



CHERI

Centre for Higher Education
Research and Information

Report to Foundation Degree Forward on the Impact of Foundation Degrees on Students and the Workplace

**Centre for Higher Education Research and
Information
The Open University**

Learning and Skills Network

February 2008

Maggie Greenwood and Brenda Little
with Eddie Burch, Carol Collins, Maki Kimura
and Karen Yarrow

Learning and Skills Network
Fifth Floor, Holborn Centre
120 Holborn
London
EC1N 2AD

Tel: +44 (0)20 7297 9144
Fax: +44 (0)20 7297 9001
enquiries@LSNeducation.org.uk
www.lsneducation.org.uk

Centre for Higher Education Research and Information
The Open University
44 Bedford Row
London
WC1R 4LL

Tel: +44 (0)20 7447 2506
Fax: +44 (0)20 7447 2556
cheri@open.ac.uk
www.open.ac.uk/cheri

Contents

Contents.....	3
Acknowledgements	4
1 Policy background.....	5
2 Findings from other research on employer engagement and Foundation Degrees.....	7
3 Method	13
4 Students' perspectives	15
5 Employers' perspectives	32
6 Practitioners' perspectives	40
7 Conclusions and recommendations	51
Appendices	56
Appendix 1: list of programmes involved in study	57
Appendix 2: employer interview schedule	58
Appendix 3: analysis of incoming students' survey	60
Appendix 4: copy of questionnaire – experiences of Fd students.....	85

Acknowledgements

This report was commissioned by Foundation Degree Forward (fdf), and the research was undertaken between April and December 2007 by a team of staff and consultants from the Learning and Skills Network (LSN) and the Open University's Centre for Higher Education Research and Information. The team are indebted to Silvia Munoz from the LSN for organising the student survey and analysing the survey data.

The authors are grateful to Penny Blackie (fdf Director of Regional Strategy) and Russell Moseley (fdf research consultant) for their support, advice and encouragement throughout the study. Thanks also go to Esther Lockley and Kate Fletcher at fdf for their assistance in the initial stages of the study, and the dissemination events.

Most of all we are very grateful to the Foundation Degree (fd) practitioners in colleges and universities who gave of their time to help us set-up focus groups and interviews with students, to contact employers, and to discuss with us the ongoing development of their Fds. We are also very grateful to those students and employers who gave their time to be interviewed by members of the research team, and who took part in the survey.

Maggie Greenwood
Independent Consultant

Brenda Little
Centre for Higher Education Research and Information, Open University

1 Policy background

- 1.1 Substantial expansion of higher education has largely been justified in terms of improving national economic competitiveness within a framework of the growth of the so-called knowledge society. The emergence of the knowledge society or economy has also been used to provide a human capital justification for widening participation in higher education, and to drive a new 'vocational' emphasis in teaching and the curriculum, most recently through the emphasis placed upon foundation degrees.
- 1.2 Foundation degrees were a specific government initiative launched in 2000 with the aim of meeting a perceived shortfall in the numbers of people with intermediate higher technical and associate professional skills, and increasing and widening participation by providing a new and accessible route into higher education (HEFCE, 2007)¹.
- 1.3 At the outset, there was an intention that foundation degrees (Fds) would be developed and delivered through partnerships between employers, higher education institutions, further education colleges and the (emerging) Sector Skills Councils. Close collaboration between employers and programme providers would ensure the integration of academic and work-based learning (QAA, 2004)².
- 1.4 The 2003 Skills Strategy white paper (DfES, 2003)³ reinforced government's desire to increase the level of work-based learning within higher education and for institutions to secure wider employer buy-in. As we have noted elsewhere (Brennan and Little, 2006)⁴ such economic and employment imperatives directed at higher education sat alongside a raft of other policy initiatives directed at education/ training/employment interfaces and posed questions concerning the boundaries between different forms and different levels of education and between education and employment sectors. For example, two years after the Skills Strategy white paper, a further Skills white paper (DfES, 2005)⁵ heralded the establishment of Skills Academies which aimed to be employer-led centres of excellence at the core of a network of specialist colleges and training providers focusing on high quality skills training; and the 2006 Further Education white paper (DfES, 2006)⁶ sought moves towards a more demand-led system of skills training. The most recent government-sponsored wide-ranging review of the UK's skills base (the Leitch Review of Skills, 2006)⁷ highlighted the poor standing of the UK at every level compared with our main international competitors. In relation to higher education, the review noted that the focus of higher education expansion had continued to be on young people at the expense of engaging with employers and increasing workforce development. It stressed the need to raise significantly the proportion of people with higher level skills across the labour force through increased employer engagement and workforce development, whilst at the same time noting that access to higher education still needed improvement so that young people from all backgrounds have a 'fair chance of attending'. In particular, the

¹ HEFCE(2007) Foundation degrees – key statistics 2001-02 to 2006-07, Bristol: Higher Education Funding Council for England.

² QAA (2004) Foundation Degree qualification benchmark, Gloucester: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

³ DfES, HM Treasury (2003) 21st Century Skills: realising our potential. London: HMSO.

⁴ Brennan, J. and Little, B. with Connor, H., de Weert, E., Delve, S., Harris, J., Josselyn, B., Ratcliffe, N. and Scesa, A. (2006) Towards a strategy for workplace learning – report of a study to assist HEFCE in the development of a strategy for workplace learning, Bristol: Higher Education Funding Council for England.

⁵ DfES, DTI, HM Treasury, DWP (2005) Skills: getting on in business, getting on at work. London: HMSO, Cm 6483-1.

⁶ DfES (2006) Further Education: Raising skills, improving life chances, DfES, Cm 6768.

⁷ Leitch Review of Skills (2006) Prosperity for All in the Global Economy – World Class Skills. Final Report. Norwich: HMSO.

Leitch review recommended an increase in employer investment in level 3 and 4 qualifications⁸ for the workplace, and that future expansion in higher education should be based on programmes offering specific job-related skills, such as Fds.

- 1.5 In July 2007 the Government published its response to the Leitch Review, setting out an ambitious programme to make the UK become a world leader in skills by 2020⁹. By 2014, it aims for 36 per cent of adults to be qualified to level 4 and above (defined as being equivalent to a certificate in higher education, foundation degree or honours degree). In addition the response stated:

“We will continue to encourage more HE institutions to collaborate with employers to develop programmes and delivery methods that meet their higher level skills needs” (DIUS, 2007, p12 point 25). The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), which is supporting a range of projects in HE institutions to develop employer engagement, will fund an additional 5,000 student places in 2008-09, co-funded with employers. We expect the HEFCE’s work in this area to substantially expand in subsequent years. (p12 point 26)

In return, we want employers to increase their investment in skills, training and qualifications at all levels. We expect employers to be active in using the opportunities set out in this plan to shape the skills and employment systems to meet their needs. (p12 point 27)

We want employers to be more demanding, and to clearly articulate what their skills needs and priorities are, in order to support business development. We also want them to engage with and challenge the learning and skills providers at all levels, to achieve high standards in the design and delivery of training.” (p12 point 28)

- 1.6 The Government’s response to Leitch had a specific recommendation with respect to Fds:

“Employers, working with their SSCs, should articulate their priorities for high level skills and influence the development of HE programmes to meet their needs. Foundation Degrees already provide an excellent example of collaborative working between universities, FE colleges, employers and SSCs. We will encourage SSCs and HE institutions to extend their Collaborations.”(DIUS, 2007, p42 section 3.25)

- 1.7 It was in this context of government support for Fds and their continuing encouragement for an increased focus on employer related, demand led, work focussed programmes at level 4 and above that the current study was undertaken.

⁸ Level 3 equates to two or more A levels, NVQ3, and level 4 and above equates broadly to degree level qualifications.

⁹ Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills (2007) World Class Skills: implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England. DIUS, Cm 7181. Norwich: HMSO.

2 Findings from other research on employer engagement and Foundation Degrees

Employer engagement

- 2.1 As noted above, successive government policies have sought to effect greater linkages between further and higher education and employers, and to create a culture of more demand, rather than supply-led educational provision. Over many years employers have been urged to invest in workforce development as a way of increasing competitiveness (see for example, DfEE, 1995¹⁰; DIUS, 2007¹¹). There have been a number of research projects looking at the issues around engaging employers in education and training and the challenges this poses. What is interesting is that over the years the issues and challenges remain stubbornly the same. For example, research commissioned by the Scottish Council for Research in Education in the late 1980s which looked at adult training and what it should be found the factors affecting employers' decisions to train staff fell into 4 distinct categories
- *financial considerations*
 - *productivity, personnel and time-management concerns*
 - *availability and quality of external training*
 - *training resources (e.g. equipment and space). (Lowden, 1989, p.2)*¹²
- 2.2 This same research detailed a number of issues relating to public sector trainers, including
- *inappropriate teaching styles for adults on training courses;*
 - *employers felt lecturers needed more experience of the 'real world' of business to make their knowledge and expertise suitable for training today;*
 - *inflexible organisation, e.g. the rigidity of the academic year often prevented the provider from initiating new training courses;*
 - *lack of suitable and modern equipment, especially for engineering and scientific courses.*
- 2.3 At the time, this presented a picture of the need for training that was of good quality, relevant to employers' needs and flexible but also was related to the business bottom line.
- 2.4 A much more recent study looking at workforce development and employer engagement in higher education (undertaken for the Council for Industry and Higher Education) concluded:
- *"Businesses do not generally relate the learning they offer staff to academically recognised levels; they are less interested in whole qualifications than in what could improve their economic performance, enable employees to meet legislative (e.g. health & safety) requirements, fit them for an enhanced role or tackle new processes; individuals, however, may have a need to keep up their professional qualifications or be interested in portable awards;*

¹⁰ Department for Education and Employment (1995) White paper on Lifelong Learning.

¹¹ Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills (2007) World class skills: implementing the Leitch Review of skills in England. DIUS, Cm 7181. Norwich: HMSO

¹² Lowden, K. (1989) Employers and adult training: attitudes and practices. <http://www.scre.ac.uk/ukspotlight/spotlight15.html> accessed on 29 November 2007.

- *They place more emphasis on quality and relevance to business needs plus delivery method that suits the company (rather than the HEI) over price; but a CBI survey suggests that only 45% of respondents were satisfied with the location of HEI training.” (King, 2007, pp 1-2)¹³*

2.5 This also emphasises the need for relevance and the opportunities that training brings to the business. Similarly, research commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council on employer demands for education and training in the further education sector identified a number of expectations, including:

Relevance: *linked to workplace practices, up to date and reflecting the changing needs of the sector and its workforce.*

Value for money: *not necessarily the cheapest but the most relevant.*

Appropriate national qualifications: *especially for larger companies.*

Flexibility in mode, location and duration: *both large and small organisations stressed the importance for flexibility of delivery times, modes of provision and assessment as and when required. Also they referred to reducing training time to the minimum required to achieve the objectives and avoiding disruption to duty rotas to avoid cover costs.*

Good communications: *regular contact with a named person.*

High quality: *this included high quality training, standards of delivery and high completion rates; it was important that the trainers were knowledgeable in the subject, up to date with current thinking and have a passion for the business.*

Support for learners: *crucial for employees returning to learning.*

Awareness of new trends: *keeping up to date with policy and regulatory sector changes. (Hughes and Smeaton, 2005)¹⁴*

2.6 The over-riding issues that emerge from these studies can be summarised as: the importance of relevance; the importance of up to date experience and understanding of the relevant sector; the need for flexibility and responsiveness by providers; clear communication lines between employers and providers; and an understanding of the constraints of a business in terms of funding, support and ‘the bottom line’.

2.7 Furthermore, notwithstanding employers’ views and expectations regarding education and training, levels of actual engagement with such provision vary greatly, both in terms of employer demand for education and training for purposes of workforce development, and the nature and shape of such provision.

2.8 A general study of higher education’s engagement with ‘the workplace’ commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England to inform their strategy on workplace learning (Brennan and Little et al., 2006)¹⁵ identified three levels of engagement between employers and providers:

“A high level of engagement *is characterised by situations where the employer and the higher education provider have an equal shared interest in ensuring high standards of education and training to support the initial formation of specialists to*

¹³ King, M. (2007) Workforce development: how much engagement do employers have with higher education? A review of the evidence of employer demand. London: Council for Industry and Higher Education.

¹⁴ Hughes M. and Smeaton B. (2005) Exploring employers’ perceptions of employer engagement, London: Learning and Skills Network.

¹⁵ Brennan, J. and Little, B. with Connor, H., de Weert, E., Delve, S., Harris, J., Josselyn, B., Ratcliffe, N., and Scesa, A. (2006) Towards a strategy for workplace learning, Bristol: Higher Education Funding Council for England.

work in that employment sector, the continuing development of those specialists, and the continuing development of other employees.

Medium levels of employer engagement in relation to workplace learning might be characterised by less tightly bound and less comprehensive links between higher education and employers, for example, where higher education is neither the sole nor the preferred choice as provider of continuing professional development for employees. Nevertheless, moves are being taken to strengthen links.

Low level engagement in relation to workplace learning would be characterised by employment sectors in which there is no overarching strategic drive towards improving links between higher education and business for the learner's initial formation, and little emphasis on continuing professional development for existing employees. It is left to an individual learner to seek out opportunities to gain work experiences during higher education, and once in work it is an individual's choice to seek out and undertake further professional development". (Brennan and Little et al., 2006, p.50)

- 2.9 It is clear from the few examples cited above that the issues surrounding employer engagement with education and training that were highlighted 20 years ago are still important and that the issues lie across provision both at further education and higher education levels. This is an important consideration when we look at the issue of employer engagement with respect to Foundation degrees.

Foundation degrees

- 2.10 As noted above, an underlying objective of the foundation degree initiative was that such programmes would be developed and delivered through partnerships between employers, higher education institutions, further education colleges and Sector Skills Councils. As Parry notes, the foundation degree was the first major new higher education qualification to be introduced in England since the diploma of higher education in the 1970s (Parry, 2006)¹⁶. He notes it was also the first time that a short-cycle qualification carried the title 'degree' rather than diploma or certificate.
- 2.11 Research on foundation degrees (Fds) and employer engagement has tended to focus on either specific sectors e.g. health or education, or specific regions. In looking at Fds, researchers have often focussed on the demand for Fds, the availability of Fds and the regard for Fds held by employers. Some studies have also addressed students' experiences of Fds.
- 2.12 In October 2003, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) commissioned an in depth evaluation of the Early Years Foundation degree¹⁷. The need for such an intermediate level qualification for employees working in the 'early years' sector had been clearly identified in the 1998 National Childcare Strategy Green Paper¹⁸, and a overarching framework for such a programme had been developed in partnership with the DfES, higher education institutions (HEIs), and local education authorities. As such, the Fd was 'sector-endorsed', and the study found that both HEIs and employers were very positive about the need for such Fds. Nevertheless, the report noted

...that all HEIs were aware that they sometimes had to 'win' employer support (Mowlam, Murphy and Arthur, 2003, p.19)

¹⁶ Parry, G. (2006) Policy-Participation trajectories in English higher education. In Higher Education Quarterly, 60, 4, pp 392 – 412.

¹⁷ Mowlam A., Murphy M. and Arthur S. (2003) Evaluating the introduction of the early years foundation degree. London: National Centre for Social Research, for the DfES.

¹⁸ Department for Education and Employment (1998) Meeting the childcare challenge – a framework and consultation document. DfEE, Cm 3959.

but that employers were not well aware of what was required of them. It was stated that HEIs were aware they could have done more to work with employers and give a much better explanation of the degree and their involvement.

- 2.13 The same study also reported that none of the employers had any visits from the HEI – apart from that of visits to mentors in the settings. It was unusual to have any direct contact between employers and the college. However, the employers were not concerned about this for the most part but did want feedback on the students' progress.
- 2.14 This evaluation also investigated some 50 students' views and perspectives, during 2005 (Knight, Tennant, Dillon and Weddell, 2006)¹⁹. Students viewed work-based learning as a valuable component of the Fd with mentors playing a vital role in supporting students in the workplace; teaching on the Fds was widely praised but students had found some elements of the college-based learning disorganised. Participation in the Fd had benefited students' self-development, but most students who had now completed programmes had gained no formal recognition for achieving the Fd in terms of pay or job title.
- 2.15 More recently, HEFCE-commissioned a study of demand for Fds in the East Midlands²⁰ focussing on four key employment areas viz logistics, food and drink, construction and retail. The study found that Fds were not necessarily being developed in response to demand and that there was

.... a very low level of awareness of FDs at present among employers and employees, and even where there is awareness their relevance is not fully understood (Raddon and Quinn, 2007, p.2)

although where employees were studying for an Fd they were well regarded and the employers recognised the benefits. The study also found a shortage of information about Fds in the region under investigation; some confusion about the Fd in relation to other qualifications and where they fitted in the system; a perception of Fds being 'too academic'; and demonstration of relevance was of particular importance to employers.

- 2.16 In a further HEFCE-commissioned study²¹, researchers looked at issues relating to the implementation of Fds in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in and around the Northamptonshire area. Their findings echoed those of the East Midlands research in that

"Among many small businesses, awareness of the nature of Foundation Degree programmes was often very low.

Not all employers were entirely convinced of the merits of Foundation Degrees — some were extremely sceptical.

There was a sense, most strongly felt among smaller SMEs, that the prospect of undertaking a 'degree' was very daunting for staff who had not undertaken any formal learning since leaving school.

There was a strong feeling that the 'costs' involved outweighed the 'benefits', especially in those businesses with small numbers of staff, or where there was no formal tradition of staff development. Among larger organisations, keen interest was expressed in corporate discounts. "(Matthews, Maynard and Kraftl, 2007, pp.4 - 5)

- 2.17 What also emerged was the importance of good clear communication with the provider and a better understanding of the value of Fds to the employer. As found in other research the relevance of the Fd was crucial; this was described as

¹⁹ Knight, T., Tennant, R., Dillon, L. and Weddell, E. (2006) Evaluating the early years sector endorsed foundation degree – a qualitative study of students' views and experiences. London: National Centre for Social Research for the DfES. Research briefing RB751.

²⁰ Raddon, A. and Quinn, M. (2007) Demand for Foundation Degrees and engaging employers in the East Midlands. Bristol: HEFCE.

²¹ Matthews, H., Maynard, M. and Kraftl, P. (2007) Sustainable Foundation degrees: a case study of Northamptonshire Bristol: HEFCE.

“The notion of ‘fitness for purpose’ is a paramount consideration. Foundation Degree providers must show a keener awareness of their potential market, recognising above all that the rhythms of higher and further education are not universally applicable.” (Matthews, Maynard and Kraftl, 2007, p.6)

2.18 A study of Fds in the north east of England (commissioned by the regional development agency) found a high level of enthusiasm for Fds from employers who had been involved in their development (Step Ahead Research Ltd and RCU Ltd, 2004)²². However, stakeholders considered individual and employer demand was suppressed by a lack of awareness, and there was a suggestion that the flexibility of Fds may be a source of confusion and ‘muddled image’. But this very flexibility has also been noted as encouraging innovative responses to the diverse range of England’s higher level skills needs, and attracting students who might not otherwise access higher education (QAA, 2005)²³.

2.19 A foundation degree feasibility study was carried out by Cogent (2007)²⁴ - the SSC that represents the petroleum, polymer and nuclear industries which are highly dependent on skilled, trained and qualified employees. The study found a similar lack of awareness of Fds, apart from information from Cogent itself. There was also a lack of understanding of the qualification:

“When asked about the purpose and characteristics of FDs and their place in the NQF, a significant majority were very unclear and asked for more information about how they related to HNDs and HNCs” (Cogent, 2007, p. 11).

2.20 The Cogent study reported employers’ views about:

“.....gaps and shortcomings particularly with respect to delivery and balance in the content between theory and practical applications. Satisfaction levels unsurprisingly were usually linked to the extent to which content and delivery had been tailored to company requirements.” (Cogent, 2007, p.2)

In addition:

“Flexible delivery was without exception a key requirement to take account of working practices and shift patterns. Employers expressed a wide range of delivery preferences with employer satisfaction levels closely linked to the provider’s ability to tailor the delivery to meet the company’s requirements.” (Cogent, 2007, p.3)

2.21 A number of these issues are picked up in a report on marketing Fds²⁵. In terms of developing Fds the study noted the following:

“It became clear during the research that the promotion of Fds cannot be discussed in isolation from their initial development. Examples were given of Fds that had been developed with only a scant amount of market intelligence or employer involvement and which had then failed to recruit as there was no real market for them. The frustration for those who were tasked with promoting such Fds was that they were often held responsible for the lack of success, yet they had little input into the initial stages of development. Conversely, those Fds that had been fully researched and developed with the co-operation of employers flourished without the need for much promotion at all.” (Heist, 2007, p. 11)

²² Step Ahead Research Ltd and RCU Ltd. (2004) Foundation degrees: supply and demand in North-East England. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: One NorthEast.

²³ Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2005) Learning from reviews of Foundation Degrees in England carried out in 2004-05: sharing good practice. Gloucester: QAA.

²⁴ 2007 Foundation Degree Feasibility Study: Employer and Provider Research prepared for Foundation Degree Forward by Cogent SSC Ltd.

²⁵ HEIST (2007) Good practice in the marketing of Foundation degrees – a research based guide for practitioners **fdf** Lichfield.

- 2.22 The same report reviews issues raised in the research on working with employers which include:
- *Employers are often unaware of Fds, but understand the idea of 'courses' in general.*
 - *Some employers may not have the time or inclination to become actively involved in developing an Fd. They may, however, have a training need or wish to develop their staff, but they are looking for an external organisation (the college or university) to run the Fd with as little input from themselves as possible. It is important, therefore, to have realistic expectations of employers and to ensure that your Fd is designed to meet their needs.*
 - *The traditional modes of delivery for part-time courses may not be appropriate for employers and their employees. (Heist, 2007, p.19)*
- 2.23 The above points to the need for realistic expectations in terms of employer engagement. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's own reviews of Fds have found relationships with employers becoming more effective though they have also noted that sustained and continuous involvement sometimes proves difficult; and have pointed to the troublesome lack of involvement by some employers in Fd development, monitoring, assessment, student feedback, and support for work-based learning (QAA, 2005)²⁶.
- 2.24 The lack of awareness of the Fd and its place in the qualifications system is a recurring theme in a number of research reports in England. It is also highlighted as an issue in Wales²⁷, where a study on the role of Fds noted that even where employers were involved in Fds, they were concerned about the whether the Fd would meet their specific needs and whether there was sufficient employer input.
- 2.25 There is also some evidence that students are concerned about the perceptions that their employers have of the Fd and the extent to which this lack of understanding will impact on their own careers (DfES, 2004)²⁸.
- 2.26 In summary the above research on Fds points to a number of issues: the continuing low level of awareness of Fds in certain employment sectors; uncertainties about its relationship to other higher education qualifications; the uneven pattern of sustained employer engagement in the design and delivery of Fds; the benefits to potential students of flexible and diverse delivery patterns; the good opportunities for self-development through Fds, but the lack of formal recognition hampering Fd graduates' career prospects.

²⁶ Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2005) Learning from reviews of Foundation Degrees in England carried –out in 2004-05: sharing good practice. Gloucester: QAA.

²⁷ Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (2007) A study of the role of foundation degrees in Wales (SQW) . Cardiff: HEFCW.

²⁸ Department for Education and Skills (2004) Evaluation of Foundation degrees, final report (York Consulting). London: DfES.

3 Method

3.1 The research study, commissioned by Foundation Degree Forward (*fdf*) was designed to:

- explore the impact of Foundation Degrees (Fds) on students and the student experience; and
- explore the impact of Fds in the workplace from an employer perspective.

A major objective of the study was to focus on the nature and extent of employer involvement in Fds. Additionally, the study aimed to build capacity among (mainly) staff in further education colleges delivering Fd programmes through the involvement of Fd practitioners in the study.

3.2 The study commenced in April 2007 and was undertaken in two phases, comprising a number of elements, as outlined below:

- *Phase One (April – August):*
student perspective (through focus groups with current Fd students);
employer perspectives (through interviews with employers);
Fd practitioner perspectives (through development of case studies).
- *Phase Two (September – December):*
student perspective (through survey of new students, and interviews with Fd graduates);
employer perspectives (additional interviews);
dissemination of emerging findings and sharing experiences.

3.3 It was agreed at the outset that the study would focus on a limited number of Fd programmes (from which at least one cohort of students had already graduated) and through which links with employers, current students and Fd graduates would be made. By design, it had also been agreed that for each programme, a named practitioner would be identified who would prepare a short written narrative of the development of the programme thus far, focussing particularly on aspects relating to employer engagement. Practitioners would also participate in regional seminars designed to share experiences of Fd design and delivery with others developing or running Fds, and other stakeholders, including employers.

3.4 The selection of the limited number of Fd programmes was informed by: a preliminary analysis of Fd provision, by region and broad subject/employment sector, undertaken by *fdf*, overview statistics included in the Higher Education Funding Council for England's report on foundation degrees (HEFCE, 2007)²⁹; *fdf* regional directors' suggestions for the possible inclusion of particular Fds in 'their' region.

3.5 Given the resources available for the study it was agreed to focus on just four or five broad sectors. It was also agreed that the study should include at least one sector that comprised significant numbers of Fd students and programmes (for example early years education, or health and social care). Given a major study of Fds in health and social care had recently been commissioned³⁰ it was agreed not to include this sector in the current study. The five broad employment sectors included in this study were: creative/ design/ media; business and management; early years/ teaching and learning support; engineering/materials; uniformed/public services.

²⁹ HEFCE (2007) Foundation degrees Key statistics 2001-02 to 2006-07. Bristol: Higher Education Funding Council for England, January 2007/03.

³⁰ University of Central Lancashire, Faculty of Health evaluation of Fds for assistant practitioners in health and social care (with NHS North West).

- 3.6 The research team initially worked with a 'long list' of selected programmes and sought confirmation from the relevant provider that at least one cohort had already completed the programme. This exercise resulted in a small number of programmes being eliminated because no students had yet completed the programme. Appendix 1 lists the 20 programmes that were involved in the study, grouped by main employment sector, together with the overall numbers of employers and students interviewed or surveyed as part of the study. Of the 20 Fd programmes, five were delivered by universities, 14 by colleges, and one by a private training provider. The majority of the programmes (13) were designed for people who were already working in the relevant employment sector; the remainder were geared towards those yet to enter relevant employment (or who were in a sense 'trainees').
- 3.7 Named practitioners assisted the research team in setting-up focus groups with Fd students nearing completion of their first year of study. It was also planned to interview up to three recent Fd graduates per programme (with contact details provided by the named practitioner). In a small number of cases the research team was unable to gain contact details from named practitioners and this seemed more likely in the case of programmes geared towards learners already employed in a relevant workplace (see section 4 for details of student interviews).
- 3.8 Additionally, students who had recently commenced their Fd studies in September/October 2007 were surveyed (by means of a short questionnaire completed in class contact time). This exercise resulted in over 300 questionnaires (from 19 programmes) being completed (see sections 4.67 – 4.87 for summary of findings from the survey).
- 3.9 For each Fd programme, a named practitioner worked with a member of the research team to identify up to three employers involved with the programme (either through providing work experience opportunities for students or by having an employee studying for, or having completed an Fd). Employers thus identified were invited to be interviewed (primarily by telephone), and in most instances employers were pleased to be involved in such interviews (though some proved rather elusive to pin-down). In a small number of cases, the programme was in fact 'bespoke', designed for a single employer and in these instances attempts were made to interview more than one person in the same organisation. In a further small number of cases, the practitioner was reluctant, on data protection grounds, to provide employer details; rather Fd completers were invited (by the named practitioner) to provide details of 'their' employers. This method did not result in any employers being identified. In all, 37 employers were interviewed (see section 5 for details of employer interviews).
- 3.10 Finally, as noted above, a key part of the study was to engage practitioners in the research. This was done through requesting each practitioner to draft a case study on their Fd, reflecting on issues encountered in the development and ongoing delivery of the Fd. Each practitioner was invited to attend one or two dissemination events (in November 2007) and a number presented 'their' case for wider discussion. Practitioners' views (as presented in the case studies) have been collated and analysed and are presented in section 6 of the report.

4 Students' perspectives

- 4.1 By design the study aimed to capture students' perspectives on Fds from three separate constituencies: those who had very recently enrolled on an Fd; those who had been studying on an Fd for almost one year; those who had now successfully completed their Fd programme.
- 4.2 This section starts with the findings from focus group discussions with current students, and one-to-one telephone interviews with a small number of students who had now completed their Fd studies. Given the rather different nature of questions about new Fd students' very early experiences of Fds, the findings from the survey of these students are reported in a separate section (see sections 4.67 – 4.87 below).
- 4.3 Most of the focus groups with current students – primarily those who had been studying for at least a year (or more) were undertaken during May – July 2007; two were undertaken in September – October 2007. In all, over 120 current Fd students, from 20 Fd programmes took part in the focus group discussions. Telephone interviews with students who had now completed their Fd programme were undertaken primarily in the period September – November 2007. As noted in the section 3 of this report the research team experienced some difficulties with identifying and contacting such 'completers'. As a result interviews with 27 'completers' were undertaken, from only 13 of the 20 programmes involved in the study: as such, it is difficult to generalise such completers' views (in some cases only one or two students on a particular programme). In reporting the findings we have borne this in mind.
- 4.4 Given part of the study's focus was on the nature and extent of employer engagement in Fds, we found it useful to group the students' into two distinct categories for the purposes of reporting their views. The first comprised those who were studying full-time and were not (yet) employed in a job directly related to the focus of their Fd programme – in a sense this group could be viewed as 'potential employees'. In this category we also included students on those programmes which were essentially bespoke 'trainee programmes' for the company concerned (with the 'students' having a trainee status within the company). The second comprised those who were currently employed in a job related to the focus of the Fd programme – in some cases this second group could be further categorised (to an extent) between those who were enrolled on a programme designed and delivered for a particular employer (a bespoke programme) and those enrolled on a programme designed and delivered for a generic employment sector (for example, business and management; early years education). In the following sections, we look at students' choice of studying for an Fd; issues relating to programme location and delivery; demands of the programmes; and students' perceptions of overall gains. The specific aspect of employer involvement in the Fds is considered in sections 4.44 – 4.63 below.

Reasons for enrolling on Fd

Potential employees

- 4.5 These (in the main young) students had chosen the Fd because of their interest in the general subject area and a desire to work in the industry. Additional reasons included the access given (via placements) to relevant workplaces; a desire to study in their locality (and in a college environment); the access an Fd could give to an honours degree, and for some, the fact that the Fd seemed less daunting than an honours degree programme. For a minority, the Fd was an existing progression route from a national diploma course offered in the same college, and a small number also indicated

that the Fd had not been the first choice option. Nevertheless, overall, it seemed that students had chosen to study the Fd for a series of positive reasons. In one case, students indicated they had chosen the particular Fd because it also offered the opportunity to gain an NVQ and additional certificate in the first year; but on reflection, these students considered that this arrangement had proved confusing and difficult to manage.

- 4.6 Those for whom the Fd was part and parcel of an organisation's trainee scheme (for example, naval ratings training to become naval officers; trainees on a scheme that would result in them being in a position to apply for engineering posts within the organisation) had no choice in the matter. However, the opportunity to study for a qualification alongside gaining work experience within the organisation (and being paid a salary) had obviously been an attractive proposition when applying to the training scheme.

Current employees

- 4.7 In the vast majority of cases, these students (ages ranging from early 20s – early 50s) had taken the initiative to find out about Fds as a way of developing personally and professionally whilst continuing to work full-time. All were looking to build on existing qualifications (many obtained several years before) and on relevant work experiences (which in some cases was very substantial).
- 4.8 In some employment areas (for example, early years) the Fd had specifically been introduced to create a progression route to a certain level of practitioner role within the sector. In other areas (for example, business and management), some students had considered enrolling on other higher education courses '...like an HNC or something.....when I rang the college I was told they were no longer offering [but] that they did this Fd instead...'. Those for whom the Fd had been designed as a 'bespoke' programme for their company realistically had no choice in the matter (and none of these regretted having 'had' to do the programme).
- 4.9 More generally, the majority considered the Fd was less daunting than enrolling on a honours degree programme (though many saw the Fd as a stepping stone towards the latter), but in only a (very) few cases had their employer suggested such a route.
- 4.10 A few specifically mentioned the attractiveness of small class sizes and locally offered provision (at times to 'fit' with work and family commitments); others stated that they had chosen an Fd with face-to-face tuition and opportunities for direct interaction with other students in preference to learning 'at a distance'. As one student noted 'I really needed tutors to push me, reminding me of deadlines .. I couldn't have managed [just] on-line stuff!...'
- 4.11 Once enrolled, employer support (in the form of tuition fees paid for, paid day release, or finishing work 'early' to attend college in the evening) was in the main forthcoming; in one case, such support extended to provision of personal copies of relevant text books. However, for some students, particularly those working in early years/teaching and learning support settings, such financial support was much less secure (and in some instances, non-existent).

Programme location

- 4.12 Most of our 'cases' were delivered by colleges (rather than universities) and, in one case, by a private training provider. The majority (of both potential and current employees) raised few specific issues relating to location.

Potential employees

- 4.13 One group of students felt the lack of pressure at the local college (in comparison with being at a 'big' university) was a drawback; another group were concerned that their programme had been relocated to a local business park (where the college had a campus) away from students and tutors in other cognate areas.

Current employees

- 4.14 It was evident that many current employees were prepared to travel some considerable distances to attend the college (and incidentally to attend our focus groups).
- 4.15 One group, attending the college's campus in a local business park, commented that it had a very business-like feel, away from the 14-19 year olds, but one student noted that she had taken the opportunity to visit the (validating) university on an open-day 'that was good..it's like a real massive university ..the size and scale of it..it had a really good buzz..a student culture'. A completer from the same programme commented (*unprompted*) rather tellingly '...the most disappointing thing .. I never got to - [validating university] not even for a day..I didn't feel going to [college] was being a university student...maybe I've seen 'Educating Rita' too many times!...but to listen to a proper (sic) lecture in a proper lecture hall with people who wanted to be there...seeing a real university and seeing how students really are....'.

Programme delivery

- 4.16 The pattern of timetabled sessions for both 'full-time' and for 'part-time' Fds varied considerably (from half-a-day/week; extended 12-hour day/week; one evening/week; through to set 'blocks' of days every 4 - 6 weeks).

Potential employees

- 4.17 In the main, programmes for potential employees included the expectation that students would undertake work placements in relevant work settings. Students particularly valued such placements. In most cases they had to find their own placements (with help and support from the college). However, there were isolated concerns relating to the inappropriateness of placements on offer (in business and management); the availability of suitable placements in the locality (in design/media); and (in one case) the non-existence of 'designed in' placements with students having to operate on a freelance basis, and finding commissions through the internet.
- 4.18 Clearly, where the relevant employment sector in the locality is dominated by micro-businesses, the availability of appropriate placements for full-time students can be an issue. In recognition of this situation, in one of the 'cases' the college itself had set-up its own studio on-site which replicated a working environment and was operated on that basis (with students working on 'live briefs' for employers to industry timescales).
- 4.19 Students commented that the level of support provided (by employers) on placements was generally good, though it could be rather variable, from excellent throughout, to good initial induction and then left to their own devices.
- 4.20 Given the newness of some of the Fds involved in the study, there were some (limited) concerns expressed about poorly-organised programmes: with practical sessions held prior to topics being covered in lecture sessions (though this has since been rectified to improve the 'flow'); one cohort being given 'time-off' so a new (entering) cohort could 'catch-up'; the cancellation of an organised trip to a London art fair frequented by employers – this was significant in that the programme concerned offered no direct engagement with employers and the fair would have provided the opportunity for students to display their work and possibly negotiate commissions and/or job offers.

Further, students enrolled on a programme specific to a new area of management (in which there were as yet few qualifications) were disappointed to find the programme did not meet their expectations, and seemed more like a general business and management programme

- 4.21 All students had enjoyed a mix of lectures, seminars, tutorials, group activities, and self-directed study. Learning resources (web-based; tutor hand-outs; text books) were generally available though one group had experienced specific problems with insufficient software licences and recurring computer 'crashes' - given the high reliance placed on IT-supported learning resources this was a significant issue (which the college was addressing); and another had no access to computer facilities on site (one day per week) during the initial phases of the programme.
- 4.22 In a few instances, it seemed that programme delivery rested on a very few members of staff (such that incidences of staff illness, and unfilled posts impacted negatively on programme delivery).

Current employees

- 4.23 All the students were already employed in relevant workplaces. For some students, the Fd was highly related to their current work roles (this was often the case for those on early years/teaching and learning support Fds); for others, the Fd was related to their current work roles to an extent but given programmes were generic there was little expectation that the Fd would be immediately applicable to their own current work tasks and settings in every respect.
- 4.24 Again, the programmes were delivered through a mix of lectures, discussion groups, practical workshops and the like. In the main, this mix was welcomed though some (in engineering) considered they needed more group work and practical workshops.
- 4.25 Students found group activities and discussions particularly valuable in terms of hearing of, and reflecting on, their own and others' experiences and practices in different workplace settings - both business and management, and early years/teaching and learning support specifically commented on this aspect. As one student noted '...it moves you out of your comfort zone, which is good...hearing about customs and practices elsewhere'. However for those attending from a wide geographical area, group assignments were difficult to undertake.
- 4.26 For some (and particularly where the 'day' was very tightly scheduled, and with different activities led by different staff members) there was sometimes a sense of insufficient time available to engage more fully in discussions/explore topics in more detail. Tutors were accessible by phone and email, though some students would have welcomed more 'space' for face-to face contact with a range of staff, but recognised that work and family commitments often meant time spent 'in' college was very limited (this seemed to be particularly the case for early years/ teaching and learning support students). Nevertheless, students clearly supported each other, though where web-based discussion groups had been established, many had been reluctant to engage with these (preferring face-to-face contact with those they knew). A few others commented that such web-based discussion groups were not working well because insufficient numbers were using them.
- 4.27 A minority were also highly critical of situations whereby tutors did not turn-up for timetabled sessions or 'just' handed-out work, on their 'one day/evening' in college (which students felt was not a good use of their time).
- 4.28 All students had access to a wide range of learning resources (text books, tutor hand-outs, web-based resources); tutor hand-outs were often seen as excellent starting points, guiding their more in-depth study of particular topics. But given students' limited time 'on-site' many seemed to have experienced problems obtaining copies of the text books (either because of insufficient numbers held in the library, or availability limited to

short-term loans only). In the case of the bespoke programme, the employer had purchased copies of the relevant text books for each employee's personal use. In this case, the employees who had now completed the Fd still regularly made use of the text books and other Fd materials in their day-to-day work.

Student gains thus far and plans for the future

4.29 Our discussions with current students and those who had now successfully completed their Fd programme sought to explore what students had gained from their studies. We asked students to identify the main benefits they gained from their studies; if they had developed new skills (and/or enhanced existing ones); was the Fd making a difference to them personally, and in their jobs (where applicable). The later section (on the linkages between the Fd and the workplace) provides further detail (see 4.44 – 4. 63).

Potential employees

4.30 In the main, these students cited the opportunity to gain real business and industry experience through the study of the Fd as invaluable. Such experiences tended to be gained through work placements, but also (in the media/design areas in particular) through students working on live briefs to meet clients' requirements. Through such experiences students acquired and honed practical and technical skills; many cited having to work to tight deadlines, having to work effectively with others (not student friends), becoming 'entrenched in the trade' and gaining 'streetwise skills' relevant to specific employment contexts, and gaining support from work colleagues to help them meet the high professional standards required in the workplace.

4.31 Other gains mentioned included a broader knowledge of a specific industry; learning from specialist tutors (with considerable industry experience); the development and enhancement of practical knowledge and skills; development of critical reasoning and reflective skills; and the usefulness of contacts made (through placements) for future jobs. Whilst most students welcomed the emphasis placed on work-oriented knowledge, skills and attributes (including the development of a work ethos) a few were clearly looking for a more academic focus (and some of these had now successfully completed a BA Honours programme). In one group (relating to business and management) some students suggested that though the theoretical aspects covered were sound, they seemed to bear little relation to practices in their (placement) workplaces with one student commenting ruefully '...theories of motivation were irrelevant in the workplace...could find no examples .. and the line manager stated they were good as theories but they didn't work in practice!' For another group, the first year of the Fd had seemed very theoretical though they expected this might change in the second year.

4.32 These views were also reflected in students' views about the demands of the Fd programmes and levels of stimulation, with most students considering the Fd was intellectually challenging and demanding in terms of time commitments.

4.33 The majority of these current students cited they had gained confidence through their studies. Most were planning to continue their studies 'on' to an honours degree (although those trainees who already had honours degrees would not be so doing). Of those completers interviewed, some had now gained an honours degree, whereas others had successfully used the Fd as a springboard into their chosen employment.

4.34 The majority would encourage others to study on an Fd (and some had already done so).

Current employees

- 4.35 For current employees, the main benefits identified were: the opportunity to 'get back' into learning (at higher education level) without having to commit to an honours degree programme at the outset; gaining new subject knowledge and an understanding of theories linked to workplace practices (and hence a new-found confidence in explaining concepts and techniques to colleagues in the workplace); a realisation (and respect) for existing (and in some cases extensive) work-based knowledge; the development of academic skills (including evidence-based evaluations, critical reasoning, academic writing); the development of transferable skills (through oral presentations, group working) which had resulted in positive impacts at work (particularly for those on a company bespoke programme); a broader perspective on their particular workplace activities and how they 'fit' within the company's overall operations.
- 4.36 In general these students found the Fd programmes were intellectually challenging (with some in engineering described as highly theoretical). Students who had (only) NVQs as prior qualifications commented on the different expectations in the Fd assignments in relation to academic writing. In addition to the intellectual stimulation provided by the Fds, the majority of students commented on the (time) demanding nature of their studies (juggling work, study and home life – especially if work 'just piled up .. when I was away at college..'). Though they had been given initial indications of the amount of independent study needed to complete the Fd, in many cases they had to devote more time than originally anticipated, though some acknowledged this might be 'just' poor time management on their behalf.
- 4.37 A small number commented specifically on aspects of assessment. One group understood there would be no written examinations as part of the Fd's assessment strategy (and this feature had seemed rather attractive) – hence they had been concerned to learn (after some time studying) that this was not the case. However in another Fd, students would have welcomed the inclusion of written examinations. Further, in one group students would have welcomed the opportunity to have been given clearer indications, early on in their studies, of what characterised differing assessment tasks - 'what the tutors were really looking for' – and feedback on such tasks early on in the programme so they could gain a better sense of 'being on the right tracks'.
- 4.38 As noted above, these students particularly valued the opportunity to share and discuss experiences of working situations and practices with their peers, learn from those interactions and in many cases broaden their horizons as a result. In the case of the bespoke programme (in business and management) the deliberate mix of people from different departments working on group activities had been particularly beneficial in breaking down barriers between departments (and had continued, once the employees had completed their studies).
- 4.39 A few had already gained promotion at work, or had taken on additional responsibilities including leadership responsibilities and developing and managing projects. Many reflected on how their studies had changed them as a person and had changed (positively) how they now interacted with others at work; how they were more likely to take the initiative in proposing alternative courses of action; and generally be more engaged with their work.
- 4.40 On a personal level, many such students considered they had gained in confidence and their Fd studies had added a new dimension to them ('no longer just a mum to a teenager'). The majority were planning to continue studying 'something' after the Fd and a few (who had now gained an Fd) had already embarked on an honours or masters programme.
- 4.41 For those studying early years/teaching and learning support some expressed frustration that changes in government policy had resulted in the Fd itself no longer leading directly to senior practitioner status – rather students would need to progress to an honours programme. As one student commented '..my Fd had become worthless....this was a nightmare!..' And in other areas (for example, engineering)

some students were highly critical of the reputation of Fds – these students concurred that the Fd was ‘not an easy option’, but felt the use of the word ‘foundation’ was misleading and created an image of a sub-standard qualification.

- 4.42 For many students progression on to an honours programme was their intention, but some (in the early years/teaching and learning support area) noted that whereas the Fd seemed to have been timetabled to accommodate particular working patterns, the ‘linked’ honours programme was less amenable to ‘fitting-in’ with work commitments. In other sectors, students were less sure of the precise nature of further studies. Many were hoping the Fd would provide a springboard for promotion/applying for other jobs. The majority would encourage others to study for an Fd whilst working.
- 4.43 Many of the findings reported above could well be equally applicable to other forms of higher education provision, particularly those relating to older students returning to study after some years in work. However, one of the defining features of the Fd is the integration of academic and work-based learning through close collaboration between employers and programme providers; by design, learning and work are intended to be closely interlinked involving a two-way process between the environments of work and the institution providing the Fd (QAA, 2004)³¹. In the next section of the report we consider the nature and extent of employer involvement as perceived by students currently enrolled on, or having recently completed an Fd; and the benefits gained from such involvement.

Students’ perceptions of employer involvement

- 4.44 As with our employer interviews (see later) we found the views expressed by students about employer involvement in their Fds fell into the following broad categories:

Type of student	Type of general employer involvement			Specific linkages between Fd and the workplace		
Potential employee	Active	Passive	None	Two-way	One-way	None
Current employee	Active	Passive	None	Two-way	One-way	None

Type of general employer involvement

Active employer involvement

Potential employees

- 4.45 In the creative/design/media area, all students considered active employer engagement in Fd design and delivery would be beneficial – providing a direct link to the industry, adding a sense of reality/realism to their studies and activities and giving a professional ‘edge’. However only in a minority of cases was such active engagement evident, though many students acknowledged that programme tutors themselves had much up-to-date industry knowledge. Moreover, those who had experienced well-supported work placements had clearly benefited from the assistance that employers had provided in helping students integrate what had been learned in college with tasks in the workplace.
- 4.46 Two of our cases related to (potential) employment within the uniformed services (the Navy and the police force). In the former, students were in fact already naval ratings engaged in the Navy’s officer trainee programme which ‘happened’ to lead to a Fd (though the trainees were not necessarily aware of this). In this case, although the training programme led to an academic award, students considered the whole

³¹ Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2004) Foundation Degree qualification benchmark, QAA 065 10/2004. Gloucester: QAA.

programme had been developed (solely) by the Navy and was delivered and assessed solely by the Navy (at the Royal Naval College). The second case aimed to prepare students for employment in the police force or law-enforcement related industries. As such, students had to actively seek and gain employment as a special constable during the Fd, and the programme was designed (with strategic and local employer involvement) to link theory (delivered at college) with simulated role plays and practice experienced 'on patrol'.

Current employees

- 4.47 In the business/management area we found active employer involvement in one case wherein the employer (training and development manager) had been involved in the design of a bespoke programme for the company's middle managers. Such involvement comprised both input in to the design and delivery pattern of the programme, tailoring of some assignments to the needs of the business, an expectation that the outputs of assignments would be used in concurrent work tasks, and lecturing input from some members of staff. Employees who had completed this bespoke programme generally felt such involvement was a positive feature, and reinforced a sense of company commitment to the Fd and their own professional development.

Passive employer involvement

Potential employees

- 4.48 In the creative/design/media area many of our cases fell into this category, with students acknowledging that employers set 'live briefs', provided relevant work placements and provided specific one-off inputs to the programme delivery but were less clear about employers' broad involvement. And in one instance work placements were not 'designed in' to the programme, and students were expected to 'source' their own live briefs (possibly through their concurrent part-time (non-related) jobs).
- 4.49 In business/management one case fell into this category (with students studying one day/week and being on 'extended' placements, arranged through the private training provider for the remaining four days/week). These students considered employers had not been (asked to be) involved in the design and delivery, nor did they think they should be, since such involvement might result in the Fd becoming less generic, and less applicable to a broad group of students, and more tailored to a specific company's needs.
- 4.50 In the engineering area, one case seemed to fall into this category: the students were 'trainees' within the organisation (but with no guarantee of a permanent job on completion) and the Fd formed part of their two-year training programme. As such the Fd was bespoke for that organisation and the organisation had been involved in the design of the programme but current students perceived no connection between the Fd and their 'work' (wherein they were spending set periods of time within different divisions within the organisation), and had yet to experience employer engagement in its delivery. Students who had now completed the programme noted that the employer had not been as involved in the delivery as they had expected.

Current employees

- 4.51 Generally the business/management programmes (other than bespoke programmes) seemed to fall into this category. Given the generic nature of the subject, the broad focus of such programmes clearly reflected employer needs, but students perceived little direct employer involvement beyond 'signing-off' (some) work-related project plans. However, these students were also ambivalent about the desirability of closer

involvement, seeing potential downsides: for example, too close an orientation to a particular workplace could lessen the transferability of knowledge and skills gained; increased linkage /reduced 'separation' might affect student's scope to bring critical perspectives to bear on current work practices. These students commented that their employers seemed happy for them to study 'without interference'.

- 4.52 The early years/teaching and learning support students also fell into this category, with the Fds being developed as part of wider government initiatives to up-skill and professionalise the workforce. Students confirmed there seemed to be very little direct involvement of their immediate employers in the Fds, though a few acknowledged that their line manager had shown interest in their studies, and it was helpful if other members of staff in the working environment were aware of the student's Fd studies (for example, in agreeing to classroom observations and the like). For others, such interest only seemed to become evident when it suited the school's purposes (e.g. the student, having gained Higher Level Teaching Assistant status through the Fd being able to 'cover' for qualified teachers). Many students did not consider that greater (direct) employer involvement would be beneficial citing potential conflicts of interest (including reducing scope for criticality) and having to 'pressurise' others in the workplace to assess their work as drawbacks. However, others considered there should be greater linkage between academic study and practice but acknowledged that they themselves were bringing extensive practice-based knowledge 'in' to the Fd.
- 4.53 In the engineering area, one group of students confirmed there was no employer involvement in the delivery or assessment of their Fd, but considered employers should be involved in the design of such programmes to bring a 'work-based edge', and involvement in delivery would be beneficial in terms of enriching the programme through recent 'field experience' and enhancing its credibility. In one programme there had been inputs from industry from time to time; in another, current students acknowledged that it seemed that employers did not respond to tutors' requests for such involvement (though the students themselves preferred to keep 'college' activities separate from 'work'). Further, the students commented that the tutors' own knowledge and industrial experience ensured the relevance and up-to-dateness of the programme. A completer from the same programme had been informed that employers were a central part of the programme, and was disappointed that this had not in fact materialised. Nevertheless, for this programme some useful industry visits had taken place.

Linkages between the Fd and the workplace

- 4.54 Our discussions with student focus groups included questions relating to the interplay between work-related experiences and activities and other aspects of the Fd in terms of the ongoing delivery and assessment of the programme. Once again we found a spread of practices ranging from: interactions flowing in 'both' directions (from the workplace 'in' to the programme and vice versa); the interplay essentially being only in one direction (from the workplace 'in' to the programme; or from the programme 'in' to the workplace); and the extreme of seemingly no interplay at all.

Two-way interactions

Potential employees

- 4.55 Those in the creative/design/media area who undertook relevant work placements as part of the Fd valued the blending of workplace activities and experiences with college-based aspects, with each reinforcing the other. Most acknowledged that college-based aspects provided more scope for reflective and creative activities, whereas the work-based elements, especially working to tight production schedules and clients' briefs, gave opportunities to acquire and 'hone' practical skills, apply their knowledge and skills in an effective manner, and to develop a good work ethic. Students also valued

the fact that active involvement of employers provided opportunities to ask questions about the 'real world' (of the industry in question) and also 'show-case' their own work.

Current employees

- 4.56 The bespoke business and management programme designed for current middle managers clearly exhibited two-way interactions, both in terms of the content of the programme and the assignments completed by students, which for the most part had to be agreed with a relevant line manager and aligned to a specific business need, such that the 'end-product' was readily useable within the workplace. That said, the planned involvement of workplace mentors did not materialise (though students noted that they had been able to 'support' each other, and tutor support was excellent).
- 4.57 In the early years/teaching and learning support area, many students spoke of undertaking work-focused tasks in their workplaces - the nature of which had to be agreed with their immediate line manager, but there was less certainty about (institution and employer) expectations in relation to workplace mentors.

One – way interactions

Potential employees

- 4.58 In our one business and management case involving potential employees, students were expected to draw on practical experiences in completing assignments but there was no pressure (nor expectation?) from their placement providers to bring their (new) knowledge 'in' to the company.
- 4.59 In the case of the Fd preparing students for employment in the police force, students were clearly expected to draw on their regular (weekly) workplace experiences (gained as special constables) within college - based discussion groups and simulated role play exercises. The programme also benefited from specialist inputs from specific units within the police force, but from the student perspective there was less certainty about the extent to which students' developing knowledge and skills were deployed in their current work roles.

Current employees

- 4.60 In the business and management area, though some students were undertaking work-related projects they were somewhat ambivalent about the extent to which they were able to or indeed expected to integrate knowledge –based aspects with the work-related projects. Others were encouraged (by tutors) to draw on work-related situations and experiences within their written assignments, but there seemed little expectation from these students' employers that they would engage in work-based projects of direct and immediate relevance to their workplaces. That said, these students perceived that through their studies they were becoming more critically aware, and developing critical reasoning skills and were (already) taking such ways of working 'back' in to their workplaces. Further, some students acknowledged that increased confidence (gained through oral presentations and group work) had meant they were more ready to participate in workplace discussions and their 'customer care' skills had improved.
- 4.61 In early years/ teaching and learning support, though some students considered they were able to bring new ideas in to their workplaces, many were rather ambivalent about this, with a minority even commenting on the lack of encouragement (from their workplace) to do so, with suggestions for changes to existing practices not being particularly well-received '...the classroom teacher suggested that the theory was fine in theory but in practice things do not quite work in that way'. However, as with the business/management students, these groups considered the confidence they were gaining through their studies was helping them to make an input at work, critically

assessing projects and the like (even if such confidence might cause some resentment among qualified staff).

- 4.62 In the (building services) engineering area, students saw the college as the place where theory was learned, and they were expected to draw on their work-based experiences to illustrate facts and ideas from these studies (and would welcome more such opportunities). However, these same students considered their employers did not expect them to bring their (new) knowledge and skills in to the workplace (possibly because their employers did not view the Fd in that role). In contrast, some of those in the metallurgy/materials area were actively encouraged by their workplace mentors to use the knowledge being gained through their Fd studies in mini-projects within the workplace; but another student (on the same programme) had never been asked to apply Fd knowledge in the workplace (and the mentor showed little interest in the employee's studies). Further, these students considered that the programme itself did not seem to require them to draw on their workplace experiences within the taught programme.

No interactions

Potential employees

- 4.63 In our one engineering Fd case geared to potential employees (viz. the Fd formed a part of the organisation's trainee programme designed to 'grow' its own engineers) current students considered there was no connection between the Fd and their 'work', which given they were on a training programme did not arise from a substantive post as such – rather they spent set periods of time in different departments (to gain knowledge of the 'whole' operation). Students noted that the first year had been very theoretical thus far with no sense of 'work' being designed in (though they acknowledged this may change in the second year). Completers from the same programme (both now employed within the organisation) noted there was little expectation of interplay between the Fd and their trainee roles, though they suggested the organisation's mentoring system was pivotal to ensuring appropriate work experiences for trainees.

Key points from current and completed students' perspectives on Fds

- 4.64 From our focus groups and interviews with students about their experiences of studying on programmes leading to Fds, and their impact we can see that:
- Students enrolled on Fds for a number of positive reasons. Potential employees were likely to cite interest in the subject area, wanting to gain knowledge of a particular industry, and opportunities for getting a job as the main reasons. Those already employed in the relevant sector viewed the Fd as a way of developing personally and professionally, whilst continuing to work, and most had taken the initiative to find out about Fds (rather than their employer). For both sets of students, most considered the Fd had seemed less daunting than enrolling on an Honours degree programme.
 - In terms of delivery of the Fds, current employees particularly valued the opportunities for sharing and discussing their differing workplace practices. But these same students found their limited 'time' in college or university constrained opportunities for engaging with a range of tutors outside of 'timetabled sessions', and also sometimes made access to some resources (e.g. text books) difficult. Generally the majority of students seemed satisfied with their learning experiences, though a few difficulties were highlighted, including: access to, and reliability of IT-supported learning resources; the reliance on a very few members of staff; students' own reluctance to use web-based facilities (preferring face-to-face contact); paucity of relevant placement opportunities in some localities.

- Students identified a range of benefits arising from their Fd studies. Potential employees cited gaining real business and industry experience, gaining broad knowledge of a specific industry, developing relevant knowledge and skills, including critical reasoning and reflective skills, and making contacts for future jobs as some of the benefits. Current employees cited getting back in to learning (at a higher education level), gaining new subject knowledge and an understanding of theories linked to and informed by workplace practices, the development of academic skills (or writing, and of critical reasoning), and gaining broader perspectives on their current work as benefits. For both sets of students, the majority considered they had gained confidence through their studies.
- In certain employment sectors (early years/teaching and learning support; engineering) some students were critical about the Fd's wider reputation and the possible impact on their future careers.
- The majority of students who were 'current employees' were planning to continue studying 'something' after completion of their Fds and many were hoping the Fd would provide a springboard for promotion/ applying for new jobs. Most students who were 'potential employees' were also planning to continue their studies through an Honours degree (though many of those who had now completed the Fd had secured relevant employment, rather than progressing directly on to an Honours programme).

4.65 Some of the above findings could be equally applicable to other forms of higher education provision (particularly those relating to students already in the workplace returning to study after some years in work). But Fds are intended to have a number of defining features, including a close collaboration between employers and providers, and the integration of academic and work-based learning. From our focus groups and interviews with students, we can see that:

- Involvement by employers in the design, development and delivery of the Fds is very variable (and in some cases students' views do not necessarily align to employers' views of the 'same' cases) (see also sections 5.9 -5.21).
- Full-time students (i.e. potential employees) are more likely to consider employer engagement should be greater than currently exists. But many current employees are ambivalent about the need for increased involvement and perceive some drawbacks.
- Linkages between workplace experiences and activities and 'taught' elements of the Fds tend to be in one direction only, with students actively encouraged by tutors to reflect on and draw on workplace experiences in assignments and group discussions. There is less expectation (from employers) for students to transfer Fd knowledge and skills 'in' to the workplace, though there are some exceptions. Though some students are actively encouraged to bring 'new' ideas and theories in to their workplace, some perceived that such new ideas and their increased confidence was not always welcomed by their colleagues (and sometimes caused resentment).
- From the students' perspectives, expectations (of both providers and of employers) regarding the interplay and synergies between taught elements and workplace experiences varies rather greatly, both between programmes, and even within the same programme (in terms of employers' expectations).

4.66 Given the intended integration of academic and work-based learning, and close interlinking of learning and work being at the heart of Fds, this is an area which requires further development if Fds are to maintain such features as part and parcel of their distinctiveness.

Findings from survey of incoming students

4.67 In addition to focus groups with Fd students who had been studying for a year or more and one-to-one interviews with students who had now completed their Fd studies, we undertook a survey of students who had very recently embarked on one of the Fd programmes involved in this study. Paper-based questionnaires were distributed to about 400 students, and 318 completed questionnaires were returned³².

A fuller report of the survey process and findings is attached as Appendix 3. In the following sections we draw attention to some of the main findings from the survey.

4.68 Given the five broad areas were covered by a different number of Fd programmes (from seven in the early years/teaching and learning support area to two in uniformed services), we anticipated rather different numbers of responses for each area. Although we received completed questionnaires from each of the five broad programme areas, responses from those enrolled on Fds in early years/ teaching and learning support accounted for over half the completed questionnaires (55 per cent – 166 cases), with business/management and creative/design/media accounting for rather less (14 and 20 per cent respectively - 45 and 62 cases). The remaining broad areas (engineering/materials; uniformed services) each accounted for less than ten per cent of responses (28 and 17 cases). In reporting findings by programme area (below), these latter two areas are omitted (given the low case numbers in each).

Demographics of the sample

4.69 Half the sample were aged 21-39; young students (under 21 years of age) and older students (aged 40 plus) each accounted for around a quarter. The distribution of age by programme area clearly shows a wide variation. In the creative/ design/media area (where all the Fds were for full-time students, yet to gain industry-related employment) two thirds of respondents were young (under 21) and the remaining third were aged 21-39. In business/management (where most of the Fds were for part-time students already employed in related employment settings), the majority (60 per cent) were aged 21-39, with the remainder equally split between young students (under 21) and those aged 40 plus. In early years/teaching and learning support (where all the Fds were for part-time students) the majority (60 per cent) were also in the middle age range (21-39), a further third were older students (aged 40 plus) with very few in the young category (only six per cent).

4.70 Almost three quarters of respondents were female (partly reflecting the broad areas covered in the study); the overwhelming majority (93 per cent) were white³³; a half had dependants; the vast majority (86 per cent) were living at home; and just under a half (46 per cent) reported their occupational background as managerial or professional (with a further 15 per cent reporting an intermediate occupation, 18 per cent routine supervisory, technical, and 19 per cent 'not sure/other').

4.71 In terms of educational backgrounds, most were the first in their immediate family to attend university (60 per cent), and just over half had some previous higher education experience. For three quarters of respondents their highest qualification was at level 3 (NVQ3, advanced GNVQ, BTEC national diploma, A levels, access course).

³² The questionnaire was based on the Higher Education Academy's First Year Experience Questionnaire (Yorke and Longden, 2007), and the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services survey of foundation degree students (Jackson and Tunnah, 2005).

³³ The Higher Education Funding Council for England's report 'Foundation degrees – key statistics 2001-02 to 2006-07 (HEFCE, January 2007/03) presents detailed data on the attributes of students on Fd programmes. Our sample contained a higher proportion of white students (93 per cent) than the proportion reported by HEFCE (84 per cent) - though our sample comprised predominantly part-time students and HEFCE's own report shows 89 per cent of part-time Fd students are white.

Getting in to higher education

- 4.72 Half the respondents had little (or no) knowledge about the institution offering the Fd prior to enrolment. Young students (aged under 21) were much more likely to have such knowledge, with some 63 per cent indicating they knew a moderate amount or a lot. Those on creative/design/media programmes were much more likely to indicate they knew a moderate amount or a lot about the institution (these were likely to be the young students).
- 4.73 Just under half had little (or no) knowledge about the Fd programme prior to enrolment. Again young students were much more likely to know a moderate amount (or a lot) – and almost three quarters of those on creative/design/media Fds did so.

Reasons for doing a Foundation degree

- 4.74 Respondents' main reason for enrolling on the Fd was to enhance their career prospects (82 per cent); other reasons included to continue their education (45 per cent; to help me do my current work better (28 per cent); and out of interest (25 per cent). There were a few differences by age. Not surprisingly young students (aged under 21) were more likely to cite 'to get a job' as a reason (33 per cent, compared to 15 per cent overall); older students (40 plus age group) were more likely to cite 'help me to do my current job better' (55 per cent compared to 28 per cent overall). Those doing creative/design/media Fds were also much more likely to cite 'to get a job' as a reason for doing an Fd (57 per cent compared to 15 per cent overall) which again is probably linked to the age of those studying in this area.
- 4.75 For the overwhelming majority, the Fd was their first choice (92 per cent) and there was little variation by age or by programme area. Only a small proportion of respondents had gained their Fd place through the 'clearing system' (13 per cent), and again there was little variation by age or by programme area.
- 4.76 College or university prospectus/leaflet, employers, and college or university websites seemed to be the most commonly used information source for finding out about Fds (cited by 38 per cent; 29 per cent and 25 per cent of respondents respectively). Young students made greater use of college/university prospectuses than the sample overall (50 per cent did so) but (not surprisingly) made much less use of employers as a source of information (only 11 per cent did so). (See also section 4.80 on students' employment status.)

Patterns of studying and working

- 4.77 For the majority of respondents (72 per cent), the Fd was timetabled on a weekly basis during term-time (but almost 20 per cent indicated the Fd was timetabled over a full year). Where the programme was timetabled on a weekly basis, the majority (69 per cent) indicated that timetabled sessions were scheduled for one day per week. Creative/design/media Fds (which were essentially full-time programmes) were more likely to have timetabled sessions scheduled on four or five days/week.
- 4.78 Around a half the students indicated they studied privately on two or three days per week (the rest indicating either one day, or four, or five days/week). Aligned to the pattern of timetabled sessions, young students (aged under 21) were more likely to indicate they did private study on only one day per week (24 per cent compared to 16 per cent overall).
- 4.79 About a fifth of students had considered withdrawing from the Fd. Young students (aged under 21) and those on creative/design/media programmes were slightly less likely to have done so.
- 4.80 The majority of students in the sample were in paid employment whilst studying their Fds: only 16 per cent indicated they were not doing so. Not surprisingly, young

students (aged under 21) were much more likely not be in paid employment (30 per cent compared to 16 per cent overall). Of those in paid employment, a half were working 28 hours per week or more and almost three quarters (70 per cent) were working 19 hours per week or more. Again, the young students were much less likely to be working 19 hours per week or more. Around one in seven students in the sample (14 per cent) were working 12 hours per week or less.

- 4.81 Of those in paid employment, the majority (76 per cent) indicated that the Fd was highly related to their current employment. But 12 per cent said the Fd was not related to their employment at all (these tended to be young students on the full-time creative/design/media Fds). Further, in the majority of cases (74 per cent) the employer had either sent the student on the Fd as part of the job/professional development (22 per cent) or knew they were enrolled on the Fd and were supportive (52 per cent). For a further fifth of those in employment (20 per cent), the employer knew the student was enrolled on the Fd but was neither supportive nor unsupportive. Only in a very few instances did the employer know about the course but was unsupportive (three per cent), or was unaware about the student being on the Fd (two per cent).

Experiences of higher education

- 4.82 Statistical analysis of students' responses to statements about their experiences of higher education resulted in four main themes emerging, viz. views on teaching standards; on expectations and choice; about the learning experience; and on how well students were coping with studies (See Appendix 3 for details).

- 4.83 The statements comprising each cluster were as follows:

Teaching standards	The teaching staff are good at explaining things The teaching on my programme has shown me what I need to do to be successful in my studies I am satisfied with the level of tutorial support on my programme The teaching on my programme is stimulating My programme is well organised I am satisfied with the quality of the teaching on my programme The teaching on my programme has suited the way I learn
Expectations and choice	I made a good choice of subject(s) to study Staff made it clear from the start what they expected from students From the moment I enrolled I was helped to get off to a good start, academically I understand what the assessments (assignments, examinations) on my programme expect of me The criteria used in assessing work were made clear at the beginning of my programme
Learning experience	I am finding the programme intellectually stimulating The prospect of learning at a high level is a motivation for my studying I have received detailed comments on my work My programme is helping me to develop skills in working independently
Coping with studies	I find it hard to keep up with the volume of work in this programme I find it difficult to balance academic and other commitments Academic work at this level is harder than I expected it to be I have had difficulty adjusting to the style of teaching at this institution

Students were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with each of the statements on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

As can be seen from the above, in relation to teaching standards, expectations and choice, and learning experience, higher ratings can be viewed positively. Higher ratings for the cluster of statements relating to coping with studies can be viewed negatively.

4.84 The mean scores for each of these clusters are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Mean scores for views on teaching standards, expectations and choice, the learning experience, and coping with studies - overall and by age and programme area

Theme	All	Under 21	21-39	40+	BML	CDM	EYC
Teaching standards	3.86	3.87	3.85	3.86	3.97	4.09	3.85
Expectations and choice	3.89	3.98	3.89	3.79	4.04	4.17	3.80
Learning experience	3.84	3.82	3.85	3.87	3.87	3.89	3.86
Coping with studies	2.89	2.82	2.88	3.00	2.70	2.86	2.97

BML = business/management/logistics

CDM = creative/design/media

EYC = early years care and education/teaching and learning support

4.85 As can be seen from table 1, overall students were positive about the teaching standards, expectations and choice, and learning experiences (mean ratings just below 4 in each case). Ratings of teaching standards did not vary by age. Young students (aged under 21) were slightly more positive about expectations and choice, and older students (aged 40 plus) slightly less positive than overall. In contrast, older students were slightly more positive about learning experiences than the young students. In terms of coping with studies, young students seemed to report slightly less difficulty with this aspect of their studies than the older group (mean ratings of 2.82 and 3.00 respectively).

4.86 Ratings for each cluster of statements by programme area also show some variations. Students on early years/teaching and learning support Fds seemed less positive about teaching standards, and expectations and choice than those on business/management/logistics Fds and creative/design/media Fds. Those on early years/teaching and learning support Fds also seemed to report more difficulties with coping with studies than students in the other two programme areas reported in this section.

Summary of findings from survey of students recently enrolled on Fds

4.87 From the foregoing survey of students recently enrolled on the Fds in this study, we can see that:

- Students were primarily studying to enhance their career prospects; other main reasons cited included to continue their education; to help do their current job better (particularly cited by older students); and out of interest. Young students also cited 'to get a job'.
- The Fd had been the first choice of programme for the overwhelming majority of students. Prior to enrolment, young students (aged under 21) were more likely than older groups to know a moderate amount (or a lot) about the institution and the Fd.
- The majority were in paid employment whilst studying – only 16 per cent were not working (but young students were more likely not to be working). Three quarters of those in paid employment indicated the Fd was highly related to their current employment.

- For three quarters of those in paid employment, the employer had sent the student on the Fd as part of job/professional development, or knew the student was studying for an Fd and was supportive.
- Students were positive about teaching standards, expectations and choice, and their learning experiences. Young students (aged under 21) were slightly more positive about expectations and choice than older students; older students (aged 40 plus) were slightly more positive about their learning experiences.
- Young students reported slightly less difficulty with coping with studies than the older students.
- Students on early years/teaching and learning support Fds seemed slightly less positive about their studies than those on business/management/logistics Fds and creative/design/media Fds, and also reported slightly more difficulty with coping with studies.

5 Employers' perspectives

Employer interviews

- 5.1 An essential part of the research was to explore the employer perspectives of the impact of Fds in the workplace. We aimed to do this through telephone and/or face to face interviews with at least two employers involved in each of the Fds, either as an employer of the students or in providing work placements for full time students. Researchers asked a series of questions (see Appendix 2) probing the involvement of the employer in the design and development of the Fd and their perspectives on the value and impact of the Fds in their workplace.
- 5.2 In all 37 employers were interviewed. The majority of employers (84 per cent of the sample) were medium to large enterprises employing more than 100 people; the remainder were small or micro-businesses with less than 10 staff. The employers ranged from large public sector organisations (e.g. Environment Agency), large media companies (e.g. Independent on Sunday), building services companies, local authorities, schools, to SMEs employing three or four people. The interviewees were a mixture of company managers, training officers, specialist staff working with Fd students, and head teachers. There was a fairly even spread of employers interviewed among the five broad employment sectors covered in the study – the exception being uniformed services (wherein only one or two employers were involved). About two-thirds of the interviews were with employers whose own employees were enrolled on Fds; a third were with employers whose links to Fds were via students undertaking placements. For the most part the staff interviewed were closely involved with the students in the workplace but to a much lesser extent with the design and development of the Fd.

Initial involvement in the Fd

- 5.3 From the interviews carried out it seemed that the route to development of the Fd was very variable.
- 5.4 In some cases there had been an approach by an organisation to a local university as they saw a need for specific training in the company. This had resulted in specialist bespoke Fds e.g. the Environment Agency approached the University of the West of England for a specific course in Rivers and Coastal Engineering; the Nottingham Police Constabulary approached the local college with a view to improving its training programme as a result of a national review of police training; Nottingham City Transport identified a need for their own management qualification for the public transport sector and the Training Manager approached the local college; Glyndebourne Opera House approached a local college with a view to upskilling the work experience students.
- 5.5 By contrast, the education/early years Fds were seen to be a result of Government initiatives and there was little if any involvement in the development of the Fds by the employers. In this sector the employers were the local authority although the employees actually worked in the schools or other community settings. There was no involvement in the development of the Fds. In some other sectors the development of the Fd had come about because of a decline in a former qualification – the Higher National Diploma (HND) – so that employers had been 'forced' to change to the Fd.
- 5.6 In some cases the involvement had been through an approach by a college or university to the local employer; in the majority of cases these were supplying placements to the Fd students rather than developing a bespoke Fd in the company

e.g. the Hilton Hotel became involved when they offered to place some students; a small graphic design company received work experience students so became involved; in Theatre Arts the local college had a good record in approaching theatres for collaborative ventures.

- 5.7 In several cases the development was down to personal contacts and good relationships with the college. Some of the people interviewed were previous students or employees of the college and had kept up the personal relationship with that institution; a construction company had a historical link with the college and therefore became involved in the Fd. There were examples of the Fd being brought to the attention of an employer through marketing by the provider e.g. an employer received a flyer from a college and realised the relevance of the Fd to their particular industry. In another case an employer was invited to the college and it was pure chance that the contact was made to provide industry input into the course.
- 5.8 There were a number of cases where the employer had very little involvement at all and it was the employee who had brought the Fd to the attention of the employer. In these cases the employer had supported the employee but had not become involved in the development of the Fd in any way. This was particularly the case in many of the general business/management and the education/early years Fds.

Design and development of the Fd

- 5.9 One of the crucial design differences between Fds and other higher level qualifications is supposed to be the close involvement of employers in the design and development of the Foundation degree. However, from our interviews with employers we found that the input and involvement of employers was extremely variable and related to the extent to which an Fd was bespoke or not.

From our interviews we found that the involvement with the Fd development fell into three categories:

- Active - close working with the provider college or university in developing the Fd
- Passive - happy to support employees and work placement students but not involved in the development
- None - not involved at all.

Active involvement

- 5.10 In five of our cases the employer had identified a need within their workforce and had approached a local provider. Together the employer and provider had developed units and modules on the degree e.g. the Environment Agency where the training manager saw it as his job to develop a syllabus and write modules with the support and collaboration of the university which provided assessment material and validated the Fd. In another example the Nottingham City Transport Training Manager carried out a training needs analysis for middle managers within the company and approached the local college with an outline of what the course should cover. In a third case the Nottingham Police Constabulary was looking to improve and reform its in-house training programme and decided to contract the training out to a local college.

Passive involvement

- 5.11 The majority of employers interviewed fell into this category (24 out of our sample of 37). Their involvement derived from an interest in an Fd that had already been developed by a provider, by an approach from a college or university to an employer, by an employee, or by a perceived need to change from an existing qualification, or through work placement schemes. There were several examples of where an Fd was

already developed by the provider and the employer saw the benefit; in a small design company the course leader came to discuss work placements for full time students so the employer became interested in the Fd; the MD of a logistics company saw the Fd as a recognised qualification for the logistics industry and as a way of developing their workforce and was willing to support the college offering a qualification in an industry that traditionally does not have graduates in its workforce - the qualification would also count as a route towards membership of the Chartered Institute of Logistics. Some media employers approached the college, motivated by the quality of its students and the slant of the course – the reputation of the college was paramount in their involvement.

- 5.12 There were a number of examples of an employee finding out about the Fd. In a large call centre an employee brought the Fd to the attention of the employer and they became interested in the Fd because it was relevant to their particular industry. In a primary school the employees identified the course and asked the school for support. An employee in a large company brought the Fd in business management to the attention of the marketing director who was then prepared to sponsor the employee.
- 5.13 In many of our cases once an employee had enrolled on an Fd the employer became interested and involved and wanted to find out more about the course and even to develop their own skills further. In a multi-national building company a member of staff was asked to mentor an Fd student – they had no prior knowledge of the Fd but they gained awareness of the qualification and now regard it as an ideal opportunity for an employee to gain a qualification that allows for progression in the workplace (in this case from assistant engineer to full engineer status) while working at the same time. A manager in a brewery became involved with the Fd from personal interest in this alternative form of study – the individual concerned had come through the traditional route of craft apprenticeship and degree and was intrigued by the Fd; since being involved the manager has become a member of the Business in the Community organisation which provides schools with work placement opportunities, talks to pupils about their industry and helps with the interview process. This manager saw the Fd as a key instrument in providing the skills that are ‘fit for business’.

No involvement

- 5.14 It was surprising, given the central tenet of the Fd for employer involvement, that eight of our employer interviews seemed to have no involvement in developing the Fd at all. This was particularly so in the early years and education Fds where most of the interviewees were school staff who were ‘supervising’ students on Fds. In response to questions about development they reported that they had no involvement in planning or delivering the Fd, but were mentoring or supporting students. An interviewee from a local authority described the Fd as being a government led initiative to increase and up-skill the workforce and therefore their own local authority were not involved in its development in any way. There were some company examples where there was clearly little interest in the Fd e.g. the training manager was told that the Fd had to be implemented in the business and it was their role to oversee the process; a company was looking for an HNC/D course but was told by the local provider that they no longer offered the qualification and they had replaced it by an Fd.
- 5.15 What was discouraging in these cases was that there did not seem to be any move to become engaged in development or delivery. From the interviewees’ responses the interviewers perceived a reluctance by the employers to get involved in what was seen as an imposition and a distraction from the business in hand. In these cases the employees invariably were the impetus behind taking the Fd and were using the qualification to further their careers and for their own personal development

Delivery of the Fd

- 5.16 From discussions about the delivery of Foundation degrees it seemed the employers we interviewed fell into three categories of active involvement, passive involvement and no involvement.

Active participation

- 5.17 From our sample 13 of the employers interviewed were involved in the design and development of Fds and delivered elements of the Fd course, either at the college or university or on their own premises. They had ownership of the programme and wanted to contribute to the delivery of its contents, for example, the bespoke Fd for Nottingham City Transport was delivered by a mix of college staff, external consultants and Nottingham City Transport's own employees viz directors of Finance, Human Resources, Marketing and the Managing Director sometimes sat on assessment panels. In another example, the Environment Agency staff wrote most of the modules with their business needs in mind whilst the university provided assessment material; the Agency staff delivered parts of the course and many of their senior staff with the most expertise provided the lectures to students when they were in the university. The Britannia Royal Naval College modules were all written by the Navy and were all delivered and assessed by the Navy. The validating university accredited and validated the course as an Fd. In media Fds once the initial interest had been developed with local employers the staff became involved and delivered elements of the course e.g. setting and overseeing action practice briefs at the college; delivering a small two-day unit at the college on an aspect of the media industry and what the employer does.
- 5.18 Such active participation was also evident in relation to assessing Fd students' work. For example, a small animation company assessed part of the Fd when the students were on placements with them; a theatre company 'judged' students when they performed; a large media company assessed the students' work in the workplace and the students' ability to cope with the speed demanded by the job placement and the 'high energy' of the workplace.

Passive involvement

- 5.19 This best describes 16 of our employers who were interested in the Fd as a qualification but had not been involved in its development and did not participate in the assessment of the students, but were mentors and supported their employees. This was particularly evident in the early years/education programmes where teachers acted as mentors for the students. Often employers were unfamiliar with the Fd programme but were impressed by what it could offer them e.g. a building company was approached by the college and the company realised the benefits the course would bring as it included a broader base of knowledge and skills; an engineering company manager was asked by the MD to lead on the Fd initiative and then realised the opportunity the degree gave to fill the skills gap that existed in their company.
- 5.20 It also applies to some employers who take students on work placements and work experience; they were interested and involved with the students but not the design and development of the Fd per se. For example, in the Theatre Arts Fd the development was driven by the local college but employers showed a keen enthusiasm for the work placement programmes and the 'live' experience it bought the students; in a business /management Fd the company was not involved in the planning or delivery of the Fd but the interviewee had clearly been involved in discussing the work based assignment with the students.

No involvement

- 5.21 In our study eight of the employers interviewed stated they had not had any involvement in the delivery of the Fd at all. We found this in some education settings but it was also the case in some business/ management programmes. The situation in

the education settings is unusual in that head teachers and managers of day centres are not technically the employers. In most cases there was little interest in being involved in the delivery of the Fd and this was often due to time pressures. Some employers with students on the generic business and management Fds did express an interest in being more closely involved in delivery but were similarly wary of the time commitment.

Impact of the Fd in the workplace

- 5.22 In our sample of employers there were those that were sending employees on to the Fds and there were those that were receiving students on work placements. For those in the former category, in most cases the employers interviewed recognised that there had been an impact in the workplace in the employees' broader understanding of the industry as a whole, in better performance in the job and in their personal attributes.
- 5.23 The workforce benefited from having employees on the Fd who were able to bring extra current and relevant knowledge to the company and share new techniques. Some employers reported that studying on the Fd enabled the employee to gain a broader picture of the industry in the wider context. Many reported the importance of the 'real world' setting that the Fd brings with live case studies and briefs being worked on both by employees and work placement students. Other employers were pleased that a gap had been filled in providing non-graduates with an initial qualification to build on. Many reported an increased motivation and commitment to the company.
- 5.24 The education Fds clearly brought benefits in the classroom and mentors reported that staff currently studying had better engagement with the children, an increased repertoire of activities, and increased confidence in applying skills and knowledge. Studying the Fd also brought the opportunity for students to discuss their own learning with others from outside the school and enabled them to hear about different practices and experiences often giving them a good feeling about their own place of work compared to others. Other employers noted the 'community of F-degree-rs' who supported each other and shared experiences.
- 5.25 Some employers who were acting as mentors also commented on the benefits to themselves, providing challenge to their ideas, and increasing their own skills as managers. Mentoring often led the employer to think about the way they were doing something, which they saw as a benefit.
- 5.26 Employers especially noticed a positive change in the behaviours of the employees. The most frequent comment was that employees gained in confidence and were willing to take on tasks that previously they would not e.g. attending meetings; more team working; improved report writing; a willingness to engage in wider aspects of the business; better communication skills; able to speak confidently in team meetings and offer well thought out solutions to problems; management skills had improved; employees were eager to learn.
- 5.27 Within one company Fd students are now being sought as mentors and coaches and in another case the Fd had brought promotion to the employee. In one company the employee was able to cascade knowledge learnt on the Fd to other employees in the business.
- 5.28 For those employers only providing work placements for full time students the benefits were also tangible. At one end having work placement students in the company provided a reservoir of potential employees who were well trained and knowledgeable about the industry sector; at the other end the staff became motivated and enthused by their mentoring role and 'got a buzz' from new students on board. The students also provided direct labour as they worked on live briefs, which was of particular benefit to SMEs.

Costs of involvement in Fds

- 5.29 The most frequently cited costs were
- staff time in mentoring/ supporting/ supervising the employee or work placement student
 - replacement costs for students when in college or on study leave.
- 5.30 Clearly such costs can be significant and employers were prepared to invest in their staff to enable them to study. Some employers paid fees, provided bursaries, contributed to travel costs and textbooks but this was not always the case.
- 5.31 One employer who was actively involved in the design, delivery and assessment of the Fd described additional hidden costs of preparation of documents, and organising the panels for award boards. Other employers mentioned time spent on developing fictitious briefs and assessing the work of students.
- 5.32 The employers were by and large prepared to give freely of their time to support their staff on Fds and were clear about the immediate benefits to the company. However some were unsure of the returns they were getting for their investment as it was difficult to quantify in the short term.

Relationship with providers

- 5.33 The intended close relationship between employers and providers in the development of Fds was not borne out by the interviews we carried out with our employers, except in those cases where the Fds were actually initiated and developed by the company. Where there was close involvement there were regular meetings with tutors and the training manager was in constant communication with the provider. One employer commented that support from the provider was very good and they offered advice and were always helpful, but clearly were 'in charge'. Other employers had been invited on to liaison committees or business networks.
- 5.34 For many employers there had been little, if any, contact with the provider although many suggested that they would have liked to have been more involved and would have responded positively if asked by the provider. There were several who would have liked to be more involved in the delivery and development of the Fd as they felt they could contribute their knowledge of the business to the students on the course. However, one employer did not consider it of any advantage to be further involved in the Fd as they did not have the time or expertise and thought the provider was best qualified to develop such programmes.
- 5.35 Some employers were disappointed in the feedback they received from the provider about their employees and would like to have known more about their employees' progress. In education it was particularly noticeable that there had been no contact with the college or the university and the schools felt isolated from the process.
- 5.36 Many expressed an interest in being involved in future Fd developments if they had the time but pressures at work, especially in SMEs, were significant constraints.
- 5.37 There were a few interviewees who did not appear to have had any engagement with the provider and did not wish to do so, or even to find out more about the programme their staff were on. Some were already involved in other initiatives e.g. the 14-19 curriculum, or other training programmes (especially in education) so did not wish to be involved with the development and delivery of the Fd.

Other work based training

- 5.38 Most employers interviewed were involved in a number of other work based training initiatives; these included Apprenticeship schemes, NVQs, graduate trainee schemes, especially Initial Teacher Training, national diplomas, health and safety training and placements. A few employers included the Fd in their staff training strategy and continuing professional development (CPD) or as part of the company training programme. In the case of teaching assistants and early years there was a history of supporting programmes to up skill the workforce, especially using NVQs, but rather than being part of a training programme initiated by schools, for the most part this was externally determined by Government initiatives relating to improving the qualifications of the workforce.
- 5.39 The majority of employers interviewed saw the Fd as one of a number of training opportunities that could be a useful addition to fill any gaps. Some saw the Fd as providing opportunities for higher level study where previously no such qualification currently existed. Some were more sceptical as to the value of the Fd and were not sure how it fitted in, especially where there were existing qualifications that employers perceived to be appropriate for their industry.

The future

- 5.40 Sixty per cent of the employers interviewed (22 out of 37) were extremely positive about the Fds and planning to continue sending their staff on Fd programmes. They clearly saw the benefit to the company and having their employees studying an Fd had enabled them to learn about the qualification and its benefits. They regarded the Fd as an academic qualification but more importantly, one that was commercially relevant and therefore highly suitable for the business. One employer recruited graduates from less specialist disciplines on to the specialist Fd programme as it was more vocationally relevant to the industry they were employed in. In this case the Fd was used as part of the training programme for these employees.
- 5.41 Forty per cent of the employers interviewed were less convinced about the value of the Fds and would not be sending their staff or encouraging them to study an Fd in spite of the fact that at the time of interviewing they all had employees studying on an Fd. There were a variety of reasons cited – some related to the qualification itself and its recognition in the sector or its appropriateness for the employees. Other reasons, especially in Education, were the confusion about the place of the qualification within a plethora of initiatives such as QTS, Higher Level Teaching Assistant accreditation, Cert. Eds, Early Year Professional Status etc. Although the Fd was designed to fill a qualification gap for teaching assistants and learning support tutors there still seemed to be some confusion in the schools about its place.
- 5.42 There was also a concern voiced by some employers about the Fd being seen as 'second class' compared to the Honours degree. Some employers interviewed recruited graduates and did not see the relevance of an Fd. These were by and large the same group of employers that had no involvement in the development or delivery of an Fd.
- 5.43 Half the employers interviewed were actively encouraging their employees to progress on to an Honours degree and go further with their work related studies. For some this was part of good CPD, for others it was about the currency of the Fd itself, and for the LEA it was about encouraging employees to achieve 60 HE points at level 3 – an Early Years Professional Status requirement.
- 5.44 Where progression was not being actively encouraged it was because of uncertainties about the type of work and whether an honours degree was really needed or whether practical experience in the industry was more relevant; these concerns were expressed particularly in relation to theatre arts and media design.

- 5.45 Whilst all employers interviewed were engaged with students on an Fd either as employees or on work experience, a number said they would not at the moment recruit students with an Fd. None had recruited anyone to date although one employer indicated possession of an Fd was now being written in to recruitment/promotion criteria. It was unclear whether lack of recruitment of Fd graduates was due to the relatively recent introduction of the Fd in that industry, therefore not many applicants would actually hold an Fd, or whether it was some other factor, such as lack of awareness or understanding of the qualification by the individual employer interviewed.

Summary of findings from employer interviews

- 5.46 In any study of this nature, covering employers of varying sizes across a range of employment sectors (and with differing reasons for engagement in Fds) it is inevitable that a range of views will emerge. In summary, we have found that:
- Employers identified a range of positive benefits that Fd study brought to students and the workplace. Employers noted that employees gained broader understandings of the industry as a whole, performance in the job improved (e.g. through increased knowledge and skills, increased confidence in applying such knowledge and skills, sharing new techniques, willingness to take initiative), and personal attributes were enhanced (e.g. increased motivation and commitment). Students 'in' the workplace on placement brought fresh ideas, and existing staff were motivated and enthused by taking on mentoring roles.
 - Employer engagement with the design and development of Fds is variable. A few had been actively engaged, but for the majority such engagement was passive, and for a minority, it had been minimal.
 - Employer engagement in the delivery of Fds is also variable. Though the majority had been engaged in delivery (with employers fairly evenly divided between active and passive engagement), for a significant minority engagement in the delivery of Fds was minimal.
 - Employers often could be more engaged in the delivery but providers do not seem to develop opportunities, although time constraints are an issue.
 - Many employers will continue to send their staff to study on Fd programmes. However around two-fifths of employers interviewed were less positive about Fds. For these employers, there is continuing uncertainty about the place of the Fd in a complex qualification environment.
 - Some employers appear reluctant to recruit staff with Fds.

6 Practitioners' perspectives

- 6.1 A key part of the research and an essential element of the project was to engage practitioners in Fd-related research. Having identified the 20 Fds for the study we asked the named practitioner in each provider to write a case study on the development of their Fd. We specifically wanted a reflective case study which could illuminate issues encountered in developing the Fd in their context. This would enable others to build on the experiences of those who had already successfully developed and run an Fd programme. We asked our practitioners to reflect on:
- the issues associated with developing their Fd programme
 - working with employers and addressing their needs
 - content appropriateness
 - relevance for students
 - changes that have been made since the initial development of the Fd
 - and to highlight any issues that they need to address in the future
- 6.2 Each named practitioner was supported by a member of the research team in writing their case study. Practitioners were also invited to participate in a workshop to share their experiences of developing and delivering an Fd programme of study.
- 6.3 Of the 20 Fds selected for this study, 16 case studies were received. In analysing the case studies received, we have collated the practitioners' perspectives on their experiences of issues relating to the design and delivery of Fds, viz. the impetus behind the development of the Fd; the dynamics of working with employers and addressing their needs; the benefits to students; and changes since the initial development of the Fd. In the final section (6.40 - 6.44) we identify a number of key issues which seem to be common to a number of the Fd providers involved in this study.

Developing the Fd programme

- 6.4 There was a clear distinction between those providers that developed bespoke Fds with employers for their own employees, and those that developed the Fd as part of the college or university's strategic plan, needing to review their programmes (most often Higher National Diplomas and Certificates), and seeing the opportunity for offering Fds as part of their own curriculum development. Some case studies also referred to the fact that they were encouraged to implement Fds as the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) was supporting their development through the funding of its widening participation strategy and reaching the target of 50% participation in higher education.

Fds as a result of employer demand

- 6.5 The Fd in River and Coastal Engineering was developed as a result of a successful competitive bid to deliver the programme. The University of the West of England (UWE) had been invited by the Environment Agency to tender for the delivery of the Fd. This resulted in a highly specialised degree being developed for trainees in employment.
- 6.6 The Criminal Justice (Police Studies) Fd was developed as a result of a Home Office report that identified the need for changes in Police Training. Castle College in Nottingham designed a degree specifically to meet the needs of the local

Constabulary in association with the Skills for Justice Sector Skills Council and local Police forces.

- 6.7 The Fd in Logistics Management was developed to meet the specific needs of the local Yorkshire and Humber regions. Through research, and in discussion with a number of local companies, the need for a structured career path and higher skilled workforce was identified and the Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education (GIFHE) developed a focussed work based degree with support from the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, Skills for Logistics, the Port and Logistics Centre of Vocational Excellence and the University of Hull Logistics Institute.
- 6.8 The Fd in Business and Management at West Nottinghamshire College was developed as a result of an approach by a large local employer for a management development programme for its middle managers. The college worked primarily with one employer to develop the modules and content of the Fd.

Fds as part of a provider's development

- 6.9 The Theatre Arts programme at Northbrook College was developed to meet the need to expand vocational education at undergraduate level, identified through an increase in applications to existing courses. The Fd was developed from an existing course base of HNDs but the college saw it as an opportunity to develop a coherent, relevant and current qualification that could use the resources the college had to offer.
- 6.10 Cleveland College of Art and Design (CCAD) is a specialist art and design college and had been offering graphic design through an HND. It already had a good established progression route but saw this as an opportunity to introduce the Fd thus creating its own tailored programme responsive to local need. Consultation with local design agencies and freelancers and their clients and with the professional bodies (Print and Graphics NTO and Design and Art Direction) established the need for the degree in a fast moving creative industry.
- 6.11 The Fd in Editorial and News media design at Newcastle College was developed from an HND and gave the college the opportunity to take an updated look at the course content and at the same time give greater scope for engagement with employers. The HND course was originally developed in conjunction with Thompson Newspapers but through personal contacts and word of mouth the course became nationally recognised.
- 6.12 The Fd in Building Services Engineering at Hartlepool College was set up after the University of Teesside Higher Education Business Partnership (HEBP) proposed a cycle of events to produce various Fd programmes. Over a three year planning period of formulating, testing and approving proposals in the light of regional, local and University strategies Fd programmes were developed for delivery; this was taken forward by a Building Services Engineering course team at the college following a format developed in conjunction with Teesside University.
- 6.13 The Fd Early Years Senior Practitioner (Sector Endorsed) at Stockport College was developed as a result of a review within the college of all curriculum areas offering Higher National Diplomas. The first of the College's Fds was within the Centre for Childhood Studies and the endorsement of the (then) Department for Education and Skills prompted the decision to develop the Fd for early years professionals.
- 6.14 Lancashire Business School of the University of Central Lancashire took the decision to develop Fds in response to the Government's White Paper on the Future of Higher Education (April 2003) and new Fds were validated in place of their HNC and HND qualifications. The Contact Centre Management Fd was developed by the University of Central Lancashire as it identified a significant growth in this sector in the region (contact centres are a central aspect of the Government's "Northern Way" initiative). The course was developed in consultation with the industry and the relevant sector

skills council, and the course is aligned to the requirements of the national occupational standards in this sector.

- 6.15 Manchester Skills Solutions developed an Fd from its Professional Apprenticeship. In 2004 Skills Solutions launched its Professional Apprenticeship programme. It was the first provider in the country to introduce this training programme for individuals aged 18-24 – it is a programme of learning that combines a traditional Advanced Apprenticeship with a higher education or professional qualification. It was designed to offer young people a route into higher education whilst simultaneously gaining skills and competencies through work based learning. It offered qualifications in Retail, Hospitality and Sports and Leisure and it was within this Services sector that the rationale for an Fd emerged. The Fd in Service Sector Management was developed after market research with Bolton Institute and the local LSC identified a need to introduce higher skills to the workplace to meet the demands of the industry, improve performance and raise the profile of the service sector.
- 6.16 The Fd Learning Support at Anglia Ruskin University was developed as a result of feedback from students who had completed Diploma of Credit courses which took its lead from the Specialist Teaching Assistant (STA) programmes successfully delivered by the Open University. The course structure was developed with partner schools.
- 6.17 Other Fds in education were developed as a response to a national priority e.g. the Sector Endorsed Early Years Care and Education Fd at Portsmouth University arose through the training and career development opportunities identified in the 1998 National Childcare Strategy; the Fd in Teaching and Learning Support (TLS) at Chichester University evolved to encompass the Training and Development Agency's (TDA) Higher Level Teaching Assistant status scheme (HLTA). The Institute of Education in London's decision to run an Fd was based in part on the ongoing school workforce remodelling and the associated changes in the remit of the TDA.

Working with employers and addressing their needs

- 6.18 For bespoke programmes there was clearly a close working relationship with the employer and this resulted in good partnership arrangements. The Environment Agency and UWE reported that a strong working relationship and support are crucial. They also recognised the importance of students gaining industry experience and used specialist practitioners and researchers in the programme. The Environment Agency staff provided expertise. Where possible students were placed within the appropriate team according to the module they were working on but this was often not achievable because of the challenges this placed onto operations and staff.
- 6.19 Castle College, Nottingham identified the essential role that the employer plays. Close links were formed with the Nottinghamshire Constabulary who helped shape the course in terms of policing expectations. The Special Constabulary co-ordinator organised work placements and some training for the students prior to them going on patrol. The Police also performed their own checks and a numeracy test.
- 6.20 The development of the Business and Management Fd at West Nottinghamshire College involved the employer at all stages of the process including design of the content, selection of appropriate deliverers, deciding on the pace and the delivery schedule, the location of delivery and the suitability of the assessments. Regular meetings were held with the employer for the first cohort of students although less frequent contact was maintained as the second two cohorts progressed through the programme.
- 6.21 At Newcastle College the Fd in Editorial and News Media Design has been developed with industry in mind and is constantly evolving. Students are on placements with newspapers and work on live briefs wherever possible.

- 6.22 At Northbrook College industry panels were convened at points throughout the development and delivery of the Fd and this enabled the college to address new areas in response to industry demand e.g. Makeup and Hair for Theatre and Media. Employers are involved as workplace mentors on the Industrial practice unit.
- 6.23 In the education Fds the employer is the Local Authority (LA), although students are working within school and early years settings. At Chichester University the Fd TLS was developed in consultation with the LA which was involved in the design of the programme. Head teachers were supportive of the principles of the Fd and were happy to support their teaching assistants in taking the degree. The LA as the overall educational employer in the region was very supportive of the Fd and developed provision of a bursary scheme.
- 6.24 Portsmouth University has a scheme with five local FE colleges delivering its Fd in Early Years Care and Education. The students took responsibility for finding a work based mentor – often a senior manager or member of staff within the setting. This has evolved into a critical friend model and is the most enduring aspect of employer engagement/involvement as it depends largely on goodwill for implementation. The establishment of Foundation Direct within the University has provided excellent support for mentors.
- 6.25 The Fd Animation and Games Art at Doncaster College involved employers prior, during and after the development of the programme. They were initially helpful in lending support to the overall project but it became clear that this relationship needed to be reciprocal and take into account student as well as employer needs. Employers were impressed with the overall curriculum design.
- 6.26 In developing the content of the Building Services Engineering Fd at Hartlepool College Employer Focus groups were arranged with specific employers expressing an interest in helping to develop the award. The content was discussed over time, both in team meetings incorporating employers and through employers' forums; the employers took information back to their companies and took soundings in the workplace.
- 6.27 Some Fds have developed as a result of close links with their professional body or the sector skills council. For example, the building services engineering industry and professional body CIBSE were represented throughout the development of the Building Services Engineering Fd; the Fd in Graphic design at Cleveland College was developed after consultation with the Print and Graphics National Training Organisation (the predecessor body to the Cultural and Creative Industries Sector Skills Council – CISCC) and Design and Art Direction; the Contact Centre Management Fd was developed in consultation with the industry and e-skills (the relevant sector skills council), and the course is aligned to the requirements of the national occupational standards in this sector; the Criminal Justice (Police Studies) Fd was designed with the Skills for Justice Sector Skills Council.

Benefits to students

- 6.27 Our practitioners were asked to comment on the benefits of the Fd to the students. The case studies demonstrate clearly the benefits derived by the students from studying an Fd. The following is a sample from the case study reports identifying the range of benefits accrued:

- a) Gaining employment

“The benefits of a foundation degree over a conventional degree are the fact that the curriculum is designed to reflect industry more, so students feel that they are in a better position to gain employment.” Doncaster College Fd Animation & Games Art

“Students get to look and sample the Police without having to make any form of commitment. The course allows students to mature, and we always notice a marked difference in attitudes, experience and maturity in Year 2. The range of different learning and assessment techniques helps students to build their confidence and gives them a head start in the Policing FD. Nottinghamshire Police have shown themselves willing to accredit prior learning and experience gained on the CJPSFD, such that graduates of the CJPSFD will not then have to complete the full Policing Foundation Degree. By not having to complete the same work over again, graduates of the CJPSFD joining the Police are able to undertake operational policing far earlier than those completing the full Policing FD.” Castle College, Nottingham Fd Criminal Justice (Police Studies)

- b) Personal development in building confidence and understanding their own potential

“Feedback from the students themselves suggest that the course promotes personal and professional confidence; one student commented that ‘I feel respected and valued in school – I don’t think that was the case before’, and another reflected on her ‘belief that I can do a good job and know about effective early years practice, I know now why I do what I do, and if it’s not working, I have the confidence to change it’.” Stockport College FdA Early Years Senior Practitioner.

“The course was great for me because it was a good mix of practical and academic work – I had the best of both worlds. It was challenging without being daunting and for someone in my financial circumstances it was not as expensive as a three-year degree course... In my second year I directed a student production of As You Like It. This was a joint production with students on Design, Technical Theatre and Stage Management courses and I was a bit apprehensive about stepping out of my peer group and being in charge. But everyone was so supportive and I was really proud when I saw my work come to fruition in the finished production“ Graduate, Northbrook College FdA Drama Pathway

- c) Understanding the commercial and industrial environment

“The main benefit perceived by students studying on the Foundation degree Programme was the level and quality of exposure to industry and commercial practice. This has been borne out in student responses to questionnaires and in assemblies and one to one feedback since the inception of the programme. In particular the students have responded very well to live briefs and working directly with clients and industry practitioners. Our students have been successful in national competitions including YCN and D&AD (Yellow Pencil) and they have won exposure for their work in international trade publications such as Computer Arts and Digital Arts magazines” CCAD Fd Graphic Design.

“When suitable and where appropriate, live briefs are included into our course. The criteria for these briefs are agreed between the employers and the college. The course tutor, with experience of the industry and working practice will then mentor students through this live brief process within the college environment. This may take up whole modules, or may be slotted into the curriculum working as part of Personal Professional Development – again, as a reflection of industry, you never only have one project to work on at once. Students must be able to juggle their workload as if they were in industry and be able to plan their time effectively”. Newcastle College Fd Editorial and News Media Design

- d) Mutual support for learning and sharing experiences via personal and internet contacts

“Although the students are dispersed throughout England and Wales, they have been remarkable cohesive as a cohort. More recently this cohesion has been developing across the cohorts. This cohesion has provided the students with mutual support, much of it through use of communications technology, predominantly through the internet. This cohesion extends into the classroom where students sit in their peer groups and help one another with their studies. This dynamic provides an energy and enthusiasm as a benefit which are believed to be quite unique to this programme.” UWE Fd Rivers and Coastal Engineering

“Students also appreciate the opportunity they have to meet and share with other practitioners across a range of experience. They regularly comment about how valuable this is as an ongoing opportunity to share advice and ideas that are related to the workplace not just academic requirements. The networking that occurs and dissemination of good practice could also be considered a benefit that is occurring because of the course”. University of Portsmouth Sector Endorsed Fd Early Years Care & Education

- e) Progressing on to an Honours degree

“Our foundation degree offers a unique product and path into a fast-paced and engaging industry. Many students opt to take advantage of the direct employment possibilities offered to them, but equally can progress onto a BA (Hons) Course in Creative practices here at Newcastle which would give them opportunity to develop and further their studies in a more in depth fashion.” Newcastle College Fd Editorial and News Media Design

“The articulated progression route to honours level study is the BA(Hons) Early Childhood Studies, at Stockport College. This means that students do not need to transfer to a different institution in order to complete honours degree study. This has proved to be very popular, indeed 68% of the first cohort of completers, 75% of the second and 91% of the third have progressed to the third year of the honours degree.” Stockport College FdA Early Years Senior Practitioner.

- f) Employees improving their skills and developing a critical understanding of the sector

“The Foundation Degree in Contact Centre Management provides opportunities for practising managers, supervisors and team leaders to formalise their skills and experiences. Our experience of two cohorts identifies middle and senior managers with no formal qualifications yet have substantial experience. The course provides opportunities to formalise these skills and develop new ones. For lower level managers, supervisors and team leaders the benefits of the course are to develop and practice new skills to aid future career development. Feedback has been measured through tutorial discussion and module evaluation questionnaires. The main theme that runs through the feedback is the added confidence the course has given students when in the work place. In addition students find that the course provides an excellent opportunity to discuss good and bad practice within the industry.” Burnley College Fd Contact Centre Management

“Certainly, since the programme began, students from the company cohorts have definitely bonded with each other and this teamwork has transferred to the workplace. Employees have a better understanding of other departments and their functions and how the organisation functions as a whole. The employer places such a value on the programme that employees applying for

a certain management position within the company, must already have the Fd in Business and Management or be prepared to undertake one.” West Nottinghamshire College Fd Business and Management,

- g) Employers in recruiting or supporting their employees as Fd students

“The benefits offered by the course are primarily divided into two areas. Firstly the employers can gain advantage from the projects introduced through the course. These projects offer the opportunity for monetary and process benefits, which is evidenced by the continuous support these organisations have shown by supporting the course, together with larger organisations offering support in a number of ways. Secondly the employees gain a recognised qualification by employing their own experiences to the assessment elements of the course.” Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education Fd Logistics Management

“The perceived benefits, to students and employers, at the time of initiation were twofold: for employers, the opportunity to grow your own graduate and for students, ‘earn while you learn’. This has been reflected at [organisation X] and now in the roles they are in. The importance of learning skills on the job and the opportunity to apply theory is of particular benefit. Some learners have aspirations to run own their own business. Actual benefits e.g. A and B through projects have saved the company £30,000 in reducing waste and increased productivity by 11% in the first year. [organisation Y] see the learners develop into individuals with confidence. [organisation Z] enjoy the benefits of ‘moulding’ an employee to meet business demands and develop an enthusiastic individual with potential” Manchester Skills Solutions Fd Management

Changes since the initial development of the Fd

- 6.28 It is significant in the context of rapidly changing industrial, commercial, social and educational environments that all the case studies identify a number of changes to their Fds since the initial development. Whilst this is encouraging in that it shows responsiveness on the part of providers, it does pose problems for them in keeping up to date with new requirements/legislation/resourcing and staffing. There are also raised expectations by employers that the students on work placements will be ‘oven ready’ and be able to ‘hit the ground running’ – often at odds with the notion of degree level academic training which requires students to develop a critical analytical approach to their work and solving a problem.
- 6.29 The changes identified in the case studies were mainly in content or delivery of the Fd but in some cases the Fd had changed its focus and become more generic to attract a range of students. There is even an example of a change to the name of the Fd to ensure a better description of the curriculum and attractiveness to students.

Content

- 6.30 Many of the providers have changed aspects of their Fds and developed their curriculum in line with employer needs. This is summarised well by an employer who works with Northbrook College on the Fd Theatre Arts:

“We have a responsibility to the future of our professions to ensure that the students who pass through our courses and who we present with a certificate telling them they’re ready to be employed really are – and this requires, absolutely – the acquisition of skills fundamental to these professions and an awareness of where one is within them.”

- 6.31 The Grimsby Institute Logistics Management Fd is an example of where continuous change is addressed. They introduced a module on investigation skills to help non-

traditional students address the academic requirements of the degree. The practitioner reflects

“The very nature of the course demands that the course continuously evolves. One particular module, Concepts and Issues on Logistics, allows for the evolution of key issues in the world of Logistics. This ethos continues in other modules to allow students address so called hot topics which affect issues of interest. These issues may well include transport policy; trade figures; training and development; and crisis management to name but a few.”

- 6.32 In a similar vein the tutor for Fd in Editorial and News Media Design at Newcastle College reflects on the changing nature of the industry and the need to keep up to date.

“It is now well-known that newspaper sales are declining, which reduces employment opportunity in this area, though many people can gain some valuable and rewarding work as freelance designers. With this in mind, the core skills and knowledge of knowing editorial design inside out, it maybe that students need to be taught a wider range of skills to make them more employable in other areas..... this year the college introduced a new initiative to forge new links within magazine publications as a trend in recent years has seen many new magazines hit our newsstands, with no new newspapers...”

- 6.33 Anglia Ruskin University took the opportunity of reviewing the content of the Fd Learning Support when the programme was revalidated. This required the inclusion of sufficient specialist subject content to make the student a viable candidate should they wish, either to become a specialist practitioner within their establishment, or to pursue a teaching career. The programme now provides for two separate pathways for secondary and for primary sector students. The first year of the programme includes generic content related to teaching and learning, and cohorts are taught together. This has proved very successful as it allows students to consider a wide range of issues, and how they impact within very different settings.

Delivery

- 6.34 A few of the case studies identified changes in the delivery of their Fd either in response to student needs or a need to update the modules and increase flexibility into the curriculum.
- 6.35 The University of Portsmouth had introduced a change in assessment of work-based practice through the professional development portfolio in their Early Years Care and Education Fd. They now use an online/blended learning approach to professional development in order to avoid an NVQ tick list approach. This has also contributed to a shift in some other units in terms of when they are delivered while still delivering the learning outcomes of the statements of requirement.
- 6.36 The UWE had introduced a blended learning approach to provide directed learning via online materials. Modules have been developed for study online which are then supported by contact sessions with tutors.
- 6.37 The Criminal Justice (Police Studies) Fd was developing additional support to the students who passed the academic assessments and demonstrated competence and commitment to a career in policing, but were unable to progress owing to the fact they did not pass the Specials entry requirements. They were also considering mapping the Fd even closer to the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP) to include topics such as civil law and animal law.
- 6.38 At CCAD the validating University changed the modular structure of the programme from 12 to 20 credits per module. This forced a restructuring exercise which allowed a rethink of the organisation and content of the programme. The restructured

programme retains most of the features of the previous model but allowed the opportunity to extend some modules and integrate others to provide a structure that more accurately reflected industry practice, to further contextualise theory into practice and to allow for the delivery of some modules in a contiguous rather than concurrent pattern. It also afforded the opportunity to enhance the central importance of work based learning in the programme.

- 6.39 Anglia Ruskin University changed the running of the degree of the Fd Learning Support from four to three years by changing to trimesters instead of semesters. It ensured that all applicants were interviewed, and all students had to be provided with a mentor by their workplace. A workplace co-ordinator regularly visited all settings to ensure there was ongoing communication between the university, school and student.

Key issues emerging

- 6.40 Although the Fds and the providers selected operated in very different contexts a number of key issues have emerged from the case studies. Some of these clearly relate to the cognate area of the Fd e.g. the issues identified in the case studies around the Early Years and Education Fds relate to the employer/ employee relationship and Government initiatives about training teaching staff. Other issues are more general – especially relating to engaging employers in an appropriate and sustainable way. All practitioners involved in the research are strongly supportive of their Fds and demonstrate resourcefulness, adaptability and a keen understanding of the needs of employers.
- 6.41 However, the following key issues seem to be common to a number of providers, and should be given serious consideration in supporting the future development of Foundation degrees.

- *Engaging employers effectively and persuading them to take part in future development*

This is a major issue. Employer engagement in bespoke Fd programmes is less of an issue than in general business and management and education programmes. In the latter the practitioners all refer to mentoring for their students as of major concern and the need to develop effective ways of involving teachers and staff, especially in small early years settings such as nurseries where there are few staff.

There is also the issue of employers finding time to meet providers and to mentor and support their trainees. Practitioners note that there is a belief amongst some employers that this responsibility is a particularly onerous one. Fd providers have taken great care to provide information sessions, support, advice, guidance and training. Many visit mentors in the workplace to support them but this is a time consuming process and as courses take on more students it is hard to keep up the level of support needed to the students in the workplace. One provider found that asking employers to visit them (whether during or out of work hours) was futile.

- *Responding to demand led provision – providers need to remain realistic and pragmatic in their response*
Developing new Fds and building relationships with employers is a time consuming process. Practitioners report issues in having sufficient time for developing the Fd, developing work based learning and developing a professional client facing approach.
- *Flexible patterns of work and study demanded by employers – this can be difficult for providers to accommodate with all the other demands on their resources*

This is noted by providers as an issue and can have a knock on effect on retention of those students in the Fd. Providers are increasingly developing flexible learning and teaching strategies and blended learning opportunities to assist those students who are in demanding jobs.

Some providers are working with employers to change the timing of their block delivery to coincide with quieter periods in the industry. This issue becomes especially difficult where an Fd is provided for a number of employers and the provider has tried to accommodate their preferred delivery patterns. This causes tremendous difficulties for the provider in timetabling, staffing, rooming etc. Whilst it is exemplary to be fully flexible to meet an employer's preferred delivery pattern in reality this is not always possible or the most cost effective deployment of resources.

- *Recruitment of students*

The bespoke Fds may have a limited shelf life. Depending on the nature of the programme it may not be feasible to adapt a bespoke programme into a more generic one, and open up recruitment to a wider pool of potential students. This has led to difficulties in recruiting from employers other than the specific one for which the Fd was originally designed. It has required the provider to adapt the degree to make it less specialised.

In Education there are issues relating to the lack of funding support from schools and other employers, and employers' attitudes to teaching assistants undertaking professional development as well as a conflicting array of qualifications on offer. There is inconsistency both within a Local Authority and between them about support for students on Fds. There has been a reduction in the government support package and competition from HLTA programmes – some Teaching Assistants see the HLTA status as being a quicker route to job security and progression.

Some practitioners running Fds geared to full-time students noted that students are less willing to move away to carry out their work experience. This poses a recruitment problem for those Fds where their contacts for their work experience are at a significant distance from the college or university where they are studying.

- *The higher level qualification does not result in any financial reward in some sectors where there is low pay*

This is an issue that is identified mainly by the providers delivering the Teaching Assistant Fds. There is clearly a need to raise the profile of the teaching assistant and workplace support throughout the Fd. The complex routes to teaching and QTS make it hard for students to navigate through progression routes and the success of the progression route to QTS needs to be monitored.

- *Fds are not clearly recognised yet with some employers still demonstrating little awareness of what they are or how they fit in the qualifications framework*

This issue emerges in a number of different guises – there may be scepticism from 'older' employees about the value of the Fd compared to the 'old style' routes of training. This leads to suspicion of the qualification and lack of understanding of its value.

- *Explicit expectations of all involved in partnerships*

There are challenges when working in complex collaborative partnerships of HEI, FECs and employers. This is especially so when looking at the different HE and FE environments and the conditions of employment of the two sectors. This has led to difficulties in attending meetings, undertaking staff development activities and conflicting priorities - inevitable in such a situation.

- *Ensuring that vocationally based learning is meaningful in an academic context*

This has been identified in several case studies. It relates to the need to develop a balance between the more theoretically oriented curriculum content with a direct relationship to professional workplace practice. The issue relates to the debate around the need for the Fd to encompass 'degree-level' thinking and analytical skills as well as ensuring vocational relevance to the workplace. It emerges as a conflict between preparing people who are 'industry ready' and can hit the ground running with the requirements of reflective thinking and research at HE level 3.

One provider notes the responsibility for making students 'ready' for employment in an industry that is not solely concerned with 'tick box' competence, yet demands very high standards of its' employees. Another talks about the need to prepare industry ready designers, able to work quickly and professionally under pressure.

- *Students feeling isolated from the university*
This was identified in several case studies and depended on whether their courses were primarily delivered at a further education college or private training provider and the extent to which the university enabled students to visit and access their resources or delivered the programme on site.
- *Suitability of students for the Fd and progression*
This issue has emerged as a number of providers have recognised that either the students are ill equipped to cope with aspects of the course or their employment requires skills that were not originally conceived as an element of the course. Providers are now interviewing and screening students in a more systematic way and often requiring them to complete an initial literacy and numeracy diagnostic test. A couple of case studies reported that they now include numeracy additionally within the qualification for the students as they are required to pass a test set by their industry or employer.

6.42 Some employment areas (notably engineering) have traditionally used other qualifications as the accepted higher level skills training, especially the Higher National route and there is a lack of understanding about the changes needed and required and the benefits of the Fd over the Higher National Diploma/Certificate. These employers appear reluctant to send their employees to study on an Fd programme and there is still a lot of work to be done in convincing employers of the merit of the Fd awards.

6.43 In some industries there is the issue of the Fd achieving parity with more 'traditional' academic qualifications.

6.44 All Fds are expected to articulate with a progression route to an Honours degree; providers have identified the issue of preparing students on a vocational course for the academic demands of a top up year should they chose that option.

7 Conclusions and recommendations

- 7.1 The study set out to explore the impact of Fds on students and on the workplace from the perspectives of students and employers. Given the intended distinctive nature of Fd programmes (in relation to other higher education programmes) the study also aimed to investigate the nature and extent of employer involvement in Fds. Further, an essential element of the study was to engage Fd practitioners in Fd-related research. All the practitioners involved in the study were invited to draft a case study reflecting on the issues encountered in developing and delivering the Fd in their local context. Using these case studies, we have been able to draw on providers' perspectives of Fd design and delivery, as well as the students' and employers' perspectives.
- 7.2 It is clear from this study that Fds have been developed for a variety of potential purposes (including for students who have yet to seek full-time employment in the relevant employment sector; for those already employed in the relevant industry; and for those who are in a sense 'trainees' within a particular organisation). It is also clear that these rather different purposes are reflected in the various stakeholder perspectives of Fds (students, employers and providers).
- 7.3 Many of the Fds that were the focus of this study were still rather new (and in some cases, our student interviewees were part of the first or second cohort progressing through the Fd). Given this (and the relatively recent introduction of Fds into the higher education scene itself) we might expect that some of the issues raised in our discussions with students and employers would reflect this recency. From the practitioners' case studies it was also clear that those involved in developing and delivering Fds were very aware of the need to be resourceful and adaptable in developing and delivering this relatively new form of higher education programme.
- 7.4 We present the findings from our study under a number of broad areas. Many of our findings could be equally applicable to other forms of higher education provision (particularly those relating to students returning to study after some years in work, and trying to combine studying with working full-time). But Fds are intended to have a number of defining features, including a close collaboration between employers and providers, and the integration of academic and work-based learning, and some of our findings refer specifically to these features of Fd provision.

Recruitment and engagement in the Fd

- 7.5 Students enrol on Fds for a number of positive reasons relating to enhancing their career prospects: potential employees were likely to cite interest in the subject area, wanting to gain knowledge of a particular industry, and opportunities for getting a job as the main reasons; those already employed in the relevant sector viewed the Fd as a way of developing personally and professionally, whilst continuing to work. For both sets of students, most considered the Fd had seemed less daunting than enrolling on an Honours degree programme.
- 7.6 The majority of students already working in relevant employment sectors had taken the initiative to find out about Fds (rather than their employer), but once enrolled their employers were generally supportive of their studies. In contrast, the survey findings indicate that around a fifth of recently-enrolled Fd students had been sent on the Fd by their employer.
- 7.7 Practitioners acknowledge that recruitment of students can be difficult, particularly in respect of the potential limited shelf life of bespoke programmes; the lack of

sustained support from schools and other employers for students on early years/teaching and learning support Fds; students' reluctance to move 'away' from a provider's locality to secure suitable work placements.

- 7.8 Practitioners have expressed concern about the suitability of some students for the Fd and progression (with some providers now interviewing and screening students in a more systematic way, and introducing additional elements into the Fd, for example, numeracy skills).

Benefits of the Fd to students and employers

- 7.9 It is clear that students and employers perceive a range of benefits that Fd study brings to individual students and the workplace.
- 7.10 Students identify a range of benefits arising from their Fd studies. Potential employees cite gaining real business and industry experience, gaining broad knowledge of a specific industry, developing relevant knowledge and skills, including critical reasoning and reflective skills, and making contacts for future jobs as some of the benefits. Current employees cite getting back in to learning (at a higher education level), gaining new subject knowledge and an understanding of theories linked to, and informed by, workplace practices, the development of academic skills (of writing, and of critical reasoning), and gaining broader perspectives on their current work as benefits. For both sets of students, the majority consider they have gained confidence through their studies.
- 7.11 Employers identify a range of positive benefits that Fd study brings to students and the workplace. Employers note that employees gain broader understandings of the industry as a whole, performance in the job improves (e.g. through increased knowledge and skills, increased confidence in applying such knowledge and skills, sharing new techniques, willingness to take initiative), and personal attributes are enhanced (e.g. increased motivation and commitment). Students 'in' the workplace on placement bring fresh ideas, and existing staff are motivated and enthused by taking on mentoring roles.
- 7.12 Practitioners concur with the views expressed by students and employers.

Design of the Fd

- 7.13 From our focus groups and interviews with students, we have found that involvement by employers in the design and development of the Fds is very variable; our employer interviews supported this. A few had been actively engaged, but for the majority such engagement was passive, and for a minority, it had been minimal.
- 7.14 Practitioners also acknowledge that engaging employers effectively and persuading them to take part in future developments can be a challenge.

Delivery of the Fd

- 7.15 In terms of delivery of the Fds, current employees particularly value the opportunities for sharing and discussing their differing workplace practices. But these same students find their limited 'time' in college or university constrains opportunities for engaging with a range of tutors outside of 'timetabled sessions', and also makes access to some resources (e.g. text books) sometimes difficult. The majority of students are satisfied with learning experiences, though a few difficulties are highlighted, including: access to and reliability of IT-supported learning resources; the reliance on a very few members of staff; students' own reluctance to use web-based facilities (with some preferring face-to-face contact); the paucity of relevant placement opportunities in some localities.

- 7.16 Practitioners report some difficulties in accommodating employers' demands for flexible patterns of work and study alongside all the other demands on providers' resources; they suggest that providers need to remain realistic and pragmatic in responding to employer demands for Fd provision.
- 7.17 Employer engagement in the delivery of Fds is variable. Though the majority had been engaged in delivery (with employers fairly evenly divided between active and passive engagement), for a significant minority engagement in the delivery of Fds had been minimal; employers often considered they could be more engaged in the delivery but providers do not seem to develop opportunities, although time constraints are an issue.
- 7.18 Full-time students (i.e. potential employees) are more likely to consider employer engagement should be greater than currently exists. But many current employees are ambivalent about the need for increased involvement and perceive some drawbacks.
- 7.19 Linkages between workplace experiences and activities and 'taught' elements of the Fds tend to be in one direction only, with students actively encouraged by tutors to reflect on and draw on workplace experiences in assignments and group discussions. There is less expectation (from employers) for students to transfer Fd knowledge and skills 'in' to the workplace, though there are some exceptions. Though some students are actively encouraged to bring 'new' ideas and theories in to their workplace, some perceived that such new ideas and students' own increased confidence was not always welcomed by their colleagues (and sometimes caused resentment).
- 7.20 From the students' perspectives, expectations (of both providers and of employers) regarding such linkages vary rather greatly, both between programmes, and even within the same programme (in terms of employers' expectations).

Progression from the Fd

- 7.21 The majority of students who are 'current employees' are planning to continue studying 'something' after completion of their Fds and many are hoping the Fd will provide a springboard for promotion/ applying for new jobs. Most students who are 'potential employees' are also planning to continue their studies through to an honours degree (though many of those who had now completed the Fd had secured relevant employment, rather than progressing directly on to an honours programme).

Reputation of the Fd

- 7.22 From our survey it seems that, prior to enrolment, young students are more likely to know about the institution and the Fd programme than older students.
- 7.23 There continue to be some concerns about the reputation of Fds. Though many employers are positive about Fds, a significant minority have yet to be convinced about their value. Many employers will continue to send their staff to study on Fd programmes – however around two fifths of employers interviewed were less positive about Fds. For these employers, there is continuing uncertainty about the place of the Fd in a complex qualification environment; and some employers appear reluctant to recruit staff with Fds.
- 7.24 In some employment sectors (early years/teaching and learning support; engineering) some students are critical about the Fd's wider reputation and the possible impact on their future careers. Practitioners also express concern over the fact that the Fd does not result in any financial reward in some sectors (where pay for current employees is low), and acknowledge that Fds are not yet clearly recognised with some employers still demonstrating little awareness of what they are or how they fit in the qualifications framework.

- 7.25 As can be seen from the foregoing, many of the practitioners' views of the benefits of Fds and the ongoing issues relating to design and delivery align to those of students and employers. However, some additional issues can be discerned from the practitioner case studies. Whilst some clearly relate to the cognate area of the Fd (e.g. some issues relating to early years/ teaching and learning support Fds revolve around the employer/employee relationship and government initiatives to upskill and professionalise the workforce), other issues are more general. From the providers' perspectives these specific issues are:
- the challenges inherent in working within complex partnerships of higher education institutions, further education colleges and employers;
 - the need to ensure that vocationally based learning is meaningful in an academic context and to balance more theoretically oriented curriculum content with professional workplace practices;
 - the sense that students may feel isolated from the (validating) university.
- 7.26 It is evident that many of the Fds involved in this study have yet to capitalise on the intended levels of integration of academic and work-based learning, and of employer engagement which are seen as some of the distinctive features of Fds. It is also clear that Fd providers are aware of many of these shortfalls, in particular the challenges of securing effective and sustained engagement with employers, and of ensuring stability of provision (and efficient use of investment and resource) when meeting employer demands for bespoke (or niche) Fds.
- 7.27 We note that Government has recently acknowledged that the rapid growth of Fds shows the potential demand from employers for higher level skills training, and is committed to fund additional places on Fds, co-funded with employers (Denham, 2007)³⁴. We also note that Foundation Degree Forward is currently piloting an Fd Endorsement Service which aims to encourage providers to work with employers and ensure Fds are really work-based degrees³⁵.

Recommendations

- 7.28 Given the foregoing, and the fact that many of the findings from this study replicate those from earlier studies of Fds (section 2.26 refers) we recommend that Foundation Degree Forward:
- works with relevant employer groups (for example, Sector Skills Councils; the CBI) and employee groups to ensure greater awareness and enhanced understandings of Fds related to their industries;
 - works with relevant agencies (for example, Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills; Learning and Skills Council; Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education; Universities and Colleges Admissions Service; the Connexions Service) to enhance employer, employee and student understandings of the place of Fds within the range of higher education qualifications currently available in the UK;
 - works with providers and employer groups and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education to improve the nature and level of engagement of employers in the design and delivery of Fds, and secure shared understandings amongst parties about intended levels of engagement;

³⁴ John Denham speech to CBI Skills summit, September 2007.

http://www.dius.gov.uk/speeches/denham_cbiskills_120907.html accessed 20/11/07.

³⁵ Fdf (2007) Handbook for Endorsement -fdf and Skills for Business network Foundation degree endorsement service. Lichfield: Foundation Degree Forward.

- ensures the findings from the study are discussed with those interested in enhancing the quality of student learning experiences (for example, the Higher Education Academy and its subject centres);
- draws on the findings to develop good practice guidelines for providers (including those with authority to validate Fds) and employers, as a way of enhancing the design and delivery of Fds;
- draws on the findings to ensure that marketing and publicity materials about Fds are focussed and targeted in ways appropriate to the different types of Fds in operation, and to the different types of potential students;
- continues to monitor the range of Fds currently in operation (and those currently being planned) to gain a clear understanding of the variety of provision, and the profiles of students enrolled on such programmes (particularly given the initial aim of Fds in terms of widening participation in higher education).

Appendices

Appendix 1: list of programmes involved in study

List of Fds involved in study with numbers of students interviewed and surveyed, and numbers of employers interviewed

Foundation degree	Provider	Students interviewed	Surveyed	Employers interviewed
<i>Business/management/logistics</i>		31	45	8
Contact Centre Management	Burnley College			
Management (Service Sector)	Manchester Skills Solutions			
Business and Management	West Notts College			
Logistics Management	Grimsby Institute of F/HE			
<i>Design/media/arts</i>		39	62	10
Graphic Design	Cleveland College of Art and Design			
Editorial News and Media	Newcastle College			
Animation and Games Art	Doncaster College			
Theatre Arts	Northbrook College			
<i>Early years/teaching and learning support</i>		44	166	11
Learning Support	Anglia Ruskin University			
Teaching and Learning Support	University of Colchester			
Supporting Teaching and Learning in the Classroom	Institute of Education (University of London)			
Early Years Care and Education	University of Portsmouth			
Early Years Care and Education	Alton College			
Early Years Care and Education	St Vincent's College			
Early Years Senior Practitioner	Stockport College			
<i>Engineering/materials</i>		23	28	6
Building Services Engineering	Hartlepool College			
Rivers & Coastal Engineering	University of the West of England			
Metallurgy and Materials	Bradford College			
<i>Uniformed services</i>		14	17	2
Criminal Justice (Police Studies)	Castle College			
Naval Studies	Britannia Royal Naval College			

Appendix 2: employer interview schedule

General background

1. Name/address of employer
2. Size of organisation – approx number of employees
3. Type of employment industry e.g. construction/ media, public/private sector
4. Why did you/your company get involved with Fds? (Did it see Fds as meeting a particular 'need'? were other options considered?)
5. Number of students on Fd programmes (NB we need to know about both their employees on Fds, and students on placement with the organisation? It would also be useful to explore previous, current, planned Fd students)
6. Are the students FT employees doing a PT Fd or are they full time Fd students coming into the organisation on work placement?
7. Are Fds a recognised 'qualification', or 'training route' to certain occupations within their sector?
8. Is the Fd with which you are involved specific to your company or are the students on a generic Fd programme?
9. Does the organisation take part in other forms of work-based training e.g. Apprenticeships, Professional Qualifications, NVQs. Please give details e.g. how long has this been the case, how many employees are involved at any one time
10. Is the development of the Fd part of a company training programme or is it generated through other interests? (e.g. individual requests for CPD)
11. Is the company involved in other Fds apart from the specific one we are researching? Please give details

Costs and benefits of involvement in Fds: for employees on Fds

1. What investment, (in terms of time and money) has been required in relation to your involvement in the Fd? To what extent has this been worthwhile?
2. What returns (if any) might the organisation see from this investment?
3. Do you think that your employees studying on Fds have developed new skills? What are these skills?
4. Would these have been achieved without taking the Fd?
5. Do you recruit staff who already hold Fds as well as enable them to study for an Fd while at work?
6. What are the benefits to your workforce of supporting your employees to gain an Fd ?

Costs and benefits of involvement in Fds: for work placement Fds

1. What investment, (in terms of time and money) has been required in relation to your involvement in the Fd? To what extent has this been worthwhile?
2. What returns (if any) might the organisation see from this investment?
3. Do you think that the students doing work experience as part of studying on Fds have developed new skills? What are these skills?
4. Would these have been achieved without taking the Fd?
5. Do you recruit staff who already hold Fds as well as enable them to study for an Fd while at work?
6. What are the benefits to you of providing work placements rather than supporting your employees to gain a qualification?

The Fd initiative and course development: employees

Involvement:

1. What made you decide to become involved with the Foundation degree initiative?
2. Did you start the discussions or were you approached by the college/ university or an employer body?
3. What gaps in the skills in your workforce did you think would be filled by the Fd? Have these gaps now been filled?
4. To what extent were you involved in the development of the Fd?
5. Did you write any of the modules or assessments for the Fd?
6. How much of the Fd is delivered in the college/university and how much in the workplace?
7. How many hours do your employees spend at college/university?
8. Are you involved in assessing the students' academic study on the Fd work a) in the workplace b) in the university or college?

9. Do you deliver any elements of the course? E.g. Do you provide talks or inputs to the students about your industry/ course?
10. Is it important for you to be involved with the development and delivery of the course? Why?
11. Would you describe your involvement in the Fd as successful? If so, or if not, find out why.
12. Are you involved with any other aspects of the provision e.g. are you a Governor at the college/university? Would you like to be more involved?
13. Was there a support network of employers/ college/ university? If 'yes' in what ways was this beneficial? If no, would you have liked one? What benefits might have come from this?
14. Would you like to be more involved in developments such as the Fd if you had more time?

Impact in the workplace:

15. Has it made a difference in your workplace?
16. Have your employees benefited? If not, why not? If so, in what ways? (Has their performance in the workplace changed? For better / for worse? Have their values/attitudes changed? Increased knowledge, and understanding? Better skills and applying those skills? Other ways? Like taking more initiative? Willingness to take on more responsibility?)
17. Have job tasks/roles been changed as result of Fd? (if so, who prompted the change/ you as employer, or member of staff with Fd initiated the change)
18. Has your business benefited? If not, why not? If so, why and how?

Futures:

19. Would you encourage other staff to do an Fd?
20. Are you encouraging those now with Fds to 'go further'?

The Fd initiative and course development: work placement students

Involvement:

1. What made you decide to become involved with the Foundation degree initiative?
2. Did you start the discussions or were you approached by the college/ university or an employer body?
3. What gaps in the skills in your workforce did you think would be filled by the work placement student? Have these gaps been filled?
4. To what extent were you involved in the development of the Fd?
5. Did you write any of the modules or assessments for the Fd?
6. How much of the Fd is delivered in the college/university and how much in the workplace?
7. How many hours do your work placement students spend with you?
8. Are you involved in assessing the students' academic study on the Fd work a) in the workplace b) in the university or college?
9. Do you deliver any elements of the course? E.g. Do you provide talks or inputs to the students about your industry/ course?
10. Is it important for you to be involved with the development and delivery of the course? Why?
11. Would you describe your involvement in the Fd as successful? If so, or if not, find out why.
12. Are you involved with any other aspects of the provision e.g. are you a Governor at the college/university? Would you like to be more involved?
13. Was there a support network of employers/ college/ university? If 'yes' in what ways was this beneficial? If no, would you have liked one? What benefits might have come from this?
14. Would you like to be more involved in developments such as the Fd if you had more time?

Impact in the workplace:

15. Has it made a difference in your workplace?
16. Have your employees benefited from having a work experience student alongside them? If not, why not? If so, in what ways? (Has their performance in the workplace changed? For better / for worse? Have their values/attitudes changed? Increased knowledge, and understanding?)
17. Has your business benefited? If not, why not? If so, why and how?

Futures:

18. Would you encourage staff to do an Fd?
19. Are you encouraging those now on the Fd work placement to apply for a job with you?

Thank you for taking the time to be interviewed as part of this study.

Would you like to receive a copy of the executive summary of the report – when available ? y/n

Appendix 3: analysis of incoming students' survey

Foundation Degree Students: Early Experiences Survey

Methodology

As an important part of the national study on Foundation Degrees, a survey was undertaken with the aim of obtaining input from students who had recently embarked on their Foundation Degree studies.

The questionnaire was designed in consultation with LSN and CHERI researchers involved in the study and many questions were based on those previously included in surveys undertaken by the Higher Education Academy and the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services on first year experiences and Foundation Degrees. The questionnaire consisted primarily of multiple choice and rank item questions which required individuals to tick the appropriate response box. It was structured under four key sections:

Section 1: About you

Section 2: Getting into higher education

Section 3: Your experiences in higher education

Section 4: Work and study balance

For the purposes of the survey process, the questionnaire was designed and distributed in a paper-based format. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as **Annex A**.

The 20 institutions which took part in the other streams of the study were also asked to participate in the survey. A breakdown of the five Foundation Degree programme areas surveyed and the number of classes and students sampled is shown in Table 1.

Foundation Degree programme areas	Number of classes	Number of students
Business/Management/Logistics	4 classes	approx. 80 students
Creative/Design/Media	4 classes	approx. 100 students
Early years care and Education/Teaching and Learning Support	7 classes	approx. 190 students
Engineering/materials	3 classes	approx. 35 students
Uniformed Services	2 classes	approx. 35 students
TOTAL	20 classes	Approx 440 students

[Table 1]

Practitioners for each class were emailed at the end of October 2007 information about the survey process and were notified that they would be receiving a survey pack containing questionnaires and envelopes. They were asked to distribute the questionnaires to the 1st year students in their Foundation Degree course during a class time between Monday 5th and Wednesday 21st November. All completed questionnaires were then returned in a sealed envelope to the practitioner who collated and mailed them back to the LSN Survey team in self-addressed free-post envelopes.

Where classes had also distance learners, practitioners were asked to make suitable arrangements for student to complete the questionnaire and return it to them or LSN directly. In some cases, electronic copies were made available so distance learners could return their questionnaires by email.

A combined total of 318 surveys were returned by 19 institutions and the details are shown in Table 2.

Foundation Degree programme areas	Number of classes	Number of students	% of students
Business/Management/Logistics	4 classes	45	14.2%
Creative/Design/Media	4 classes	62	19.5%
Early years care and Education/Teaching and Learning Support	7 classes	166	52.2%
Engineering/materials	3 classes	28	8.8%
Uniformed Services	1 class	17	5.3%
TOTAL	19 classes	318	100.0%

[Table 2]

For a detailed breakdown of the survey results, please refer to **Annex B**.

Section 1: Demographics of Sample

Age	Under 21	27%	86
	21 – 39	51%	163
	40+	22%	69
Gender	Male	28%	89
	Female	72%	229
Ethnicity	White	93%	294
	Black or Black British	2%	7
	Asian or Asian British	2%	6
	Chinese	1%	2
	Other	2%	7
Occupational background	Managerial or professional occupation	46%	146
	Intermediate occupation (e.g. administrative role; running small business; self-employed)	15%	47
	Relatively routine supervisory, technical, service or manual occupation	18%	55
	Long-term unemployment or never worked	2%	7
	Not sure or other, not easily categorised as one of the above	19%	59
Dependents	Yes	51%	160
	No	49%	155
First in immediate family to attend university	Yes	60%	190
	No	40%	128
Previous HE experience	Yes	54%	172
	No	46%	144
Highest qualification	Above Level 3	15%	48
	Level 3	73%	230
	Below Level 3	12%	37
Living Situation	At home	86%	273
	In other private accommodation	12%	38
	In university/institution-run accommodation	2%	6

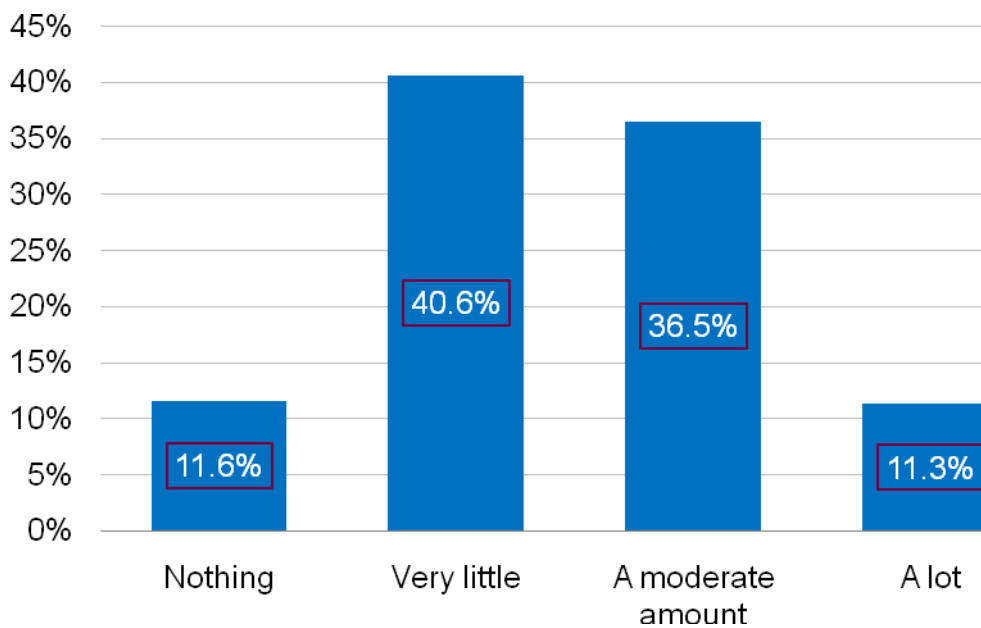
[Table 3]

Foundation Degree Programme Area by Age							
	Under 21		21 - 39		40+		Total
Business/Management/Logistics	9	20.0%	27	60.0%	9	20.0%	45
Creative/Design/Media	42	67.7%	20	32.3%	0	0.0%	62
Early years care and Education/teaching and learning support	10	6.0%	100	60.2%	56	33.7%	166
Engineering/materials	9	32.1%	15	53.6%	4	14.3%	28
Uniformed Services	16	94.1%	1	5.9%	0	0.0%	17

[Table 4]

Section 2: Getting into Higher Education

[Chart 1a: Q10: Knowledge of institution prior to enrolment- All respondents]



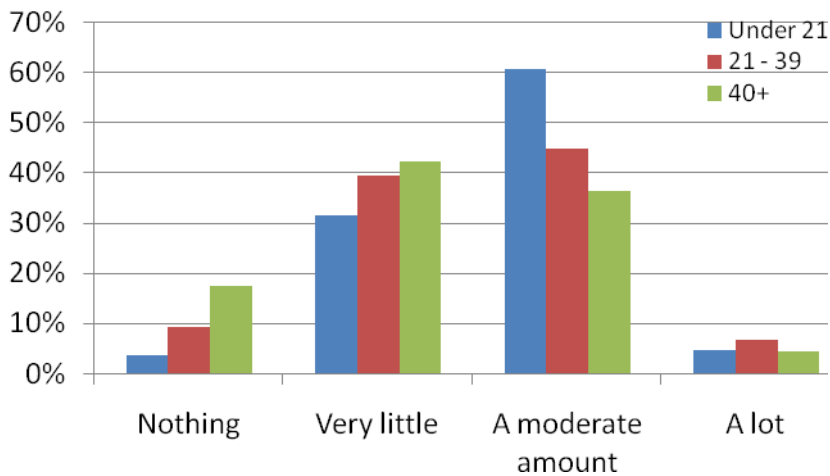


Chart 1b: By Age

Younger respondents (Under 21) indicated that they had a greater knowledge of their institution prior to enrolment compared to those aged 21-39 and 40+.

63% of respondents under 21 knew either 'a moderate amount' or 'a lot' about their institution compared to 44% and 38% for 21-39 and 40+ categories respectively.

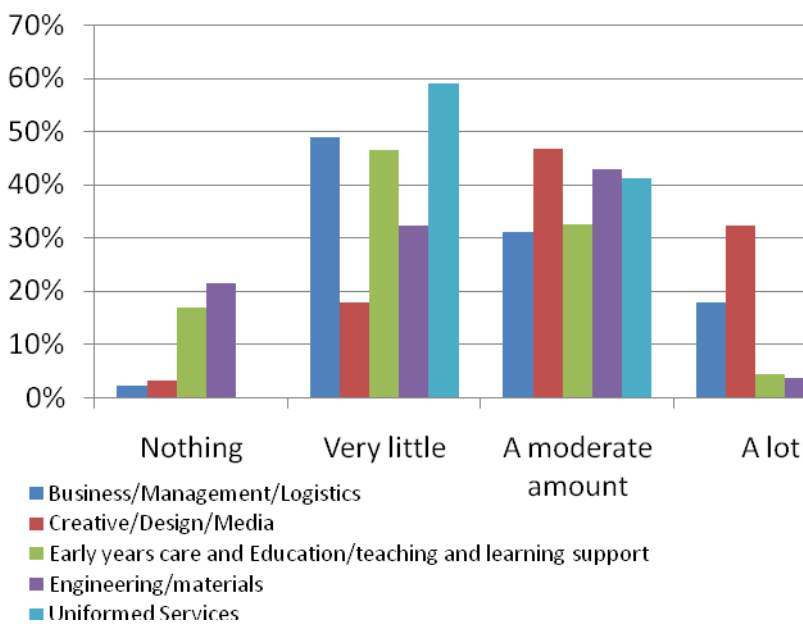
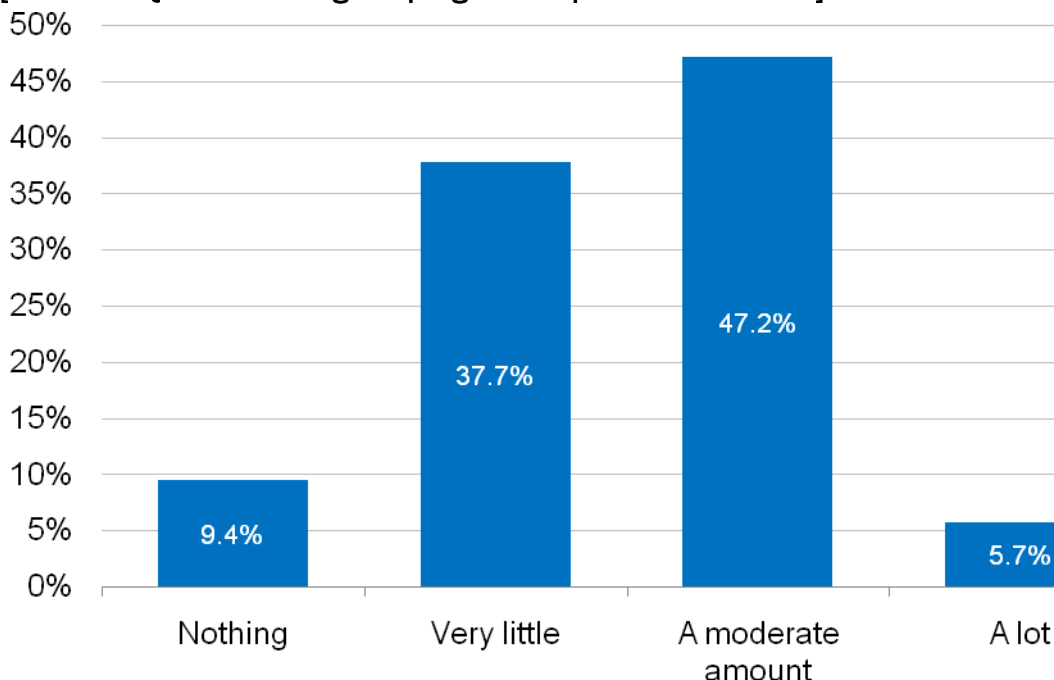


Chart 1c: By Programme Area

Overall, there is little difference between the levels of knowledge amongst programme areas.

One notable dissimilarity is that 79% of Creative/Design/Media learners knew either 'a moderate' amount or 'a lot' about their institution prior to enrolment. This was significantly higher than learners within Business/Management/Logistics (49%), Early years care and Education/teaching and learning support (37%), Engineering/materials (46%), and Uniformed Services (41%).

[Chart 2a: Q11: Knowledge of programme prior to enrolment]



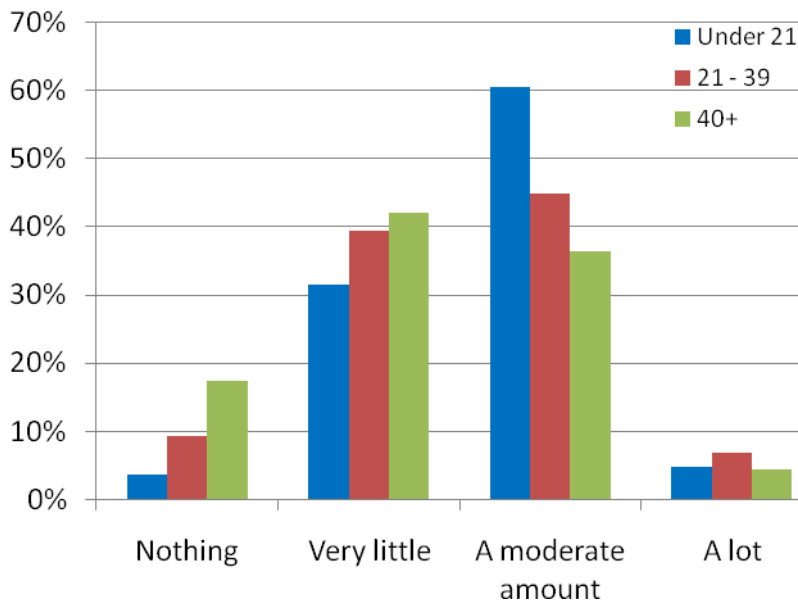


Chart 2b: By Age

Younger respondents (Under 21) indicated that they had a greater knowledge about their programme prior to enrolment compared to those aged 21-39 and 40+.

65% of respondents under 21 knew either 'a moderate amount' or 'a lot' about their programme compared to 52% and 41% for 21-39 and 40+ categories respectively.

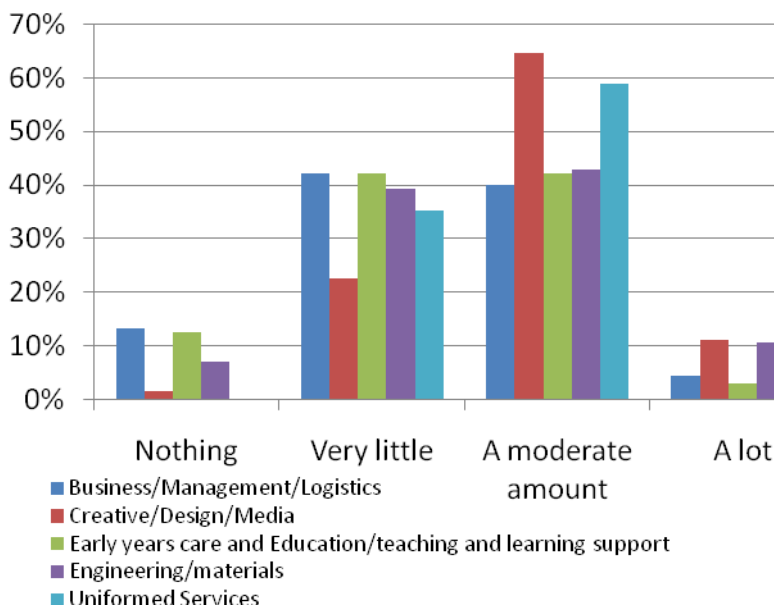


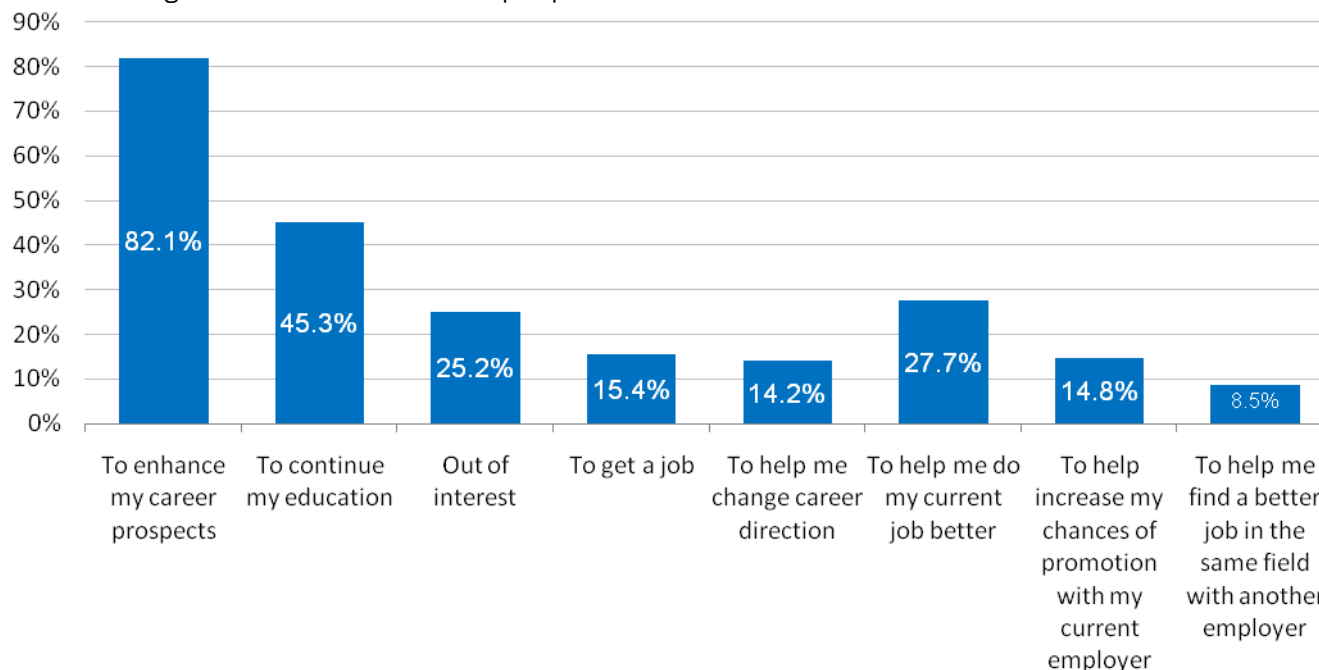
Chart 2c: By Programme Area

Creative/Design/Media learners had a greater knowledge about their programme compared to learners from other programme areas. 76% of such respondents knew at least a moderate amount about their programme prior to enrolment.

This was significantly higher than learners within Business/Management/Logistics (44%), Early years care and Education (45%), Engineering/Materials (54%), and Uniformed Services (65%).

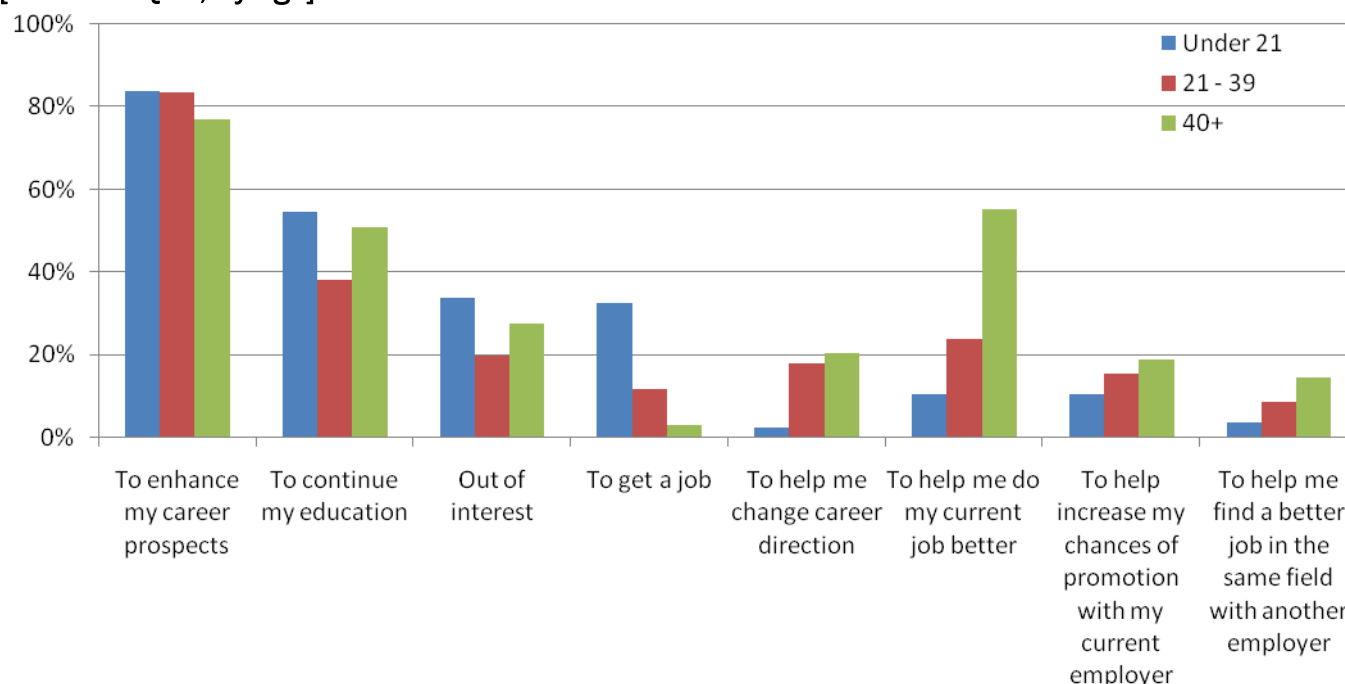
[Chart 3a: Q12; Reasons for doing a Foundation Degree]

*Please note: the percentages in the below chart indicate the proportion of survey respondents that selected each reason for studying a Foundation Degree. For example, 82.1 of survey respondents stated that they were doing their Foundation Degree 'To enhance their career prospects'.



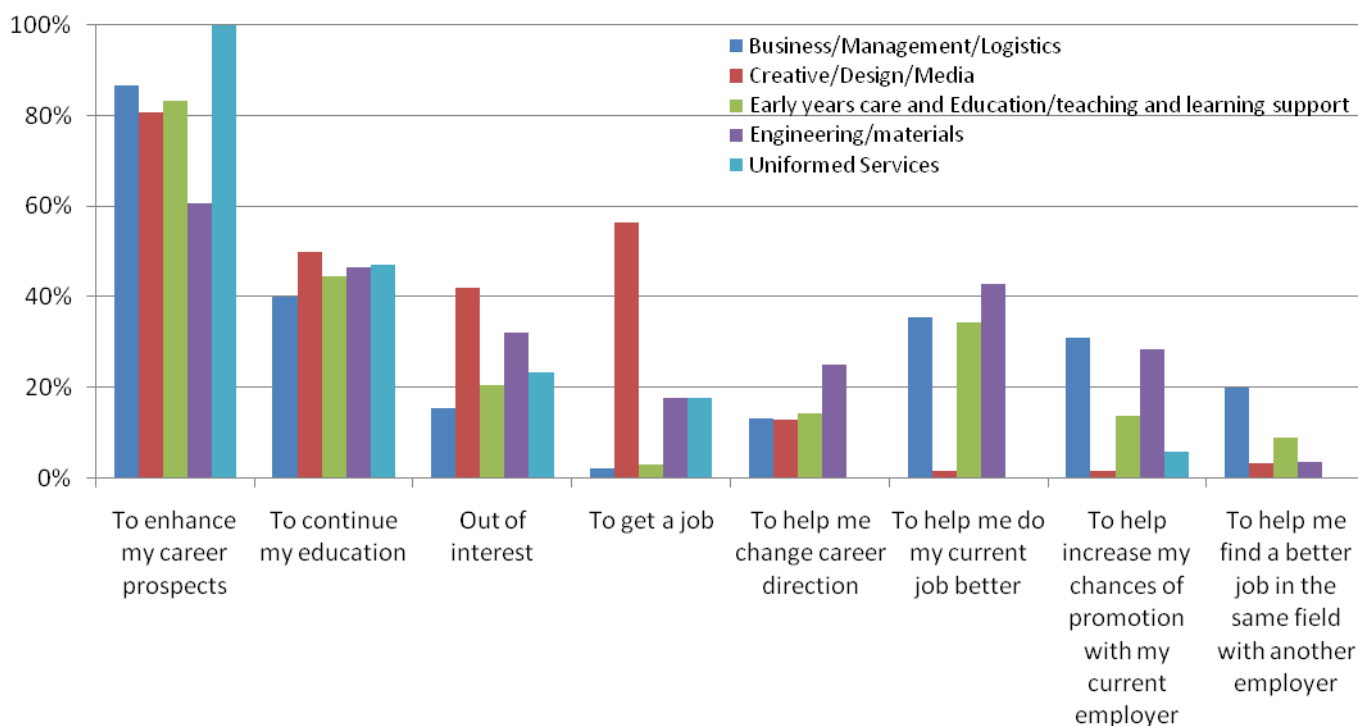
Analysing Q12 (as illustrated in Chart 3b below) by age reveals few major differences in relation to the reasons for learners doing their Foundation Degree. Two dissimilarities that would be expected are the higher proportion of learners under 21 doing Foundation Degrees in order to get a job and the significantly higher proportion of 40+ learners doing so in order to help do their current job better. 33% of under 21 learners stated that they were doing their Foundation Degree in order to get a job, this compared to 12% for those aged 21-39 and 3% for learners aged above 40. 55% of the 40+ age group indicated that they were doing a Foundation Degree to help do their jobs better, this being well above the 11% of under 21s and 24% of those aged 21-39.

[Chart 3b: Q12; By Age]

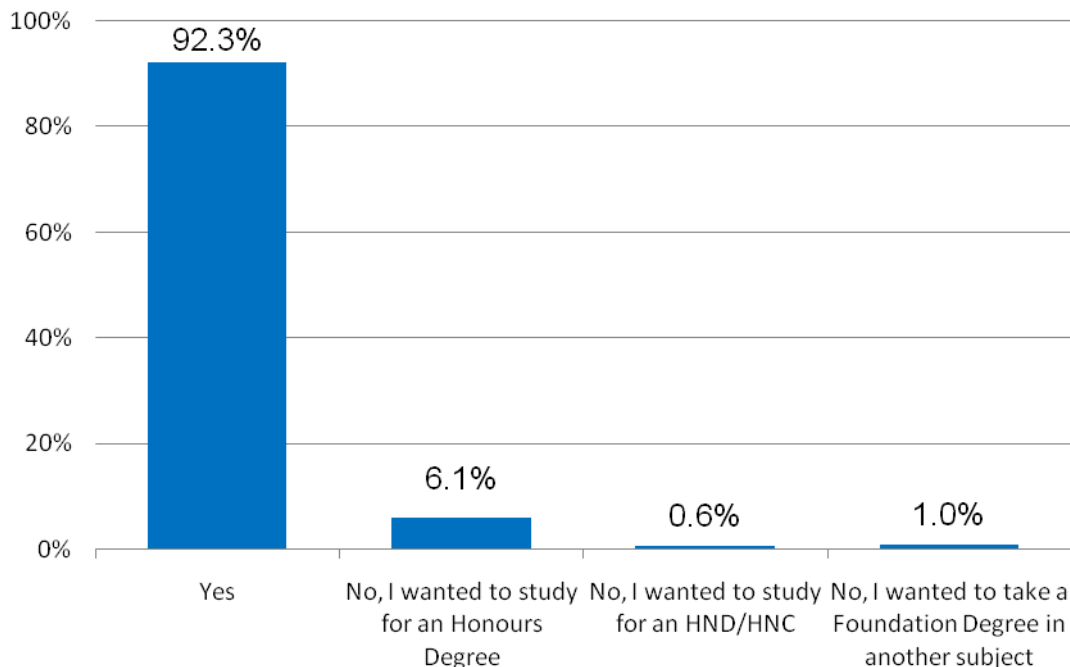


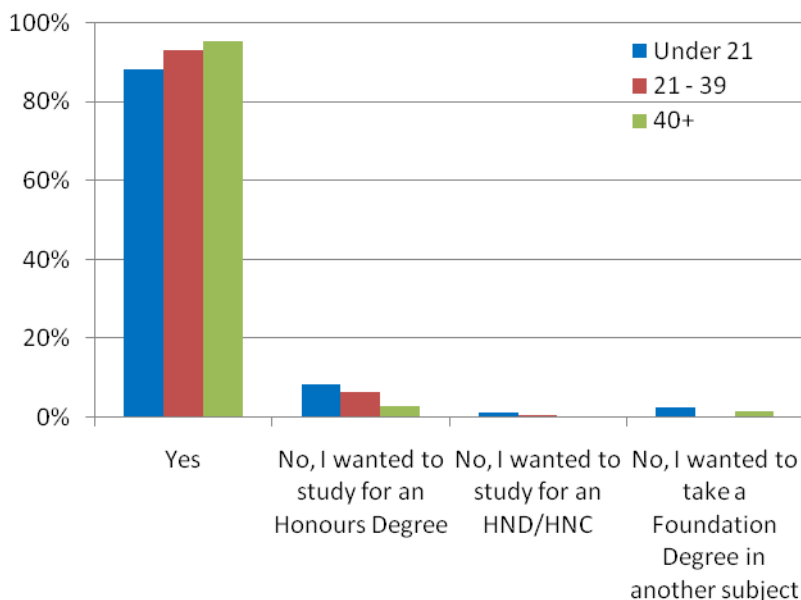
Exploring the reasons for learners doing their Foundation Degrees by separating respondents into their appropriate programme areas resulted in mixed outcomes. 100% (n=17) of learners within Uniformed Services were doing their Foundation Degree to enhance their careers prospects, with the majority of learners in all other programme areas stating the same reason. A significantly higher proportion (57%) of learners studying Creative/Design/Media were doing their Foundation Degree 'to get a job' compared to those within alternative programme areas. The programme area with the second highest frequency of learners selecting this reason was Engineering/Materials (18%).

[Chart 3c: Q12; By Programme Area]



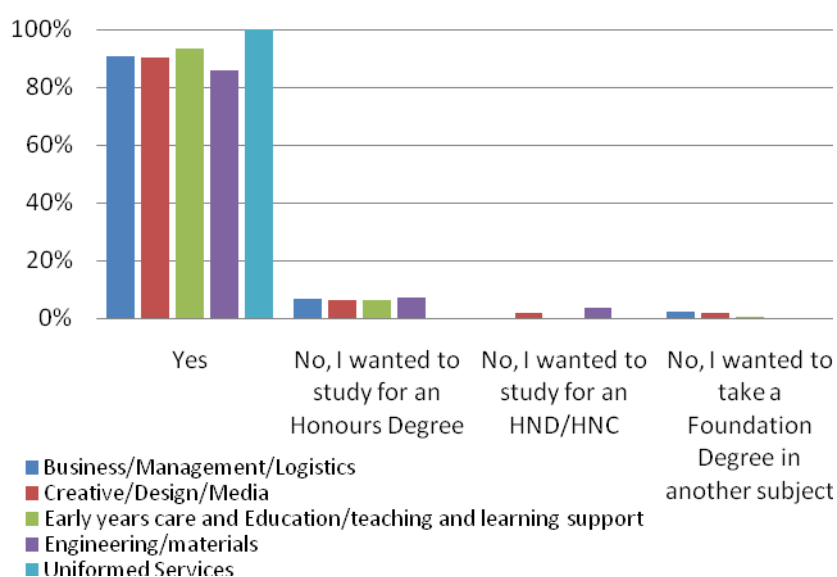
[Chart 4a: Q13; Was this Foundation Degree your first choice?]





[Chart 4b: q13; By Age]

The vast majority of learners from all three age groups stated that the Foundation Degree currently being studied was their choice.



[Chart 4c: q13; By Programme Area]

The vast majority of learners from the five programme areas also stated that the Foundation Degree currently being studied was their choice.

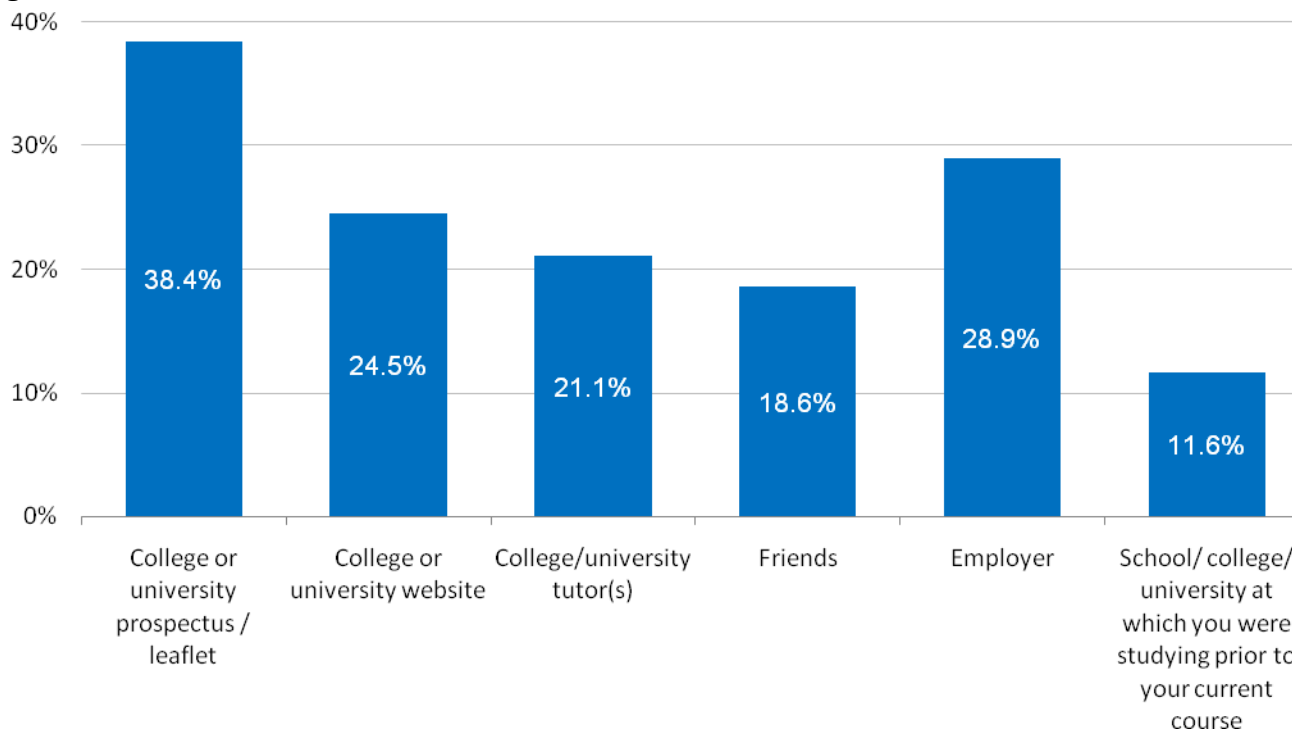
Respondents were asked to identify whether or not they had got their Foundation Degree place through clearing. Table 5 below displays the results of this particular question. There were no variances in terms of respondents from different age groups of programme areas. The majority of respondents indicated that they had not gained their Foundation Degree through clearing with only 13% of all respondents gaining a place through clearing.

Q14: Did you get your Foundation Degree place through clearing?	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
All respondents	37	13.0%	248	87.0%
Under 21	11	13.6%	70	86.4%
21 - 39	17	11.9%	126	88.1%
40+	9	14.5%	52	83.9%
Business/Management/Logistics	6	14.6%	35	85.4%
Creative/Design/Media	10	16.9%	49	83.1%
Early years care and Education/teaching and learning support	16	11.0%	129	88.4%
Engineering/materials	2	8.3%	22	91.7%
Uniformed Services	3	18.8%	13	81.3%

[Table 5]

[Chart 5a: Q15; From whom did you receive advice about taking this course?]

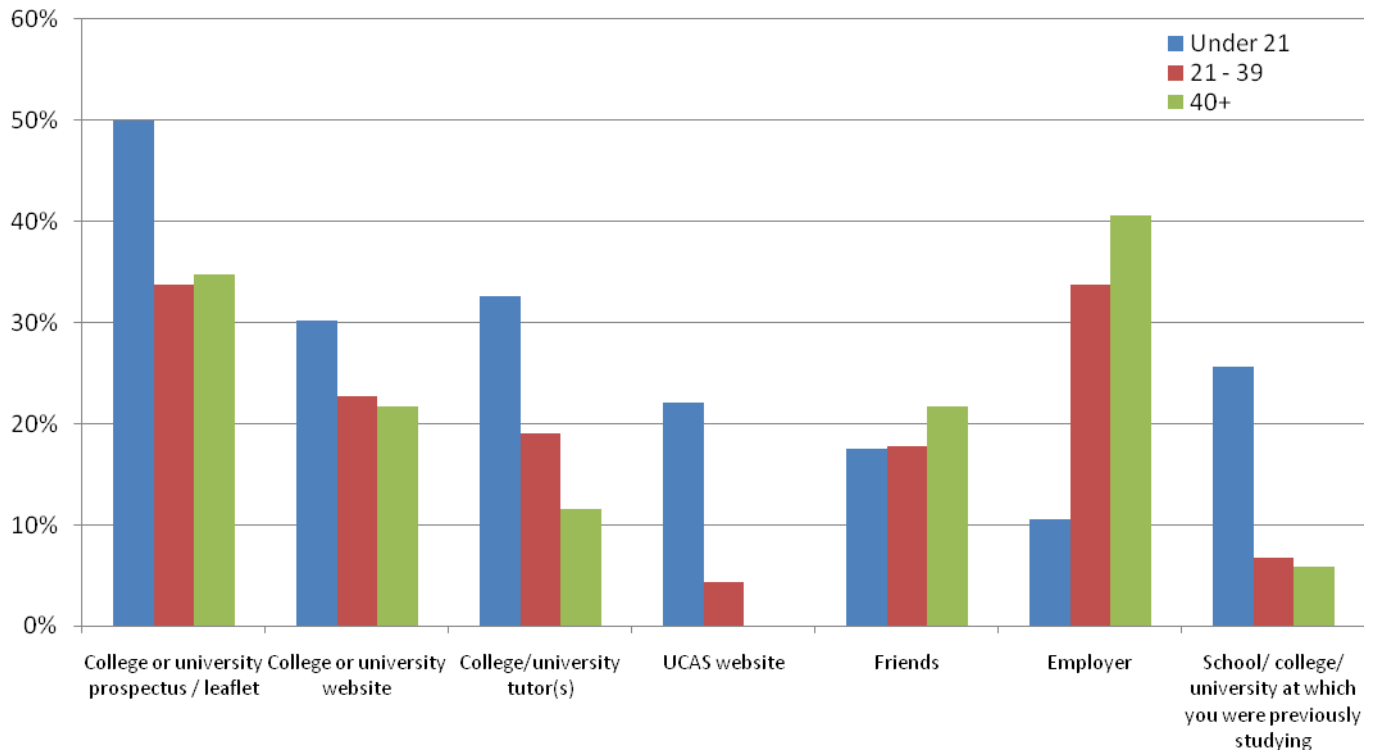
*Please note: Options that accounted for 7% or less were omitted from the below chart. These include UCSA website, Family, Careers services, Newspapers, Connexions service, Other careers websites, and Universities/Colleges that award the Foundation Degree.



In general, college or university prospectus/leaflets and employers appear to be the most commonly used information source for learners finding out about their Foundation Degrees. College or university websites were also frequently utilised by all age groups, as were college/university tutors. As illustrated in Chart 5b below, it is evident that learners aged under 21 made greater use of college or university prospectus/leaflets with 50% utilising this information source compared to 34% of 21-39 year olds and 35% of learners aged 40+.

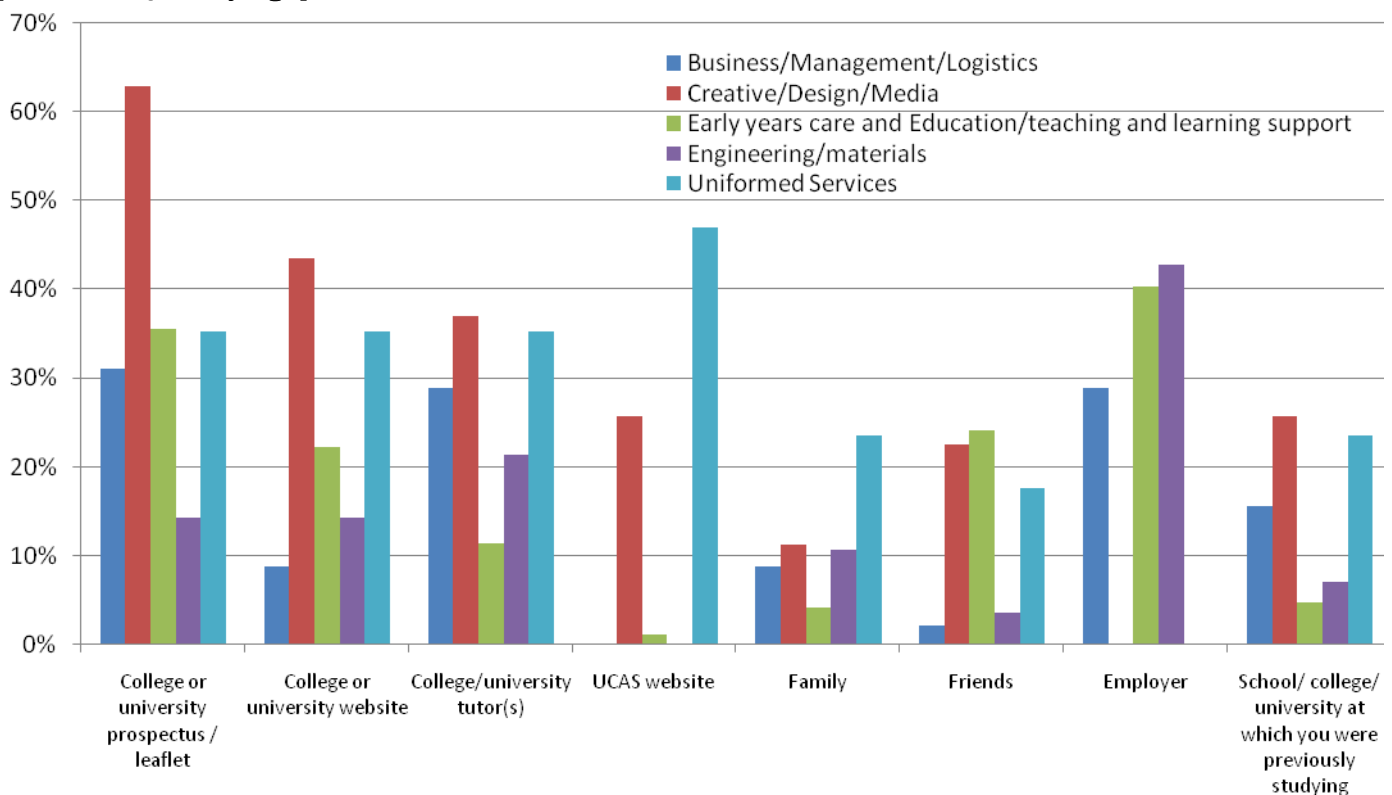
A greater proportion of respondents aged 40 and above (41%) used their employer to gain information about their Foundation Degree than those between 21-39 (36%) and under 21 (11%).

[Chart 5b: Q15; By Age]



As displayed in Chart 5c, information sources varied among the various programme areas. Learners studying in the areas of Creative/Design/Media and Uniformed Services tended to take advice from multiple sources more often than learners from other programme areas.

[Chart 5c: Q15; By Age]



Section 3: Your experiences in higher education

Please refer to Annex B for summary of results

A factor analysis was carried out in order to explore the relationship between the list of statements and determine whether any key patterns could be recognised in the data. The process included clustering those statements which have a high correlation and then testing the reliability of the group of statements in order to ensure the results are accurate and relevant to the theme they represented. In this case, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to measure how well the group of statements were consistent in explaining the common theme. Only those themes that scored a reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher (and therefore deemed suitable) are summarised below. Overall, the four main themes which emerged from the process were:

Themes	Statements	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Mean score
Teaching standards	The teaching staff are good at explaining things	0.901	3.86
	The teaching on my programme has shown me what I need to do to be successful in my studies		
	I am satisfied with the level of tutorial support on my programme		
	The teaching on my programme is stimulating		
	My programme is well organised		
	I am satisfied with the quality of the teaching on my programme		
	The teaching on my programme has suited the way I learn		
Expectations and Choice	I made a good choice of subject(s) to study	0.797	3.89
	Staff made it clear from the start what they expected from students		
	From the moment I enrolled I was helped to get off to a good start, academically		
	I understand what the assessments (assignments, examinations) on my programme expect of me		
	The criteria used in assessing work were made clear at the beginning of my programme		
Coping with studies	I find it hard to keep up with the volume of work in this programme	0.740	2.89
	I find it difficult to balance academic and other commitments		
	Academic work at this level is harder than I expected it to be		
	I have had difficulty adjusting to the style of teaching at this institution		
Learning experience	I am finding my programme intellectually stimulating	0.702	3.84
	The prospect of learning at a high level is a motivation for my studying		
	I have received detailed comments on my work		
	My programme is helping me to develop skills in working independently		

Note: For the purposes of carrying out the statistical analysis and calculating mean scores and coefficients for this section, values for the response categories were allocated as follows: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree and 1=Strongly disagree .

The results for the four themes by age and programme area are tabled below.

Table 6 [Mean scores of main themes by Age and Programme Area]

Cluster Group	Under 21	21-39	40+		BML	CDM	EYC	EM	US
Teaching Standards	3.87	3.85	3.86		3.97	4.09	3.85	3.43	3.47
Expectations and Choice	3.98	3.89	3.79		4.04	4.17	3.80	3.64	3.88
Coping with Studies	2.82	2.88	3.00		2.70	2.86	2.97	2.90	2.72
Learner's Learning Experience	3.82	3.85	3.87		3.87	3.89	3.86	3.63	3.78

BML = Business/Management/Logistics

CDM = Creative/Design/Media

EYC = Early years care and Education/teaching and learning support

EM = Engineering/materials

US = Uniformed Services

Chart 1.1 [Mean scores of main themes - by age]

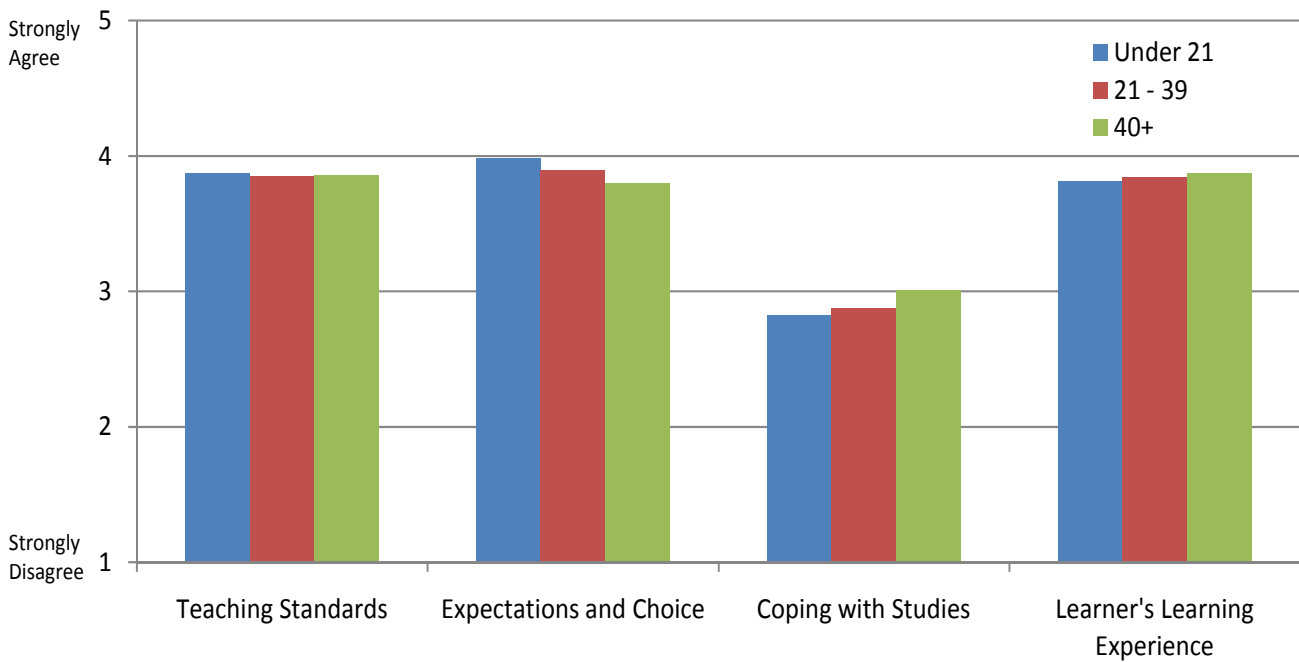
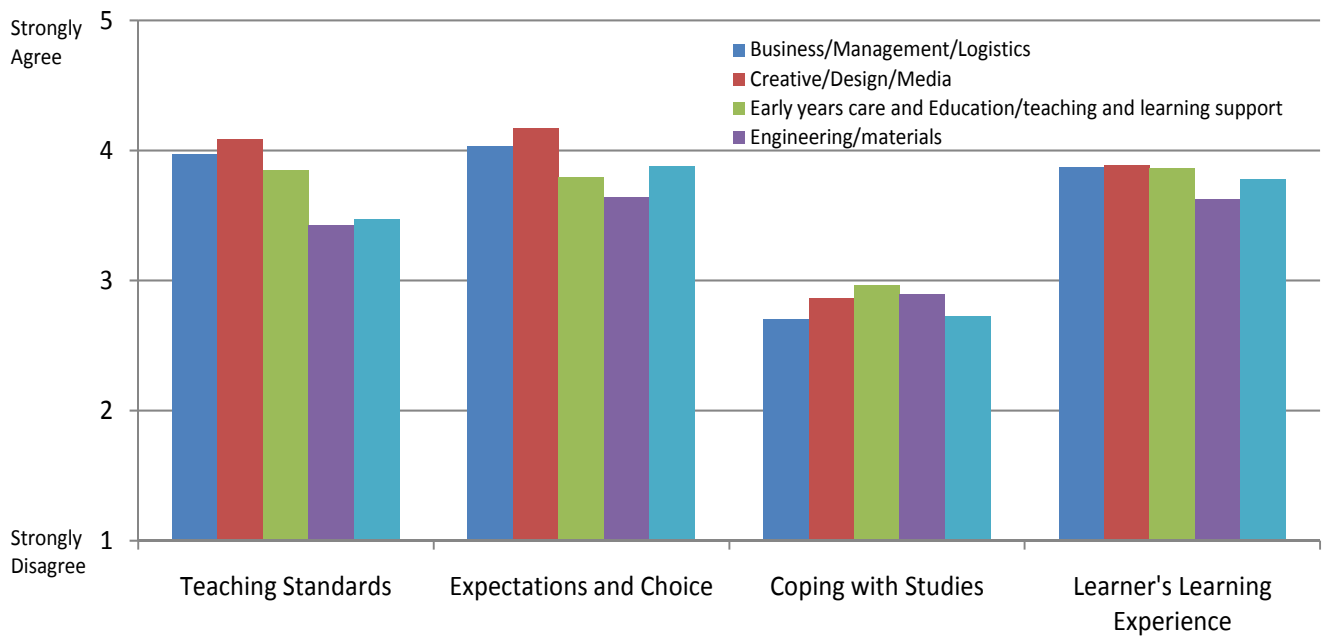
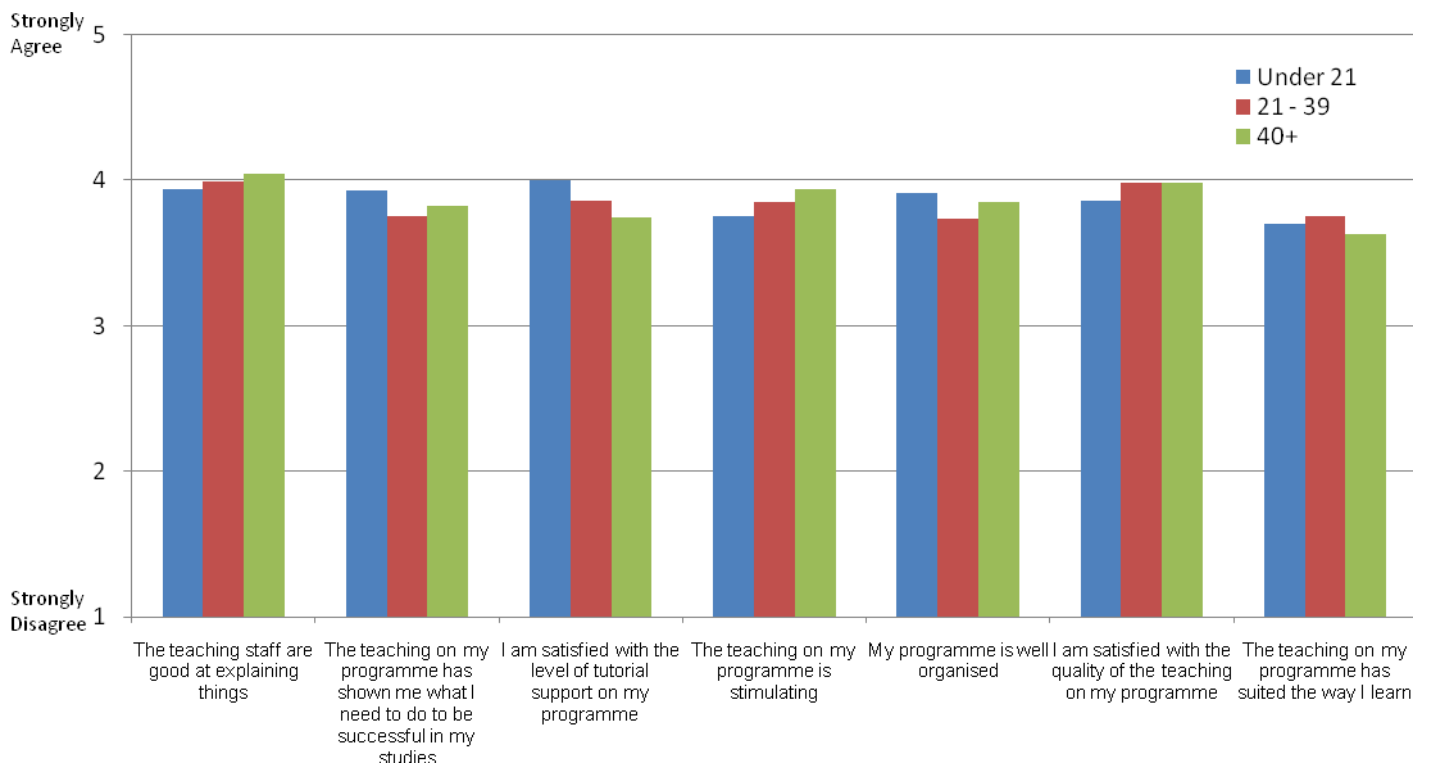


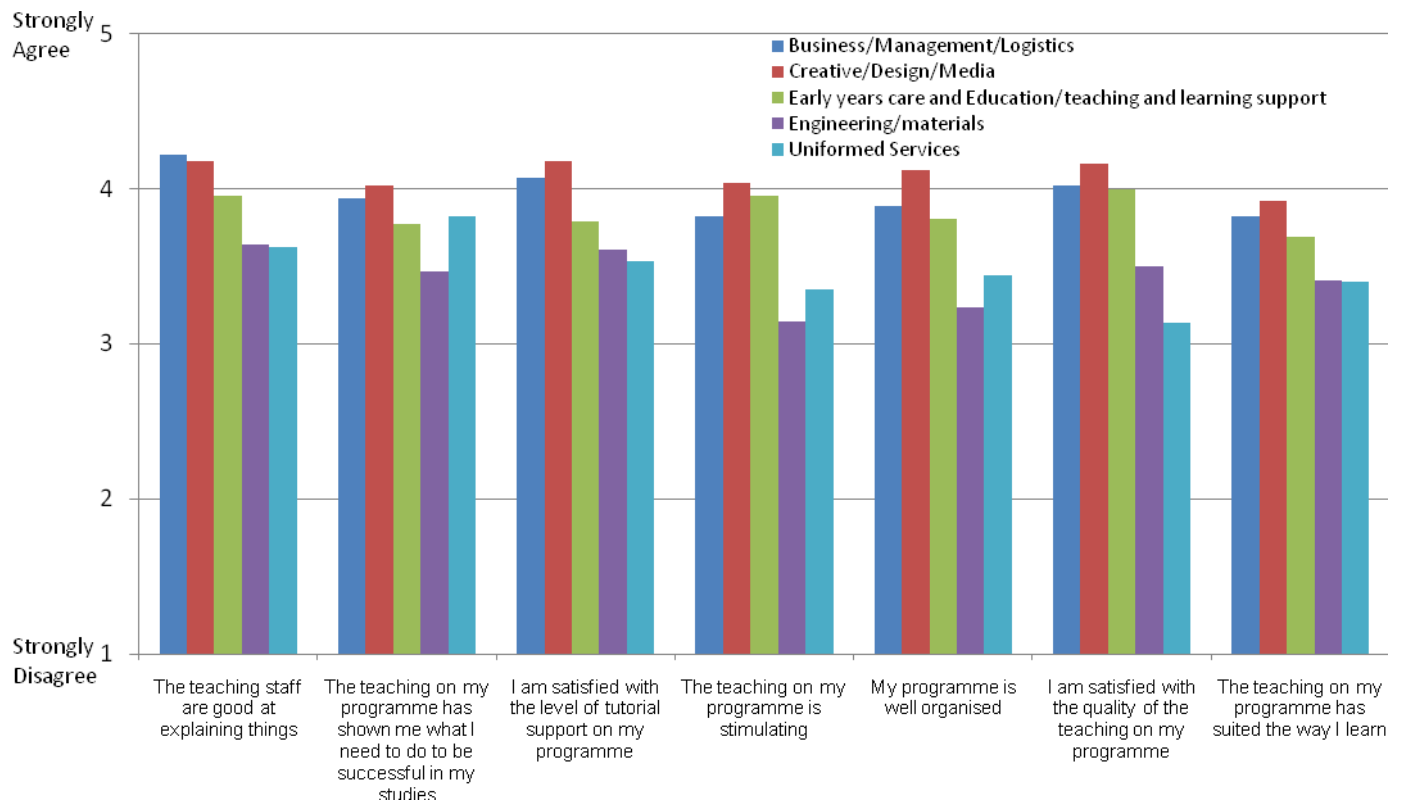
Chart 1.2 [Mean scores of main themes - by programme area]



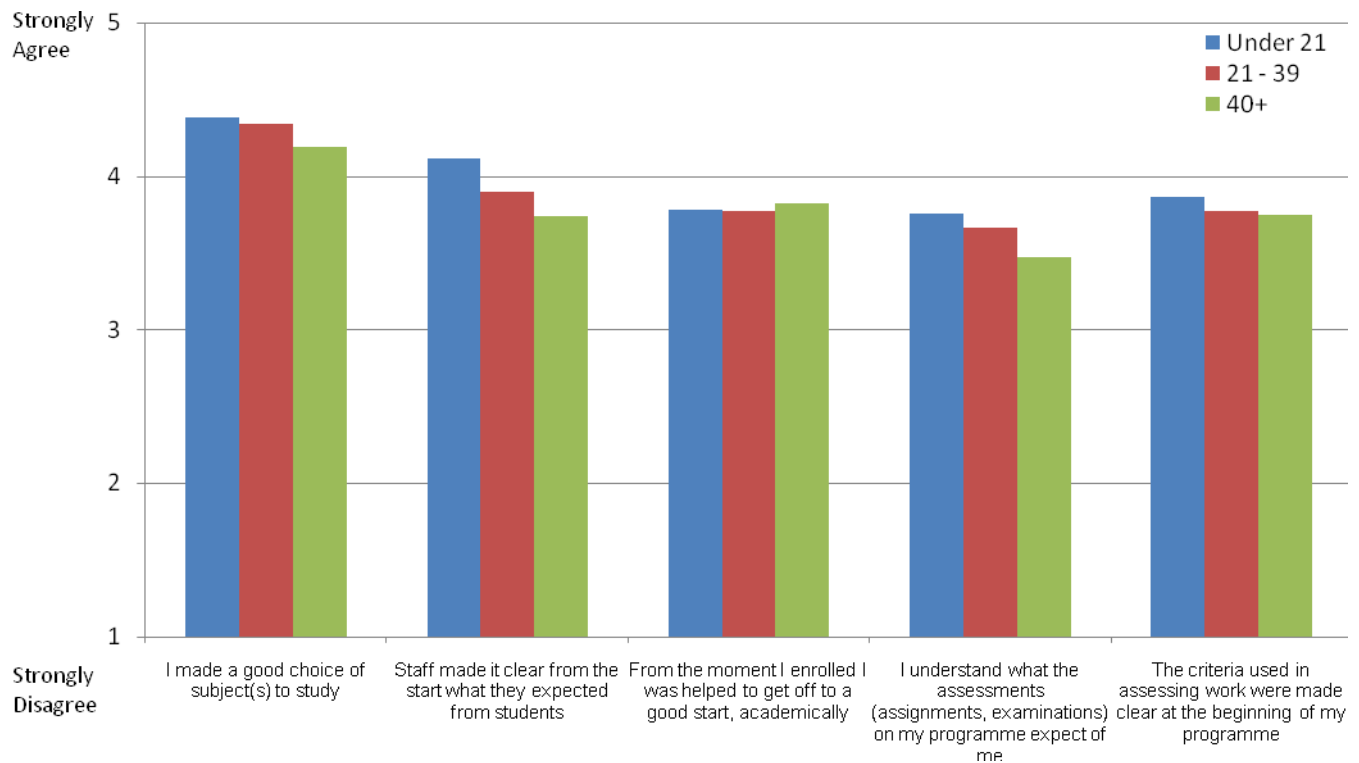
[Chart 2.1: Mean scores of statements in Theme: Teaching standards – by age]



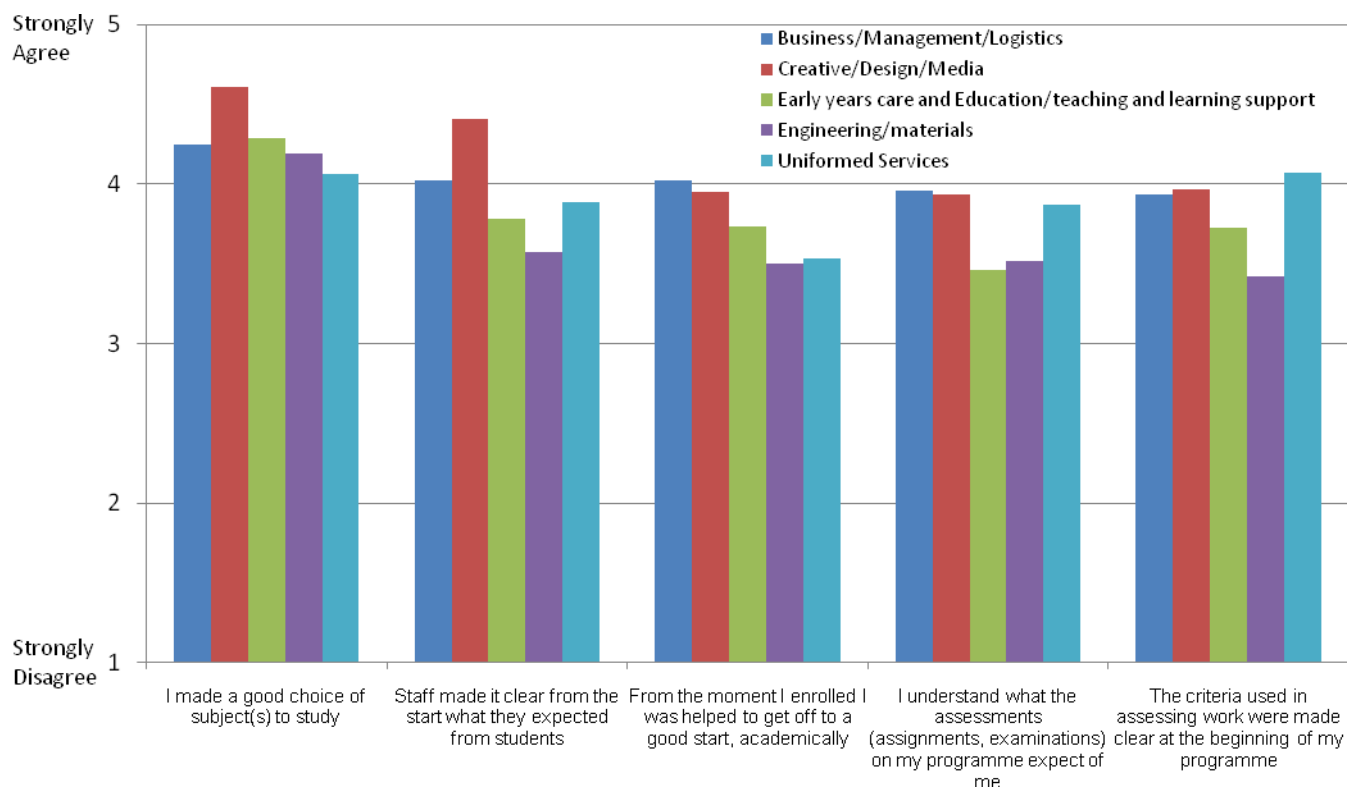
[Chart 2.2: Mean scores of statements in Theme: Teaching standards – by programme area]



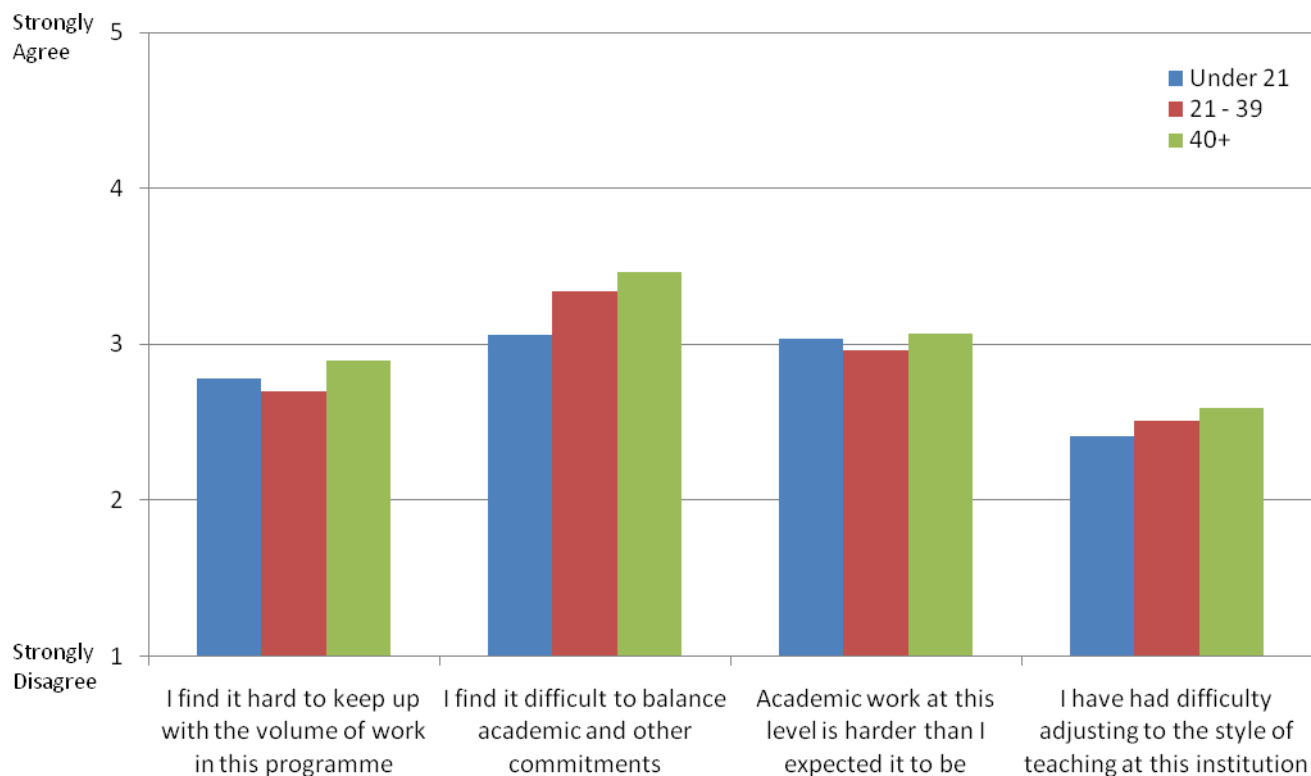
[Chart 3.1: Mean scores of statements in Theme: Expectations and Choice – by age]



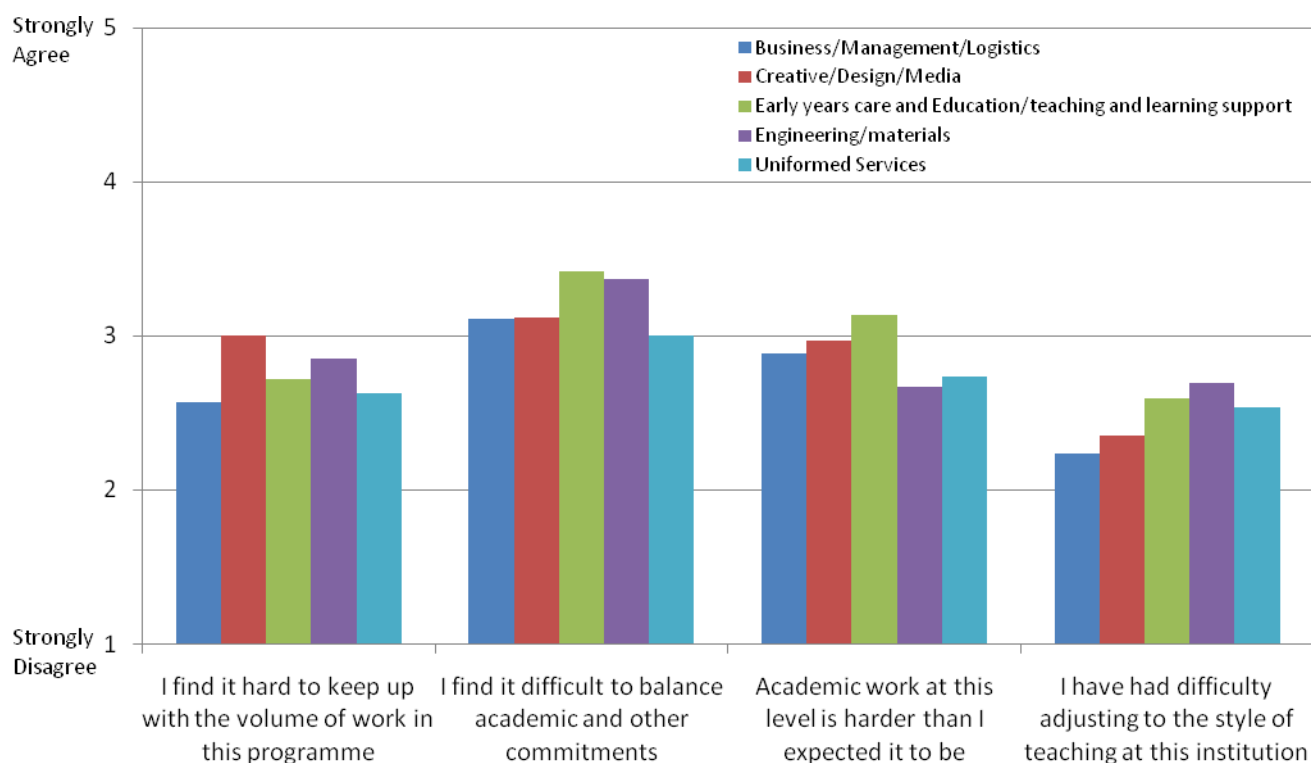
[Chart 3.2: Mean scores of statements in Theme: Expectations and Choice – by programme area]



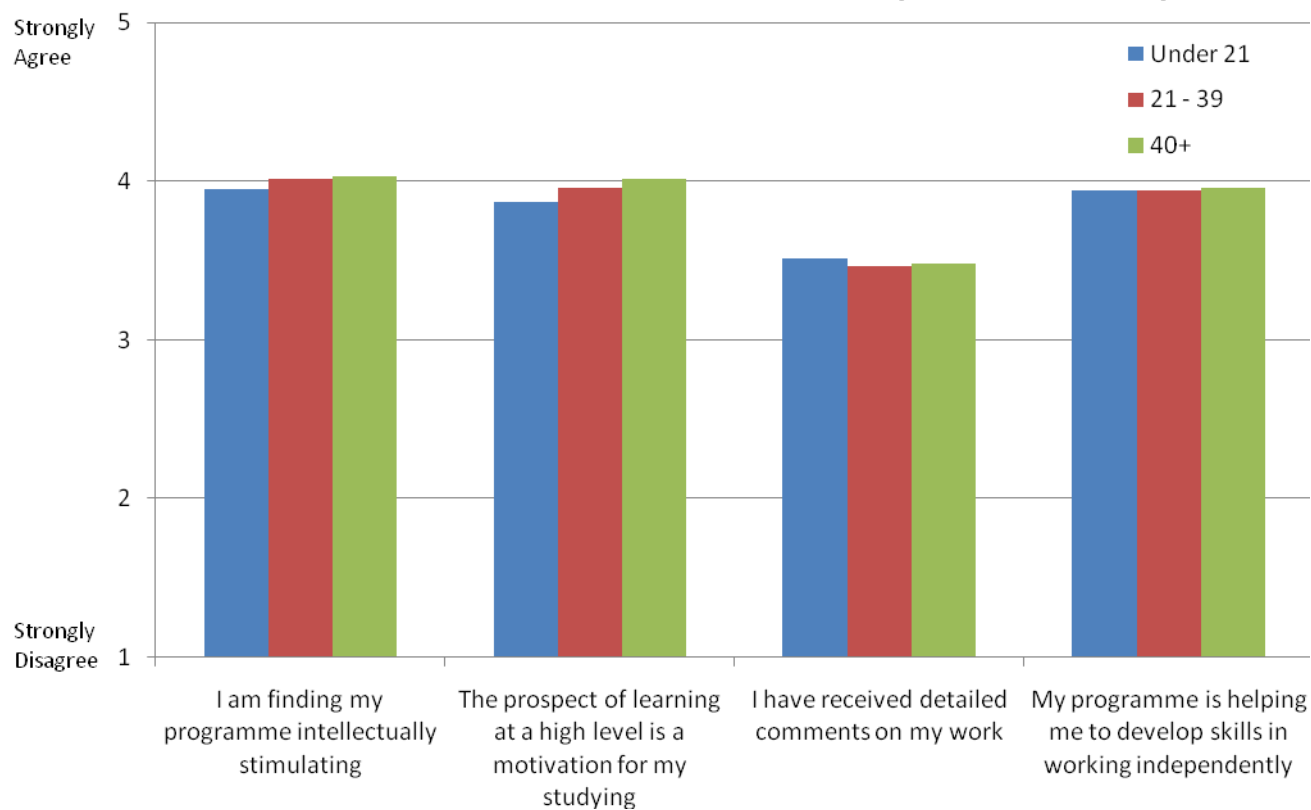
[Chart 4.1: Mean scores of statements in Theme: Coping with studies – by age]



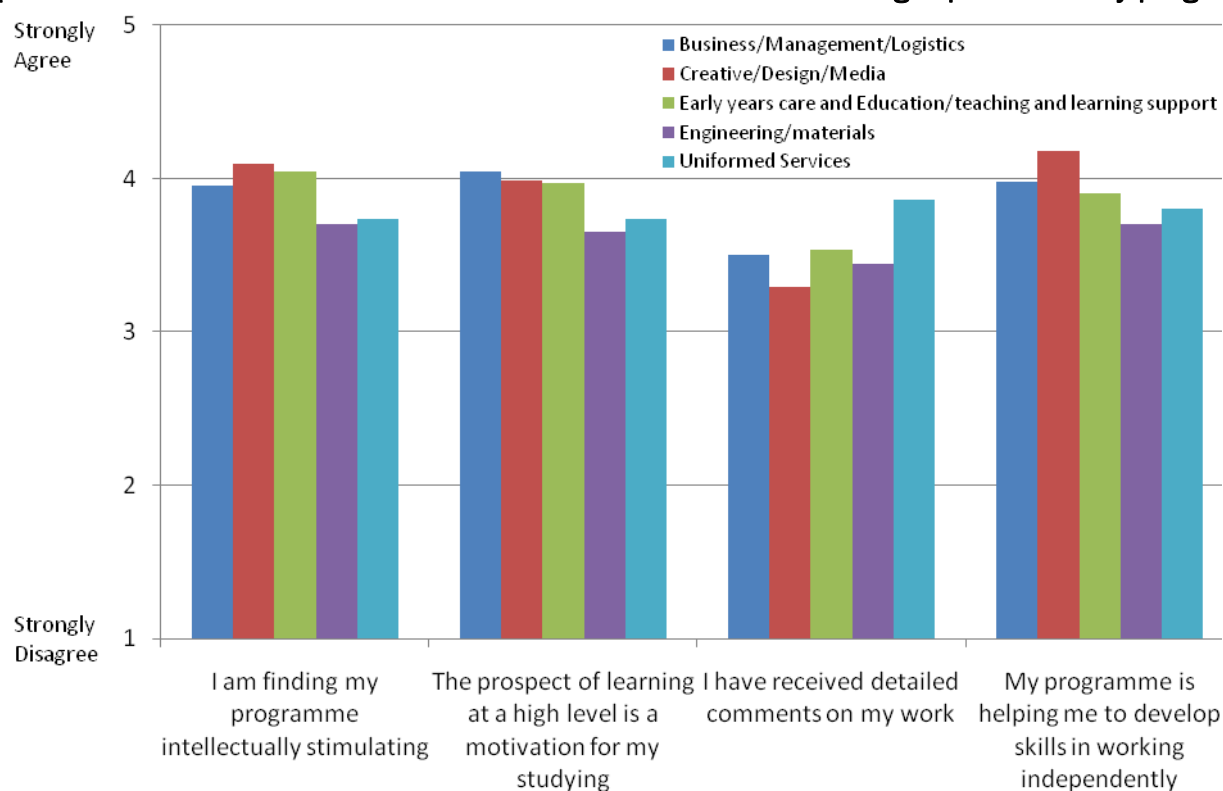
[Chart 4.2: Mean scores of statements in Theme: Coping with studies – by programme area]



[Chart 5.1: Mean scores of statements in Theme: Learner's learning experience – by age]

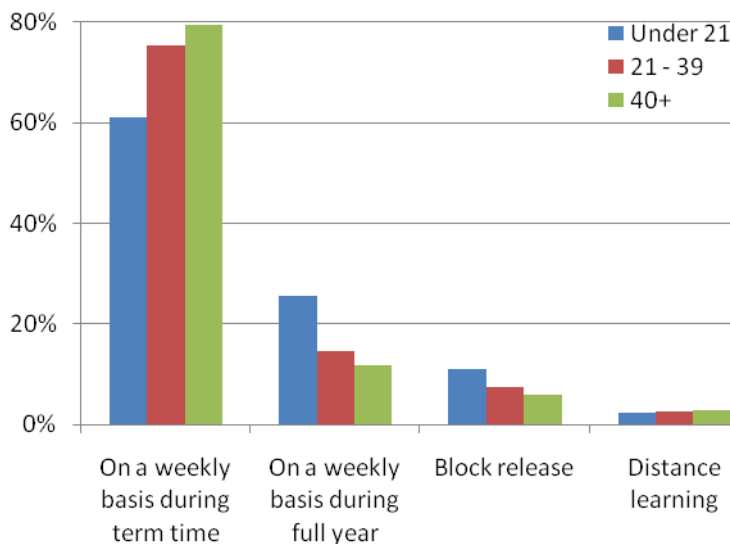
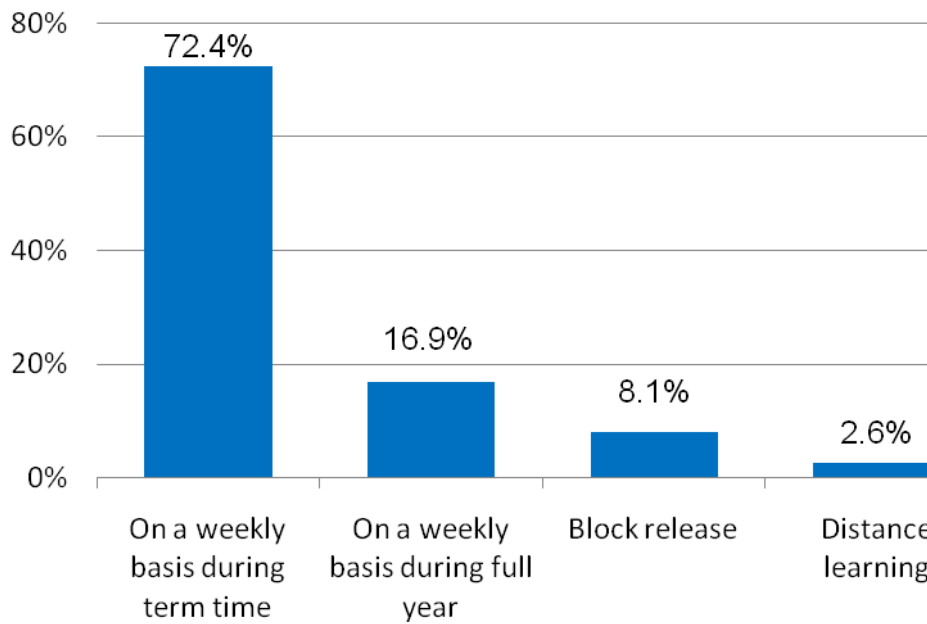


[Chart 5.2: Mean scores of statements in Theme: Learner's learning experience – by programme area]



Section 4: Work and study balance

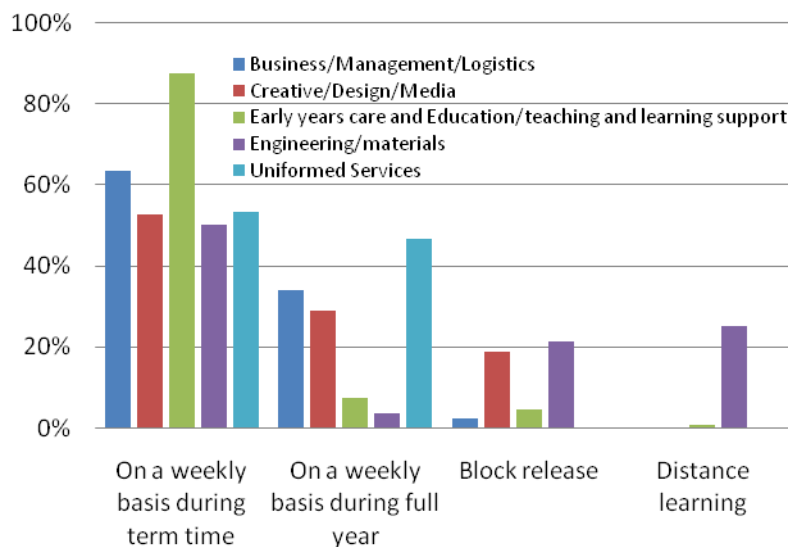
[Chart 6a: Q17; Programme timetabling]



[Chart 6b: Q17; By Age]

A higher proportion of respondents aged 40 and above (79%) were undertaking courses that were timetabled on a weekly basis during term time compared to the 21-39 (75%) and under 21 (61%) aged groups.

The younger age groups appear to have a slightly higher proportion of learners undertaking programmes that are timetabled on a weekly basis during full year and also on block release than the 40+ group.

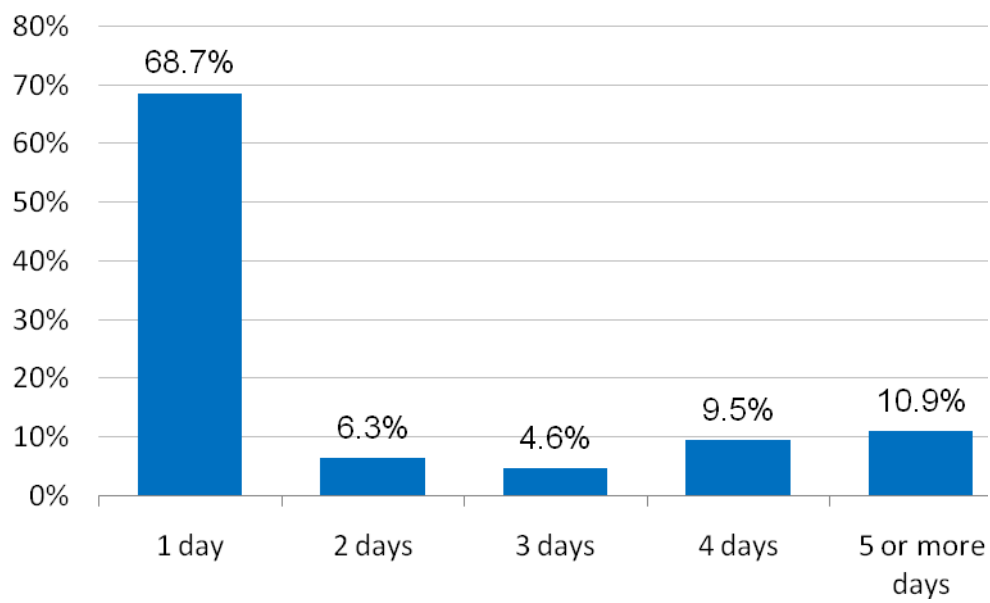


[Chart 6c: Q17; By Programme Area]

The vast majority of learners from across all programme areas were studying on a weekly basis either during term time or during full year.

The only exception was for learners studying Engineering/Materials, where block release and distance learning accounted for 46% of learners.

[Chart 7a: Q18; How many days per week are there timetabled sessions for your programme?]



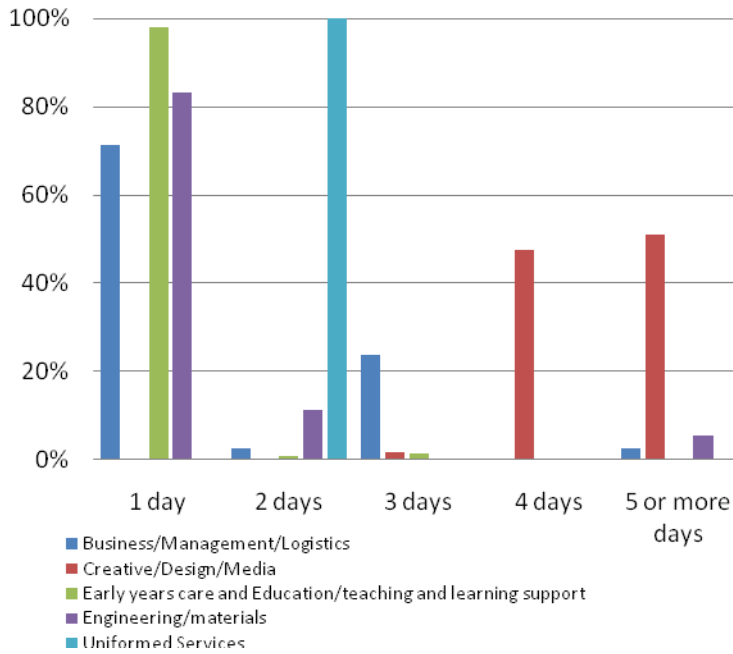


Chart 7b: Q18; By Age]

Nearly all (98%) of respondents aged 40+ opted to undertake Foundation Degrees that were timetabled 1 day per week.

Learners under 21 tended to be studying programmes timetabled on multiple days per week with 56% enrolling in Foundation Degrees that were timetabled on 3 or more days per week. This is significantly greater than that of learners aged 21-39 (18%) and 40+ (0%).

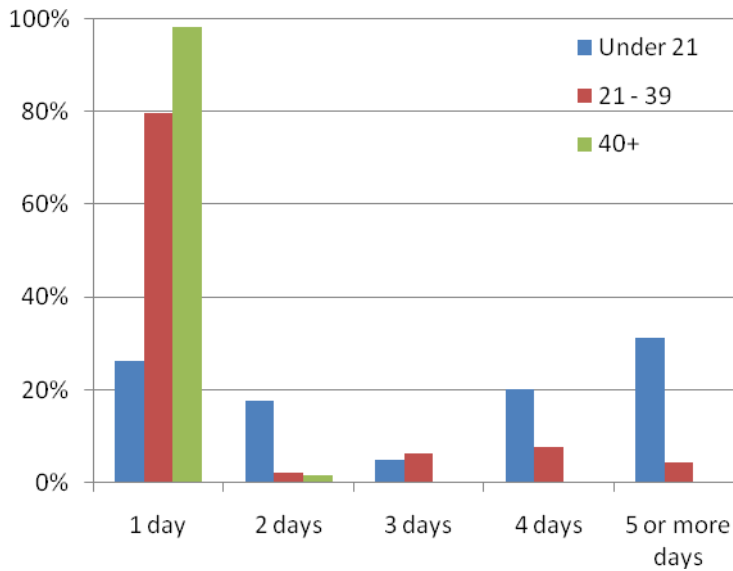


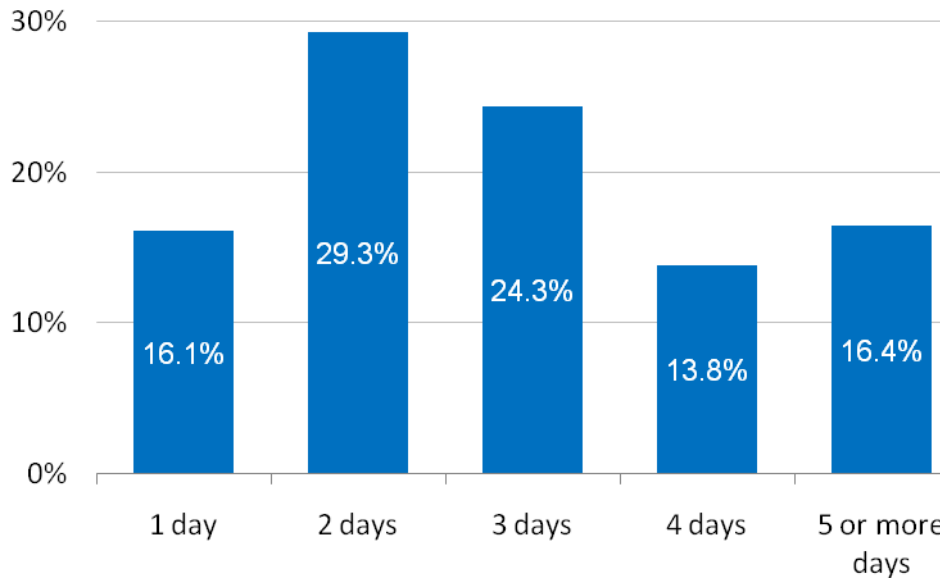
Chart 7c: Q18; By Programme Area]

The number of days that programmes were timetabled varied significantly depending on their programme area. Caution should be taken when interpreting these results as some programme areas had low a participation rate in the survey.

Nearly all Creative/Design/Media learners (98%) were studying 4 or 5+ days a week.

The majority of all other programme areas appear to be timetabled on either 1 or 2 days per week.

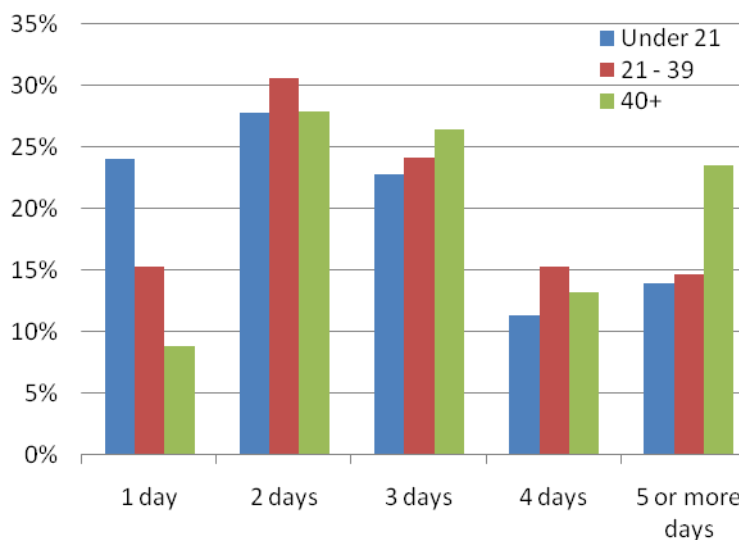
[Chart 8a: Q19; How many days per week do you typically undertake private study for your programme?]



[Chart 8b: Q19; By Age]

There does not appear to be a significant trend between the age of learners and the number of days they undertake private study.

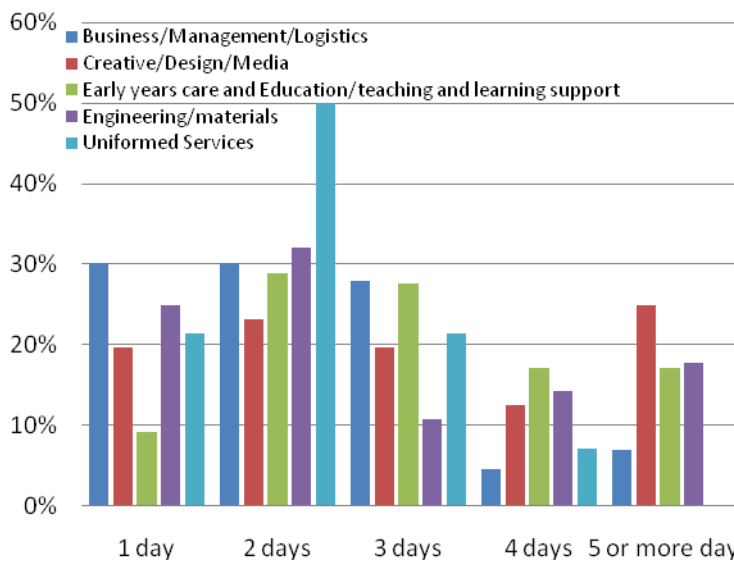
One notable difference is that a higher proportion of learners under 21 stated that they undertook private study only 1 day per week, this accounting for 24% of such learners. Learners aged 40 and above more frequently stated that they studied 5 or more days per week compared to the younger age groups, this being 24% against 15% of 21-39 year olds and 14% of learners under 21.



[Chart 8c: Q19; By Programme Area]

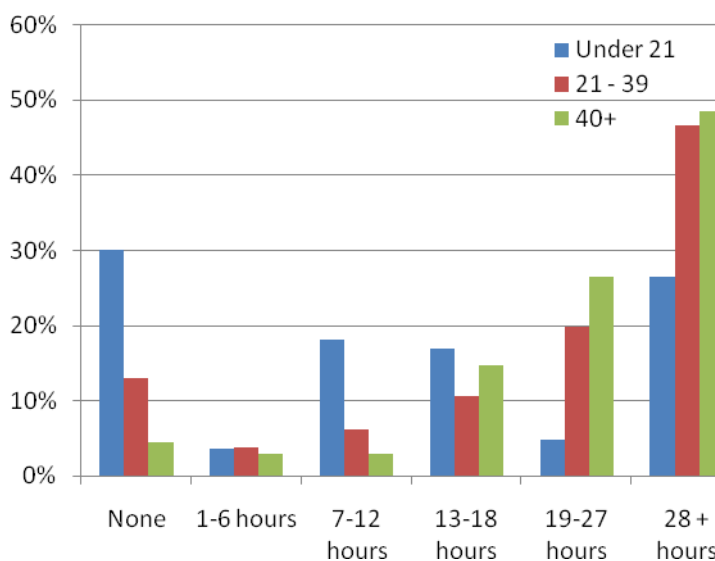
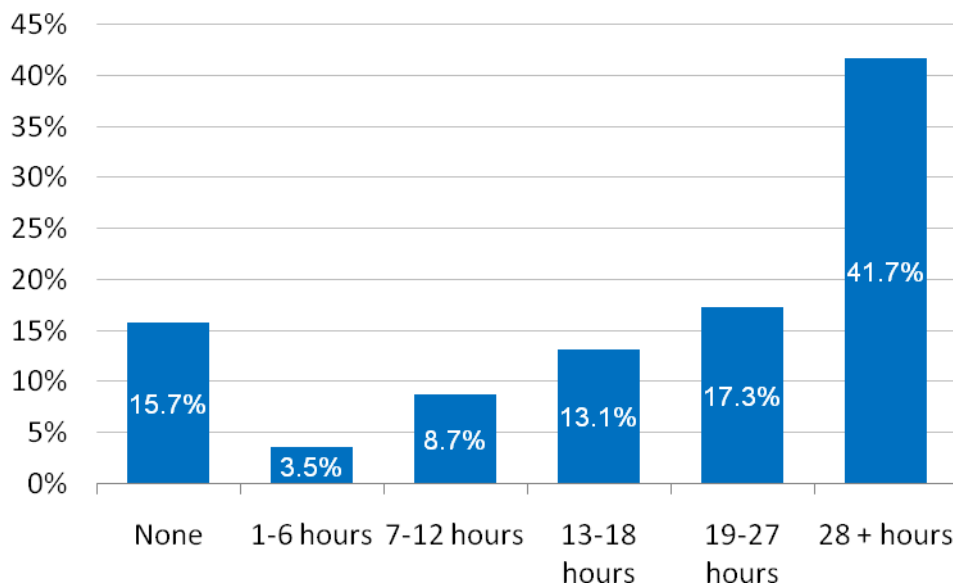
The number of days used to undertake private study varied considerably for learners across all programme area.

Overall, it is not possible to identify any clear differences in studying patterns for learners within the various programme areas.



Q20: Have you ever considered withdrawing from your programme whilst you have been at this institution?	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Total	69	22.2%	242	77.8%
Under 21	14	16.9%	69	83.1%
21 - 39	37	23.3%	122	76.7%
40+	18	26.1%	51	73.9%
Business/Management/Logistics	9	20.0%	36	80.0%
Creative/Design/Media	8	13.3%	52	86.7%
Early years care and Education/teaching and learning support	42	25.8%	121	74.2%
Engineering/materials	7	25.0%	21	75.0%
Uniformed Services	3	20.0%	12	80.0%

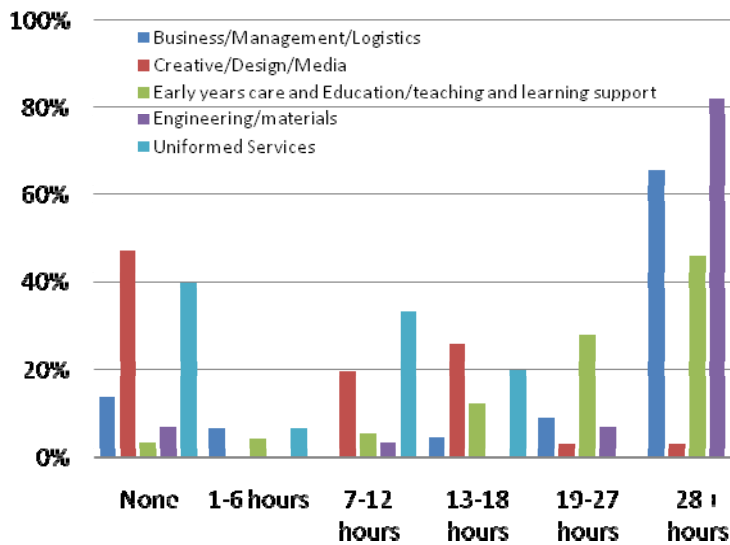
[Chart 9a: Q22; Average weekly hours spent in paid employment]



[Chart 9b: Q22; By Age]

Respondents aged 21 and above indicated that they were working significantly greater hours in paid employment than those under 21. 75% of learners aged 40+ were working in excess of 19 hours per week, as were 67% of those aged 21-39. Only 31% of respondents aged under 21 stated that they worked similar hours.

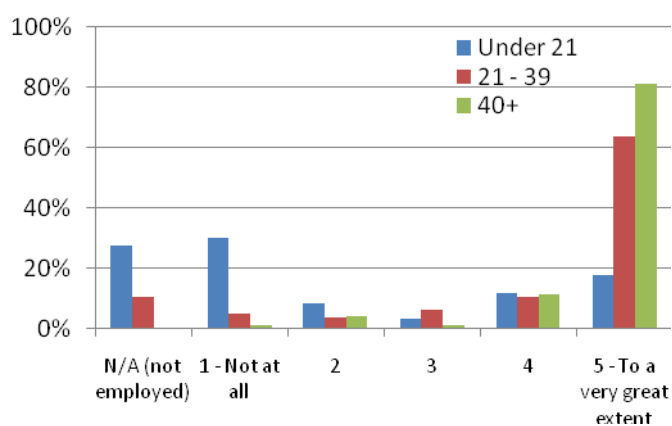
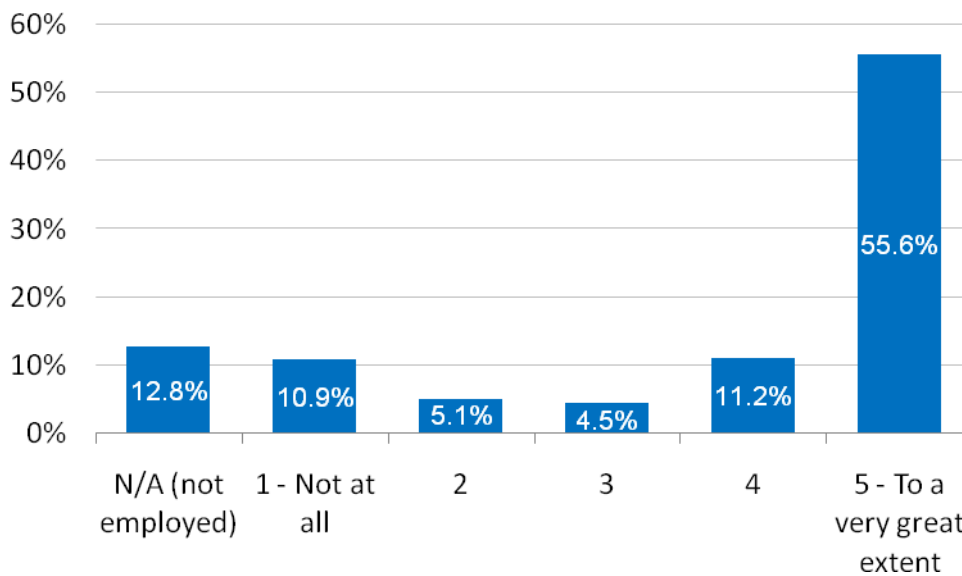
30% of the under 21 age group indicated that they were not involved in paid employment at all.



[Chart 9c: Q22; By Programme Area]
 The programme areas with the greatest working hours among learners were Engineering/Materials, Business / Management / Logistics, and Early years care and Education. 82% of Engineering / Material learners spent 28+ hours in paid employment per week.

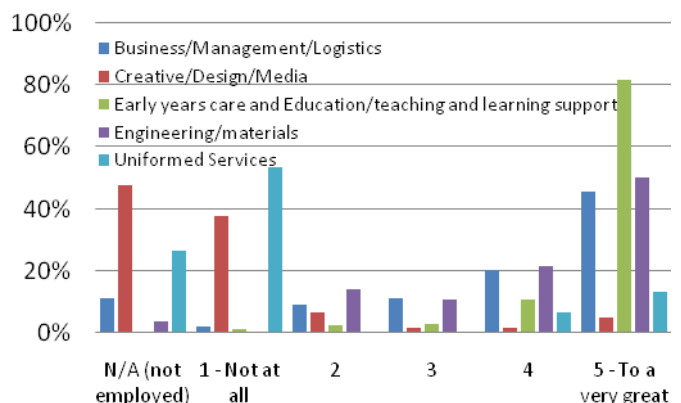
93% of learners within Creative/Design/Media worked less 19 hours per week, as did 100% of Uniformed Services learners.

[Chart 10a: Q23; To what extent is your Foundation Degree related to your current employment?]



[Chart 10b: Q23; By Age]

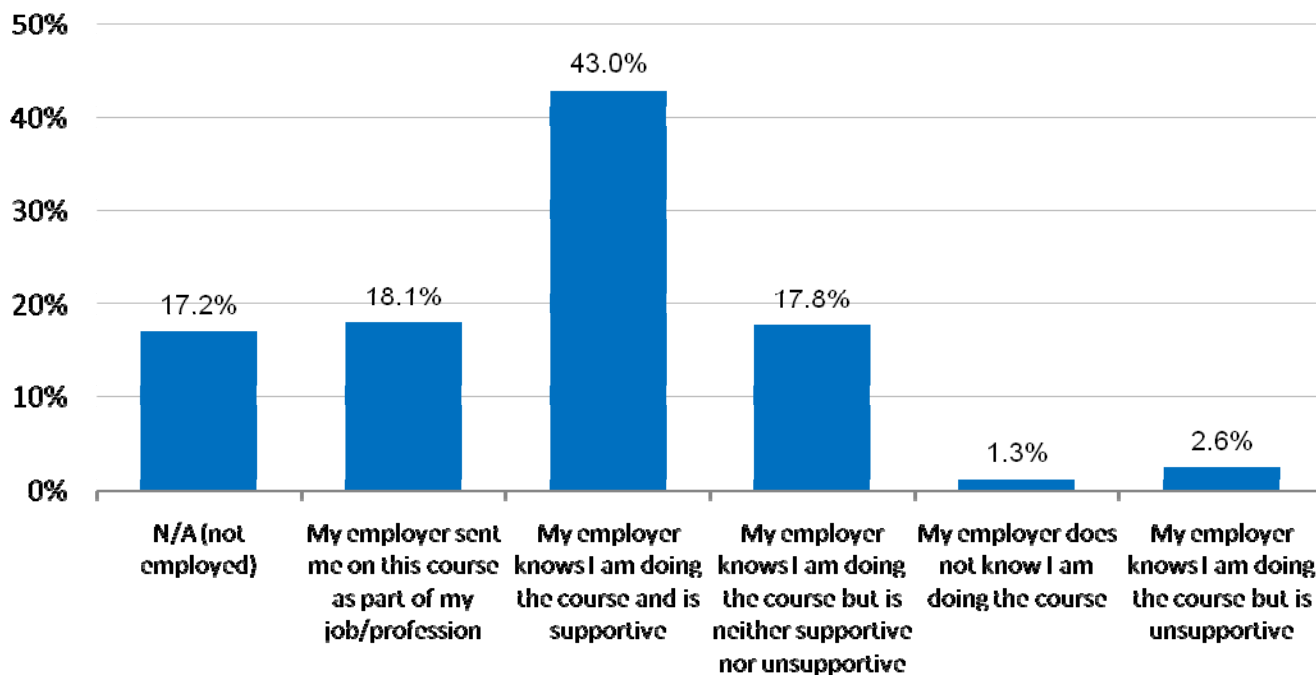
Whilst the majority of respondents aged 21-39 and 40+ indicated that their Foundation degree was greatly related to their current employment, this was not the case for those under 21. 30% of such learners stated that their Foundation Degree was not at all related whilst 28% per not



[Chart 10b: Q23; By Programme Area]

Learners within Early years care and Education appear to be studying Foundation Degrees related to their current employment compared to learners in other programme areas. 82% of such learners stated that their Foundation Degree was related to their current employment to a very great extent. Learners from Creative/Design/Media and Uniformed Services programmes were not generally studying a programme related to their employment

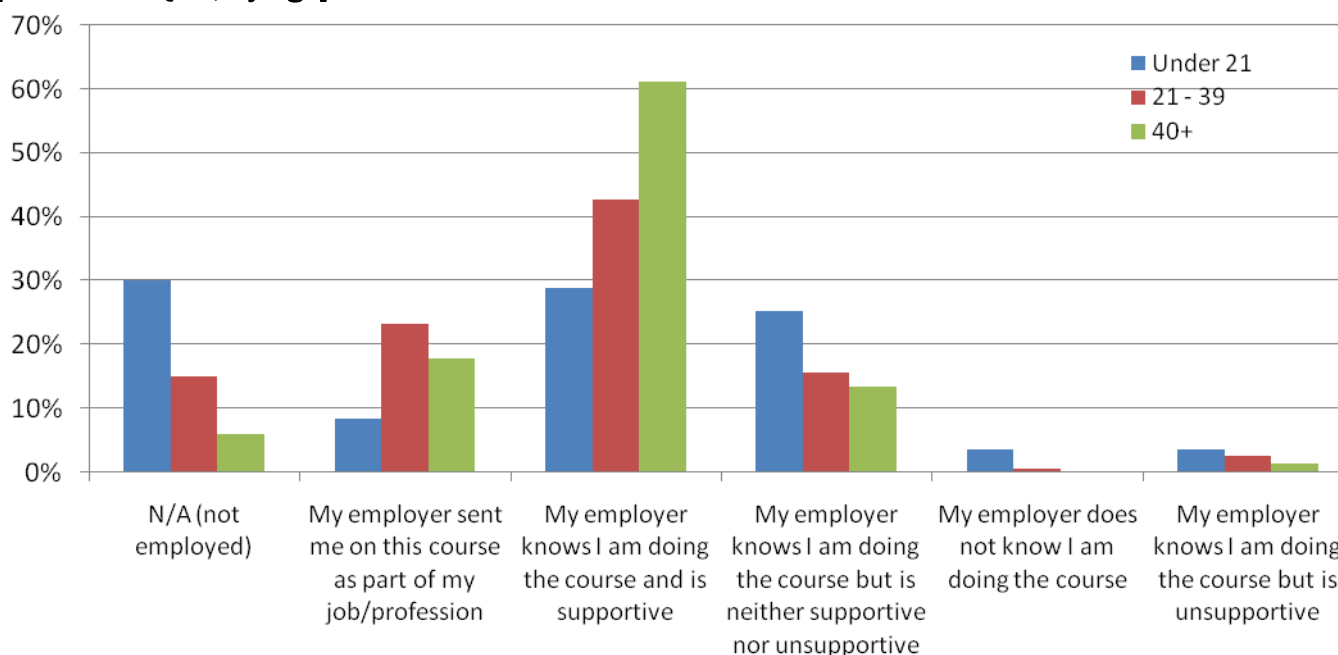
[Chart 11a: Q24; Employer's attitude towards the Foundation Degree]



Overall, the majority of employers were either supportive of the learner or had sent them to undertake the Foundation Degree as part of their job/profession. As illustrated in Chart 11b, 79% of learners aged 40+ had either been sent to undertake their Foundation Degree by their employer or had support from their employer. 66% of respondents aged 21-39 and 37% of those under 21 had the same type of support form their employer. Percentages for the under 21 age group should be treated with caution due to the 30% that stated they were not employed, which distorted all other selectable options.

There was little sign among all ages that employers were unsupportive of their current Foundation Degree comittments.

[Chart 11a: Q24; By Age]

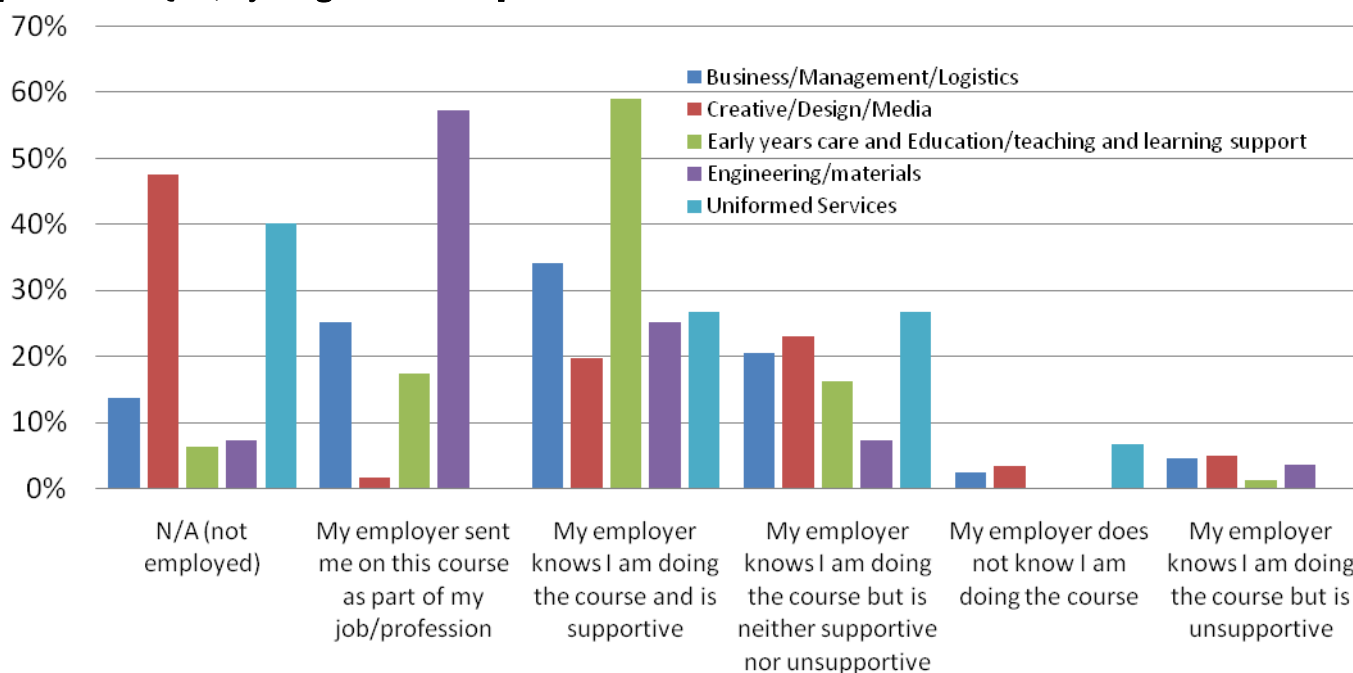


An analysis of the employer’s attitudes towards learner’s Foundation Degrees within the various programme areas did not result in discovering obvious trends. Learners studying Early years care and Education appear to have a greater level of support from their employer with 59% of such learners stating that their employer knew they were studying the course and were supportive. This is significantly higher than the 34% of Business/Management/Logistic learners, 20% of Creative/Design/Media, 35% of Engineering/Materials, and 27% of Uniformed Services.

A higher proportion of learners within the areas of Engineering/Materials (57%) and Uniformed Services (40%) had been sent on their course by their employer compared to learners in all other programme areas.

Once again, there is minimal evidence to suggest that employers are unsupportive of their employee’s Foundation Degree commitments.

[Chart 11a: Q24; By Programme Area]



Appendix 4: copy of questionnaire – experiences of Fd students



Foundation Degree Students Early Experiences

Your college/university is already taking part in a national study on Foundation Degrees. The study is being funded by Foundation Degree Forward and is being undertaken by an experienced team of researchers from the Learning and Skills Network, and the Open University's Centre for Higher Education Research and Information.

As an important part of the study, we are seeking an input from students who have recently embarked on their studies, and would be very grateful if you could complete the attached questionnaire. This should not take you more than 20 minutes.

All your answers will be treated in **strict confidence** by the research team and will not be attributed to you in any way.

This questionnaire is designed to be printed and completed in a paper-based form. All questions can be answered by ticking the appropriate 'response box' (in black or blue pen), or writing in the text boxes provided. When you have completed all sections, please put the questionnaire in an envelope and send it back to your tutor or directly to the LSN survey team using the free postal address:

Silvia Munoz – Survey Team
Learning and Skills Network (LSN)
FREEPOST 25LON20500
LONDON
W1E 7LT

We hope you will enjoy reflecting on the first few weeks on your Foundation Degree and that it will help you to focus on what is important for you in your study.

Many thanks for your help with this survey.

Section 1: About you

Q1 In what age-band were you when you enrolled on your first year at this institution?

- Under 21
- 21 - 25
- 26 - 30
- 31 - 35
- 36 - 40
- 40+

Q2 Please indicate your gender

- Male
- Female

Q3 Which one of the following categories most closely describes your ethnicity?

- White
- Black or Black British
- Asian or Asian British
- Chinese
- Other

Q4 Which one of the following categories most closely describes your occupational background?

(If you are under 25 years of age, please interpret this question in terms of your family background, giving only the higher-level occupation if, say, parents differ in this respect. If you are aged 25 or over, please interpret it with reference to your own situation.)

- Managerial or professional occupation
- Intermediate occupation (e.g. administrative role; running small business; self-employed)
- Relatively routine supervisory, technical, service or manual occupation
- Long-term unemployment or Never worked

Not sure or Other, not easily categorised as one of the above....

Q5 Are you the first person in your immediate family to attend university?

- Yes
- No

Q6 Do you have dependants (e.g. children or elderly relatives)?

- Yes
- No

Q7 Have you attended any course in higher education before enrolling on this course?

- Yes
- No

Q8 What was your highest qualification when you started this Foundation Degree?

- Above level 3 (e.g. NVQ 4/5; HNC/HND; Degree)
- Level 3 (e.g. NVQ3; GNVQ Advanced; BTEC National Diploma; A levels; Access course)
- Below level 3 (e.g. NVQ2; GNVQ Intermediate; AS Level; GCSEs/O levels/CSEs)

Q9 Where are you living whilst you are attending this institution?

- At home
- In other private accommodation (e.g. flat)
- In university/institution-run accommodation

Section 2: Getting into higher education

Q10 How much did you know about your institution before you enrolled?

- Nothing.....
- Very little
- A moderate amount
- A lot.....

Q11 How much did you know about your programme of study before you enrolled?

- Nothing.....
- Very little
- A moderate amount
- A lot.....

Q12 Why are you doing this Foundation Degree? (Please tick all which apply)

- To enhance my career prospects..
- To continue my education.....
- Out of interest
- To get a job
- To help me change career direction
- To help me do my current job better
- To help increase my chances of promotion with my current employer
- To help me find a better job in the same field with another employer..
- Other (please specify in the space provided)*

Q13 Was this Foundation Degree your first choice? (Please tick one only)

- Yes.....
- No, I wanted to study for an Honours Degree
- No, I wanted to study for an HND/HNC

No, I wanted to take a Foundation Degree in another subject.....

No, other
(please specify in the space provided)

Q14 Did you get your Foundation Degree place through clearing?

- Yes.....
- No.....

Q15 From whom did you receive information and advice about taking this course: (Tick all which apply)

- College or university prospectus / leaflet.....
- College or university website.....
- College/university tutor(s)
- UCAS website.....
- Family
- Friends
- Employer.....
- School/college/university at which you were studying prior to your current course
- Careers service at the college/university at which you are studying.....
- Newspapers
- Connexions service.....
- Other Careers website.....
- Careers service at the university/college which awards your degree
- TV or radio.....

Other
(please specify in the space provided below)

Section 3: Your experiences in higher education

Q16 Please indicate, by ticking the appropriate response category, the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

If a statement doesn't apply to your particular circumstances, please tick the 'not-applicable'(N/A) box.

The term 'programme' is used for the totality of your studies, so far.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I made a good choice of subject(s) to study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff made it clear from the start what they expected from students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The programme information I received prior to enrolment was poor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The induction programme helped me to feel that I belonged in this institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teaching staff are good at explaining things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
From the moment I enrolled I was helped to get off to a good start, academically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have missed some of the formally timetabled sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teaching on my programme has shown me what I need to do to be successful in my studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If I don't get good grades for my work, higher education will have been a waste of time for me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have been able to contact staff when I needed to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I am satisfied with the level of tutorial support on my programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The way in which programme assessments (assignments, etc) are scheduled cause problems for me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teaching on my programme is stimulating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I need to undertake paid employment in order to help fund my studies in higher education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I haven't done the background reading expected of me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
My programme requires me to work collaboratively with other students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My programme is well organised	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feedback on my work has been prompt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Feedback on my work has helped me in my learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am satisfied with the support I have received from student support services (in respect of matters such as student finance, accommodation, welfare issues, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
The facilities for working on one's own within this institution are inadequate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The library resources and services are good enough for my needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have been able to access general computing resources when I needed to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I tend to keep to myself within the institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I find it hard to keep up with the volume of work in this programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I am not as motivated towards my studies as I ought to be	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I meet up with other students outside the formally timetabled activities in order to discuss academic work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The institution turned out to be different from what I had expected	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I find it difficult to balance academic and other commitments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I enjoy the social side of higher education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Travelling to the institution takes up more time than I think is reasonable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do more reading than the programme seems to require of me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I worry about financing my way through higher education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am in electronic contact with other students regarding academic work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand what the assessments (assignments, examinations) on my programme expect of me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I am finding my programme intellectually stimulating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The timetabling of my programme doesn't suit my needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am satisfied with the quality of the teaching on my programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know enough about studying to cope with the academic demands of my programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teaching on my programme has suited the way I learn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
The criteria used in assessing work were made clear at the beginning of my programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

My programme is not as I had expected it to be	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The staff with whom I come into contact are friendly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic work at this level is harder than I expected it to be	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not able to attend some formally timetabled sessions because of other demands on my time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
The prospect of learning at a high level is a motivation for my studying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have to give time to looking after others (e.g. parents, children, partner, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have received detailed comments on my work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not particularly interested in the extra-curricular activities or facilities provided in this institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I have had difficulty adjusting to the style of teaching at this institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am managing my academic workload well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do not feel that I belong to an academic grouping (e.g. department; school) within this institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My programme is helping me to develop skills in working independently	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 4: Work and study balance

Q17 How is your programme timetabled?

(please tick one)

- On a weekly basis during term time
- On a weekly basis during full year.
- Block release.....
- Distance learning.....

Q18 If weekly, on how many days per week are there timetabled sessions for your programme?

(please tick one)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

Q19 On how many days per week do you typically undertake private study for your programme? (please tick one)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

Q20 Have you ever considered withdrawing from your programme whilst you have been at this institution?

- Yes.....
- No

Q21 If 'yes', why?

(Please specify in the space provided below)

Q22 On average, approximately how many hours do you spend per week during term time in paid employment?

- None
- 1-6 hours.....
- 7-12 hours.....
- 13-18 hours
- 19-27 hours
- 28 + hours.....

Q23 To what extent is your Foundation Degree related to your current employment?

- N/A (not employed)
- 1 - Not at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - To a very great extent.....

Q24 What is your employer's attitude to your Foundation Degree?

(please tick one answer only)

- N/A (not employed)
- My employer sent me on this course as part of my job/professional development.....
- My employer knows I am doing the course and is supportive.....
- My employer knows I am doing the course but is neither supportive nor unsupportive
- My employer does not know I am doing the course
- My employer knows I am doing the course but is unsupportive

Thank you very much for filling in this questionnaire

If you are willing for the project team to contact you again (in about a year's time) so that we might get your view of your continuing FD experience, please give your name and your Student ID number:

Name: _____
 Student ID number _____

Annex B

Section 1: About you

Age	Under 21	27%	86
	21 – 25	51%	163
	26 – 30	22%	69
Gender	Male	28%	89
	Female	72%	229
Ethnicity	White	93%	294
	Black or Black British	2%	7
	Asian or Asian British	2%	6
	Chinese	1%	2
	Other	2%	7
Occupational background	Managerial or professional occupation	46%	146
	Intermediate occupation (e.g. administrative role; running small business; self-employed)	15%	47
	Relatively routine supervisory, technical, service or manual occupation	18%	55
	Long-term unemployment or never worked	2%	7
	Not sure or other, not easily categorised as one of the above	19%	59
Dependents	Yes	51%	160
	No	49%	155
First in immediate family to attend university	Yes	60%	190
	No	40%	128
Previous HE experience	Yes	54%	172
	No	46%	144
Highest qualification	Above Level 3	15%	48
	Level 3	73%	230
	Below Level 3	12%	37

Living Situation	At home	86%	273
	In other private accommodation	12%	38
	In university/institution-run accommodation	2%	6

Section 2: Getting into higher education

Q10: How much did you know about your institution before you enrolled?	N	%
Nothing	37	11.6%
Very little	129	40.6%
A moderate amount	116	36.5%
A lot	36	11.3%
Total	318	100.0%

Q11: How much did you know about your programme of study before you enrolled?	N	%
Nothing	30	9.4%
Very little	120	37.7%
A moderate amount	150	47.2%
A lot	18	5.7%
Total	318	100.0%

Q:12 Why are you doing this Foundation Degree?	N	%
To enhance my career prospects	261	82.1%
To continue my education	144	45.3%
Out of interest	80	25.2%
To get a job	49	15.4%
To help me change career direction	45	14.2%
To help me do my current job better	88	27.7%
To help increase my chances of promotion with my current employer	47	14.8%
To help me find a better job in the same field with another employer	27	8.5%

Q13: Was this Foundation Degree your first choice?	N	%
Yes	287	92.3%
No, I wanted to study for an Honours Degree	19	6.1%
No, I wanted to study for an HND/HNC	2	0.6%
No, I wanted to take a Foundation Degree in another subject	3	1.0%
Total	311	100.0%

Q14: Did you get your Foundation Degree place through clearing?	N	%
Yes	37	13.0%
No	248	87.0%
Total	285	100.0%

Q15: From whom did you receive information and advice about taking this course?	N	%
College or university prospectus / leaflet	122	38.4%
College or university website	78	24.5%
College/university tutor(s)	67	21.1%
UCAS website	26	8.2%
Family	25	7.9%
Friends	59	18.6%
Employer	92	28.9%
School/college/university at which you were studying prior to your current course	37	11.6%
Careers service at the college/university at which you are studying	9	2.8%
Newspapers	3	0.9%
Connexions service	1	0.3%
Other Careers website	5	1.6%
Careers service at the university/college which awards your degree	5	1.6%
TV or radio	2	0.6%

*Please note: It was possible for respondents to select more than one response; therefore, figures represent the proportion of all survey respondents. For example, 38.4% of survey respondents received information about taking their course from a 'College or university prospectus / leaflet'.

Section 3: Your experiences in higher education

STATEMENTS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	%	%	%	%	%
I made a good choice of subject(s) to study	0.0	1.0	6.4	52.1	40.6
Staff made it clear from the start what they expected from students	2.2	5.7	15.8	50.0	26.3
The programme information I received prior to enrolment was poor	18.1	40.6	21.9	14.8	4.5
The induction programme helped me to feel that I belonged in this institution	1.0	7.0	32.9	44.0	15.1
The teaching staff are good at explaining things	0.6	3.8	15.1	56.8	23.7
From the moment I enrolled I was helped to get off to a good start, academically	0.6	6.0	24.6	51.7	17.0
I have missed some of the formally timetabled sessions	42.9	27.6	7.7	19.9	1.9
The teaching on my programme has shown me what I need to do to be successful in my studies	1.6	3.8	23.0	54.6	17.0
If I don't get good grades for my work, higher education will have been a waste of time for me	13.3	36.6	20.7	22.3	7.1
I have been able to contact staff when I needed to	1.0	5.1	12.3	51.2	30.4
I am satisfied with the level of tutorial support on my programme	1.3	7.3	15.6	54.5	21.3
The way in which programme assessments (assignments, etc) are scheduled cause problems for me	9.7	44.2	30.5	13.0	2.6
The teaching on my programme is stimulating	1.3	3.8	20.9	57.3	16.8
I need to undertake paid employment in order to help fund my studies in higher education	6.8	20.4	14.7	29.8	28.3
I haven't done the background reading expected of me	16.5	41.6	25.4	13.1	3.4

My programme requires me to work collaboratively with other students	0.6	1.3	5.8	61.3	31.0
My programme is well organised	1.3	8.0	16.0	57.7	17.0
Feedback on my work has been prompt	1.5	3.7	34.5	49.1	11.2
Feedback on my work has helped me in my learning	0.8	1.6	23.3	57.4	17.1
I am satisfied with the support I have received from student support services (in respect of matters such as student finance, accommodation, welfare issues, etc)	1.7	7.7	31.2	41.5	17.9
The facilities for working on one's own within this institution are inadequate	10.4	35.8	24.0	27.4	2.4
The library resources and services are good enough for my needs	1.0	5.2	11.4	61.6	20.8
I have been able to access general computing resources when I needed to	0.3	3.0	14.8	57.4	24.5
I tend to keep to myself within the institution	9.1	32.1	23.0	27.4	8.4
I find it hard to keep up with the volume of work in this programme	5.6	40.0	31.5	18.7	4.3
I am not as motivated towards my studies as I ought to be	18.1	48.7	13.2	16.5	3.5
I meet up with other students outside the formally timetabled activities in order to discuss academic work	7.7	32.9	22.7	30.1	6.6
The institution turned out to be different from what I had expected	7.1	40.3	24.1	25.4	3.1
I find it difficult to balance academic and other commitments	2.3	24.5	24.8	38.4	10.0
I enjoy the social side of higher education	2.4	5.3	30.9	45.5	15.9
Travelling to the institution takes up more time than I think is reasonable	13.6	48.5	20.9	10.3	6.6
I do more reading than the programme seems to require of me	7.3	53.5	22.4	14.5	2.3

I worry about financing my way through higher education	7.6	27.7	17.6	28.4	18.7
I am in electronic contact with other students regarding academic work	3.4	11.4	17.8	47.1	20.2
I understand what the assessments (assignments, examinations) on my programme expect of me	2.3	11.0	19.0	55.2	12.6
I am finding my programme intellectually stimulating	1.0	2.9	14.3	58.9	22.9
The timetabling of my programme doesn't suit my needs	12.3	58.3	21.9	6.6	1.0
I am satisfied with the quality of the teaching on my programme	1.6	4.5	13.7	57.8	22.4
I know enough about studying to cope with the academic demands of my programme	1.3	9.6	24.1	56.3	8.7
The teaching on my programme has suited the way I learn	0.6	8.0	22.2	57.6	11.6
The criteria used in assessing work were made clear at the beginning of my programme	1.0	7.9	16.8	59.4	14.9
My programme is not as I had expected it to be	9.8	45.9	22.5	18.9	2.9
The staff with whom I come into contact are friendly	0.0	0.6	5.1	52.6	41.7
Academic work at this level is harder than I expected it to be	4.5	28.4	35.5	25.2	6.4
I am not able to attend some formally timetabled sessions because of other demands on my time	23.7	48.7	16.1	9.7	1.8
The prospect of learning at a high level is a motivation for my studying	1.6	2.9	17.0	56.4	22.1
I have to give time to looking after others (e.g. parents, children, partner, etc)	11.6	20.7	10.9	28.4	28.4
I have received detailed comments on my work	3.0	10.2	33.3	42.0	11.4
I am not particularly interested in the extra-curricular activities or facilities provided in this institution	8.7	23.8	35.0	24.5	7.9
I have had difficulty adjusting to the style of teaching at this institution	9.0	51.4	21.9	15.8	1.9

I am managing my academic workload well	1.9	15.5	31.6	46.1	4.8
I do not feel that I belong to an academic grouping (e.g. department; school) within this institution	17.2	46.7	23.8	8.9	3.3
My programme is helping me to develop skills in working independently	1.6	3.5	12.9	62.6	19.4

Section 4: Work and Study balance

Q17: How is your programme timetabled?	N	%
On a weekly basis during term time	223	72.4%
On a weekly basis during full year	52	16.9%
Block release	25	8.1%
Distance learning	8	2.6%
Total	308	100.0%

Q18: If weekly, on how many days per week are there timetabled sessions for your programme?	N	%
1	195	68.7%
2	18	6.3%
3	13	4.6%
4	27	9.5%
5 or more	31	10.9%
Total	284	100.0%

Q19: On how many days per week do you typically undertake private study for your programme?	N	%
1	49	16.1%
2	89	29.3%
3	74	24.3%
4	42	13.8%
5 or more	50	16.4%
Total	304	100.0%

Q20: Have you ever considered withdrawing from your programme whilst you have been at this institution?	N	%
Yes	69	22.2%
No	242	77.8%
Total	311	100.0%

Q22: On average, approximately how many hours do you spend per week during term time in paid employment?	N	%
None	49	15.7%
1-6 hours	11	3.5%
7-12 hours	27	8.7%
13-18 hours	41	13.1%
19-27 hours	54	17.3%
28 + hours	130	41.7%
Total	312	100.0%

Q23: To what extent is your Foundation Degree related to your current employment?	N	%
N/A (not employed)	40	12.8%
1 - Not at all	34	10.9%
2	16	5.1%
3	14	4.5%
4	35	11.2%
5 - To a very great extent	174	55.6%
Total	313	100.0%

Q24: What is your employer's attitude to your Foundation Degree?	N	%
N/A (not employed)	53	17.2%
My employer sent me on this course as part of my job/profess	56	18.1%
My employer knows I am doing the course and is supportive	133	43.0%
My employer knows I am doing the course but is neither supportive nor unsupportive	55	17.8%
My employer does not know I am doing the course	4	1.3%
My employer knows I am doing the course but is unsupportive	8	2.6%
Total	309	100.0%