Work-based learning
Impact study

Prepared by Iain Nixon, The KSA Partnership

Preface

This publication is a product of the Higher Education Academy's work in the field of Employer Engagement. Over the course of the last two years, we have been working to help develop the capacity and capability of higher education institutions to provide higher level learning to the workforce, building on existing practice and the general recommendations of the Leitch Report.

The Academy's work has focussed upon the promotion of best practice, the networking of HEIs and stakeholders with an interest in this agenda and research into the possibilities and practicalities of providing work-based learning. We have worked with government departments, funding bodies, subject communities, individual HEIs and other relevant agencies to support this agenda. We have also coordinated network groups to allow discussion at the level of specific roles from Pro Vice-Chancellors through to work-based learning practitioners and staff focussing on research in the field.

By working both extensively throughout the sector and intensively with specific individuals and institutions, the Academy has been able to raise the awareness of workforce development, support those trying to get to grips with it and make some important contributions to research in the field. This publication is one such contribution that we hope will continue to shed light on the possibilities that workforce development offers to employers, HEIs and prospective students.

The Academy Employee Learning Team
8 May 2008

Acknowledgements

Executive summary

Introduction

The advent of the Leitch Report, and aspects of its implementation, such as HEFCE's 'HE – Transforming Workforce Development' programme has accelerated interest in innovative approaches to curriculum development, learning and teaching focused on the workplace and market-led approaches to building a customer base of employers and employees, as a means by which to fulfil employer demand for higher level skills.

The Higher Education Academy commissioned a study to explore the experience of employees and their employers engaged in work-based learning, and the impact that this learning has for them. In commissioning this small-scale study, the Academy accepted proposals from six universities to support the qualitative research element. The six universities were:

- Chester
- Derby
- Middlesex
- Northumbria
- Teesside
- Westminster.

Each of the universities were identified as having considerable experience in designing and delivering learning to meet the needs of the employees (the 'students') and their employers. The intention was to ensure a broad coverage of the range of provision, notably full programmes leading to an HE award, as well as smaller, bite size programmes which may or may not be accredited.

What do we know about the experience?

When asked what motivated the employee to undertake the programme of study, a number of reasons were commonly repeated. These included to:

- validate and formalise their experience
- open up new opportunities for career progression
- develop a greater understanding, knowledge and expertise in a particular (and possibly more specialist) area
- develop practical skills to enable them to do a current role better or develop in a new role.

The main reasons given by employers for supporting their employees in undertaking a programme of study at a higher education level were to:

- develop the knowledge, skills and expertise of staff
- support staff retention strategies
- supplement and extend the nature of the in-house staff training.

The employees tended to be the driving force behind the willingness of the employer to support them in engaging in a programme of study such as the ones described above. Even when the programme was part of an employer-university partnership, it was the willingness of the employee that influenced the uptake of the programme.

A number of primary reasons for choosing the particular programme of study were consistently identified by the employees. In particular, the flexibility of the programme was an important aspect for many employees both in terms of time and content. For others it was the ability to study at their own pace, the convenience of the programme's delivery in the workplace, meeting individual learning needs and styles and the extent to which the programme was relevant to the employee's work compared to other available programmes.

By contrast the reasons given by employers for why they chose the particular programme of study included were it:

- fitted well into the work schedule
- required employees to be away from their place of work for a minimal amount of time
- provided an opportunity to influence change in the workplace
- linked theory to practical day-to-day issues faced by the business.

Most of the employees and employers indicated that the programmes of study had met or even exceeded their expectations.

What do we know about the impact?

A range of personal and professional benefits resulting from having completed the programme of study were identified by employees. The most commonly mentioned

benefit was increased confidence, both in their job and outside of work. Other personal benefits included:

- higher aspirations and motivation
- raised personal status
- more self aware as an individual
- learning to think and challenge assumptions
- a greater awareness and understanding of particular issues
- developed new and enhanced existing skills (e.g. communication, organisation skills)
- more likely to take stock and reflect on their performance.

Employees discussed how professionally they had gained a better understanding of issues from a wider organisational perspective and how individual roles contribute to an organisation's business objectives.

The reflective based approaches to learning were often mentioned by employees as critically important elements of the programmes which realised significant benefits at work.

There was a strong belief amongst both the employees and the employers that the organisations involved had benefited from their employees participating in the programmes of study. These benefits included:

- established a clearer direction of travel for the organisation
- development of new or improved existing policies, standards and contracts
- improved service provision to the end users and improved quality of work
- increased levels of innovation
- improved performance of employees who are more self-sufficient and require less direct support
- secured a positive attitudinal and behavioural change in staff in line with the values of the organisation
- achieved external recognition and prestige.

Most employees considered the programme of study had been value for money and a good use of their time because of the range of personal and professional benefits it provided. Employers also generally agreed that the programmes of study had been value for money and had met with their expectations.

Conclusions

The evidence indicates that higher education programmes of study have had a positive impact on employers and their employees. The benefits of this form of workforce development extend well beyond enhancing an individual's skills to the exchange

or generation of new knowledge (in the workplace). That said, the skills that are developed can be both technically specific for a job role, function or sector of work, as well as generic in nature. Moreover, the individual employees have benefited in a way that has been described as 'capability extending' in terms of attitudes and approaches to work. They have also gained a wider appreciation of how what they do fits into the 'bigger picture' and this has led to increased confidence in their performance at work.

Supporting the development of employees in this way has enabled employers to strengthen the human capital of their organisations irrespective of whether the intervention was a short, business-focused programme of higher education or a full programme leading to an HE award.

The shorter 'bite size' programmes of study have also been acknowledged as being catalysts for individual employees to progress to further study. So whilst these shorter interventions have value in their own right, they are potentially one means through which to widen and increase participation into and through higher education.

Notwithstanding the findings of this study, there is still a need to further explore the legitimisation of shorter, non-linear higher education study as a means to better meet employer and employee needs. There is also a need to investigate in more detail some of the challenges involved in engaging individual and cohorts of employees in higher education programmes of study. That said, these challenges should not detract from the overall success of such provision, as indicated by the findings of this study, in meeting and exceeding employers' and employees' needs and expectations.

Introduction

The advent of the Leitch Report, and aspects of its implementation, such as HEFCE's 'HE – Transforming Workforce Development' programme has accelerated interest in innovative approaches to curriculum development, learning and teaching focused on the workplace and market led approaches to building a customer base of employers and employees, as means by which to fulfil employer demand for higher level skills. This interest has led higher education institutions (HEIs) to cite the need to investigate and evaluate current practice as a means by which to explore the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches, as well as to determine and evidence the impact that such learning has on employees and their employers. This need was confirmed by the Higher Education Academy's Work-based Learning Research Network.

Consequently the Higher Education Academy commissioned a study to **explore the experience of employees and their employers engaged in work-based learning, and the impact that this learning has for them.** Hence, the study centred on 'learning which accredits or extends the workplace skills and abilities of employees', irrespective of whether the drive behind the learning was to improve personal and professional performance in an individual's existing work and/or the organisation's performance and competitiveness (see the righthandside of the typology in Figure 1, opposite)[1].

As such the study was interested in workforce development and not the contribution that higher education plays in providing a pool of talented new graduate entrants to the workforce (typically acknowledged as 'initial HE').

---

1   Nixon, I., Smith, K., Stafford, R. & Camm, S. (2006) Work-Based Learning: Illuminating the Higher Education Landscape. The Higher Education Academy: www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/research/wbl_illuminating.pdf

Figure 1 – Workforce development typology

Individual driven

Investing in learning to improve personal performance in securing new work	Investing in learning to improve personal and professional performance in existing work/ organisation
Investing in learning to bring knowledge and skills to the organisation	Investing in learning to improve the organisation's peformance and competitiveness

Informal relationship (not employed)

Formal relationship (employed)

Organisation driven

1.1 Methodology

In commissioning this small-scale study, the Higher Education Academy accepted proposals from six universities to support the qualitative research element. The six universities were:

- Chester
- Derby
- Middlesex
- Northumbria
- Teesside
- Westminster.

Each of the universities were identified as having considerable experience in designing and delivering learning to meet the needs of the employees (the 'students') and their employers. The intention was to ensure a broad coverage of the range of provision, notably full programmes leading to an HE award at an undergraduate (e.g. BA) and postgraduate (e.g. MA, PG Cert, Professional Certificates, Doctor in Professional Studies) level, as well as smaller, bite size programmes which may or may not be accredited. The latter included single accredited modules alongside smaller non-accredited units. Whilst most programmes led to an HE award, where the learning was not accredited, recognition was often provided (e.g. Certificate of Achievement).

The universities were also encouraged to consider open and closed programmes, alongside individually and cohort-negotiated programmes.

Examples of the programmes of study included within this study are:

- Buying and Merchandising short course (University of Westminster)
- Certificate of Achievement in Personal Development & Introduction to Leadership (30 credits at NQF Level 6, University of Derby)
- Certificate of Achievement Leading the Integrated IAG Service (30 credits at NQF Level 7, University of Derby)
- Professional Certificate (60 credits, University of Chester)
- Masters in Individual and Organisational Development (University of Westminster)
- Masters in and Doctorates of Professional Studies (Middlesex University).

The study excluded Foundation degrees as a complementary (but larger scale) piece of research was being conducted by CHERI at the Open University and the Learning & Skills Network, on behalf of Foundation Degree Forward[2].

Researchers were identified by each of the universities to conduct semi-structured interviews with employees (former 'students') and their employer to explore their respective experiences of engaging in work-based learning, and the impact that the learning had. An employee and employer discussion guide (see Annex 1) was designed and agreed by the Higher Education Academy and all the participating institutions.

The initial intention was that each university would interview a minimum of 10 employees and their corresponding employers (which might have meant fewer than 10 employers overall where cohort contracts or closed courses were concerned). In total 59 interviews were conducted with employees – both individual and cohort – and 46 interviews with their employers. The interviews took between 30 minutes and an hour to complete. Wherever possible, face-to-face interviews were used and for logistical reasons telephone interviews were also utilised.

For pragmatic reasons only employees who had successfully completed the programme of study were interviewed. Wherever possible, employees who had completed their study as long ago as possible were identified, so that the full extent of the impact could be explored.

In some instances it was problematic to identify the employer as the status (e.g. self employment), nature of job (e.g. consultancy) and/or career moves of the individual

---

2　　Greenwood, M. & Little, B. (2008) Report to Foundation Degree Forward on the Impact of Foundation Degrees on Students and the Workplace. Learning & Skills Network and Centre for Higher Education Research & Information, The Open University.

'employee' meant that no corresponding employer could be identified. Where the employer could be identified, the universities were encouraged to focus on different sectors – public, private and voluntary and community – to ensure a wide range of professions were covered. In the public sector, health and teaching were covered; whereas in the private sector, aviation, education and training, finance, fitness, health, information technology, media, music and retail were covered in the study. A registered charity was also covered in the voluntary and community sector.

The interviews were in the main recorded and transcribed, and in some instances the transcription was sent to the respondee to ensure its accuracy. The analysis of the transcribed individuals was then undertaken by the identified researcher, a team of researchers from within the institution and/or a number of focus groups. Each institution had the flexibility to decide how best to approach this aspect of the study and more detail is available in the individual institutional reports.

Given the differentiated approaches adopted by institutions involved and the limitations in the sample size, it was not possible for the institutions individually or collectively through the Higher Education Academy's synthesis to cross-tabulate the findings by, for instance, the nature of the provision or the size or sector of the employer. Whilst this level of analysis might be desireable in any future research, it was never an intended element of this small-scale study.

This research phase took place between June and October 2007 prior to the individual institutional reports being submitted in November 2007. The Higher Education Academy then synthesised the individual reports into this single report.

What do we know about the employee and employer experience?

In this chapter we explore the findings from the employer and employee interviews in relation to:

- background and context in which the learning took place
- motivations to undertake the programme of study
- needs and expectations
- programme of study selected and why.

Where appropriate we have split the findings from an employee and employer perspective. Supporting evidence in the form of direct anonymised quotes from the interviews is provided to 'bring to life' some of the points being made.

2.1 Background and context

As highlighted above, the study focused on employees (the 'students') and their employers operating in a wide range of sectors who had previously engaged in a variety of programmes of study – undergraduate and postgraduate, full programme and 'bite size' courses, accredited and non-accredited, individually and cohort-negotiated, open and closed.

The majority of employees who had undertaken the programmes of study held key roles within their employing organisations, although they did have varying degrees of responsibility. Some of the employees had been in post for a while and others were very new to their role before commencing the particular programme of study. The range extended from a couple of months in some cases to over 20 years in others.

There was a mix of previous educational experience amongst the employees with some holding degree level qualifications and most having GCSE level experience or an NVQ equivalent. And, as such the work-based learning programmes do seem to attract employees who otherwise might not have participated in higher education. Most of the employees had completed some type of professional development, supported by their employer, since gaining these earlier qualifications.

Some of the employees had completed their programme of study relatively recently and others had completed some time ago.

The employing organisations also varied considerably – both in size and in that they were spread across the public, private and voluntary sectors (see section 1.1 above).

2.2 Motivation

2.2.1 For employees

When asked what motivated the employee to undertake the programme of study, a number of reasons were commonly repeated across all of the institutional reports. The main reasons are described below.

One of these reasons was to **validate and formalise their experience.** Many employees felt that they had the relevant experience and knowledge but did not have a qualification to provide evidence of these. This point is demonstrated in a quote from one employee who studied a programme provided by University of Westminster:

> *"Well, only to the extent that I've always tried to […] match up […] what I'm achieving in my experience with what I achieve academically, so as I've […] got […] higher up the ladder, I've tried to match that with some sort of academic achievement […]"*
> — Interview 5, Westminster

Similarly, employees studying at Derby and Middlesex stated:

> *"I wanted to contribute to the sector and I needed to have qualifications to show that I was capable."*
> — Learner DL9, Derby

> *"I was capable, and was told I was capable of doing the consultancy work. But the fact that I did not have an academic qualification would have made others who didn't know me perhaps undervalue what I was able to offer."*
> — Case Study N, Middlesex

Another motivation was the chance to gain more responsibility and **open up new opportunities for career progression.** This is supported by a quote explaining one learner's reasons for taking the course:

> *"Gaining a skill-base and expanding on my knowledge… to enable me to move up to the next level."*
> — Participant 10, Northumbria

A cohort learner from the University of Chester also explains how she:

> "…knew that for career purposes it would be good to not only undertake but to complete the programme and put it on my CV."
> — Interview F, Chester

To develop a greater understanding, knowledge and expertise in a particular (and possibly more specialist) area was another motivational reason mentioned by many of the employees interviewed. This is demonstrated in a quote from an employee who studied at University of Westminster:

> "When the programme started with [employer] J and the University it was an opportunity for me again to become an expert in my field in terms of the role I had done in J, it gave me an ideal opportunity to learn the business in detail and become an expert in my field. And that really was what motivated me because I wanted to know everything there was to know about the business."
> — Case Study U, Middlesex

> "I kept coming across things at work and thinking, "Oh, I'd really like to have the time to look at this a bit more" and "I wish I had the time to find out this", and so from that…in terms of developing the work, rather than developing the career, because I knew I didn't have time to do those things at work, so that was another motivation for doing it, rather than…"
> — Interview 4, Westminster

One learner at the University of Teesside suggested that his motivation was to develop himself as well as to fulfil his aspiration to achieve more in his job role. Many other learners shared a similar motivation to **develop practical skills to enable them to do a current role better or develop in a new role.**

Other motivating factors expressed by employees included an interest in the subject matter, a desire to provide a better service to customers/service users and an opportunity to influence and improve organisational policy and practice in a way that supports colleagues and which can also support organisational objectives.

The employees that were interviewed were all highly self-motivated and seemed to exhibit strong personal enthusiasm for undertaking a university level programme of study. There did not tend to be one single motivating factor for starting the programme; rather there were often a number of interrelated intrinsic and extrinsic reasons which are demonstrated in the quotes above. That said, gaining a recognised qualification was identified time and time again as being of both personal and professional benefit.

Many employees had some sense of a career path when they began their study, which is supported in the motivational reasons for starting the programme. However, the strength and clarity of this varied. One employee stated that in her early fifties she was not looking for a massive change in career but mostly wanted to be better prepared for any challenges her current job role might bring (Teesside). Others had more specific ideas about how the programme could help them change their current employment or career path. One employee also reported that:

> *"My career aspirations are still much the same, but it has awakened a desire to study which I didn't realise I had, it must have been quite dormant and I found it fascinating and I've continued with it ever since."*
> — Employee C, Chester

2.2.2 For employers

The main reasons given by employers for supporting their employees in undertaking a programme of study at a higher education level were to:

- **develop the knowledge, skills and expertise of staff** to improve the quality of organisational management and maximise the benefit to the business
- **support staff retention strategies** by demonstrating a commitment to ongoing staff training and development
- supplement and **extend the nature of the in-house staff training** and development.

Continuous training and development, including the updating of relevant skills, were ranked highly by employers including those who admitted they did not have a strategic commitment to learning and development. As one employer stated:

> *"The staff are basically the biggest asset we've got and if we can develop them to make them better employees and give them personal development then it is going to motivate them [and] that's something I am absolutely committed to."*
> — Teesside

Other (larger) employers were recognised as having an infrastructure in place to support continued professional development.

> *"We do CPD all the time."*
> — Employer DE9, Derby

> *"If you offer development opportunities, which can be related to work… this will in turn encourage staff retention."*
> — Employer DE1, Derby

And, in some employing organisations the commitment to learning and development is clearly linked to organisational objectives, which in turn can be driven by national level-policy drivers, especially in the public sector.

> "We've actually supported the University… by ensuring the students develop library skills training actually in the Trust… they get to know our resources as well as the University ones… we've organised IT training for staff as well which fits in with our own objectives about trying to get staff IT literate… using Trust resources to give people the skills to be able to manage the whole programme."
> — Employer Participant 3, Northumbria

> "The projects themselves are actually geared towards making a change in the workplace."
> — Employer Participant 3, Northumbria

2.3 Needs

The employees tended to be the driving force behind the willingness of the employer to support them in engaging in a programme of study such as the ones described above. Even when the programme was part of an employer-university partnership, it was the willingness of the employee that influenced the uptake of the programme.

> "I was the driver for the course. I did the course with my line manager, but I drove the interest."
> — Employee DL8, Derby

Similarly, an employee who studied at Northumbria University stated:

> "When I started working with [organisation] I was aware that they provided funding for this qualification… so I started making noises that I wanted to do it."
> — Interview 12, Northumbria University

Most of the employees were clear – they knew exactly or had a good idea – about what they wanted to achieve from the programme of study. The needs identified by the employees were closely linked to the reasons given when they were asked about what motivated them to engage in the programme of the study. For example, some wanted to develop a greater understanding of the area they were working in whilst others identified gaining the qualification as the primary need.

> "Looking at… work-based issues that I could hopefully influence and make a difference about through project work… looking at what mattered more to ward-based nurses."
> — Employee Participant 2, Northumbria

Moreover, one respondent, who studied at Middlesex, undertook the programme that was directly related to dealing with a specific issue that was being confronted at the workplace.

In contrast some employees who were engaged in cohort programmes were less clear about what they hoped to get out of the programme of study: The suggestion being that where programmes were individually negotiated, the employees seem to be generally clearer about their needs compared to those employees who embark on cohort designed programmes.

> *"I'd heard others talking about (it) and they thought it was a good programme… (I thought) it might help me in my role as a leader or line manager and that it would help me improve as a manager of people."*
> — Employee G, Chester

The distinguishing feature here may be the extent to which the employee(s) played an instrumental role in instigating the programme of study.

Employees had a range of experiences regarding the way in which their employer helped them to identify what they hoped to gain from the programme. Very few of the interviews suggested that employers had adopted a formal approach to identifying needs, with the majority of employees engaging in informal discussions with their employers both before and during the programme. One employee explained:

> *"I did have several conversations with my boss about how it would align with what he wanted out of me in terms of an employee, both before and during the degree."*
> — Employee B, Chester

However, some (larger) public and private sector organisations had more structured approaches to identifying employees' needs and the training and development required for different job roles.

> *"We have a very open booking process, so everybody's provided with a training log which tells them what courses are required for their job role, what courses are advanced, so when they're ready to move onto the next level, and what courses are optional. For our assistant level, which is like the second level up, it's a required course, and for the trainees – the entry level – it's an advanced course."*
> — Employer Training Manager, Westminster

Most employers did, however, see the advantages of supporting their employees in engaging in university level study. One employer actively explored skill shortages with an employee commenting:

> *"We looked at her skills to find out what she wasn't quite reaching. We identified training needs together. She found managing staff challenging, but rewarding. She wanted to find out more".*
> — Employer DE2, Derby

For cohort designed programmes, responding employers noted that the organisation had generally identified the need then discussed these with the staff who were likely to be involved. For instance, one employer who had worked with the University of Teesside suggested that their strategy behind supporting their employees was very much to give people the right skills so that when they make that leap into management positions, they are ready for it.

On the whole employees and employers were extremely positive about the extent to which the programmes of study had met their needs and expectations. Specific reasons given included: the ability to choose and tailor modules; the support provided by the university; the focus and depth of the programme of study; and, the ability for employees to progress at their own pace. The nature of the programmes of study are discussed in more detail in section 2.4 below and the benefits gained from undertaking the study are summarised in chapter 3.

2.4 Programme of Study

2.4.1 Employee perspective

A number of primary reasons for choosing the particular programme of study were consistently identified by the employees. In particular, the **flexibility of the programme** was an important aspect for many employees both in terms of time and content.

> "WBL is practical for anybody in similar situation, it is adaptable and it caters for students' needs not for any college."
> — Case Study N, Middlesex

Some employees also explained how they were able to transfer credits from previous programmes they had taken and build on these to gain a qualification.

> "I could transfer in credits basically demonstrating that I could do work at Level 2 because I had done some Level 2 modules. So that for me was really useful because I didn't have to spend a year or two years proving that I could do the work."
> — Employee B, Chester

For other employees who had to balance family and work commitments, **the ability to study at their own pace** was the main factor for their choice.

> "It was the only way because I am a single parent, I had a son who had just begun University himself, and financially there was no way that I could give up my employment in order to study full time."
> — University of Teesside

Other key reasons included – **convenience of the programme's delivery in the workplace, meeting individual learning needs and styles and being more directly relevant to the employee's work** than other available programmes – as the following quotes demonstrate:

> *"Mainly because we didn't have to move off site. Top and bottom of it."*
> — Participant 8, Northumbria University

> *"… (work-based learning) appealed to my skills and the fact that it wasn't going to be purely academic studies for academic sake. It felt that it was going to give me a way of developing practice in the workplace and having the academic side to fall back on, to be able to explore how I could relate the two in my working life."*
> — Employee E, Chester

> *"Because it does fit well with heavy workload. It's not like saying I've got to spend one or two days a week or big block of time, certain times going away to study, it actually links in with work. It became all much distinguishable from real work; so it had this sort of element being genuinely work-based."*
> — Case Study Q, Middlesex

> *"It kind of suited my needs, you know working full-time, having a family… that it was work-based on site… certainly suited my learning style, my learning needs."*
> — Participant 1, Northumbria University

> *"…it was sort of very much linked to the work that I was doing…. it enabled me to cover elements of that field in some depth that I particularly wanted to."*
> — Interview 5, University of Westminster

The two main reasons for choosing the particular university to provide the programme of study were existing contacts between the employer or employee and the institution, and the monopoly that the university had over the programme at the time, i.e. the lack of alternative options.

> *"It was what was on offer… I actually find it very difficult… there's not many post-graduate courses that are directly linked to paediatrics… it was trying to find something that would link in with the job that I had."*
> — Employee Participant 1, Northumbria

Other reasons employees gave for choosing the institution were based around locality and convenience.

In some instances, employees did consider other providers and other levels and options of study. Other modes of study (e.g. day release, distance learning) were discounted because they would take too long, weren't flexible enough or were

considered to be too 'lonely'. One employee, who had considered an MBA, said that the short work-based course they had actually undertaken was more attractive because it was free, the credits could be put towards an MA at a later date and:

> "…with this option I was able to choose my own modules and that is a lot more flexible, even more so than the Open University".
> — Employee DL5, Derby

Colleges were also considered as alternative providers; however, these were rejected as the qualification offered was not at the required level.

Most of the employees, particularly those on cohort-designed programmes, heard about the programme from their line manager, through internal communications (e.g. company emails) or by word of mouth from other members of staff who had previously completed the programme.

2.4.2 Employer perspective

By contrast the reasons given by employers for why they chose a particular programme of study included:

- the programme fitted well into the work schedule
- the programme required employees to be away from their place of work for a minimal amount of time
- the programme provided an opportunity to influence change in the workplace
- the programme linked theory to practical day-to-day issues faced by the business.

The comments below provide evidence of the reasons why employers chose the specific programme of study.

> "The work-based learning programme is all about transferring what you've learned into practice and that's really important for us."
> — Employer Interview 3, Northumbria

> "It fitted in with this idea of the learning organisation and trying to develop self-directed learners, you know people who could really evaluate what was happening in the workplace, look at evidence, think about recommendations for change and how to go around negotiating change, and you know, implementing better practice."
> — Employer Participant 3, Northumbria

Most of the employers directly supported their employees in undertaking the programme of study; however, this support manifested itself in different forms and to varying degrees.

Types of support provided by employers included:

- time off to study
- use of resources (e.g. libraries) and access to expertise
- funding full or part of the programme cost
- providing designated mentors or advisers in the workplace
- allowing learners to undertake 'fieldwork' with their work colleagues and to informally discuss issues with them
- providing opportunities for employees to present their findings from work-based projects
- allocation of a designated staff post to recruit employees and act as a link between the employees and the university.

The following comments taken from various interviews typify how employees were supported through the programme of study by their employers.

> *"They actually paid for the course, and they gave me time off in blocks to study."*
> — Interview 3, Westminster

> *"I'm not the kind of person who can do an hour tonight, an hour tomorrow and an hour at the weekend, I need to just literally sit down from nine until five and just keep at it… if I hadn't had those days off I would've been eating into my holiday entitlement… so the days off for me were absolutely invaluable."*
> — Participant 12, Northumbria

One employee also commented that her employer's support completely suited her needs:

> *"My employer paid for the course, they gave me the resources I needed and they also gave me the expertise I needed to complete the course. This was far more important than being given the day off to complete the program… I think I got the best deal."*
> — Employee DL1, Derby

Over and above the support provided to employees, some employers were involved in all aspects of the design, delivery and assessment of the programme, working alongside the university's staff to develop their in-house support and training to a higher education standard. Others arranged for parts of the content to be tailored to their organisation's and/or employee's needs.

2.4.3 Meeting expectations

Most of the employees and employers indicated that the programmes of study had met or even exceeded their expectations. One employer stated that even though they knew what they wanted from the programme, they were surprised when they got things out which

they could not have predicted.

> *"Things that are intangible; and what I mean by that is watching the students actually growing in stature."*
> — Employer, Teesside

Similarly, one employee studying at the University of Teesside stated that the programme more than met their needs as it was:

> *"…based on your own personal and individual circumstances rather than just doing an academic module […] so you based it around your work, the projects that you would do would be work-based."*
> — Employee, Teesside

This finding was supported by other employees, many of whom highlighted the relevancy of work-based projects as a distinguishing factor.

> *"Part of the course was a number of work-based projects which could give me the exposure to other departments at work and then it snowballed from there."*
> — Employee, Teesside

> *"I learnt far more about what I was doing and why I was doing it, what the impact of what I was doing was having on the workplace and I became far more self aware."*
> — Employee A, Chester

> *"I think, yes it did. And I think the experience was very useful, the chance to reflect and to think why I was doing this, what I want to get out of it…"*
> — Case Study Q, Middlesex

Whilst many employees mentioned that the overall programme had met their expectations, a number did highlight certain elements that fell short of their expectations. The elements cited included:

- providing a clear picture of the precise scope and format of the programme of study
- accessing programme-related information, support and advice in a timely manner
- designing programme content in such a way as to make it relevant to a specific work situation or context.

For example, one student at the University of Teesside said that they did not get much out of modules which dealt more with general knowledge and learning theories, but they had enjoyed and benefited greatly from specific training parts of the programme.

A number of employees engaged in a range of programmes suggested that the self-managed aspect was difficult to get a handle on and at the outset this often made the programmes feel quite 'vague' in nature. As such some employees felt the programmes of study could have been more structured while others felt more support (particularly in the workplace) was required.

> "…at the end of the day, we were expected to learn how to manage our own learning, that was part of it, and that actually meant not being given too much structure, because if you're given too much structure, then you're being directed on how you're going to do your learning, so it's sort of… I understand why, you know. It was just a bit uncomfortable."
> — Interview 5, Westminster

> "At times you sort of felt well where do we go from here… and even my mentors, who have Masters Degrees were sat there blankly and saying 'not quite sure what they're after here.'"
> — Employee Interview 6, Northumbria

> "I often felt like there wasn't a plan. It was just sort of do what you want to do… there needed to be some – a little bit more framework around which we could be self directed… it all seemed a bit vague."
> — Interview 2, Westminster

The statements above clearly demonstrate that the high level of individual responsibility required of employees to undertake their programme of study and direct their own learning, as well as the work and effort that goes into the work-based elements, was the most challenging aspect of combining work and learning at a higher education level.

What do we know about the benefits and impacts?

3.1 Benefits and impacts

3.1.1 For the employees

A range of personal and professional benefits resulting from having completed the programme of study were identified by employees. The most commonly mentioned benefit was **increased confidence**, both inside and outside of work. One employee claimed that the benefits came not from the knowledge itself but from the confidence gained through that knowledge and added that they had, previously, never really thought they could have done a degree. Another employee revealed an increased confidence in out of work situations:

> *"I was best man a couple of years ago before I did the programme and I was really nervous but I know now that if I had to do that again this year, it would not bother me … it has given me that confidence … it's just techniques and [the programme] has taught me how to do that."*
> — Employee, Teesside

Many of the employers also commented on the noticeable increase of confidence in the employees.

> *"It gave her a degree of confidence and expertise that was unparalleled [in the training provider sector] at that time."*
> — Employer DEI, Derby

Other personal benefits included:

- higher aspirations and motivation
- raised personal status
- more self aware as an individual
- learning to think and challenge assumptions
- a greater awareness and understanding of particular issues
- developed new and enhanced existing skills (e.g. communication, organisation skills)
- more likely to take stock and reflect on their performance.

The following comments from various interviews highlight the personal benefits gained from participation in the programmes of study:

> *"Learning how to use PowerPoint… plus the latest things that have been written on those theoretical aspects as well, and some of the different view points which have come out over the years. It increased my knowledge base on the theoretical side."*
> — Employee Participant 8, Northumbria

> *"I am a lot more understanding of things… I look at things from different angles."*
> — Employee, Middlesex

> *"Personally it was intellectually rewarding to have the opportunity to deepen the research… I learnt some new things, particularly on the methodological side that I would not have learnt otherwise."*
> — Employee, Middlesex

Key professional benefits included:

- better performance at work
- taking on more responsibility
- changed jobs or secured promotion
- secured a salary increase
- better able to see other points of view
- positive change in ways of thinking at work
- relieved stress and increased contentment
- being able to coach others at work through change
- professional recognition and membership.

Employees discussed how they had gained a better understanding of issues from a wider organisational perspective and how individual roles contribute to an organisation's business objectives. Several employees also mentioned that completing the programme of study gave them an advantage when applying for senior posts as the accredited qualification resulted in them being considered more knowledgeable and committed to their career and the particular organisation. Other employees described how undertaking the programme had given them the confidence to make new suggestions and to try and influence others.

> *"Before it would be very much they'd tell me what they wanted and I'd get on with it. Now, when there are problems, I've got the confidence to say, 'Well, how about we approach it this way?'"*
> — Employee Interview 1, Westminster

The reflective based approaches to learning were often mentioned by employees as critically important elements of the programmes which realised significant benefits at work.

"The assignments… made you reflect… a majority of them focused on improvements in some sense and that makes me think the same way about the work we do now… how can we improve something for the benefit of the company."
— Employee Participant 10, Northumbria

"Having done the reflective reviews – which are something I have never really done before, I've never looked at my own performance, and I've always been quite negative about my own performance and it's only when I've explored it and put it down on paper and read it back myself that I've actually had the self belief – well actually that is me and I have done that."
— Employee F, Chester

"What I got was much more than I could have hoped for because it was reflection. It made me realise that there's more to learning than sitting in a classroom and reading what's on the board, or on a handout or in a handbook – it's more about reflection"
— Employee B, Chester

"It's definitely changed me personally and professionally for the better, and it's made me… I guess look at myself more, but not necessarily worry as much about whether I've done the right thing, said the right thing, and yeah, taking time to reflect! That is absolutely the biggest thing!"
— Interview 1, Westminster

3.1.2   For the employers

There was a strong belief amongst both the employees and the employers that the organisations involved had benefited from their employees participating in the programmes of study.

"[Programme] R really got home to me and the Chief Executive that we can't divorce the two, that for you to do something that is going to help the environment it also has to be part of the business plan and feed into what you want to do, otherwise you are not going to do anything. I think that really speaks in my memory as one of the points where R made a really big impact. I think since then we've taken that route a lot more and we've had people join since."
— Case Study R, Middlesex

These benefits included:

- established a clearer direction of travel for the organisation
- development of new or improved existing policies, standards and contracts
- improved service provision to the end users and improved quality of work
- increased levels of innovation

- improved performance of employees who are more self-sufficient and require less direct support
- secured a positive attitudinal and behavioural change in staff in line with the values of the organisation
- achieved external recognition and prestige.

The following is one example of how an organisation directly benefited from supporting their employees to undertake a higher education programme of study. An NHS Trust Director used the knowledge gained by a Laundry Manager, who had studied a work-based learning programme, when exploring the possibility of purchasing new soft furnishings for a hospital ward. The Laundry Manager had studied the use of different materials in reducing cross-infections on wards and this knowledge was used to inform future purchases.

Another employer explained how the benefit to the organisation came through the recognition and endorsement of its support for ongoing training and development. This helped to enhance its reputation in comparison to its competitor organisations. Some employees also thought that their employer had benefited in this way.

> *"I think my company benefited, I put the title on my business card because it impresses clients…"*
> — Employee, Middlesex

Some employers did note that establishing the benefits to the organisation were difficult to measure. They quite often found it difficult to identify the precise contribution that the programme had made, because of a range of additional interrelated factors that impact on an organisation's business strategy and ways of working. In many instances employers did not systematically evaluate the benefit and impact of programmes of study in respect to supporting employee development and improving productivity.

> *"The holy grail of training is to be able to quantify its impact on the bottom line which we never achieved [because of the change in circumstances]."*
> — Employer, Teesside

Notwithstanding, evidence from employers who supported their employees in engaging in work-based learning programmes does suggest that such programmes can provide important benefits for organisations by informing practice and contributing to the strategic aims. One employer engaged in a programme of study at the University of Teesside referred to the programme's impact as being 'a bit of a step change'.

Most employees considered the programme of study had been value for money and a good use of their time because of the range of personal and professional benefits it provided. In some cases the programme had resulted in financial gains for employees through job or role changes. Employees also thought that their studies had been value for money for their employer. One employee stated that it was obvious that his employer saw the benefits as they had supported another employee on the same programme.

Employers also generally agreed that the programmes of study had been value for money and had met with their expectations. One employer stated:

> *"It would have provided value for money if we would have paid double that."*
> — Employer, Teesside

> *"We have been very pleased. We feel we have direct and real benefits… (and Learner)… found her support to be excellent… very complimentary about the programme."*
> — Employer DEI, Derby

The employer went on to explain that the programme had helped to create a group of employees who acted as role models and that the majority of these individuals were still with the organisation.

Many employees would or have considered further study and in some instances they have already started other programmes. Several employees stated that if they were to undertake further study it would have to be similar in flexibility to the work-based programme and as relevant to their job role. One learner already undertaking study at a Masters level explained how they were regretting starting a conventional rather than work-based programme:

> *"I have ended up doing things that have no relevance whatsoever to my job. Doing what I do all day you don't want to go home and do something that is completely different and that you often don't see the point in."*
> — Employee B, University of Chester

The majority of employers also said that they would consider work-based learning programmes for employees in the future.

Conclusions

In the final chapter we draw on what we now know about the employee and employer experience, and the benefits and impact that can be accrued from engaging in higher education study.

The evidence presented in chapters 2 and 3 indicates that higher education programmes of study have had a positive impact on employers and their employees. The benefits of this form of workforce development extend well beyond enhancing an individual's skills to the exchange or generation of new knowledge (in the workplace). That said the skills that are developed can be both technically specific for a job role, function or sector of work, as well as generic in nature. Moreover, the individual employees have benefited in a way that has been described as 'capability extending' in terms of attitudes and approaches to work. They have also gained a wider appreciation of how what they do fits into the 'bigger picture' and this has led to increased confidence in their performance at work.

The nature and pace of change in today's employing organisations offers only infrequent opportunities to take stock. The programmes of study – full programmes and short courses – investigated in this study have by all accounts created the space for the individual employees to engage in reflective practice. Supporting the development of employees in this way has enabled employers to strengthen the human capital of their organisations irrespective of whether the intervention was a short, business-focused programme of higher education or a full programme leading to an HE award.

The shorter 'bite size' programmes of study have also been acknowledged as being catalysts for individual employees to progress to further study. So whilst these shorter interventions have value in their own right, they are potentially one means through which to widen and increase participation into and through higher education. This further emphasises that the voice of the employee in showing willingness and enthusiasm to undertake a higher education programme can be instrumental in securing an employer's support.

Notwithstanding the findings of this study, there is still a need to further explore the legitimisation of shorter, non-linear higher education study as a means to better meet

employer and employee needs. This will help to ascertain the extent to which such interventions are more appropriate than full programmes in growing the market for flexible, negotiated and responsive HE provision. Exploration of what constitutes a meaningful quantity of 'bite-sized' learning at higher education levels will be required. Arguably some of the short courses explored in this study – the equivalent to 30 to 60 credits – are quite large 'bites' given the notional learning effort of 10 hours per credit.

There is also a need to investigate in more detail some of the challenges involved in engaging individual and cohorts of employees in higher education programmes of study. That said, these challenges should not detract from the overall success of such provision, as indicated by the findings of this study, in meeting and exceeding employers' and employees' needs and expectations.

In summary, the indicative findings of this study do appear to offer a very good foundation on which to build. So in conducting any further studies in this area it will be important to extend the scope and probe deeper in respect to the impact that studying at an HE level has had on the employee and their employers. Consideration should also be given as to how further studies could generate statistically representative data which could enable comparisons to be drawn across different types of programmes, etc.

Discussion guides

Employee interview discussion guide

Introduction

The Higher Education Academy is funding a number of higher education institutions to conduct a study focused on the experience of employees and their employers engaged in work-based learning. The study will also consider the impact that this learning has for them. This discussion guide has been designed to capture employee (learner) and employer perspectives.

Employee interview questions

The sections to spend most time on, and to collate most evidence on, are shaded in purple.

Section A: Context [Refer to CV or information sheet]	

1. What is your current role?
   Is this the same role you had when you began the programme of study?
   If no, what was your role at the time?	

2. How long have/had you been in your role when you began the programme of study?	
3. How long have you worked for your current organisation? [Please clarify whether it is the same organisation as when they began their programme of study]	
4. What previous roles/jobs have you had prior to the one when you began the programme of study?	

Section A: Context [Refer to CV or information sheet]	
5. What qualifications do you have (e.g. undergraduate degree)? And, what was the highest level of qualification you had when you began the programme of study?	
6. Have you undertaken any other professional development? If yes, what specifically? If no, why not?	

Section B: Motivation	
7. What motivated you to undertake the programme of study? [Please explore the extent to which their motivation was self-generated or was more to do with their employer]	
8. Did you have a sense of a career and career path when you began the programme of study? If yes, what were your career aspirations? And, have these changed since?	

Section C: Needs	
9. Prior to beginning the programme of study were you clear about what you hoped to get out of the learning and development? If yes, what were your expectations?	
10. Was there any formal/informal process (supported by your employer) to help you to identify what you hoped to get out of the programme of study?	

Section D: Programme of study	
11. Why did you choose this particular programme of study?	
12. How did you hear about this particular programme of study?	
13. Why did you choose the particular HE provider?	
14. Did you consider other options? If so, what other options were considered? So why was this option selected?	

Section D: Programme of study

15. Did your employer support you in undertaking the programme of study? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think this was the case? And, what support would you have benefited from?	

Section E: Benefits and impact

16. To what extent did the programme of study meet your expectations and needs? And, in what ways?	
17. Did you benefit personally from the learning and development? If so, in what ways? If not, had you expected to benefit? And, why do you think this was the case? [Please provide evidence to support your answers]	
18. Did you benefit professionally from the learning and development? If so, in what ways? If not, had you expected to benefit? And, why do you think this was the case? [Please provide evidence to support your answers]	
19. Has your organisation benefited from you undertaking study at a higher level? If so, in what ways? How do you think? If not, why do you think this has been the case? [Please provide evidence to support your answers]	
20. Has anything changed as a result? If so, what has changed as a result and what has been the impact? [Please provide evidence to support your answer]	
21. Is there anything else that had a significant impact on your performance at work?	

Section F: Value for money

22. What was the financial cost of the programme of study? And, who paid and in what proportions?	

Section F: Value for money	

23. Was it good use of your time?
  If so, why?
  If not, why do you think this was the case?	

24. Do you think your employer thought it was good use of your time/value for money?	
25. Are you considering further study at any level in the future? If so, what are you considering?	
26. Would you consider or are you currently undertaking further higher level study? If so, what?	

Section G: Other	
27. Is there anything else you would like to add?	

Employer interview discussion guide

Introduction

The Higher Education Academy is funding a number of higher education institutions to conduct a study focused on the experience of employees and their employers engaged in work-based learning. The study will also consider the impact that this learning has for them. This discussion guide has been designed to capture employee (learner) and employer perspectives.

Employer interview questions

The sections to spend most time on, and to collate most evidence on, are shaded in purple.

Section A: Context	
1. What is the nature of your organisation's business?	
2. What industrial sector does your organisation operate in?	
3. How long has your organisation been established?	
4. How many members of staff does your organisation employ?	

Section A: Context

5. How is your organisation structured?	

Section B: Motivation

6. What is your organisation's motivation for supporting its employees' ongoing learning and development?	
7. How does your organisation demonstrate its strategic commitment to learning and development?	

Section C: Needs

8. Was your organisation clear about the needs it was trying to fulfil in supporting its employee(s) in undertaking the programme of study? If so, what needs was your organisation trying to fulfil in supporting its employee(s) in undertaking study at a higher level? If not, why do you think this was the case?	

Section D: Programme of study

9. Why did you choose this particular programme of study?	
10. Why did you choose the particular HE provider?	
11. Did you consider other options? If so, what other options were considered?	
12. Was your organisation involved in the design, delivery and/or assessment of the programme of study? If so, in what ways?	
13. Did your organisation support its employee(s) in undertaking the programme of study? If so, in what ways?	

Section E: Benefits and impact

14. To what extent did the programme of study meet your expectations and needs? And, in what ways?	

Section E: Benefits and impact	
15. Did your employee(s) benefit from the learning and development? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think this was the case? [Please provide evidence to support your answer]	
16. Did your organisation benefit from its employee(s) undertaking study at a higher level? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think this was the case? [Please provide evidence to support your answer]	
17. Has anything changed as a result for (a) your organisation and (b) your employee(s)? If so, what has changed as a result and what has been the impact? [Please provide evidence to support your answer]	

Section F: Value for money	
18. What was the financial cost of the programme of study? And, who paid and in what proportions?	
19. To what extent did the programme of study provide value for money? And, on what basis are you making this assessment?	
20. Are you considering supporting further study at any level for your employees in the future? If so, what are you considering?	
21. Would you consider further higher level study for your employees in the future? If so what?	

Section G: Other	
22. Does your organisation have any other links with higher education? If so, what?	
23. Is there anything else you would like to add?	

Biographies

Chester

Karen Willis is Director of Widening Access at the University of Chester and also involved in the management of a Lifelong Learning Network. She has experience of teaching, curriculum development and management in adult, further and higher education, including flexible learning, post-compulsory teacher education, professional programmes and undergraduate modular schemes.

David Major is Dean of the Faculty of Lifelong Learning at the University of Chester. He has been involved in Work Based Learning since the early 90's and, in 2000, set up the Centre for Work Related Studies which, in 2006, became the School of Lifelong Learning. His research interests include the philosophical argument for Work Based Learning in the Higher Education curriculum.

Derby

David Young is Professor of Work-based Learning and Head of Flexible Learning within the School of Flexible and Partnership Learning at the University of Derby. He has been engaged in the development of award-bearing work-based learning since the mid-1990s and has had significant experience in external examination, staff development and consultancy in the field in the UK and internationally. He has also presented extensively at local, regional and national conferences. He led the University of Derby team which won the Times Higher Education Award in 2006 for Most Imaginative Use of Distance Learning. He was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship in 2007.

Anna Tongue is a freelance researcher and electronic note-taker for the deaf and hard of hearing. She has taught analytical research methods to Tourism, Sports and Hospitality students at the University of Derby and at their partner school in Switzerland, the Swiss Hospitality Management School. In recent years Anna has undertaken a number of research projects for the School of Flexible and Partnership Learning at the University of Derby to investigate the benefits and impacts of work based learning programmes in a range of industrial sectors including Construction, Care, Tourism and Mining.

Middlessex

Dr Carol Costley is Head of Work Based Learning Research Centre (Reader in Work Based Learning) at Middlesex University. She works with individuals and organisations in the private, public, community and voluntary sectors internationally in the teaching and learning of work based programmes, particularly in Cyprus where she has developed the Work Based Learning and Doctorate in Professional Studies programmes since 1996. Research interests are in examining methodologies and epistemologies in work based learning, looking particularly at work based learning as a field of study, especially issues relating to trans- disciplinarily, equity, ethics and practitioner as researcher. Carol is the convenor of the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning, Work Based Learning network,1998-present, and executive member of UALL.

Dr Abdulai Abukari presently works as a Research Assistant at the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University, he also teaches Research Methods in Education and Education and Equality at the School of Arts and Education. His research interests cover a wide range of areas in education particularly comparative and international education in developed and developing contexts, teacher training and development, service roles of contemporary higher education institutions and how institutions respond to the emerging knowledge society and knowledge economy especially through work based learning and distance education. His recent completed research projects include Service Engagement of the Contemporary University: Towards a New Understanding through a Comparative Study of Middlesex University (UK) and the University for Development Studies (2007) and Conceptualising Lifelong Learning: A Reflection of Lifelong Learning at Lund University (Sweden) and Middlesex University (UK) (2005)

Northumbria

Paul Biddle (MA, BA Hons) is a Research Associate at the Centre for Public Policy at Northumbria University. Paul has widespread experience of undertaking applied public policy research and research project management across a wide range of policy areas including; housing, learning, employment, transport, culture, heritage and equality & diversity. Paul has experience of both quantitative and qualitative data collection analysis, comparative cost-effectiveness analysis and working with policy makers and practitioners in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Particular areas of interest include services for families and children and policy to address worklessness.

Sue Graham's professional background is in teaching / teacher-training (English as a Foreign Language). She has taught in Spain, France and UK in companies and in Higher Education. She became directly involved in Work-based learning at Northumbria in 2001, becoming the University's Work-related Learning Manager in 2004. She is

responsible for a small central team coordinating and developing Northumbria's flexible work-based learning activity in response to employer demand across the university and in partnership with key stakeholders. Her interests lie in the pedagogy of lifelong/work-based learning and the surrounding policy context.

Teesside

Kerstin McClenaghan studied English, Music and German in Germany where she completed her Erstes and Zweites Staatsexamen (Bachelor Hons & Master Level Degree for teaching). She has been teaching in Germany, Canada and England. A career change took her into HE lecturing at the University of Teesside (UoT) where she started her PhD research into the wider area of e-learning and became interested in work-based learning. Her specific interests are in the pedagogy of e-learning and using Virtual Learning Environments for work-based studies. Kerstin is currently involved in a number of work-based study programmes, both as a lecturer and a VLE developer, and has presented at numerous conferences in and outside the UK.

Dr Ruth Helyer is Head of Workforce Development at the University of Teesside with experience which includes being Programme Leader for the Work-based Studies degree and managing large employer engagement projects. Recent publications include: 'What is Employability?: reflecting on the postmodern challenges of work-based learning' in the Journal of Employability in the Humanities (August 2007).

Westminster

Alan Beadsmoore is Principal Lecturer in the Centre for Excellence in Professional Learning from the Workplace at the University of Westminster. He has a background in nursing and healthcare management and research. He worked previously as a senior lecturer in the National Centre for Work Based Partnerships at Middlesex University before joining the University of Westminster in 2007. His current interests include further education and higher education partnerships, employer engagement, and the evaluation of work based learning pedagogies.

Valeriya Karuk completed her MBA at the University of Westminster in October 2006. Her first degree was received from the Moscow State University. She has an extensive (over 7 years) experience as a project manager and a track of successfully completed projects for a variety of clients: political parties; international organisations (e.g. World Bank); multinational corporations (Philip Morris, Coca Cola). Prior to joining the Centre for Employment Research, Valeriya has been involved in Westminster Business Consultants, a Junior Enterprise at the University of Westminster, first, since October 2004, as a project manager and strategy consultant and since January 2006, as a Managing Director.

Bernadetta Siara is a Researcher in the Centre for Employment Research, Westminster Business School, University of Westminster. She has participated in a variety of research projects related to issues of diversity and equality, but also work-based learning. Her research interests include diversity issues (including gender and ethnicity), employment, identity and migration. Currently, Bernadetta is studying for a PhD in Sociology at City University, London. Her PhD research focuses on gender and migration issues.

Peter Urwin is Director of the Centre for Employment Research and School Director of Research at the Westminster Business School. He has focused on the application of approaches used primarily in the field of economics, across a wide variety of subject areas; publishing in journals ranging from Applied Economics to Higher Education Quarterly and the Human Resource Management Journal. Peter has just finished a DIUS commissioned project on Lifelong Learning with colleagues from the Centre for Economic Performance and Surrey University; he has ongoing projects for the Federation of Small Businesses and the Ministry of Justice, as well as a range of other collaborative work with the Institute of Economic Affairs, HMRC and the Government Economic Service.

**To request copies of this report in
large print or in a different format,
please contact the Academy.**