, in partnership with Luminar, to roll out the foundation degree to recruit students from other night clubs, bars and similar establishments.

8.9 Employers' involvement

8.9.1 College–employers' relationship

Luminar and Loughborough College have developed their relationship from scratch over the past three years. Both organisations are complimentary about each other and about how well the relationship has developed and functions.

Mr Wiseman, the Training Manager at Luminar, said:

*Loughborough College have been very good, world-class, to the extent that they have learnt about our industry very quickly. For example, I was sitting in on one of the courses and one of the lecturers was talking about marketing in the larger field but was able to bring the marketing theory into a nightclub environment. They change the content to suit our industry, and the delivery style changes as well.*

*I think Loughborough have been absolutely fantastic. Highly competent, really organised and they have managed Luminar particularly well. They are always enthusiastic and positive about everything and it is good to have that external reassurance. You need reassurance that you are doing the*
right thing because you do get a little bit narrow-minded just in nightclubs and when you get staff saying that it is fantastic it gives everybody else a boost as well. Loughborough have bent over backwards for us and everything has been so smooth with regard to any admin communication it has worked really well.

8.9.1.3 From the College’s perspective, a lecturer said:

*I think for the College and Luminar it has been quite a learning and enriching exercise to get to where we have. Given the chance, in fairness I don’t think we would have done a lot differently.*

8.9.1.4 It has taken some time to marry together the different styles of delivery of academic teaching and a private-sector company, and both organisations said that they have had to adapt. The greatest advantage has been the motivation of both Luminar and Loughborough College to succeed and overcome challenges, especially in terms of delivery. Loughborough College receives immediate feedback if there are any course or individual-related concerns and they are dealt with straight away without waiting for formal meetings. Scheduled formal meetings on teaching take place every three months.

8.9.1.5 Both organisations acknowledge that communication can sometimes be frustrating. The Training Manager for Luminar is responsible for the training needs of 10-12,000 employees at any one time which makes heavy demands on his time, but he still manages to speak to Loughborough College staff on a weekly basis and members of his staff are in daily contact. Contact was particularly frequent when the course was first starting, when Loughborough felt it was necessary to be more ‘hands on’, but now it is into the third year the trainers are more experienced and contact is related to more focused issues.

8.9.2 Course impact

8.9.2.1 Luminar had a number of aims for the foundation degree, as lecturer Geoff Tonge explained:

*They wanted the foundation degree to reflect a straight improvement in key performance indicators, in terms of turnover and profitability, rather than to promote creative thinking – the top-up degree is there for that. The foundation degree is to make them better leaders and managers in terms of the functionality of their job, straight business improvement and improve their attitudes. In addition, by providing a transparent career path the aim was to improve retention of staff and remove the selective process that existed. On a more global scale they were looking to improve the industry image and attract high-quality people into the organisation.*
8.9.2.2 Have these aims been successful? Luminar said they have been impressed with the results so far:

*We have seen management turnover decrease dramatically. We have still got a fairly high management turnover but it is decreasing, and I think what we have found is the ones that we are keeping now are the ones that we want to keep. The ones that don't like to be assessed, or don't want to be on an academic programme, or fight against the idea of being made to do a training programme, do we really want them in the company anyway? We want articulate, intelligent, bright managers. If you can't put a marketing plan together why would we make you a manager? And if we don't teach you how to do it, who is going to, and who is going to measure if it is any good or not? So the best measurement for us on return of investment is the decrease in management turnover and in staff turnover.*

*We use the foundation degree as an attraction tool as well: it makes us industry leaders. We can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with any organisation and say our training is equal to or better than yours. A month ago Tesco announced with a flurry that they were introducing their FD in retail management and we are three years ahead of Tesco who are regarded as the main retailer in Europe. We are now at top-up degree stage which is a hell of a journey.*

8.9.2.3 The Project Manager from Luminar explained:

*We're seeing a more confident level of manager – for example, they come to us and they learn how to do an appraisal whereas if they didn't come to us, it's more than likely that they wouldn't learn how to do that so a regional manager would have to do it. We're seeing a much better level of management style. You can definitely tell the difference between Luminar managers and those of other venues.*

8.9.2.4 The subjective selection process has also been replaced which was difficult for Luminar because the general managers were used to saying 'I want him or her'. They cannot do this anymore and this has been a fundamental change.

8.9.2.5 Bill Wiseman, Luminar Training Manager, said there is now more response to training from senior managers, more emphasis on measurement of the individual and when staff submit their reports and presentations they are more professional and succinct. They are less likely to be asked to rewrite a report as they understand more clearly what is being asked of them. All these developments have led to Luminar’s staff becoming more professional and, in general, an improving image and perception of management of late-night entertainment.
8.9.2.6 The engagement of general managers with the programme has been one of the issues from the outset, which has a knock-on effect with the junior managers who are on the programme. Mr Wiseman thinks that in part this is due to general managers being so focused on the profitability of their own venues, and their particular roles, that they forget that they are also role models and managers of a team. In his view, general managers think they can teach junior managers what they need to know and there is also a fear factor:

*I think there is a lack of understanding sometimes and also a lot of these managers don’t want their deputy to leave because suddenly they may be exposed in different areas as well, so there is the fear of losing a ‘left arm’.*

8.9.2.7 Luminar feel that a possible way of increasing the engagement of general managers would be to give them sole responsibility for managing the training of their staff in the first instance, and making them the first to mark any assignments. The more successful general managers are more supportive and will help and talk through with their junior managers how the work is progressing.

8.9.2.8 Employees nearing completion of the programme felt that there had been an improvement in the support that they received from their manager. The general manager from St Albans explained how he is able to support his staff who are undertaking the programme:

*For a lot of the crew here, I’m the most senior person they’re ever going to see, so if I say that the training is a positive thing and I think that everyone should be really working at it, then it’s going to happen. The responsibility firmly sits with the general manager of the unit. I think there have been problems in the past where people haven’t done the work or haven’t gone to courses or haven’t been let off, had time off. I think the general manager sets the tone and sets the attitude of the whole venue really.*

*We sit down every couple of weeks and we’ll go through what their modules are and each individual piece of work. I normally find that I can lend some assistance in terms of, I suppose, coaching. Setting them down, giving them some feedback about what their ideas are, letting them run through what their plan is on how they’re going to tackle a certain piece of work and how they’ve found it etc.*

*Sometimes, they find it hard to put it into words, both in terms of knowing what to write or not enough. A lot of the problem comes in actually planning what you’re going to write. If you haven’t got a structure when you’ve got a question that’s 2,000 words, you think ‘oh my goodness’. But when you break the question down, it’s really sort of 5 parts of a question that are 400 words each. Well, you can write 400 words or something and when you break it down and you sit there, they’re like, ‘oh yeah, yeah, I can write that’.*
8.9.3 Employers’ contribution

8.9.3.1 With this joint development and delivery of a foundation degree it is not really possible to separate out the separate contribution of the employer. The Chief Executive of the company, Steve Thomas, has given the foundation degree his total backing and is committed to 100% participation by his managers.

8.9.3.2 Although Luminar has contributed capital investment to develop the foundation degree they feel that by utilising a HEFCE-funded qualification their costs are now lower than running a fully in-house programme. All general managers interviewed expressed a positive view towards employees taking the qualification as the general manager from Stevenage said:

*I think it is a bold move because at the end of the day people will get extra qualifications which makes them more attractive in the workplace and they could go elsewhere, but it is a commitment from the company to say we want to give something back, and if we get it right it will give us a better relationship with employees.*

8.10 Students’ experiences of the foundation degree

8.10.1 Initial selection

8.10.1.1 The course is compulsory for staff who are managers with Luminar. When the foundation degree was ready to be launched, the Chief Executive, the Human Resources Director and the Training Manager went round the country to 8 or 10 different locations and spoke to all staff who were going to be involved in the programme. Employees were enrolled and got their timetable on the same day.

8.10.1.2 Luminar was conscious that they lacked a large publicity machine to get the launch of the foundation degree out into the public domain quickly, though they did have some radio coverage and a few newspaper articles. Staff success on the programme is highlighted in the staff newsletter *Illuminate* which is published six times per annum.

8.10.1.3 Employees responded in a varied manner to being told they were on the course. There was resentment from some, whilst others acknowledged that it was a good opportunity for them and once they were on the course they began enjoying it. Luminar had been clear that attending the course would help with their career progression and with promotion within the company. Students nearing completion of the qualification were more consistent in their enthusiasm and felt highly positive on the benefits of the programme.
8.10.1.4 Employees continue to feel the pressures of combining work with study and some have concerns over the academic level required, as explained by several of the students:

*Our time is physically different to everyone else’s, so when we have to come in really early to attend a course it is difficult.*

*We find there is no time to get the coursework done, when you are working 6 days a week, 60 hours a week trying to find the time to complete assignments is quite hard.*

*I had major concerns about the assignments. A lot of us within the industry left school and college to do something more practical and when you get asked to do assignments again, especially at university standard where you are adding appendices and things like that, it was kind of daunting but didn’t put us off.*

*I wasn’t very good at school so when it came to doing university-level assignments, I never knew how to write an essay and stuff like that so I have struggled on bits, but now I have got used to it and I am doing OK, I guess.*

*We thought that we had got out of education and gone into a full-time job just to realise that we had gone back into education again.*

*I have never passed English in my life: I am a numbers person not a writer, we use a lot of numbers in our business. I can write an email, but a 2,000 word essay is a big thing.*

*Time management is a big issue, initially we were told that we would get an extra day off a week to do the course work, but it rarely happens. Our workload has not decreased so to do something like that is not practical, otherwise the workplace suffers.*

8.10.2 Students’ experiences on the course

8.10.2.1 Mr Bill Wiseman from Luminar acknowledged that there have been some time-management issues with employees undertaking the foundation degree and he thinks that they were initially too lenient with them. They allowed long hand-in dates and set the submission dates too close to the training sessions. As a result there are some employees who have not submitted all their assignments. If an employee misses a training programme then it is a disciplinary offence and their venue is fined. However, it has been difficult to get 100% compliance with assignments, especially as responsibilities at work has to come first and staff do work long hours and may not have access to a computer at all times. The project was told that most staff are on track with about 70% fully up-to-date with their work. Mr Wiseman noted a correlation between their work on the foundation degree and their employment record:
The ones that are compliant, are turning out to be our better managers – they are the ones being promoted, they are the ones being more successful, they are the ones with lower staff turnover that do better appraisals. The ones that have almost slipped the net are the ones that have difficulties in other areas as well, so it is a similar map. So it is a fantastic indicator.

8.10.2.2 Employees on the foundation degree were less complimentary about the new tougher line on deadlines. They felt the continual pressures of working long hours sometimes made it difficult for them to get work in on time and did not appreciate that they were going to be fined for not meeting a deadline. Some of them felt that part of the problem was lack of support from the general managers:

They don’t see the importance because they have not done the foundation degree themselves, so I can say I need 4 hours to do my assignment but after 20 minutes you may be asked to do something else.

8.10.2.3 The students are provided with a support centre for support but some had found that this did not provide them with enough assistance. They commented that it was difficult to get hold of staff in the support centre and:

When they make us do reports we could probably get a bit more help with regards to that, because half the time you can’t even get in touch with unit support so when you want to know how to write a report it is no help.

8.10.2.4 The Project Manager from Luminar, who had only been in post for 7 months, felt that the improvement in assignment completion that had been achieved was not just due to the introduction of sanctions and tight deadlines, but had been achieved through offering a different approach:

We are now offering a lot of support to our managers and letting them know that I'm there to help them. I focus on each and every individual to make sure that they're confident in what they're trying to achieve, even why they're trying to achieve it. I've tried to work around it in a completely different line – more of a positive spin on why we're wanting to achieve what we're trying to achieve and what they're going to get out of it, instead of just telling them that they have to do it and that’s it.

8.10.2.5 Certainly some students could see improvements, as one employee who was nearing completion of the qualification said:

At first when not a lot of people understood, it was not so good, but over the last year they have had meetings and now everyone is more aware of what it entails and a lot of us have done more of the course now and we know where we are going. It is definitely a lot better and people are more supportive now, not just unit based but head office based as well, a lot more support that when we first started.
8.10.2.6 Students expressed a range of comments relating to the quality of course delivery. They said that the delivery style of trainers from Loughborough College was refreshing and informative and they had confidence in their knowledge and understanding of the subject matter and grading skills. They felt that Luminar staff were often too close to be objective and did not have the wider knowledge of the subjects.

8.10.3 Course benefits for students

8.10.3.1 Employees on the foundation degree often referred to themselves as being non-academic and said they had begun to realise that working in management they had already been applying motivational and marketing theories without knowing the theories or structures behind what they are attempting. Thus, one of the outcomes of attending the programme has been to help them to realise the returns they are getting on their investment of time and energy into the foundation degree.

8.10.3.2 The general manager from St Albans explained:

Within nightclubs, there’s a vast opportunity for operational experience from quite young – 20/21 years old – by being a cover or duty manager for a club of 1,500 people. It’s quite a responsibility but it’s something that you do and you don’t really take the scale of the responsibility on board. Then you realise that you might need some academic background. I think the degree programme with Luminar is an excellent way of marrying the two up.

8.10.3.3 Comments by students on the foundation degree varied considerably. There were many positive comments, but also a number of negative ones that often related to structure, support and variance in delivery rather than relevance of course content. Particularly varied were the comments relating to length and timing of the courses where there was no consensus. Some felt they were too long, others too short and some wanted an extended day, whilst others wanted the day to reflect their normal working day and run from midday to night time. What came across in these varied responses was the mixed ability range of students on the programme and their varying learning needs.

8.10.3.4 One student who had completed an Honours degree before she started the foundation degree, found the mixed ability of courses difficult to work with:

I think the thing that I found the hardest and struggled with is that you are in a class with people with very different academic abilities and interests and levels and it has been quite frustrating because we have had to go back repeatedly for certain issues and it has made the courses a lot longer than they needed to be sometimes.
8.10.3.5 Students selected some aspects of the foundation degree for particular praise. They liked the factual information provided on the courses, such as information on contracts and recruitment law, and they liked learning the theories behind aspects of management that they came across in their workplaces. Some felt that parts of the programme were too generic – they could see the relevance but would have preferred it to be more directly related to their own industry, though when questioned they could see the relevance of transferable skills in leadership and management. There was also praise for the practical aspects of the programme which they found were often directly relevant to their workplace.

8.10.3.6 The course on transformational leadership that included neuro-linguistic programming was thought to be very useful:

The tutor was absolutely phenomenal. He explained everything, did a lot of demonstrations and completely engaged everyone in the group. The things that he has taught us we have gone back to our units and said ‘oh my goodness it works’. I think for me that has made the whole programme worthwhile.

8.10.3.7 93% of students felt that the course content of the foundation degree was relevant to their job, particularly as the content had been designed around their industry and aligned to the different levels of management within the Luminar structure. Some students’ comments included:

The course is essential to progression and to give an understanding of the job role.

I now understand what other managers’ roles are.

To be a manager you need to understand how to manage.

It has given me a better understanding of certain aspects of my job role.

8.10.3.8 Students liked the opportunity to build networks with other managers when they met up on the block-release courses, and the chance to discuss how the workplaces varied across the country.

8.10.3.9 Students did not like the assessment centre as they felt that they could do well on the coursework, but not have the confidence to shine in the setting of an assessment centre where they had to talk in front of other people. They would have preferred someone to observe them functioning in their own unit where they could demonstrate their managerial skills:

It is unfair to judge your overall ability based on one day. I can go to an assessment centre and sit in a corner and say nothing but you go back to your unit and be the most powerful person vocally, have the respect around you, deal with the police, deal with drug takers with utmost confidence, but because you didn’t sit in a room and speak out, then you are not good enough to be a manager.
8.10.3.10 The Luminar Project Manager acknowledged that some changes were being planned at the assessment centres to expand scope for individual presentations:

*We are trying to implement a better way of assessing without making it too much of a pressurised environment. One of the things that was done before was that they made these assessment centres a gruelling process whereas we've looked at it from a different angle – it is about their development and there's nothing that I am going to do to hinder their development so we need to make it as comfortable and relaxed as possible, like it would be at work.*

8.10.3.11 Scores on the student questionnaire for how well the course was improving students’ skills, knowledge and confidence were generally good with 50% grading it 4 (out of 5) and 50% grading it a 3 (out of 5). Students gave examples of how their confidence had improved:

*On the finance and costs, my general manager would say ‘I need this doing’ and you would probably have to learn it from scratch yourself, but doing this course has given me confidence that I am doing it right. The course gives you more knowledge and gives you a push to move forward quicker.*

8.10.3.12 57% of students agreed that the course was fully meeting their expectations, with the remaining 43% feeling that their expectations had been met in part. Though some students admitted that they had no expectations before they started:

*It was a new course, I hadn't done any HE before so I had no clue of what it entailed; I didn't really know what to expect.*

8.10.3.13 Students on programme they had many positive comments about how the course was helping them:

*I have gained more knowledge on key skills as well as practical skills.*

*The course has helped me to understand some areas of management and work that I didn't know before.*

*The course has given me greater knowledge in areas I needed to develop.*

*The course has given me extra knowledge to help in my career and workplace.*

*90% of the lecturers have been excellent and the content has been bang on.*

8.10.3.14 Students who were nearing completion of the foundation degree were more positive on how their expectations had been met, and felt that all the modules had been helpful and related directly to the workplace. One manager explained:

*You can get so wrapped up in the day-to-day business that you don’t actually put enough time aside to say how you would look at things differently, whereas the course is great because it allows you time to think about it.*
8.10.3.15 Students rated the overall quality of the course as consistently good, though there were comments that some of the units felt rushed, often the more challenging units. Many students appreciated the value that they were getting:

*When I talk to people in different companies they think it is quite a good idea: you are getting free training*

*Happy days if you get extra training and accreditation whilst being able to carry on with your job.*

8.10.3.16 Attending the course had not caused students to change their career aspirations with most responding that their aspirations remained the same.

8.10.4 Students' progression

8.10.4.1 Few students currently on the second level of the programme were clear that they wanted to progress on to the top-up degree. Only 21 per cent definitely wanted to move on to the BA with half the students questioned still undecided. However, the individual interviews with students who were nearing completion of all the modules provided a more positive emphasis with all four stating that they would like to progress on to the BA (Honours) qualification.

8.10.4.2 Several of the students interviewed had been promoted since they had started the programme. Students who had recently been promoted explained:

*The course has definitely helped. It has made me more focussed within my career as well, something to aim for.*

*It is all important information. The coursework makes you a better manager.*

8.10.4.3 All the students nearing completion said they would recommend the foundation degree to other employees.

8.11 Conclusions and recommendations

8.11.1 Course viability and sustainability – successes and challenges

8.11.1.1 The Foundation Degree in Leadership and Management (Late-Night Entertainment) is an excellent example of success in developing and delivering a nationwide programme with large student numbers. There are many factors that have contributed to this success, but one of the most significant is the development of an efficient infrastructure capable of supporting, tracking and organising on a national basis. The importance of developing this has been critical.
8.11.1.2 Initially, the student figures showed a strikingly high number of students dropping out of the programme, and often leaving their employment with Luminar. This figure was greatly reduced in 2007–08. Luminar and Loughborough College have achieved this improvement using several approaches. They offer valuable lessons for organisations which are developing new foundation degrees:

1. **Introductory module.** The majority of the employees enrolled on the foundation degree did not have higher level qualifications and had limited knowledge and experience of higher education. Although they were given a support system, many of them seemed to struggle to complete assignments on time and there were problems with non-submissions. The recent addition of an introductory module to assess students learning needs and provide them with basic study skills has helped overcome the problems.

   In particular, students found writing and structuring 2,000 word essays difficult and needed early support to raise their confidence in this area. The question might also be asked whether a 2,000 word essay is the best assessment method for the learning that they had undertaken. There are many imaginative methodologies that could be employed combining written work with oral and visual presentations, which students might not find so intimidating and might better suit the learning styles of students.

   **Recommendation 1:** The College and Luminar could look into varying assessment strategies to include oral and visual presentations.

   The new introductory module also aids in the development of strategies to manage the mixed-ability range, which is a feature of students on the programme, but the issues of some students needing longer and more support to complete courses is likely to remain.

   **Recommendation 2:** Depending on viable student numbers, the College and Luminar could look into streaming students and running shortened or longer courses for certain groups of learners.

2. **Line manager support.** The foundation degree programme was strongly supported by the CEO of Luminar, the central management team and the training officer, but each nightclub operates in quite an autonomous way led by a general manager, and it is their engagement and support that has proved key to employees’ success. With hindsight, Luminar feel that it would have helped to involve the general managers more directly in the training, both in front-line support and perhaps in assessing assignments.
3. **Strict deadlines.** Students were not appreciative of the new stricter deadlines that had been introduced, and resented their work venue being fined if they failed to attend a course or missed a deadline. However, it is apparent that there is a much higher compliance with deadlines since these have been introduced, and certainly students need a clear and fair system so that they know what is required of them and by when.

4. **Relevance of course content.** There was a strong consensus from students on the relevance of the course content to their industry and how it had helped them to gain knowledge and understanding that they felt was important for their job role and career progression. This endorsement by students is extremely important if they are to be willing participants in a compulsory programme. It also provides a basis for good internal marketing for the course.

8.11.1.3 Loughborough College described a highly positive relationship with the validating institution – Nottingham Trent University. However, there are two potential points worth noting:

1. There is no modular certification available on this programme, so that students leaving the programme before they have completed all the units at one level are unable to gain any credit for their work. Individual module accreditation would enable those who left to gain a credit-based record of the work they had completed.

   **Recommendation 3:** The College, in conjunction with its validating partner, could investigate the feasibility of developing modular certification for each course on the foundation degree.

2. Luminar and Loughborough College reported that there has not been a need to make many changes so far to the programme, but minor amendments are regularly needed, and this is likely to increase as a result of the changing needs of the industry if the programme is to remain up to date. At present the process of making module changes is to a formal validation panel that meets infrequently.

   **Recommendation 4:** The College, in conjunction with its validating partner, could look at developing a more streamlined approach to module changes. This might include an agreement to allow a small percentage of the programme to be updated on an annual basis without submission to a formal panel.
8.11.2 Employers’ involvement

8.11.2.1 This case study provides an excellent example of good practice in joint working between a college and an employer. Luminar, in common with many other employers, had an existing management development programme that they were keen to retain as far as practicable, and they found Loughborough College receptive and pragmatic in the way they were willing to amend and match up the ‘in-house’ programme with an already validated management development foundation degree.

8.11.2.2 Following validation, Luminar have been impressed by the flexibility of Loughborough College and the way they have integrated content related to the late-night entertainment industry into the courses and changed their delivery style to suit students. Loughborough College also operates a highly efficient administrative system that organises courses many months in advance, to ensure smooth running, and copes with the large student numbers involved.

8.11.2.3 The practice of listening to what the employer required and working together in a flexible, responsive manner is essential to the success of this type of joint venture. Regular and accessible communications between the two organisations is another important factor, from the initial enquiry stage, through to the ongoing communication when the programme is up and running.

8.11.2.4 Luminar were clear on the benefits of the programme to themselves and their employees. These benefits can be summarised as:

- Dramatic decrease in staff turnover.
- Improved profile and standing of the late-night entertainment industry making it more attractive to new recruits and ahead of high-profile retail companies such as Tesco.
- Increased confidence level in managers.
- Improved management style.
- Objective management selection process.
- More flexible response to training.
- Improved knowledge and understanding of key work-related areas.
- Focussed career progression.
- Increased practical skills.
- Externally validated and accredited qualification.
8.11.3 Students’ feedback

8.11.3.1 Students did vary in their attitudes towards their compulsory enrolment on the foundation degree, but the majority were positive about the programme, and that was particularly evident among those students who had been studying for the longest, suggesting that initial concerns and issues had been overcome.

8.11.3.2 One of the most strongly voiced concerns of students was the structure of the day(s) at the assessment centres and the need for students to pass the assessment days before they could progress to the next level of the course, or be eligible for promotion. Luminar acknowledged that there needed to be changes to the content and structure of these days. These changes could include more individual presentations, and a greater involvement of general managers, perhaps with venue-based assessments.

**Recommendation 5:** When Luminar have made the proposed changes in the way the assessment centres are run they could usefully make sure that all students are aware of the changes through a clear communications strategy. This will help improve student attitude towards the assessment centres.

8.11.3.3 Despite these concerns, the fact that 93% of the students questioned felt that the foundation degree was highly relevant to their job is a strong endorsement and shows how they appreciate the help it is giving them to carry out their management role and to aid their career progression.

8.11.3.4 It may not be easy for them to fit in study and work, but once they have overcome initial concerns they realise how they can utilise real-life examples from their workplace in assignments, and make use of the theories they learn and apply them in practice. The students nearing completion of the qualification showed how much they valued the opportunity they had been given to study, without any cost to themselves, for a nationally recognised qualification whilst working full-time.

8.11.4 Models of good practice

8.11.4.1 This case study has provided an excellent opportunity to look in detail at a workplace foundation degree which involved a close college–employer partnership. There are many points that will be of use to other organisations which are looking to work in a similar way with an employer(s). The following points are of particular note:

1. An excellent example of an effective partnership between an employer and the college provider.
2. It involves nationwide delivery with high student numbers.
3. Effective action has been taken to reduce students’ withdrawal.
9. Case Study – FdSc in IT and Technical Support at Newman University College

9.1 Methodology

9.1.1 Interviews were conducted with the following organisations who had employees on the foundation degree:

- Hereford 6th Form College
- Arrowvale High School
- Summerhill School

9.1.2 Interviews were also conducted with the course team leader and students from the first and second year of the course. Open-ended interview questions were used that had been agreed with the Steering Group as a basis for discussion. Students were also asked to complete a short questionnaire. The interviews were recorded.

| Table 9.1: Interviews conducted with different respondents |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Category                        | Number of interviews |
| Employers                       | 3               |
| Course Team Leader              | 1               |
| Students on FdSc in IT and Technical support - year 1 | 12          |
| Students on FdSc in IT and Technical support - year 2 | 11          |

9.2 Key statistics

Table 9.2: Students numbers

Title of foundation degree: FdSc in IT and Technical Support

*College/university: Newman University College; validating institution: Newman University College (formerly validated by University of Leicester)*

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Student numbers on enrolment</th>
<th>Student numbers on progression to HE level 2</th>
<th>Student numbers on successful completion of FdSc</th>
<th>Students numbers on top-up to BA</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.3 Structure of the foundation degree

9.3.1 The foundation degree has been developed as a part-time qualification only, run over one evening a week for three years. Students are required to be employed within the IT industry when they join the course, though that position can change during their time as students.

9.3.2 The College is a both a Cisco and Microsoft accredited academy and has integrated externally validated units that are offered by Microsoft and Cisco into the structure of the programme. There are four modules that use Cisco materials and three that are based on Microsoft materials out of 11 modules. Course modules are made up of 10 and 20 credits with a total of 80 credits in each year.

9.4 Students’ highest qualifications on entry

Table 9.3: Qualifications of students on entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Level 4 qualification or above, e.g. FD or BA/BSc</th>
<th>1 or more ‘A’ levels</th>
<th>Vocational level 3 qual such as BTEC ND, AVCE</th>
<th>4 or more GCSE’s grade C or over</th>
<th>No recorded academic qualifications</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005/6 cohort</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>13, 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/7 cohort</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/8 cohort</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>6%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.5 Initial concept of the foundation degree

9.5.1 The initial impetus for the foundation degree appears to have originated with the College, who then consulted with local employers, particularly with IT technicians in schools and colleges. There had been considerable staff change at Newman University College since the course was developed, which made more detailed information difficult to obtain.
9.6 Curriculum design and development

9.6.1 During the course of this research there were many comments from students and staff on the fast-changing nature of the IT industry. Many foundation degrees need to respond rapidly to changing requirements, but it would appear that in this industry it is particularly difficult for a qualification to keep pace with what is happening in the outside world. The College’s decision to include vendor qualifications from Cisco and Microsoft in the curriculum seems a highly sensible way of ensuring that what is taught is as up-to-date as the manufacturers’ products. As the course team leader said:

*Cisco know what is required out there and they have got teams of people working at designing curriculum.*

9.6.2 The College pays to become an academy with Microsoft and Cisco and can then utilise their modules. With Cisco, the College expands on the detail given, for example adding learning objectives, and then uses the Cisco materials to deliver the course. The whole of the Cisco curriculum is available online from America and the learning materials are presented to the students chapter-by-chapter, with end of chapter tests and a final summative examination. The tutor is able to monitor student progress and the students are then able to receive certificates from Cisco as they complete individual units.

9.6.3 Although the online materials and online tests are composed by Cisco there are opportunities to amend the programme through an element to the programme called ‘skills tests’. These are highly ‘hands on’ and Cisco expects delivery organisations to tailor them to suit individual circumstances, providing minimum standards are met.

9.6.4 The situation with Microsoft is more complex. The foundation degree is currently going through a revalidation and so all the modules have been closely looked at with major changes and amendments planned. As a result of student feedback and staff views, it was clear that the Microsoft academy system did not fit so well into the foundation degree structure as that of Cisco, and the College has been debating whether it is possible to align the modules more closely to the Microsoft units, or whether this is not desirable.

9.6.5 The staff were clear that they did not want to put students through a series of training courses that did not link together to form degree-level study. They felt that the Microsoft qualification may be better suited to students on a computing degree where they could take a full year over a qualification, whereas their students who are studying part-time would only have a term to complete, and needed more practical, vocationally orientated work.
9.6.6 The amount of Microsoft content in the programme following validation is likely, therefore, to be different from that experienced by students on the programme at the time of the study. Many of the units have been rewritten and a new module has been introduced called 'IT Resource Management' where students look at managing IT services and what they will be doing in the future.

9.6.7 As all students are employed within the IT industry it is possible for them to use examples from their workplace in their projects. They have a module called ‘independent learner’ in the first year, and a work-based project in the third year, and there are elements in other modules, for example when they look at databases, where they are required to look at the uses and application of databases within their organisation.

9.6.8 The College has rigorous student feedback mechanisms in place: mid-point reviews, end-point reviews and SSCCs (Staff–student consultative committees) that provide documented evidence of students' views.

9.7 Relationship with the validating institution

9.7.1 Until recently the College was validated to run degree programmes by the University of Leicester, and the University of Leicester validated this foundation degree when it was introduced in 2005. The College recently achieved university status and consequently is able to validate its own degree-level qualifications. At the time of the study the revalidation was in process.

9.8 Course viability

9.8.1 Numbers on the foundation degree have remained fairly constant during the first three years, and provided a viable group each year. However, there were only 9 students likely to complete in 2008 which did not make it viable to offer a separate BSc top-up degree. The College offers a BSc in IT on a full-time basis and students could enrol on this qualification, but it would be difficult for them to do this and work full-time, and also difficult for them to fit into a new group after they have bonded so well on the foundation degree over the three years. At the time of the study the College was planning to run the BSc top-up degree through a part-time route in 2009 when there should be more potential students.

9.8.2 The College undertakes a number of marketing initiatives with open days and an active process of leaflet distribution. This had obviously been effective as 91% of second-year students first heard about the course through a course leaflet. First-year students had heard of the course through a variety of means – as well as course leaflets there were recommendations from employers and via the website.
9.8.3 Achieving sufficient new entrants to the course each year remains a cause of anxiety for the College and makes planning problematic, with most of the applications coming to the College over the summer period for an autumn start. It would be difficult for the College to manage a group size in the computer laboratory of more than 20, but a starting cohort of 15-20 is required for financial viability.

9.9 Employers’ involvement

9.9.1 College–employers’ relationship

9.9.1.1 The employers interviewed for this case study had little ongoing contact with the College. They were all managers of employees who were students on the foundation degree and the main contact was feedback from the staff member.

9.9.1.2 One employer had been visited by a member of staff from the College during the past academic year, and been asked for general information, and all of the employers had received publicity information about the course. Employers were asked what contact they would like from the College and they were clear that they would like greater communication.

_We have had no formal feedback from the University – in the past when other people have been on courses then there has been some feedback on progress and attainment which I think, as we are paying for an employee, would be quite nice to know. We have got the information because the people are talking to us but it would be quite an enhancement if we got feedback directly from the University or college._

_I would like to know, if I am paying for a student, a least a set of results – I’m not expecting a report, but marks so at least it gives you something to be able to talk to the candidate about. And if there were areas which we needed to support them on then, if there was someone from the University that contacted us and said that ‘this person needs to do this or that’._

9.9.1.3 One employer expressed an interest in being able to email comments to the College rather than completing a formal questionnaire. Another was not sure on helping with advising on the content of modules, but would like to receive information on the modules being offered. Another employer suggested that more contact with schools would be helpful so that the College could find out what was happening in schools and be able to ensure that the course was relevant and up-to-date.

9.9.1.4 One employer described the issues they had experienced over the administration of the course where they had problems with invoices and moving start and end dates, though they were all positive about the support their students had received from the course team leader.
9.9.2 Course impact

9.9.2.1 Employers interviewed were not familiar with foundation degrees, but generally had heard of them and were looking for externally-validated courses for employees to further their career opportunities and as a reward for the work they had done. They were all satisfied with the foundation degree and felt that it was an appropriate course for their staff. The following comments are typical of the replies received:

*I am very pleased with all elements really: the price is right, the timing is right, the majority of the syllabus is relevant, even though some may not be relevant to them, and overall I think it is a very good idea and will continue to put people on it. To summarise, I think it is excellent and hope it continues.*

*Most relevant is the technical side of things. I know it helps, also because he is on the course with other school technicians and there is a lot of shared knowledge going on which is really useful and he brings those ideas back.*

*If you look at the broad sense of what value for money is, then yes it does improve productivity and efficiency, because the two people concerned have been able to apply the knowledge that they have got in a broader context and it is supporting the students.*

*I think being able to relate to both theoretical and work-related is a good way of doing it and certainly there have been some benefits there.*

9.9.2.2 Employers’ views on course content were also positive. The course was what the employers had expected, and relevant to their needs:

*It has given him a good grounding and the overall view of IT so yes it is definitely relevant.*

*Generally it is relevant and good, but there are some elements such as the Cisco part which we definitely don’t use and have no intention of using. However, even though it is not relevant to us it is something they will take with them wherever they go so it is worth doing from that side. Also we understood the course was for technicians but there was a lot of emphasis on installation of operating systems and technicians who are already in the job should know that already.*

9.9.2.3 The replies suggested that employers understood that there would be elements within a course that were not relevant as each organisation was likely to have slightly different requirements and operating systems. Some employers felt that the standard of their employees taking the course was quite high and that they had started the foundation degree with well-developed practical skills. None the less they were able to point out the benefits of the course for their employee:

*Even with someone who is experienced, as this person is, he has now been able to have some of the theoretical understanding that goes with what he has been doing in a practical sense for a number of years without a
qualification. We are looking at some of the modules he has done and he is talking about how he can implement those things so yes, generally there has been an increase in his knowledge.

He talks about (the course) a lot and when he starts a new module he explains what he is doing and then we can discuss how that will fit in.

He certainly learns a lot from it and I think he has got quite a lot out of it and he is talking about wanting to go on and make it a full degree.

9.9.2.4 There was also an expectation of the need for the programme to be updated on a regular basis:

IT does move on faster than anything and what is relevant one year has to be looked at the next year.

9.9.2.5 The timing of the course was thought to be appropriate for staff who were combining study with a working day.

It is really about perfect, if it had been any earlier I couldn’t have let them have the time off and if it had been any later I doubt they would have wanted to have gone after a day’s work.

9.9.3 Employers’ contribution

9.9.3.1 Nearly half of students in years 1 and 2 of the programme had their fees paid by their employers with the figure rising to 70% where employers were either paying fees or providing an ‘in kind’ subsidy such as time off for study. Despite concerns expressed, for example over communication with the College, the employers interviewed were unequivocal in their continued support for the programme and their desire to put more employees through the course.

If it was for a technician’s job I would definitely get them to do it, because I know my employee when he has finished this he is looking to top it up to a degree, so it is a great start for them while they are working.

It is certainly a very good idea and I would hope to support it in the future by sending more people on it.

9.10 Students’ experiences of the foundation degree

9.10.1 Initial selection of students

9.10.1.1 Some students on the foundation degree had heard of foundation degrees before they applied, but their knowledge and understanding of the qualification was limited. The majority of both years 1 and 2 cited ‘enhancing their career prospects’ as one of the main reasons for selecting the course alongside wanting a higher-level qualification.
9.10.1.2 The students’ level of qualification on entry shows that some had level 3 qualifications, some only level 2, and they had entered employment through their skill and understanding of IT, without formal qualifications in this area. In interview students explained that they wanted to be able to ‘put what they knew into a certificate’, that it ‘looked better on paper’. There was concern, however, that it was difficult for a qualification to keep pace with the changes in technology, though they agreed that the principles would remain the same.

9.10.1.3 Whilst the majority of second-year students had found out about the course via a course leaflet or from the website, more of the year 1 students had been told about the course by employers, often an employer who was already supporting a student on the course. A few students stated that the timing and location of the course was part of their reason for selecting the course and certainly the running of the course in the evening was designed to fit with a standard working day and allow for students who had to travel from across the region.

9.10.1.4 Over 50% of students in both years 1 and 2 were concerned about the financial aspect of studying, though in some cases these students had their fees paid by their employer. Year 2 students felt that they had not been made aware of the costs of books that they would be required to buy at the start of the course. Year 1 students were much more likely to have concerns over how they would cope with HE level study (58%) and how they would manage studying with other commitments (58%) than year 2 students (18%) and (27%) respectively.

9.10.1.5 This suggests that the initial concerns of students had largely disappeared by the time they reached the second year of the programme. Certainly, in interview, the year 2 students did not find the programme onerous and said that there had not been as much homework as they had anticipated.

9.10.2 Students’ experiences on the course

9.10.2.1 Students were mixed in their views about the curriculum content of the foundation degree and it was obvious that with their differing job roles, differing knowledge levels on entry, and differing expectations, no course could fulfil all the requirements. The following comments are typical of those expressed:

The knowledge base here is immense so you have got people who are starting their careers as technicians, very much hands on and getting their hands dirty on a daily basis, and myself who has been there, done that, and got to management level, having to come back down to some of these things is tedious. I think they have made the course base just a little bit too wide for what they are trying to do.
The first few units were going over stuff that I personally knew but as it has progressed I think we are learning more and more and feeling slightly more challenged. Some modules were not relevant to what we do. As technicians we have just done a database module whereas as a technician you don’t need to design databases, I can understand how you need to know how one works but to design and plan a database is not related to our job really.

The first module this year was based on a desk-top technician qualification that Microsoft do and basically every bit of that was what we all already knew and took us so long to get through.

9.10.2.2 Their comments are more critical than those of their employers. In part this may be due to the employer being able to see the ‘bigger picture’ and the longer-term benefits of study at HE level, which are greater than the acquisition of practical IT skills. The course team leader explained:

Employer A wants their students to do this and Employer B wants something completely different. In the end, though, employers are a bit more generous: they know that the student is going to have an increased intellect by the end of it, that skills come and skills go, and whatever you do in the first year of the foundation degree may not be of any value in 3 or 4 years’ time. We try and sell the foundation degree to our students on the basis of ‘where are you now, what are you aiming to be doing in 10 years time? Are you still going to be sitting in the corner installing Word or are you going to be perhaps in a supervisory position where you have got responsibility, controlling other staff or looking at resource management, or even a semi-management role where you are writing reports and giving presentations?’ That is what a foundation degree should be about, not making them into better technicians.

9.10.2.3 Students’ comments on the most successful aspects of the foundation degree were more related to the immediate skills they were acquiring:

I think the CCNA has been very useful and working on hardware that we don’t usually work with, so it is a new experience which is always good.

I think it is important to know the theories behind how technology works. We might not use it day-to-day but it is important to have some knowledge, so have found the Cisco stuff quite relevant in my day-to-day working. Although I am just a technician I think it is still important as a ‘trouble shooter’ to know how things work. So I think the Cisco gives a lot more insight than the Microsoft modules.

The Cisco modules have been very useful, very happy with that, but the Microsoft ones they are overly repetitive and to be honest that particular level was too basic.

9.10.2.4 Their views on the usefulness of the Cisco and Microsoft modules reflected those of the course team at the College and their feedback had obviously influenced the changes that the team were making to the modules that were being revalidated.
9.10.2.5 Students also had comments on the structure of the programme, which they generally found good, with a clear dividing line between modules, though they had found problems with the way that the database module had been put together. There was some surprise that there was little opportunity for online working, despite the IT base of the course and the fact that some of the students had to travel 50+ miles to attend each week. This also applied to assignments that had to have paper-based copies handed in rather than emailed.

9.10.2.6 The timing of the course suited their working day, but they had found that the College was not prepared for their evening study patterns and they discovered the café was closed as was the coursework counter where they had to hand work in. Their tutors, and particularly the course leader, had been supportive in getting improvements to these issues, but students thought these services should have been in place from the start.

9.10.3 Course benefits for students

9.10.3.1 Students on the first year of the foundation degree were more positive in their comments than those on the second year. 83% of year 1 students gave the course a score of 4 or 5 (out of 5) for improving their skills, knowledge and confidence whereas this figure reduced to 45% with the second year group. Similarly 83% of year 1 students felt that the course was fully meeting their expectations with the remainder stating that it was meeting their expectations in part. They gave many comments to back this up:

The course is giving me more understanding of the subject.
I am increasing my knowledge, skills and confidence.
Course information is what I wanted to learn.

9.10.3.2 With the second year students, only 27% felt that their expectations were fully met with 65% stating that their expectations were being met in part. They gave a number of explanations for their views:

It is difficult to understand the objectives of the course.
Some material is very repetitive.
What is being taught is outdated already now.

9.10.3.3 Yet both groups found the course equally relevant to the needs of their current job with scores of 83% from the first years and 82% from the second years. In this category it was the second years who gave the fullest explanations:

I can relate more to my team and work.
IT support practicals are useful.
I am currently in technical support so it is expanding my current expertise.
My school basically gives us very little training at all.
9.10.3.4 Despite students’ varied views on the foundation degree 92% of them across years 1 and 2 said that they would, or would possibly, recommend the course to someone else.

9.10.4 Students’ progression

9.10.4.1 Students had high expectations of the top-up degree, and those who were finding the foundation degree not as stretching as they hoped were looking forward to this aspect of the qualification. 91% of year 2 students said that they were planning or possibly planning to go on to the top-up degree and 100% of year 1 students said the same. As previously noted, with the low numbers completing in 2008, the College was not planning to run the BSc as a part-time qualification until 2009.

9.10.4.2 Students very much saw the completion of the foundation degree as a means of furthering their career:

*I don’t really know what an employer wants and I suppose different employers want different things. I think that is why I chose this course because I am getting the best of both worlds, I can say to an employer that I have done a foundation degree. I can go into an interview room and say that I had the skills to be able to complete a degree for my own professional development. I think it is important to complete a degree rather than people that just stay in the job and don’t get any kind of education.*

9.10.4.3 Since starting the foundation degree 27% of year 2 students had been promoted.

9.11 Conclusions and recommendations

9.11.1 Course viability and sustainability – successes and challenges

9.11.1.1 The Foundation Degree in IT and Technical Support run at Newman University College is a good example of a course where the curriculum is balanced to deliver relevance across a wide span of employers’ needs and remain up-to-date in a fast-changing industry.

9.11.1.2 Achieving viable student numbers on this foundation degree is an ongoing challenge for the College. The College’s marketing strategies appear to have been successful from the number of students who had heard of the course through a course leaflet, but the College has had to draw on a wide regional area to gain sufficient numbers which will always raise issues of travel for students. Some new students were hearing about the course from employers who had an employee already on programme, and if the course is to remain attractive to students from across the region it may be prudent to consider ways of reducing student journeys to the College. Could there be aspects of this IT course that could be delivered online? Could students deliver their assignments by email?
Recommendation 1: The College might look at reducing student journeys to College and advertise any decisions to students to help make the course attractive.

9.11.1.3 The relevance and attractiveness of the foundation degree’s curriculum is of central importance to retaining its viability. The College’s use of vendor qualifications run by Microsoft and Cisco appears a sensible measure to ensure that it remains up to date and has a wide appeal.

9.11.1.4 However, the College needs to balance carefully what is offered to make sure that it is appropriately structured for the needs of these vocational learners. There are also questions related to curriculum design:

1. What are the main skills that the curriculum should address? If IT skills are changing rapidly, and if employers are using different IT programmes, what are the underpinning skills and knowledge that students need in order to function well in their current roles and be able to advance in their careers?

2. In order to remain viable, the course needs to attract learners whose background knowledge of IT and the work environment will be quite varied. How can the curriculum accommodate these differing levels without some students finding the course repetitive and others finding it too fast?

9.11.1.5 These issues may already have been addressed during the revalidation of the programme, but it is likely that the College will continue to need to make minor alterations to the course on an annual basis and should ensure that there are mechanisms in place for this to happen without recourse to a full revalidation.

Recommendation 2: The College might consider introducing a ‘fast track’ for students who start the course with considerable expertise. The students would have to prove their competence, for example by compiling a portfolio of evidence to gain APEL accreditation thereby reducing attendance requirements.

9.11.2 Employers’ involvement

9.11.2.1 Employers who send students on the foundation degree are not heavily involved directly with the College, though their role in supporting employees, both financially and managerially is critical. The interviews showed that employers would welcome more involvement, and that it was important that this communication should be developed to provide
a regular update on student progress. Not all employers are likely to want to be actively involved in curriculum issues, but they need to feel that they have a knowledge and understanding of the foundation degree so that they can best support their staff.

**Recommendation 3:** The College should look at developing a range of communication strands with employers. These might include:

1. A regular reporting mechanism so that employers receive details of individual student’s progress through the foundation degree, for example on completion of a module or at the end of each year.

2. An informal method of allowing employers to be updated on curriculum changes and add their comments to amendments, perhaps through an email update.

3. A formal feedback mechanism that collates employers’ comments on the programme and uses them as part of the evaluation and planning process.

**9.11.3 Students’ feedback**

9.11.3.1 Students from across years 1 and 2 found the foundation degree highly relevant to their needs and their current job roles, which is a credit to the staff at the College who have planned and designed the curriculum. However the year 2 students were mixed in their views of whether the course was meeting their expectations and were critical of some aspects of the course. Particularly they found parts of the course repetitive and the skills outdated for what they needed.

9.11.3.2 Some of these issues may well have already been addressed through the recent revalidation of the course as the College appears to have good mechanisms for student feedback, but there will be repetition as students are brought up to the same level and the curriculum will always include elements that students will not use in their workplace, so it may be that a extended induction is needed at the start of the course. This would aim to provide students with a clear understanding of the wider aims and objectives of the foundation degree and what the likely outcomes will be for them if they successfully complete the course.

**Recommendation 4:** The College might look to introduce an induction programme for new students that explains the ‘bigger picture’ of what the foundation degree is trying to achieve and that they will work on specialist programmes that may not be used in their workplace.
9.11.3.3 The College had established the timing of the foundation degree for maximum convenience of working students, which was appreciated by students and employers and no doubt contributed to many of them being able to join the course at all. However, students are justified in expecting to access College facilities during their attendance time, such as refectory, library and the coursework handing-in counter even if this is in the evening period.

9.11.3.4 The interviews of students and employers showed that access to these facilities was not always available to them. If there are relatively few courses running at an institution in an evening, then the cost element can prohibit opening all facilities, but it is usually possible for some compromise so that the facilities are open for a period during the evening to allow evening student access.

**Recommendation 5**: If the College has not resolved the evening access issue, then it could look to a compromise of partial opening to assist students in their studies.

9.11.4 Models of good practice

9.11.4.1 This case study addresses many of the issues faced by foundation degrees and shows they may be managed. These include the following:

1. Maintenance of an up-to-date curriculum in a fast-changing industry.

2. Provision of a stimulating curriculum for students who enter the course with mixed levels of skill and knowledge.

3. A good balance of specialist curriculum content from different manufacturers with wider key skills.
10. Case Study – FdA in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations (MVCO) at the University of Leicester

10.1 Methodology

10.1.1 The Foundation Degree in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations (MVCO) is a skills-based programme provided for the voluntary and community sector. The standard methodology of interviewing employers and students was followed for this case study, but it became apparent that in the voluntary and community sectors the employer might on occasions be the student or the student in a self-employed capacity. In these cases the questions were adapted to suit the circumstances.

10.1.2 Interviews were conducted with the following organisations which were involved with the foundation degree in a range of capacities, such as employers of students on the programme and/or graduates of the foundation degree:
- Northamptonshire Neighbourhood Learning Programme
- Anseer
- Victim Support Leicestershire and Rutland
- Adapt
- St. John’s Ambulance
- Crossroads South Leicestershire

10.1.3 Group interviews with students in the first and third year of the course were undertaken and an interview was also conducted with the director of the programme. Open-ended interview questions were used that had been agreed with the Steering Group as a basis for discussion and students currently on the programme were asked to complete a short questionnaire. The interviews were recorded.

Table 10.1: Interviews conducted with different respondents

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students on FdA in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations – year 1</td>
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<td>Students on FdA in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations – year 3</td>
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<td>Graduates of FdA in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations</td>
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</table>
10.2  **Key statistics**

**Table 10.2: Student numbers**

Title of foundation degree: FdA in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations

*College/university:* University of Leicester; *validating institution:* University of Leicester

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<th>Student numbers on completion of FdA</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10.3  **Structure of the foundation degree**

10.3.1  The foundation degree is offered on a part-time basis one morning per week at locations in Leicester and Northampton. The programme is divided into two levels giving students the opportunity to complete their study with a certificate of higher education (Cert HE) after 18 months if they do not wish to study for another 18 months to achieve the foundation degree.

10.3.2  A distance-learning version of the FdA is also offered using an online virtual learning environment (Blackboard), supported by a number of one-day workshops and some paper-based materials.

10.4  **Students’ highest qualifications on entry**

**Table 10.3: Qualifications of students on entry**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Level 4 or above, e.g. FD or BA/BSc</th>
<th>1 or more ‘A’ levels</th>
<th>Vocational level 3 such as BTEC ND, AVCE</th>
<th>4 or 4+ GCSEs grade C or over</th>
<th>No recorded academic qualifications</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(sample)</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>2 10%</td>
<td>5 25%</td>
<td>9 45%</td>
<td>3 15%</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/5 cohort</td>
<td>6 22%</td>
<td>6 22%</td>
<td>11 41%</td>
<td>4 15%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>27 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/6 cohort</td>
<td>8 28%</td>
<td>3 10%</td>
<td>14 48%</td>
<td>4 14%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>29 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/7 cohort</td>
<td>3 18%</td>
<td>3 18%</td>
<td>6 35%</td>
<td>4 24%</td>
<td>1 6%</td>
<td>17 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10.5 The origin of the foundation degree

10.5.1 The Institute of Lifelong Learning at the University of Leicester brought together interested individuals from the voluntary sector and staff from Leicester College to develop the curriculum. This work resulted in a pilot one-year certificate in higher education course which started in 2002 and was aimed at the voluntary and community sector. The curriculum was developed jointly by employers from the voluntary sector and staff from education. They were able to utilise a series of modules that had been developed for a Channel 4 television documentary series called ‘Voluntary Matters’ as a base from which to draw ideas. The current Programme Director was working in the voluntary sector at the time and was heavily involved in these initial developments.

10.6 Curriculum design and development

10.6.1 Once the one-year pilot course had been completed the same group designed the curriculum for the modules at the next level, turning the course into a foundation degree. They sought to build on the content in the first level to enable a smooth progression to the second level. They also reduced the number of modules and carried out a major overhaul of the curriculum.

10.6.2 The Programme Director explained the rationale behind developing this foundation degree. He said it was important for people involved in the voluntary sector to be able to understand the whole concept of the organisation from the trustee board to the receptionist and to know how the whole organisation functioned and why. They also needed to have the knowledge and confidence to work with people from public bodies on an equal footing. It is these skills and knowledge that the foundation degree covers.

10.6.3 About 80% of the course is delivered by staff working in or from the voluntary and community sector, which ensures that the course is kept relevant and up-to-date. In 2007 a distance-learning mode was introduced which gave an opportunity to review the curriculum and check that it was still current. As this course is run online it can connect directly into things that are happening in real time, so information is up-to-the-minute.

10.6.4 Vigorous student feedback is an important dimension of the course, with ongoing interaction at each session and formal feedback at the end of each module. A board of examiners takes place at the end of each level for each cohort, with the External Examiner present, and this provides an additional opportunity to check the content and quality of the course.
10.7 **Relationship with validating institution**

10.7.1 The course is validated and run by the University of Leicester and is validated by the University in the usual way.

10.8 **Course viability**

10.8.1 Recruiting sufficient students each year to ensure a viable group is a constant challenge, with student numbers lower now than they were in 2004–05 and 2005–06. There are various possible reasons for this, most significantly:

- There were bursaries available for students who joined the first cohort in 2002 and subsequent intakes benefited from access to funding from an ESF-funded project called ‘Solnet’. The voluntary sector said that the MCVO foundation degree was training that was needed for staff working in the sector and endorsed the use of this funding to support students on the course. This funding is no longer available but the Institute of Lifelong Learning negotiated a reduced fee for its foundation degree programme. The University of Leicester gives students approximately a 50% reduction on the full fee, but even so feedback from both students and employers cites the cost of the course as being a major barrier in not being able to send more employees on the programme.

- It is not uncommon for new courses to experience a higher number of applicants in the first couple of years, especially where no similar courses had been available previously. This ‘honeymoon’ period of student numbers then diminishes when many current employees have had the opportunity to undertake the course.

10.8.2 The University has been proactive in marketing of the foundation degree since the course started. As well as traditional methods, such as leaflets and flyers, the Programme Director has identified networks of community and voluntary organisations and spends considerable time visiting them to market the course. Despite this work, by 2006 it became clear that the University might struggle to recruit a group annually in both Leicester and Northampton, so the decision was taken to speed up the already planned expansion through the develop a distance-learning (d-l) mode.

10.8.3 Initially the thought was that the foundation degree (d-l) would be aimed at UK students as parts of the legislation covered on the course are specific to the UK. However, some African countries such as Kenya and Nigeria have similar charity legislation and the course now has students from these countries enrolled. The use of online materials has enabled this to happen. It would not work with a traditional paper-based approach. The d-l mode enables a much more flexible package to be offered to students. For example, students can complete the first level as a taught course and continue by distance-learning. There are currently 26 students enrolled on the dl programme.
10.8.4 Word-of-mouth has also been an effective marketing tool, with completing students encouraging other employees to take up a place. An example of this is Victim Support in Leicester where the Area Director, the Deputy Director and the Chief Administrator have all undertaken the course in succession.

10.8.5 Although some students have completed the foundation degree there has not, to date, been a BA (Honours) top-up available to them. This is currently being addressed and the University plans to offer a distance-learning programme, linked to the BA (Hons) in Human Resource Management, from Autumn 2009.

10.8.6 The enrolment statistics show that there are significant numbers of students who did not progress from the first level to the second level, particularly from the 2004–05 cohort. All students have the opportunity to leave after completing the requirements for the Certificate in Higher Education and the figures show that approximately 20% of students take this option each year. However, this does leave a number of students who did not complete the first-level modules. Students cited a range of personal and work-related reasons for having to leave the course, but the course team also think that some of the 2004–05 cohort, who were awarded bursaries, were less committed than subsequent cohorts, who had to invest in the course themselves.

10.8.7 The students who left tended to do so within the first few weeks of starting the foundation degree and the course team concluded that extra support and study skills embedded in the first module would be helpful. These have been introduced and the drop-out figures have reduced in subsequent years. When the d-l mode was designed staff were aware that the students would need a lot of support at the early stages of the programme. They broke the first d-l module down so that small pieces of assessment would be submitted on an ongoing basis. This meant that all the assessment for the first module would be completed by the time they had progressed through the module. The d-l variant is highly structured but offers extensive resources that can be accessed online. The evidence so far is that students are happy with this mode of delivery and the drop-out rate is extremely low.

10.9 Employers’ involvement

10.9.1 College – employers’ relationship

10.9.1.1 The relationship between the University and employers is closely interwoven with much of the programme being delivered by staff who are part-time and are also employed in the voluntary and community sector. Although it is not a requirement, approximately 95% of the students are employed in the sector and the remainder are likely to be working as volunteers or working in a related area, perhaps in an unpaid capacity.
10.9.1.2 The relationship is further complicated as the majority of the organisations involved are governed by trustees rather than run by an employer, so although they will have paid employees, the concept of an employer is different to the private sector.

10.9.1.3 The Programme Director would like employers to be more involved, perhaps through a ‘think tank’ of people from the sector, but it is difficult to get people together. If an employer has any concerns they would be encouraged to talk these through with the Programme Director, though no issues have been raised so far. The Programme Director is a member of a learning consortium in the voluntary sector, but acknowledges that the voluntary sector is made up of diverse organisations which often run their own training so it is difficult to get a comprehensive picture of what employers need and want.

10.9.1.4 Employers interviewed for this study were highly supportive of the course. They were not interested in becoming more closely involved in curriculum design and development, but they would like greater contact with the University, to receive information on student progress and to have the opportunity to comment on the course. As the Manager from the Neighbourhood Learning Programme said:

Telephone and email contact would have been useful and to be asked to mentor them and give feedback. I think that would be really useful for us and useful for me as a manager, because I feel as though I am personally supporting my team rather than just providing the money and time; I would like to be actually involved in it and able to recognise what they are doing and write positive comments about them.

10.9.2 Course impact

10.9.2.1 Students and employers interviewed were highly complimentary about the benefits of the foundation degree for them and their work, with some calling it ‘inspirational’. Their comments covered a range of areas:

10.9.2.2 Capacity building for the organisation. Some of the voluntary and community organisations did not have in place the procedures and policies they needed and did not have the experience to develop them. For this group the foundation degree modules were vital. As the Manager of Anseer explained:

If I am not sure of something, then R will go through her notes for me. Recently we were going through recruiting new people as trustees on the management committee and she has helped me a lot with what I should be looking for and what rules and responsibilities and laws we should be aware of when I met the prospective trustees.
A newly-completed student reinforced these comments:

*When I first started they hadn’t got a health and safety policy, child protection, strategic plans, objectives, visions, there was none of the strategic planning or regulated documents, and it was fantastic for me because working for a charity was new to me so I was learning at the same time. As we did a module on child protection I did a child protection policy. As we did something on health and safety I did a health and safety policy. So when we apply for funding, if they come back to me and ask if we have got policy X, I know we have and that it is up to date and legal, so it has been brilliant for me.*

And the Manager from Victim Support added:

*There is no doubt in my mind that this course is absolutely vital. In a world where employment legislation is getting more complex and funding more difficult, the skills offered in this course are vital for our existence and development. The course really does set you up for impressing potential funders and potential partners. If you have staff who are able to set out a professional approach it really helps.*

10.9.2.3 *Capacity and confidence building for the student.* All the employers interviewed thought that the course was highly useful to their employee(s), both in terms of the knowledge gained and the improvement in levels of confidence. The Manager from the Neighbourhood Learning Programme said:

*The course has been very relevant and it has had real impact on their work. They have used the knowledge that they have gained to help them plan and devise things that they have been doing at work and it has certainly made them more confident academically.*

10.9.2.4 *Sharing knowledge and experience.* Managers and students commented on the benefits of being part of a group and being able to learn from each other. They commented that there was a wealth of experience within the group and they could find answers to all sorts of questions, including learning about funding opportunities. There was also the potential to make new contacts, as the Manager from Victim Support explained:

*Being there with other people from the voluntary sector was useful in terms of new possible partnerships and talking about how things happen.*

A student who had completed the foundation degree echoed this point:

*As well as the course and the content, it has been really good meeting lots of other people from the charity sector and lots of people have contacted each other since and helped each other out in different areas.*
10.9.3 Employers’ contribution

10.9.3.1 Employers are not involved in assessing work and there is no need for them to be providers of work experience, as the majority of students are already employed. Some provide financial support for students and many of them provide time off for studying as the course is run during the day time.

10.9.3.2 The managers interviewed all supported their staff through formal and informal appraisals and were kept well-informed by the student on what was being covered on the foundation degree. Although neither students nor employers used the term ‘mentor’, they were clearly providing mentor support as this comment from the Manager from Anseer shows:

*We talk about the course – she always brings ideas and what she has learned from the course and we work together on whatever knowledge she has gained.*

10.9.3.3 Managers were supportive because they could see the benefits to the organisation of someone being on the course. Students were able to demonstrate how much they had learned and had been able to implement new ideas into the organisation. Students were greatly appreciative of the support they had received from their managers, both financial and course-related.

10.10 Students’ experiences of the foundation degree

10.10.1 Initial selection of students

10.10.1.1 The majority of students heard about the foundation degree from a course leaflet or website, though word-of-mouth from employers or colleagues was another popular route. Their reasons for selecting the course varied, though over 80% said that ‘enhancing career prospects’ was one of the main factors. Some were recommended the foundation degree by their employer, others knew that they wanted to study at a higher level, and others were new to working in the voluntary sector and wanted a course to help, as students from across the years described:

*I had only just recently gone into post with the charity that I work for, my background is marketing so I really hadn’t got any idea about the day-to-day running of a charity, the regulations and what was expected, so it was because of that that I thought it would put me in the right direction and it has been excellent*

*My line manager had undertaken the course a year before me and he explained the benefits of doing it and I was signed up that way.*

*I wanted to do something in HE and because I have four children the timing is very convenient for me.*

*I needed to find a degree that was suitable to the work I was doing and I was interested in, and this just fitted.*
I had never managed to go to university and so thought this was the ideal opportunity to work and study at the same time.

10.10.1.2 None of the students interviewed were familiar with foundation degrees before they started the programme, but those who asked for information found that the open days and information service provided by the University were helpful and thorough.

10.10.1.3 Students did have concerns before they started the course, though for students now in their third year, these were not financial as the majority had been in receipt of a bursary to support them. Both first-year and third-year students felt the areas of greatest concern to them were how they would juggle study with family commitments and how much time the course would take. They explained:

The whole juggling thing, work and other voluntary commitments and also doing this degree, how am I going to juggle all this? And it is still is a juggling act but I am getting there.

I had a child when I started the course and now they help me with some child minding, but I was still concerned with all of the study and how I would cope with the assignments and everything.

Time to do the work, trying to work full-time and doing a degree course and fitting in other training that has to be done at the same time – it is not easy.

10.10.1.4 There was also the anxiety of coping with the level of study required:

I was concerned that with it being a degree, what kind of language was going to be used? Would I be able to understand it? But the fact that the course is split into modules and there is a variety of tutors has really helped.

Having never undertaken any academic study at all I was concerned at whether I would be able to fit in and cope at an intellectual level. Would I be left struggling when the concepts were raised? Would they be beyond my capability to cope?

10.10.2 Students’ experiences on the course

10.10.2.1 Students’ experiences on the course varied between the different years. It was clear that students on the first year of the foundation degree were benefiting from the additional support and guidance that had been integrated into the first modules of the course to help combat the levels of students dropping out in previous cohorts. Students in the first year commented:

I think we had a lot of reassurance, particularly in the first module, and a lot of guidance and we were listened to. Most of us voiced concerns about return to study and certainly that was a big angst for me and we did receive a lot of support and we have been offered the opportunity to have an extra tutorial on completing assignments, so I feel that has been very reassuring and very helpful.
10.10.2.2 By contrast students on the third year of the course commented:

*It was difficult in the early days because you feel like you want to be seen to be confident and you know what you are doing, it is very difficult to say ‘do I really know how to write an essay?’ It would have helped maybe to have a session or module completely on the differences between reports, essays and assignments. I think in the beginning the size of the class was so big, and all at different levels academically that to be honest I did feel really left out.*

10.10.2.3 There were no consistent views on the location of the course, which in Leicester has a central city location at the University’s Vaughan College. Some students liked the quiet location and found it less daunting and more relaxed than if they had been based on the University’s main campus. Others wanted to be on campus and be a ‘proper student’.

10.10.2.4 Students on the third year of the course commented that three years of study was a long time, not only a long commitment, but that their circumstances had often changed several times over the years. This had been reflected in their attendance patterns and attitudes. One student, who was nearing completion of the course, commented:

*It started off alright, it was manageable, but I have had several changes in my work life and stages where it has been very, very difficult. I was in the middle of a job change and I couldn’t cope with it all so I asked for extra time and I have been allowed the time for this last module.*

10.10.2.5 This flexibility and on-course support was a feature of the course that the third year students were clear about:

*I have always felt supported, If I can't hand in an essay I know that I can say I have got problems and can't hand it in. I think that as the tutors have worked in the voluntary sector themselves, they have an understanding that sometimes, if things come up, you have to prioritise your work and the university study does have to take a back seat. We can get extensions which enables you to solve the problem at work and then come back to your studies.*

10.10.2.6 Students raised a few preferences for different modules and felt some were too long or too short. The first-year students particularly liked the module on stress and time management and felt that this could have been a longer module. Third-year and completed students felt that the quality of module delivery varied considerably with different tutors, but they had fed back comments on this and they said that the position had improved.
10.10.2.7 One employer had experienced two of her staff not continuing with the course because they did not feel they had received adequate support. One of them was dyslexic and this led the employer to question whether sufficient resources were embedded into the foundation degree to support learners with individual learning needs. Some students who had completed the foundation degree raised tutor support as an issue and felt that they had not been offered enough tutorials during the course.

10.10.2.8 Feedback from d-l students who had completed modules showed that, despite some difficulties in accessing recommended reading, they were enjoying the foundation degree. The majority who commented on the structure of the course found it well-structured and thought the frequent assignments during the first module helped them, though one or two would have preferred the opportunity to write longer assignments. The following comment is typical of the group:

_I enjoyed the first module. I am not sure how the other modules are going to be set, but I liked the way we had to produce work each week which meant no major assignments at the end. I learned loads._

10.10.2.9 As the first cohort of d-l students have progressed through the foundation degree their feedback has been largely positive and mainly related to the practicalities of studying by d-l mode. Some would have liked more contact with a tutor than the once a term they had been allocated. They do comment, though not in large numbers, on the inevitable difficulties of communicating with fellow students, as these examples demonstrate:

_I have answered ‘no’ to the question of us having sufficient opportunities for discussion, simply because of the limitations of a d-l course. I am conscious that I have been late in doing some of the discussion boards because of pressures elsewhere._

_I would really like to have more communication with other students, but don't know how to stimulate ‘chat’ on the Chill Out Zone. Maybe different cohorts could interact?_

10.10.3 Course benefits for students

10.10.3.1 Students were full of praise for the many ways that the course was beneficial for them. 100% of all the first and third-year students interviewed rated the course as ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’ at improving their skills, knowledge and confidence levels.
10.10.3.2 Their comments spanned a range of areas. The improvement in their levels of confidence was commented on by several of the students. This is an example from a third-year student:

*In the first year I struggled trying to write essays again after 20 years, when the last one I wrote was at school, but now I think I am more confident in doing a lot of things I wasn't confident in doing then. I am still doing the same job and have still got a hectic lifestyle but I can manage it better. I am not saying it is all stress free but I have learned to manage my own life better.*

10.10.3.3 The first-year students also commented on the effects of the course on their confidence:

*It has clearly built my confidence and the chairman has acknowledged that. I feel much more able to vocalise my opinions and thoughts at trustee boards which I wasn’t able to do it before. I didn’t feel that I could, because I didn’t feel that I had the knowledge to reinforce my point, but now I do and I have definitely noticed the difference and so have the staff.*

*I am as clever as the next person, but it is having that belief, and I think that the course has given me that extra confidence, so it has been a real boost to me.*

*Confidence – 100%. I now have the confidence to go to other meetings where there are professional people and listen and have a say with my ideas.*

10.10.3.4 Students also found the content of the modules extremely relevant to their work with 100% of third-year students and 83% of first-year students agreeing that the course was relevant to the needs of their current job. Students on first and third years of the course commented:

*I think that everybody who is involved with a charity, whether a large one or a little one like ourselves, should do the course, I think it is one of the most beneficial courses out there and we have learnt such a lot and it has guided us in the right direction – it has been excellent.*

*I think the course has been useful, you can implement elements in work life and personal life, and all the modules have been really useful.*

*I have learned a lot which I have been able to take back and introduce to the trustees and implement.*

*It reinforced the value of trying to manage projects and staff management structures. Good management practice was the underlying reinforcement which I was able to relate directly to my work.*

10.10.3.5 Students commented on the opportunities the course gave them to stand back from their work and reflect on what was needed:

*It has helped me to reflect on current working practices, and it has consolidated my knowledge base, and the areas that I need to dig into a bit deeper.*
It is really good to come in on a Thursday morning and focus on how to improve yourself and also your organisation and the way you work and manage – that is really useful. There have been some things that people think is not relevant for them, for example because they are not trustees, but it is relevant and as the sessions have gone on I think everyone has benefited from those sessions as well.

10.10.3.6 Some students gave particular examples of how the course had helped them:

A few modules back, the assessment was to do a lobbying pack for a campaign, and a few weeks back I had a campaign day and I have now got three replies from central government and one of the MPs wants me to respond to that so he can then take it on and lobby further.

For me it has been being in a class and debating issues round a table with other people. Everyone comes from different organisations, and we have different views and ideas and I have gained an awful lot of knowledge from those class discussions – I have really found that useful.

I have learned more from class debates than anything else, because then you pick up on people’s thought patterns as well.

10.10.3.7 Distance-learning students often commented on the amount they had learned and how they had been able to take ideas back to work and solve issues. Mainly they described their personal development, as this example shows:

These past two months has taught me probably more than I have ever learned in my entire life. I am still not sure how I have managed to study, work, volunteer and be a mother and housewife all at once. I am very grateful for all the support given. I think this is a very well-planned programme. I am enjoying the course a lot.

10.10.4 Students’ progression

10.10.4.1 Several of the students interviewed had changed their jobs since starting the foundation degree, and in some cases they were clear that the course had helped them to gain promotion or new employment through their increased skills and knowledge, and particularly through their increased levels of self-confidence. Those who had completed the degree commented on how they felt different since doing the course, as a recently-completed student explained:

I feel wiser and more confident. Three years ago I could never stand in front of a group of people, never mind a class of twenty and say what I wanted to say without having a trembling voice.
10.10.4.2 80% of third-year students said that their career aspirations had changed since taking the course and 67% of first years hoped to go on to a top-up degree on completion of the foundation degree.

10.10.4.3 There were more comments from third-year students, and those who had completed the foundation degree, on the lack of opportunities to progress on to a BA top up than on anything else. Some felt frustrated that they had thought the top-up would be available when they finished. A typical comment from a student who had completed the foundation degree was:

The one disappointment is that we can't go on to the next level, we have had a break and now it is going to be very difficult for us to go back. People from our group are saying 'we have not studied for 18 months, we are not going to do it now'. If you can carry straight on it is much easier otherwise you get out of the habit of writing assignment and essays.

10.11 Conclusions and recommendations

10.11.1 Course viability and sustainability – successes and challenges

10.11.1.1 The Foundation Degree in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations is a good example of a foundation degree that works in partnership with relevant organisations so that its curriculum is firmly based on the key skills needed by staff working in the sector.

10.11.1.2 Despite the excellent relevance of its curriculum, the foundation degree is facing the challenge of maintaining adequate student numbers for a viable group. There are several steps that the Programme Director has taken to try to remedy this position:

1. Proactive marketing techniques employing widespread leaflet circulation and follow-up visits to local community and voluntary organisations.

2. Availability of bursaries to remove the financial barriers for prospective students. This, however, proved to be a mixed blessing as it seems likely that students in receipt of a bursary were less committed to the course and more likely to leave early.

3. Development of a distance-learning (d-l) mode of study. This excellent new development has enabled the curriculum to reach a far wider audience than it could through traditional teaching methods.
10.11.1.3 There are various additional strategies that could be employed cost-effectively to help expand student numbers:

1. The foundation degree groups taught by traditional mode are focussed locally on employees in Leicester and Northampton, yet some foundation degrees manage to attract students on more of a regional basis. It is possible that visits to organisations in adjoining counties might lead to wider student recruitment.

2. Some of the organisations involved with the foundation degree, such as Victim Support, explained that they no longer had control over the staff development budget which was now administered nationally. With the existence of the d-l mode, as well as the traditionally taught group, now would seem an ideal time to discuss the foundation degree with the nationally-appointed officers and advocate it being adopted by them on a national basis. They could also be invited to be involved in making amendments to suit the needs of their employees. This might possibly entail offering it as individual modules building to appropriate certification.

**Recommendation 1:** The University could look to expand student numbers through visits to community and voluntary organisations on a regional and national basis.

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10.11.2 Employers’ involvement

10.11.2.1 The foundation degree provides an excellent model for the manner in which it involved employers in the design of the course and subsequently for the way employers are involved in the delivery of the programme. However, this involvement is necessarily restricted to a few employers and rarely includes those who are supporting students on the course. Employers who are currently supporting students suggested that they would like more contact with the University. They were not asking for regular meetings or to be able to change the curriculum, but they would like feedback on how their employees were progressing, whether this was informally through a phone call or email or a more formal report.

**Recommendation 2:** The University could look at developing and improving its communications with employers through, perhaps, setting up a regular reporting mechanism for feedback to employers on students’ progress, and occasional phone calls or emails for general feedback and comments.
10.11.3 Students’ feedback

10.11.3.1 All the students interviewed had positive comments on the relevance of the foundation degree to their working needs and how it was helping their knowledge and skill levels. They were highly satisfied about the content of the modules and thought the course would be of value to all working in the voluntary sector. It also gave them general management skills that they thought would be of use in any setting. They particularly praised the way that the foundation degree had helped to develop their self-confidence and gave many examples of what they were now confident to undertake compared to their pre-course position. The opportunity to learn from each other in a group setting was one that many students appreciated and one that d-l students have limited scope to experience.

10.11.3.2 For many students the foundation degree represented the first studying that they had done for a long time and their unfamiliarity with higher education study does provide one possible explanation of why some students leave the course early. In part this situation has been remedied through the introduction of extra support and study skills into the first module, but there are some additional support mechanisms that the University might consider introducing:

1. *Pre-course introductory module or summer school*. Students could be provided with more information on what the course will entail, and be assessed for any additional learning needs that they may have. Additional learning support could then be in place for the start of the course.

2. *Work-place mentors*. Some students did receive support from a colleague or line manager at work, but this is not embedded as an essential part of the support structure.

3. *Additional tutorial support*. Students were greatly satisfied with the tutor support that they received, but some students were not clear of what they could ask for, nor how often. This also applied to distance-learning students.

**Recommendation 3**: The University might look at extending its support and guidance systems for students, particularly in the early stages of the course when students are not familiar with higher education or foundation degrees.

**Recommendation 4**: The University might look at requesting employers to provide a work-place mentor as a formal requirement for students on the foundation degree.
10.11.3.3 Students on the distance-learning mode were also highly complimentary about the foundation degree and how they were benefiting from it. Although there have only been two cohorts of students so far undertaking the programme, it would seem that this d-l mode will be an excellent way for the foundation degree to sustain student numbers. The end of module feedback mechanism provides students with a very good way to comment on what has worked for them, and what hasn’t. Their comments do not show any obvious concerns with the course, though it would be beneficial if they could have greater opportunities for occasional group study sessions and greater group interaction.

**Recommendation 5:** Within the limitations of studying by distance learning, students could be encouraged and facilitated to engage in greater group interaction. Some of this will be ‘on line’ but there will be some students who are geographically near to each other and could be encouraged to meet on an occasional basis.

10.11.3.4 The main concern of students was their inability to continue their studies on to a full honours degree. Whilst this situation should be resolved by Autumn 2009, it is possible that some students who completed the foundation degree some time ago will find that the interruption means that they have broken their study habits and it may no longer be convenient for them to continue.

10.11.3.5 The lateness in developing a progression route from the foundation degree has impeded student progress, but it should be seen in the context of what has been achieved. The opportunity for employees in the voluntary sector to undertake a foundation degree has been a life-changing experience for many who never thought they would gain a higher-education qualification, and they paid tribute to the Programme Director and other staff who helped them to realise this goal.

**10.11.4 Models of good practice**

10.11.4.1 This case study raises many of the issues that are common to foundation degrees and provides some excellent examples of ways to address them. These include the following:

1. Effective involvement of employers in the design and delivery of the curriculum.

2. Use of a variety of marketing techniques to reach employers.

3. The development of a distance-learning mode of study.
11. Conclusions and Recommendations

The overall aim of this concluding section is to provide a useful answer to the question: What makes a successful foundation degree?

The literature review provided a great deal of information and guidance on best practice and how to create demand for foundation degrees. The survey and the five case studies carried out as part of this research project have provided a wealth of very useful, interesting and revealing information and statistics. In addition, the discussions in the Steering Group, and elsewhere in the Colleges–University of Leicester Network (CULN), have made highly valuable and insightful contributions to the research project.

As a result, it is possible to reach a number of conclusions.

11.1 Employers’ involvement

11.1.1 The role of employers has emerged as a complex and varied theme. Employers are acknowledged by all sources to be of considerable importance to the success of a foundation degree. The survey showed that the foundation degrees that were active had significantly higher employer involvement than those that were not running. This correlation suggests a causal relationship between the extent of employer involvement and whether the foundation degree was active.

11.1.2 However, the survey responses showed that employers were involved relatively little in the delivery of the programmes or in assessing student work. Their main role was in the provision of work experience. As reported in Chapter 5, in the survey only 20% of respondents said that they had ongoing employers’ participation, and only 6% said that they had more involvement now than when the course first started. There were examples from both the survey and the case studies of active foundation degrees that had little employers’ involvement. This variation would suggest that it is not necessary to be prescriptive over the extent of employers’ involvement, but rather it needs to be flexible and suited to individual circumstances.

11.1.1 Employers’ involvement in course concept and curriculum design

11.1.1.1 The extent of employers’ involvement in the initial concept of a foundation degree varied considerably and this was also true for employers’ involvement in the development of the curriculum. The literature research revealed recommendations that education institutions needed to ‘create demand’ for foundation degrees in some instances and certainly some of the case studies showed that the initial impetus had been from the college or university who then ‘sold’ the idea to
employers. There was only one case study where the first approach had been from an employer and that was the Foundation Degree in Leadership and Management (Late-Night Entertainment). There were also examples of a partnership approach with employers jointly involved in the design and development of a foundation degree, such as the Foundation Degree in Families, Parenting and Communities which was developed jointly by Sure Start and higher and further education.

11.1.1.2 However much employer involvement varied, at both the initial stages and when the curriculum was being designed, the case studies showed positive feedback from employers and students over the relevance of the curriculum to their work needs. Apart from one or two concerns in IT, where the rapidly-changing nature of the subject made it difficult to be completely up-to-date in every module, employers were highly satisfied with what was being taught. In the case studies, students rated the courses highly for their relevance to their work in every case, as the figures below demonstrate:

Table 11.1: Students’ ratings of four of the case-study foundation degrees as relevant to their work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of foundation degree</th>
<th>FdSc in Sport and Exercise Years 1, 2, and those completed</th>
<th>FdA in Leadership and Management (Late-Night) Entertainment Years 2 and 3</th>
<th>FdSc in IT and Technical Support Year 1</th>
<th>FdSc in IT and Technical Support Year 2</th>
<th>FdA in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations Year 1</th>
<th>FdA in Managing Voluntary and Com Organisations Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance to work</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11.1.2 Employers’ involvement in the delivery of foundation degrees

11.1.2.1 The survey results indicated that employers were rarely involved in the delivery of the curriculum, but the case studies showed that the actual pattern of engagement varied greatly. In the case of the FdA in Leadership and Management (Late-Night Entertainment) the course was jointly delivered on the employer’s premises, whilst with the FdA in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations (MCVO) some people from the voluntary sector were employed to help deliver the course. There was no set pattern or model that was typical of the foundation degrees that were analysed.

11.1.2.2 Information from meetings of the Steering Group showed that on many occasions employers do not see course delivery or student assessment as relevant to them, but there were also examples of employer-mentoring programmes that had helped to extend employer input into foundation degrees. Once involved in the foundation degrees most if not all employers became highly enthusiastic about their benefits.
11.1.3 Employers' involvement in marketing and publicity

11.1.3.1 Interviews with employers and students showed that they frequently lacked information on, and knowledge about, foundation degrees. Few had heard of foundation degrees before they became involved in the course and in most cases it was the subject they were first interested in and sought information about rather than the qualification.

11.1.3.2 Few employers who were interviewed were involved in marketing activities for the foundation degree. The exception was the Foundation Degree in Leadership and Management (Late-Night Entertainment) where the employer publicised the course to all employees at managerial level and produced an in-house newsletter that highlighted the success of the foundation degree. Another employer, who provided work experience for students on the FdSc in Sport and Exercise Development, suggested various ways that there could be an exchange of publicity information for mutual benefit.

11.1.3.3 It emerged from the case studies that marketing is an often neglected area, but many considered that implementation of a comprehensive marketing strategy would require additional resources. In several cases the recommendations made in the concluding sections of the case studies highlight a need to expand marketing activities. For many of the foundation degrees reviewed, effective ways of spreading information about the degree needs to be found if the numbers are to remain viable.

11.1.4 Employers' relationships with the college or university

11.1.4.1 The study has found that employers enjoyed good relations with the college or university with which they were engaged. In their interviews, employers were consistent in their praise for the foundation degree and the provider.

11.1.4.2 However, there did appear to be a number of missed opportunities for contact between employers, colleges and universities. In the concluding section of a number of the case studies there are recommendations that staff at the college or university should develop a more comprehensive communications strategy with the employers with which they are working.

11.1.4.3 In particular, employers said they would like more feedback on the progress of their employees, who were students on the foundation degree, and more regular reports. It seemed surprising how many employers said that they were given no information on the course, their employee or the student’s progress.

11.1.4.4 In a minority of cases employers also asked to be more involved and felt they could assist in course delivery or assessment. Employers were also quick to point out that the time they had available for involvement in any programme was severely restricted and they were not looking for invitations to meetings.
11.1.4.5 It was reported at a meeting of the Steering Group that some employers were being approached by so many different training agencies that they were suffering overload and becoming resistant to any further requests. The research has indicated that it may be better to take a different and more subtle approach. This would involve talking to employers about their continuing professional development requirements rather than using a phrase that includes the word ‘degree’.

11.1.4.6 Greater utilisation of organisations such as sector skills councils (SSCs) is another route to more successful employer involvement. The research has suggested that course developers should establish at the outset what they want from employer engagement and what the outcomes are likely to be for employers.

11.1.5 Employers’ involvement in finance and other support

11.1.5.1 Many students who were on part-time foundation degrees benefited from financial support from their employer, or assistance in other ways, as the figures below show. The other support provided by employers included time off for study and travelling expenses.

Table 11.2: Financial and other support provided by employers for students on three of the case-study foundation degrees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of foundation degree</th>
<th>FdA in Leadership and Management (Late-Night) Entertainment Years 2 and 3</th>
<th>FdSc in IT and Technical Support Year 1</th>
<th>FdSc in IT and Technical Support Year 2</th>
<th>FdA in Managing Voluntary and Com Organisations Year 1</th>
<th>FdA in Managing Voluntary and Com Organisations Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fee subsidy from employer</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>20%(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other support by employer</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (a) A bursary was available to this cohort.

11.1.5.2 As reported in Chapter 5, when respondents to the survey were asked to comment on the factors that had contributed to the success of their foundation degree, there were many comments relating to the impact of student fees. These included the importance of fee subsidies from employers, fee subsidies from other sources, and the overall level of the fees. These views were reinforced in undertaking the case studies. The evidence indicates that getting the level of student fees right, or getting financial support for students, can be important in the success of foundation degrees.
11.2 Course/programme flexibility

11.2.1 One of the key attractions of foundation degrees is their flexibility and adaptability. They are unusual in trying to provide highly flexible delivery modes and study patterns for students. It has been difficult to obtain firm evidence about the extent to which this is taking place, though the range of modes of study from survey returns and the specific examples in the case studies do provide useful information.

11.2.2 The survey results showed that the percentage of students studying full-time (21% in 2006–07) on the CULN foundation degrees was a good deal lower than the HEFCE statistics revealed for the whole of England (58% in 2006–07). This could indicate that CULN members do provide a wider than average range of delivery modes. In terms of the ratio between full-time and part-time modes of study, it is difficult to discern a trend from the survey data reported in Chapter 5.

11.2.3 There is an inevitable trade-off between flexibility and viability, with student feedback asking for different modes of study, venues, times etc, but in the end a deciding factor is what can be afforded and what the majority of students will accept. In some cases it appeared that improvements to the flexibility of the programme would help to expand student numbers, or facilitate their continuation on the course, but such changes would also have resource implications.

11.2.4 Information from the Steering Group emphasised the need for flexibility in course delivery to meet employers’ as well as potential students’ requirements. There was evidence that many employers wanted small ‘bite-sized’ accredited courses that would build towards a foundation degree. Some employers wanted courses tailored to meet their particular needs. However, viability remained an issue – one solution might be to develop bespoke elements tailored for particular employers which could be added to more generic courses.

11.2.5 The ability of funding mechanisms and university validation procedures to cope with flexible and modular programmes was not investigated. However, the results from the CULN survey and from the case studies indicated that colleges were generally positive about the relationship they had with their validating institution. As reported in Chapter 5, 66% of those who responded thought communication was good or excellent.

11.2.6 In the case studies there was considerable variation between validating institutions over what course changes were allowed without invoking full revalidation procedures, and the length of time it took for changes to be effected. Some colleges and employers commented that they found the process of making changes slow and difficult, and that their validating institution was not geared up to the frequent course updates required by the changing circumstances of an employer-led foundation degree. However, the survey of all the CULN foundation degrees found that 81% thought the speed of validation was good or excellent.
11.3 Course/programme viability and sustainability

11.3.1 One of the measures of the success of a foundation degree is the number of students enrolled on the programme and the survey data provided the opportunity to investigate this further. As reported in Chapter 5, the number of foundation degrees, in CULN institutions, with between 11 and 50 students enrolled increased each year from 2004–05 to 2007–08. As shown in Figure 5.2, the sustained increase was particularly evident for courses with between 21 and 50 students, which amounted to 15 courses in 2007–08. However, there were still a number of courses with between 6 and 10 students enrolled (10 courses in 2007–08) which is a substantial number of courses with low numbers that must raise questions about their financial viability. Different modes of study may also have an impact on the cost of delivering a programme.

11.3.2 The survey provided examples of course numbers fluctuating year-on-year, with occasional peaks as either changes in workforce legislation or other environmental factors meant that a large cohort was seeking a foundation degree level qualification. This can cause difficulties for education providers who have invested resources in developing a programme and then find that they struggle to recruit sufficient numbers for the course to be viable.

11.3.3 The reasons behind the changing numbers seem to fall into several categories:

- **Legislative and occupational changes** – such as in the pilot case study where workforce development changes were affecting employer support and funding.

- **Honeymoon period** – where student numbers are initially good, but decline after the first couple of years because the course has already enrolled most if not all the interested students within the local area. Some evidence of this happening was reported in the case study of the FdA in managing Voluntary and Community Organisations. Although the FdA in Leadership and Management (Late-Night Entertainment) also showed a large decline in student numbers, the ongoing numbers were sufficiently high for viability not to be an issue.

- **Economic changes** – this could cover a range of circumstances where students were no longer able to afford to study, or employers were not able to offer support, such as the recession which appeared to be developing at the end of 2008.

- **Local or regional competition** – this might occur when another provider introduces a similar foundation degree.
11.3.4 The information from the survey and the case studies showed that there is no room for any complacency when offering a foundation degree. The education practitioners involved are likely to have to work hard year-on-year to ensure that their foundation degree is meeting the changing requirements of the environment, and the employers, and is therefore in a good position to recruit sufficient students to ensure viability.

11.3.5 In the survey, colleges and universities were asked to rate the factors that contributed to the success of their foundation degrees. As shown in Figure 5.9 in Chapter 5, they rated effective progression routes as the most significant (60%). This was followed by the level of fees (36%), time off and study release (33%), fee subsidies (30%) and active employer encouragement (30%).

11.3.6 Respondents to the survey were also asked to rate the success of their foundation degree according to eight criteria. As shown in Figure 5.11, the least successful aspects were seen as the conversion rate from enquiries to enrolments (33%), overall student recruitment (36%), student retention (45%) and the course viability (57%). All of these relate in various ways to the course viability indicating that the education providers involved had some concerns about the sustainability of their foundation degrees.

11.3.7 The survey also showed that 28% of courses developed by CULN members were not active, either because they were not running yet, or abandoned, or not likely to run. As shown in Table 5.5, the main reasons given were poor enrolments, the course had not yet been validated, or the course was still in development. The explanation ‘no enrolment or poor enrolment’ was provided for 9 out of 29 responses with another 2 mentioning ‘not financially viable’.

11.3.8 There were differences between subject areas with courses developed in business and performing arts and music running a much higher risk of not being active than courses in sport, community and social studies, education, and hospitality and tourism.

11.3.9 There are many possible reasons for these differences, such as the legislative support for courses in education and the availability of alternative, highly-respected professional qualifications, in business for example. However, all courses that have been developed will have incurred costs, and these are a drain on college or university resources when the course does not run. The information in Table 5.3 also provides a useful indication of subject areas in the region which are well supported by foundation degrees.
11.3.10 The data from the case studies indicated that the numbers of students dropping out of some courses could be quite significant. The feedback from students and practitioners indicated varying reasons:

- Change of family or work circumstances.
- Change of employment.
- Leaving after gaining an interim qualification.
- Lack of understanding of what was required in studying for a foundation degree.
- Insufficient support and guidance to help the student return to study.
- Insufficient ongoing support by employer mentor or college tutor.

11.3.11 Some of the case studies provided examples of what had been put in place in subsequent years to try to reduce this haemorrhaging of student numbers. In particular, the provision of support systems at the first stages of the foundation degree, and dividing early modules into short assessed blocks, seemed to be effective.

11.3.12 A common theme that emerged from the case studies was that there were large variations in the ability and knowledge levels of students enrolling on the foundation degrees. Many students fitted the profile of not having undertaken any academic study for several years and being unsure of how they would cope with academic study.

11.3.13 Some course managers were more aware of the need for strategies to cope with mixed groups than others and it was interesting to note that several courses had recently introduced new systems to support students. An inhibiting factor continued to be finance, which limited how flexible a course could be to meet individual learning needs of students.

11.4 The impact of foundation degrees

11.4.1 Employers interviewed as part of the case studies were overwhelmingly positive about the foundation degree, with which they were involved, and its impact on their business. The evidence from this study indicates that employers who are actively involved in a foundation degree generally rate the qualification highly. There was consistent praise for the skills that were being taught with some calling the degree ‘inspirational’.
11.4.2 All the case studies showed that students who were on the course were benefiting from their studies. Their technical or specialist skills were advancing, but it was particularly their confidence levels that were showing improvement. Students and employers were able to give many examples of how the foundation degree had helped them in the workplace and enabled them to take on roles of which they had not previously felt capable, or work at a higher level and get promoted in some cases.

11.4.3 Students described being on a foundation degree as hard work, but said it was rewarding and motivating. Where an employer was funding a student to do the foundation degree, this investment was also motivating for students. Where small organisations were involved in sending students on a foundation degree, such as the FdA in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations, they reported that sometimes they were able to apply the skills taught immediately to the benefit of their business.

11.4.4 Managers from the FdA in Management and Leadership (Late-Night Entertainment) were impressed with the reduced staff turnover since staff had joined the foundation degree programme. All agreed that taking a foundation degree improved a student’s employability and opportunities for progression.

11.4.5 The findings from the survey and the case studies showed that education providers were confident about the quality of the foundation degree that they were offering and proud of its ability to transform lives. When designed in a responsive manner, foundation degrees seem more than capable of achieving their objectives of providing an intermediate level technical/professional qualification that integrates work-based learning and meets the needs of employers and students.

11.5 Common themes that emerged from the case studies

11.5.1 Each of the five foundation degrees selected as case studies has its own distinctive features. They vary in terms of curriculum and content, employer involvement and modes of delivery. They also vary in terms of some of the challenges they face. However, there were several common themes that emerged from the case studies which will be clear from this research report. These common themes included the following:

- There is a year-on-year challenge to maintain the viability of the foundation degrees.
- Communication and engagement with employers are very important factors.
• There is a need to manage groups of mixed ability and differing levels of knowledge.

• Courses need to be kept up-to-date in an ever-changing legal, technological and employment context.

• A significant impact of the foundation degree is improved levels of students' confidence.

• The foundation degrees have had positive effects on the workplace and staff retention.

11.6 Examples of good practice revealed by the case studies

11.6.1 The foundation degrees that were studied were generally well-regarded by students, staff and employers. The overall quality was high. Each of the foundation degrees revealed particular examples of good practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation Degree in Families, Parenting and Communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Effectively combines breadth with specialist content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Good employer involvement in development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Very good at building student confidence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation Degree in Sport and Exercise Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Good example of updating and transferring an existing programme, such as an HND, into a foundation degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Excellent teaching styles and delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Flexible timetabling for full-time programmes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation Degree in Leadership and Management (Late-Night Entertainment)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. An excellent example of an effective partnership between an employer and the college provider.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It involves nationwide delivery with high student numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Effective action has been taken to reduce students' withdrawal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions and Recommendations

### Foundation Degree in IT and technical support

1. Maintenance of an up-to-date curriculum in a fast-changing industry.
2. Provision of a stimulating curriculum for students who enter the course with mixed levels of skill and knowledge.
3. A good balance of specialist curriculum content from different manufacturers with wider key skills.

### Foundation Degree in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations

1. Effective involvement of employers in the design and delivery of the curriculum.
2. Use of a variety of marketing techniques to reach employers.
3. The development of a distance-learning mode of study.

### 11.7 Recommendations arising from the case studies

11.7.1 At the end of each of the case studies the concluding section includes some recommendations which are particularly relevant to that foundation degree. These are summarised below.

### Foundation Degree in Families, Parenting and Communities

1. It would seem sensible to investigate changing the enrolment process so that students can enrol on a modular basis instead of enrolling for the full foundation degree.
2. It is recommended that a number of marketing activities should be reintroduced, such as open days in Sure Start centres and other employment and community venues across Leicester. The new market of students from schools and colleges could also be explored with education partners.
3. It is recommended that an early meeting should be arranged between the College and the validating institution to discuss the changes necessary to introduce advanced practitioner status so that employers can assist students with their fees.
4. It is suggested that resources should be provided to enable college staff to visit Sure Start centres on a regular basis and to develop a deeper ongoing relationship with the managers.
### Foundation Degree in Sport and Exercise Development

1. The College could look at precedents for library access and sharing of other facilities across institutions – the Skills for Sustainable Communities Lifelong Learning Network might be able to assist with this process – before inviting the University of Lincoln to discuss how student access could be improved. Could there be any reciprocal agreements?

2. The College might consider developing progression agreements between level 3 feeder courses and the foundation degree, starting initially with an internal agreement. This would require both course teams to work together and map their curriculum to assess synergy and then make any possible modifications.

3. The College might consider putting in place a more formal feedback mechanism for employers that is not too onerous for either employer or College, but allows for regular two-way dialogue. This could involve email and phone contact and be agreed as part of the setting up of any work placements.

4. The College might consider developing a marketing campaign to raise awareness of the part-time foundation degree for people already in work, and those looking to make a career change. This could be offered in conjunction with local key employers.

### Foundation Degree in Leadership and Management (Late-Night Entertainment)

1. The College and Luminar could look into varying assessment strategies to include oral and visual presentations.

2. Depending on viable student numbers, the College and Luminar could look into streaming students and running shortened or longer courses for certain groups of learners.

3. The College, in conjunction with its validating partner, could investigate the feasibility of developing modular certification for each course on the foundation degree.

4. The College, in conjunction with its validating partner, could look at developing a more streamlined approach to module changes. This might include an agreement to allow a small percentage of the programme to be updated on an annual basis without submission to a formal panel.

5. When Luminar have made the proposed changes in the way the assessment centres are run they could usefully make sure that all students are aware of the changes through a clear communications strategy. This will help improve student attitude towards the assessment centres.
## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Foundation Degree in IT and Technical Support

1. The College might look at reducing student journeys to College and advertise any decisions to students to help make the course more attractive.

2. The College might consider introducing a ‘fast track’ for students who start the course with considerable expertise. The students would have to prove their competence, for example by compiling a portfolio of evidence to gain APEL accreditation thereby reducing attendance requirements.

3. The College should look at developing a range of communication strands with employers. These might include:

   (a) (1) A regular reporting mechanism so that employers receive details of individual student's progress through the foundation degree, for example on completion of a module or at the end of each year.

   (b) (2) An informal method of allowing employers to be updated on curriculum changes and add their comments to amendments, perhaps through an email update.

   (c) (3) A formal feedback mechanism that collates employers' comments on the programme and uses them as part of the evaluation and planning process.

4. The College might look to introduce an induction programme for new students that explains the 'bigger picture' of what the foundation degree is trying to achieve and that they will work on specialist programmes that may not be used in their workplace.

5. If the College has not resolved the evening access issue, then it could look to a compromise of partial opening to assist students in their studies.

### Foundation Degree in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations

1. The University could look to expand student numbers through visits to community and voluntary organisations on a regional and national basis.

2. The University could look at developing and improving its communications with employers through, perhaps, setting up a regular reporting mechanism for feedback to employers on students' progress, and occasional phone calls or emails for general feedback and comments.
3. The University might look at extending its support and guidance systems for students, particularly in the early stages of the course when students are not familiar with higher education or foundation degrees.

4. The University might look at requesting employers to provide a work-place mentor as a formal requirement for students on the foundation degree.

5. Within the limitations of studying by distance learning, students could be encouraged and facilitated to engage in greater group interaction. Some of this will be ‘on line’ but there will be some students who are geographically near to each other and could be encouraged to meet on an occasional basis.

11.8 Recommendations

11.8.1 As summarised above, recommendations have been made for each of the case studies. However, there are also several generic recommendations that have emerged from the research, which are aimed at maximising the sustainability and viability of foundation degrees. There are resource implications for some of these recommendations, but investment in them may be necessary if a foundation degree is to be successful and remain viable. The recommendations may be summarised as follows.

1. It is important to develop and embed an employer–education provider communications strategy that facilitates regular, ongoing communication between the college and the employer(s).

2. Wherever possible, it is advisable to establish employer–education provider partnerships with an agreed minimum number of students to be sent by an employer(s) on a regular basis.

3. Regular updating of the curriculum content should be undertaken to ensure that it is meeting changing employer and environmental needs.

4. It is desirable to have flexible timetabling to allow for varying work and family commitments, making use of student and employer feedback.

5. It is a good idea to develop new modes of study, such as distance learning, where appropriate. The FdA in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations is a good example of this, with the distance-learning mode of study enabling the recruitment of students on an international scale.
6. It is recommended that colleges should work with the validating partner to explore the possibilities of offering a modular approach that enables students to study 'small bites of learning'.

7. It is advisable to establish a comprehensive marketing and publicity strategy and to ensure that it is continued on an ongoing basis each year.

8. It is recommended that, where appropriate, a stimulating delivery of the curriculum should be provided by professionals who have relevant industry experience.

9. Care should be taken to develop and embed support systems for students, particularly to cover study support at the beginning of the course.

10. A clearly defined ladder of progression should be available from level 3 courses through foundation degree to honours degree level.

11. Providers should respond to student and employer feedback and show sensitivity in the pitching of fee levels to take account of market tolerance.
Appendix 1  Survey Instrument

Colleges – University of Leicester Research Project

Short Survey on Foundation Degrees

Your assistance in completing the attached survey is requested. Please add any further comments in the spaces provided or on separate sheets. The attached letter provides more details about this project funded by Foundation Degree Forward.

The benefits to CULN members include:

- **Staff development and capacity building**
- **Opportunity to expand collaborative working with employers**
- **Detailed information on the factors that influence successful Foundation Degrees**
- **Opportunities to develop a new suite of Foundation Degrees (project extension)**

Please complete a separate reply for each FD your institution has developed. We are very interested in receiving information on Foundation Degrees:

- **That you have developed and have students enrolled**
- **That you have developed and are not running**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004/05</th>
<th>2005/06</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
<th>2007/08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Title of College/HEI:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Title of Foundation Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Name of Validating Institute and year of validation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Number of students enrolled</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Part-time (day/employer release)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part-time (evening/own time)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance learning</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. **Non-active Foundation Degrees**: If the Foundation Degree has never run, please tick the reasons that apply:

- Not validated
- No enrolment or poor enrolment
- No employer support
- No tutor
- Not financially viable
- New course still in development
- Other, please state

If the Foundation Degree has run in the past but is now not active, please give reasons why it is no longer running

6. **Please score employer(s) involvement in the areas listed below on a scale of 1-5.**

   1 = No involvement; 2 = Limited or occasional involvement; 3 = Medium level of involvement – interaction at functional level, some meetings; 4 = High level of involvement – regular interaction; 5 = Intensive involvement – in-depth interaction, frequent meetings, named contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial concept of the foundation degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum design &amp; development</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing employer participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of work experience</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared delivery of programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery of work-based modules</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify nature of involvement)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. **Has the extent of employer involvement in the programme changed over time?**

   Please tick

- No, employer involvement has remained the same
- Yes, there is less employer involvement now than there was when the programme was first started
- Yes, there is more employer involvement now than there was when the programme was first started
8. **Nature of relationship with validating institution.** Please rate the service received from the validating institution on a scale of 1 – 5 (1 = poor service; 5 = excellent service)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective communication</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interest/awareness of FDs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing quality assurance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed of validation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared delivery of course (with employers)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to HEI facilities, e.g. library, student support</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module updates and accreditation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. **What have been the major contributing factors to the success of this foundation degree?**

Please score the following factors (1 = insignificant; 5 = very significant)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fee subsidy (from employer)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fee subsidy (from other source)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of fees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active employer encouragement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time off/study release</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer role in marketing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective progression routes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. **On a scale of 1 – 5 (1 = very unsuccessful; 5 = very successful), how successful is the foundation degree in terms of:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversion rate (from interest to enrolment)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student recruitment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course viability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student retention</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student completion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student progression</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student employability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall quality of programme</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. Any further comments (please continue on a separate page if needed)

[Blank space for comments]

12. Name and contact details of person completing this form

Name: 
Email address: 
Telephone: 
Address: 

Please complete your responses and return by 7 November 2007 to Isobel (ijw3@le.ac.uk) or post to Isobel at the Institute of Lifelong Learning, University of Leicester, 128 Regent Road, Leicester, LE2 1ZA.
Appendix 2 Case Study Questions

(A) Employer focus

The following questions formed the basis of a face-to-face or telephone interview with employers who have been involved with the foundation degrees selected for case study analysis.

The aim of the questions was to explore the role of the employer in the selected foundation degree and to identify how they had contributed to the success of the programme.

The questions were left open to allow scope for discussion and open-ended answers.

Section 1: Initial concept of the foundation degree

1.1 Was your organisation involved in the initial idea for a foundation degree in this programme area? How are training needs identified within your organisation?

1.2 Yes – Follow up with question on how this came about.

1.3 No – Follow up with question on when the employer became involved.

1.4 Had your organisation an existing knowledge of foundation degrees before becoming involved in this development?

1.5 What prompted your organisation to want to become involved in the development of this FD?

1.6 Had your organisation an existing relationship with the educational institution(s) developing the programme? Discuss nature and scope of relationship.

1.7 Does the FD developed form a career progression route from L1, L2, or L3 courses offered already?

Section 2: FD design and development

2.1 Was your organisation involved in the design of the course content for the programme being developed?

2.2 Yes – Follow up with question on extent and nature of involvement. Was this in an advisory capacity? Were any of your staff involved in writing content for modules? Quantify approximately the amount of staff time involved.
2.3  No – Follow up with question on whether there has been any subsequent involvement in FD design. Or whether the employer would like to become involved in FD design.

2.4  Was the design and content of the programme/course influenced by any of the following:-
• SSCs
• National Occupation Standards (NOS)
• CPD
• National requirements

Section 3: On-going involvement with the selected foundation degree

3.1  Is your organisation involved in any of the following? Discuss nature and scope of the involvement.
• Provision of work experience
• Shared delivery of the programme
• Delivery of work-based modules
• Marketing of the programme
• Fee subsidy for employees
• Assessment of students
• Provision of study release/time off for employees

3.2  Are there any additional ways in which your organisation is involved with the programme?

3.3  Has your involvement with the programme changed over time?

3.4  What is the process for raising any concerns about the programme?

3.5  Do you feel that issues raised are dealt with satisfactorily?

Section 4: Employee involvement

4.1  Do you have, (or have you had) any knowledge of staff in your employ who are students on the selected foundation degree?

4.2  Yes – Follow up with questions on:-
• Number of students,
• Whether participation was initiated by employer or employee
• Was active employer encouragement was a significant factor.
• How successful have students been on the programme?
• What effect has taking the programme had to their subsequent career?
• Did the employee enjoy the course?
• Will you continue to support staff taking the programme?
• Were students studying full-time or part-time and what effect did this have on the business?
• To what extent was previous experience or training taken into account as part of the FD?
• Have students been able to apply what they have learnt on the course?

4.3  No – Follow up question of why not?

Section 5: Programme quality

5.1  Are you familiar with the content of the Foundation Degree?

5.2  Do you consider the skills and knowledge taught on the programme are relevant to your organisation? Discuss how the course content matches expectations.

5.3  How satisfactory is the integration of academic learning with work-based learning?

5.4  How has the FD impacted on your business? Answers to cover the following:
• Improving productivity and efficiency
• Reducing the skills gap
• Transforming ways of working
• Staff development/continuing professional development
• Improved partnership working
• Other ways?

5.5  Have your original expectations been met?

Yes – how
No – why not
5.6 What would you like to see done differently?

5.7 Do you think that you have had value for money?

5.8 Would a greater involvement of your organisation be of benefit to the programme? How might this be developed?

(B) Education practitioner focus

The following questions formed the basis of a face-to-face interview with the programme leader (and programme team) of the foundation degrees selected for case study analysis.

The aim of the questions was to provide an opportunity for practitioners to reflect on the development of their foundation degree programme from initial concept through validation to the current situation. Practitioners were encouraged to feel involved in the research and to utilise reflections to support the continued professional development of their team and the dissemination of findings to a wider audience.

The questions were left ‘open’ to allow scope for discussion and open-ended answers.

Section 1: Initial concept of foundation degree

1.1 How was the initial idea for a foundation degree in this programme area generated? Who was involved in initiating and driving the development?

1.2 What was the involvement of your organisation, and that of other organisations?

1.3 Had your organisation an existing relationship with the employers and other educational institution(s) developing the programme? Discuss nature and scope of relationships.

Section 2: Curriculum design and development

2.1 How was the curriculum for the programme designed and developed? What (if anything) was the curriculum benchmarked against?

2.2 Was the development shared amongst several education institutions? If yes, explain process and the role of each contributor.

2.3 Were employers involved in writing content for modules? If yes, quantify approximately the amount of staff time involved and the approximate percentage of content written by the employer. If no, did employers have any involvement at this stage?
2.4 How has work-based learning been integrated into the curriculum?

2.5 How do you ensure that the programme remains responsive to the changing needs of employers?

2.6 What changes have been made to the curriculum since its initial development and what/who instigated these changes?

2.7 With hindsight, how might you approach the task of designing and developing a relevant curriculum differently?

**Section 3: Nature of relationship with validating institution (if different from delivery institution)**

3.1 How would you describe the relationship with your validating institution? Answers to cover the following areas:

- Effective communication with HEI
- HEI Staff interest/awareness of FDs
- Implementing quality assurance
- Experience of the validation process
- Flexibility/responsiveness of HEI
- Shared delivery of programme
- Access to HEI facilities e.g. library, student support
- Modules updates

3.2 What is particularly successful in your relationship with the validating institution?

3.3 How might the relationship be improved?

**Section 4: Employer involvement**

4.1 Are employers involved in any of the following? Discuss nature and scope of the involvement.

- Provision of work experience
- Shared delivery of the programme
- Delivery of work-based modules
- Marketing of the programme
• Fee subsidy for employees
• Assessment of students
• Provision of study release/time off for employees
• Course evaluation

4.2 Are there any additional ways in which employers are involved with the programme, this could be those employer(s) directly involved in the programme or other employers on the periphery?

4.3 Has their involvement with the programme changed over time?

4.4 How would you describe your relationship with employer(s) from the relevant sector for the FD?

4.5 How do you maintain a regular contact with employers?
• Employer forum
• Regular meetings
• Newsletter
• Awards ceremony
• Other communications

4.6 How do you ensure that the programme is meeting employer needs?

4.7 How might an employer raise any concerns about the programme?

4.8 How important is the role of employers to the overall success of the foundation degree? Give examples.

4.9 What impacts have employers reported that the programme had for employers with students on programme? Answers to cover the following:
• Improving productivity and efficiency
• Reducing the skills gap
• Transforming ways of working
• Staff development/continuing professional development
• Improved motivation.
• Increased training/education culture
Section 5: Statistical analysis

(Statistical data to be provided in advance of meeting)

5.1 How successful has the programme been in attracting and recruiting students? If the conversion rate (from interest to enrolment) is low, what factors might be affecting this?

5.2 Have you had any difficulties in recruiting sufficient students for a viable group? How have you overcome such problems, or is this an ongoing issue?

5.3 How successful do you feel your statistics are for student progression and completion? Explain any significant factors that have affected student progression through the modules of the programme and student completion rates.

5.4 Has students’ mode of study had any influence over student progression and/or completion?

5.5 Have many students decided to top-up their FD with conversion to BA/BSc? How satisfactory has this process been for the students? How long will it take them to complete the top-up?

5.6 What evidence do you have for the completion of the FD aiding students progression in employment (either as career change or career enhancement?)

5.7 How do you measure student satisfaction, is this data used to inform course developments?

Statistical data required before meeting with education practitioners

Title of College ...........................................................................................................

Title of foundation degree .........................................................................................

<p>| Table 1: Progression and completion statistics |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Student Numbers</th>
<th>Student Numbers</th>
<th>Student Numbers</th>
<th>Student Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On module 1 enrolment</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(sample)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/5 cohort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/6 cohort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/7 cohort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Student qualifications on entry

Please list students highest qualification on entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>1 or more ‘A’ levels</th>
<th>Vocational level 3, such as BTEC ND, AVCE</th>
<th>4 or more GCSE’s grade C or above</th>
<th>No recorded academic</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(sample)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/5 cohort</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/6 cohort</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/7 cohort</td>
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</table>

(C) Student focus

The following questions formed the basis of face-to-face interviews with students from the foundation degree selected for case study analysis. Student groups will include those on programme and recent completers if available.

The aim of the questions was to provide an opportunity for students to comment and reflect on their experience of the foundation degree, from their reasons for selecting the programme, their satisfaction on programme and the ways the FD has assisted with the advancement of their career.

The questions were left ‘open’ to allow scope for discussion and open-ended answers.

Section 1: Initial selection of foundation degree

1.1 How did you first hear about the FD?

1.2 Was there a course leaflet or website available?

1.3 What were your reasons for selecting the programme/entering HE/ selecting mode of study?

1.4 Were there any specific entry requirements for the FD?

1.5 Did you receive any advice and guidance? If so who from? How useful was the IAG?
1.6 Did you have any concerns over applying for a place on the course, such as?
   • Financial
   • Time constraints
   • Access to HE
   • Family concerns
   • Other
   • How were these overcome?

1.7 What role did your employer play in you selecting the FD?

1.8 Did your employer provide (or continues to provide) any support to you undertaking the programme (such as fee subsidy, time off/study release)?

1.9 Does the FD form part of your own professional development?

1.10 How would you describe your experience of admission to the programme?

1.11 Did you undertake any training prior to this FD that prepared you directly for the course?

**Section 2: On course experience**

2.1 Did you have any concerns at the start of the programme, such as your ability to manage study and work, and level of academic work required?

2.2 How did you resolve any of these issues?

2.3 Have you continued to have any concerns/issues about the course?

2.4 Did you have any expectations of the course? To what extent have these been met?

2.5 What was/is your pattern of attending?
   • Full-time
   • Part-time day
   • Part-time evening
   • Block
   • Blended learning
   • Weekend workshops
Successful Foundation Degrees – Final Report

2.6 If part-time is this in your own or work time, or a combination? How does this work for you?

2.7 What extra support beyond formal teaching was made available to you? e.g. email, chat room?

2.8 How would you describe your overall satisfaction with the course

2.9 What particular aspects of the course have been the most successful for you so far?

2.10 Are there any aspects of the course that you feel could be improved or amended?

2.11 What improvements would you like to see?

Section 3: Post-course experience

3.1 How do you feel the course has improved your skills, knowledge and confidence?

3.2 Has the course improved your career prospects? If so, in what way?

3.3 Have your career aspirations changed since undertaking the course?

3.4 How would you rate overall the quality of the course?

3.5 Have you gone on to or do you plan to top-up your qualification to an honours degree? If yes how have you found this process and how long is it taking you to complete the course?

3.6 Did you find the course relevant to the needs of your current employer/job?

3.7 Did you find your employer supportive of your study and were they actively involved (or a mentor to you)?

3.8 Did you discuss your experience of the course with your employer or mentor?

For those students who have completed their course:

3.9 Have you been promoted/changed jobs/changed career since completion of your FD. If no:-

3.10 Has completing the course had any impact on your relationship with management/colleagues (particularly where career prospects have not immediately been enhanced) – i.e. more likely to be asked to do things, get involved in initiatives etc.

3.11 Would you recommend this course to anyone else?
## Appendix 3  Courses and Institutions

List of courses grouped by delivery institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Bishop Grosseteste University College, Lincoln | Early Childhood Services  
Children and Youth Services                                                      |
| Bournville College                           | Technical Support in Laboratories  
Early Years                                                                  |
| Leicester College                            | Print and Digital Media  
Educational studies for classroom assistants  
(Early Years)  
Families Parents & Communities               |
| Lincoln College                              | Sports and Exercise Development  
Electrical / Electronic Engineering  
Computing Information Systems       |
| Loughborough College                         | Leadership and Management (late night entertainment)  
Tourism Management  
Hospitality Management  
Events Management  
Food Manufacturing Management  
Sports Science  
Sports Science with Sports Management  
Sports Coaching and Performance  
Exercise, Health and Fitness Management     |
| Moulton College                              | Horticulture and garden design  
Horticulture and garden design  
Land management (conservation / agriculture)  
Sports Therapy  
Equine Management  
Applied Animal Studies  
Arboriculture  
Sports turf and groundsmanship  
Sports Performing and Coaching               |
| Newman University College, Birmingham        | Youth Ministry  
Youth Ministry  
Youth Work  
IT and Technical Support  
Counselling  
Early Years  
Professional Development for Teaching Assistants |
| North Warwickshire and Hinckley College      | Families Parenting & Communities  
Sure Start Sector endorsed early years  
Community Enterprise and Development (f/o Enterprise) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northampton College</td>
<td>Motorsport and High Performance Engineering Enterprise (Business Development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel &amp; tourism management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Leicester</td>
<td>Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drug and Alcohol Counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drug and Alcohol Counselling by Distance Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clinical Imaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Security and Risk Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational Studies for Teaching Assistants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational Studies for Early Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyggeston and QE College</td>
<td>Science Technicians</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**List of courses which are not running yet (from returns received)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brooksby Melton College</td>
<td>Musical Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicester College</td>
<td>Retail Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln College</td>
<td>Health and Active Lifestyles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Built Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internet Computing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton College</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Leicestershire College</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership and Management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**List of courses which have been abandoned or unlikely to be delivered (from returns received)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brooksby Melton College</td>
<td>Media Design and Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln College</td>
<td>Business Systems and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loughborough College</td>
<td>Health and Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newman University College, Birmingham</td>
<td>Childhood studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton College</td>
<td>Office Administration and Management Logistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephenson College</td>
<td>High performance engineering (motorsport)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Appendix 4  Courses Grouped by Subject Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area (using fdf classification)</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Not Active</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood studies</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children and Youth Services</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Services</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Years (3 courses)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational studies for classroom assistants (Early Years)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sure Start Sector Endorsed Early Years</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development for Teaching Assistants</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community and Social Studies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families Parenting &amp; Communities (3 courses)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Ministry</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Work</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Enterprise and Development (f/o Enterprise)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sport</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports and Exercise Development</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Performing and Coaching</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Therapy</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Science</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sports Science with Sports Management</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sports Coaching and Performance</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise, Health and Fitness Management</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Health</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health and Active Lifestyles</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counselling</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health and Illness</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drug and Alcohol Counselling</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drug and Alcohol Counselling – distance learning</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>Clinical Imaging</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hospitality and Tourism</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel &amp; tourism management</td>
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<td>Tourism Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hospitality Management</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Events Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security and Risk Management</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Business</strong></td>
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<td>Accounting (2 courses)</td>
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<td>Category</td>
<td>Courses</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Business</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Enterprise (Business Development)</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office administration and management</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership and Management (late night entertainment)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership and Management</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Systems and Technologies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Manufacturing Management</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Retail</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Retail Management</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transport and Logistics</strong></td>
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<td>Logistics</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Science</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Science Technicians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Support in Laboratories</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Media</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Print and Digital Media</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Performing Arts and Music</strong></td>
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<td>Community Theatre</td>
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<td>Musical Theatre</td>
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<td><strong>Veterinary Nursing and Animal Studies</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Applied Animal Studies</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Equine Management</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Agriculture, environment and land based studies</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Arboriculture</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Horticulture and garden design</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Land management (Conservation / agriculture)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sports turf and groundsmanship</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td><strong>Construction</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Built Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Art and Design</strong></td>
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<td>Design and Innovation</td>
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<td><strong>Engineering</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Electrical / Electronic Engineering</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Performance Engineering (Motorsport)</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Motorsport and High Performance Engineering</td>
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<td><strong>Computing</strong></td>
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<td>Computing</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computing Information Systems</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internet Computing</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT and Technical Support</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5  High-recruiting Courses

The courses listed below recruited more than 20 students for 2007–08:

- Counselling
- Drug and Alcohol Counselling
- Early Childhood Services
- Early Years (2 courses)
- Educational Studies for Teaching Assistants
- Electrical / Electronic Engineering
- Leadership and Management (late night entertainment)
- Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations
- Professional Development for Teaching Assistants
- Sports and Exercise Development
- Sports Science
- Sports Science with Sports Management
- Sports Therapy
- Youth Work
## Appendix 6  Project Meetings and Milestones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21/08/07</td>
<td>Meeting with fdf</td>
<td>Discussion and agreement of project.</td>
<td>Derek Longhurst, Gay Bligh (fdf) Belinda Mckee and John Benyon (UoL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 1: Survey and Literature Review</td>
<td>Scheduled: October 2007-March 2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/09/07</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Communication to CULN of project and strategy for disseminating information and surveys</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Elain Crewe, Tracy McGhie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/10/07</td>
<td>First Steering Group meeting</td>
<td>Outline of aims of project and review of questionnaire design for survey</td>
<td>9 attendees including Skills for Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/10/07</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Review of survey returns to date and next steps</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda McKee, Elain Crewe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/10/08</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Literature review and discussion of early survey findings</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Elain Crewe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11/07</td>
<td>CULN Committee meeting</td>
<td>Presentation to members on project, progress to date and likely outcomes</td>
<td>Chaired by Professor Bob Burgess; attended by 19 CULN members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/12/07</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Review of draft report for survey responses received to date with suggestions for amendments</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Elain Crewe, Tracy McGhie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/01/08</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Review of number of survey responses received, feedback on draft results and literature review in preparation for steering group meeting</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Elain Crewe, Tracy McGhie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/01/08</td>
<td>Second Steering group meeting</td>
<td>Feedback on initial survey results and review of pilot interview questions</td>
<td>15 attendees including Skills for Care, Skills for Health, Improve Ltd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>22/01/08</td>
<td>CULN Development Day and Committee</td>
<td>Project progress report to members Chaired by Professor Bob Burgess; attended by 18 CULN members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/01/08</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Review of progress, initial pilot interviews, deadlines and contract</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Elain Crewe, Tracy McGhie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/02/08</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Review of final survey results, interim report and pilot case study in preparation for steering group meeting and report submission</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Elain Crewe, Tracy McGhie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/03/08</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Review of interim report and phase 1. Discussion of FDs to be included in phase 2</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Elain Crewe, Tracy McGhie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/03/08</td>
<td>Third Steering Group meeting</td>
<td>Feedback from revised survey results, interim report and pilot case study. Initial discussion on implications of early findings</td>
<td>16 attendees including Improve Ltd, Skills for Health</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 2: Case studies and interim report</td>
<td>Scheduled: April 2008 – June 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>16/04/08</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Discussion of interim report and 2nd and 3rd case studies. Planning for CULN Committee. Discussion of dissemination events and follow-up to project</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Elain Crewe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/04/08</td>
<td>Meeting with Mark Mabey from fdf</td>
<td>Discussion of project progress and planning for CULN Committee meeting</td>
<td>John Benyon, Elain Crewe, Mark Mabey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/05/08</td>
<td>CULN Committee meeting</td>
<td>Presentations by Belinda Mckee and Professor Derek Longhurst (fd). Discussion on project and FD developments</td>
<td>Attended by 19 CULN members; chaired by Vice-Chancellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2008</td>
<td>Interim Report submitted to fdf</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/06/08</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Review of interim report; discussion of case studies 2 and 3; planning for meeting of Steering Group; discussion of dissemination arrangements</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Elain Crewe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/06/08</td>
<td>Fourth Steering Group meeting</td>
<td>Progress report on case studies; discussion of development phase; discussion of implementation of research results</td>
<td>Attended by 15 CULN members; chaired by Professor John Benyon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/06/08</td>
<td>CULN Research meeting</td>
<td>Discussion of fdf project and other possible areas of collaborative research</td>
<td>Attended by 42 CULN members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 3: Case studies; final report; dissemination of findings</td>
<td>Scheduled: July 2008 – January 2009</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/07/08</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Progress report on case studies 2 and 3 and second interim report; discussion of published research; discussion on Fdf Conference, discussion on how to take research findings forward in the future</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Elain Crewe, Katie Morris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/07/08</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Discussion of research dissemination; planning for next steering group meeting; discussion of case studies; planning for conference</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Elain Crewe, Katie Morris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/09/08</td>
<td>Project Team Meeting</td>
<td>Steering group meeting discussed – format and content; final report case studies; discussion on how to take research findings forward and discussion of meeting with fdf</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Elain Crewe, Katie Morris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/10/08</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Draft final report considered; results examined and conclusions drawn; initial planning of dissemination</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Elain Crewe, Katie Morris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Attendees</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>09/10/08</td>
<td>Fifth Steering Group meeting</td>
<td>Discussion of report on case studies and the key findings; ideas for dissemination including conference; consideration of further research project called Blueprint for Success</td>
<td>Attended by 21 members, including 4 SSCs; chaired by professor John Benyon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/10/08</td>
<td>Meeting with fdf</td>
<td>Discussion of project and findings; outline of proposed Blueprint for Success project</td>
<td>Susan Hayday, Margaret Seiffert, Belinda Mckee, Katie Morris, John Benyon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/11/08</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Further consideration of draft final report; planning for conference</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Katie Morris</td>
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<tr>
<td>08/12/08</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Planning for Blueprint for Success project; discussion of ten employers’ interviews; planning for conference</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Katie Morris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/01/09</td>
<td>CULN Development Day</td>
<td>Project progress report; outline of Blueprint for Success project and dissemination plan</td>
<td>Attended by 21 CULN members; chaired by Jackie Dunne</td>
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<tr>
<td>22/01/09</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Final report discussed; executive summary considered; outline of ten interviews with employers; dos and don'ts considered</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Katie Morris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/01/09</td>
<td>Sixth Steering Group meeting</td>
<td>Discussion of final report and its dissemination including conference; consideration of Blueprint for Success project; dos and don'ts discussed</td>
<td>Attended by 21 members, including 4 SSCs; chaired by Professor John Benyon</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/03/09</td>
<td>Project Team meeting</td>
<td>Analysis of interviews with ten employers; dos and don'ts considered; planning for next phases and conference</td>
<td>John Benyon, Belinda Mckee, Katie Morris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/03/09</td>
<td>Dissemination conference</td>
<td>Investing for Success event to disseminate project results</td>
<td>Attended by 105 participants</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Bibliography


The Colleges–University of Leicester Network (CULN) is a partnership of 18 colleges and 3 higher education institutions. Founded in 2001, it is the largest grouping of further education (FE) and higher education (HE) in the Midlands. Its college membership is diverse, ranging from vocational to sixth-form colleges. The three higher education institutions are Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln, Newman University College Birmingham and the University of Leicester.

The Network aims to foster good co-operative relationships between educational institutions and to greater promote collaboration. In particular, CULN aims to:

- Widen access to, and increase and enable participation in, further and higher education;
- Bring to bear differing perspectives on common issues such as foundation degrees;
- Champion learner progression through different institutions and programmes;
- Create improved links with businesses and local communities;
- Promote co-operation between the CULN members on all matters of common interest.

CULN has a two-tier structure consisting of a main strategic committee, which debates policy and oversees the activities of the operation tier of working groups. The CULN Committee is chaired by Professor Robert Burgess, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leicester, and is attended by the college principals or their representatives. Each CULN partner also has an assigned contact or 'champion'.

The working groups are set up according to identified needs. There are currently 18 working groups, some of which are based on subject and curriculum needs (such as English, Geography, Chemistry) while others focus on cross-cutting themes (for example, FE/HE research, sustainable development, and libraries and resources). The groups help to identify how the different sectors can work together to share good practice, enhance students' learning, and organise appropriate continuing professional development for staff.

The number of CULN events for staff and students has been increasing each year since its inception. Recent highlights include a major enterprise competition, a Chemistry revision event and science days, an event including a teacher shadowing scheme, IT training, various subject workshops, and 14-19 diploma preparation sessions.

In 2007–08, Colleges–University of Leicester Network activities involved 446 students and 576 staff. The evidence indicates that CULN student activities encourage various students to apply for higher education courses, who might otherwise not do so. The Network creates a supportive community of educators and learners.

To find out more please contact the CULN office at the Institute of Lifelong Learning, University of Leicester, 128 Regent Road, Leicester, LE1 7PA – telephone: 0116 252 5920 or 0116 252 5966; email: jl172@le.ac.uk or kmm11@le.ac.uk or yd24@le.ac.uk; website: www.le.ac.uk/culn.
Successful Foundation Degrees

A Study of the Role of Employers and Other Key Factors

Final Report

John Benyon and Belinda Mckee
with
Elain Crewe and Katie Morris

University of Leicester
Institute of Lifelong Learning