



**TRACKING THE PROGRESSION OF  
LEVEL 3 VOCATIONAL LEARNERS  
INTO HIGHER EDUCATION WITHIN  
HEREFORDSHIRE & WORCESTERSHIRE**

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF  
2005/6, 2006/7 & 2007/8  
REGISTRATIONS**

**June 2009**

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# **Tracking the Progression of Level 3 Vocational Learners into Higher Education within Herefordshire & Worcestershire : A Comparative Study of 2005/6, 2006/7 & 2007/8 Registrations**

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## **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research is to establish some baseline data from which to measure the impact of the Lifelong Learning Network (LLN) for Herefordshire & Worcestershire. The research primarily looks at the number of vocational learners that are progressing on to HE courses within the two counties.

The research does not incorporate registrations on to all HE courses in Herefordshire & Worcestershire, it is focussed more specifically on Undergraduate (UG) courses that fall within one of the subject areas of this LLN's curriculum themes which are:

- Health & Social Care (H&SC)
- Leadership & Management (L&M)
- Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture & Media (STHC&M)

## **Overview of the Research Report**

The research is based on data collected from 5 Higher Education (HE) providers in Herefordshire & Worcestershire. Although data has been collected from 5 institutions, one institution was unable to provide all of the data required, therefore only Table 1 and Chart 1 contains data on all 5 institutions to give an overview of the total number of students registering on to Undergraduate courses in the two counties.

## **Data Collection**

Data sets were obtained from each of the following institutions in Herefordshire & Worcestershire:

- Hereford College of Arts (HCA)
- Herefordshire College of Technology (HCT)
- North East Worcestershire College (NEWC)
- University of Worcester (UW)
- Worcester College of Technology (WCT)

## **Constraints & Limitations**

A number of difficulties were encountered in the collation of data for this research:

- We were advised not to use HESA data as it had been purchased previously by another organisation who reported that it was inappropriate for this purpose.
- UCAS data did not include vital information such as highest entry qualification and mode of study, plus data was only available for full-time students and not part-time.
- HE and FE providers do not collect the same data from their HE students.

- The original plan was to look at all HE courses however, the sample size was too large for University of Worcester making it unmanageable to manually check the number of student files required. The sample size was therefore scaled down to focus on just those students who were 1) registering for an Undergraduate course and 2) registering on a HE course within the subject area of one of the LLN's curriculum themes.
- A number of the FE colleges were unable to provide data at student level which showed each individual's highest entry qualification. A summary was therefore provided by 3 of the FE colleges to show the number of students registered on each HE course with each type of entry qualification which limited the amount of analysis that could be undertaken. One FE college was unable to provide any information regarding highest entry qualifications as they did not have access to this information and therefore provided information on the total number of students registered on each HE course.
- Data has been requested from the LSC to establish how many Level 3 learners qualified in 2005/6 and 2006/7. We are currently awaiting this data.
- It was not possible to obtain information regarding Highest Entry Qualification for the majority of the non-prescribed HE courses.

## Main Findings

The main findings of the research were that:

- The total number of students registering on HE courses at the 5 sampled institutions in H&W and within one of the LLN's curriculum themes was:
  - 2,061 students in 2005/6
  - 2,045 students in 2006/7
  - 2,369 students in 2007/8
- The proportion of students that registered on HE courses at HCA, HCT, UW & WCT (within one of the LLN's curriculum themes) with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification as their highest entry qualification was:
  - 30% in 2005/6 (compared with 18% that entered with A/AS Levels)
  - 32% in 2006/7 (compared with 16% that entered with A/AS Levels)
  - 29% in 2007/8 (compared with 26% that entered with A/AS Levels)
- The institution that recruited the highest proportion of Level 3 Vocational students was Hereford Colleges of Arts with:
  - 37% in 2005/6 (105 students)
  - 59% in 2006/7 (184 students)
  - 60% in 2007/8 (201 students)
- The institution that recruited the highest number of Level 3 Vocational students was the University of Worcester with:
  - 384 students in 2005/6
  - 359 students in 2006/7
  - 313 students in 2007/8
- The Curriculum Theme with the highest increase in the number of students entering with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification as their highest entry qualification was Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture & Media with:
  - 281 students in 2005/6
  - 376 students in 2006/7
  - 427 students in 2007/8

## Section 1\* - Overview of the Number of Students Registering on to an Undergraduate HE Course in Herefordshire & Worcestershire in 2005/6, 2006/7 & 2007/8?

Table 1 shows that there has been a 15% increase, from 2005/6 to 2007/8, in the number of student registrations on to an Undergraduate course that falls within one of the LLN's curriculum themes. Overall the student registrations increased from 2,061 to 2,369 from 2005/6 to 2007/8.

The most significant percentage increases have been in students entering with with Level 2 Qualifications (132% increase) and Level 3 A/AS Level Qualifications (62% increase). In contrast to this there have been decreases in the number of students entering with APL/APEL/No Formal Qualifications (38% **decrease**) and Level 4 or above qualifications (14% **decrease**).

The 13% increase in students entering with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification is in line with the overall increase in registrations (15%).

Chart 1 shows that the institution with the highest increase in the number of registrations is the University of Worcester with an additional 184 students being recruited within the areas of H&SC, L&M and STHC&M. However, the institution with the highest percentage increase in registrations in these curriculum themes is Herefordshire College of Technology with a 224% increase.

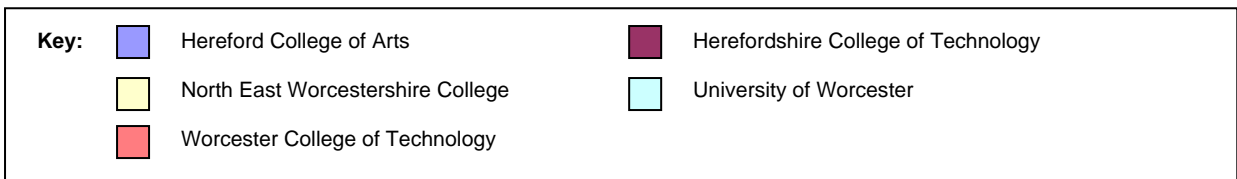
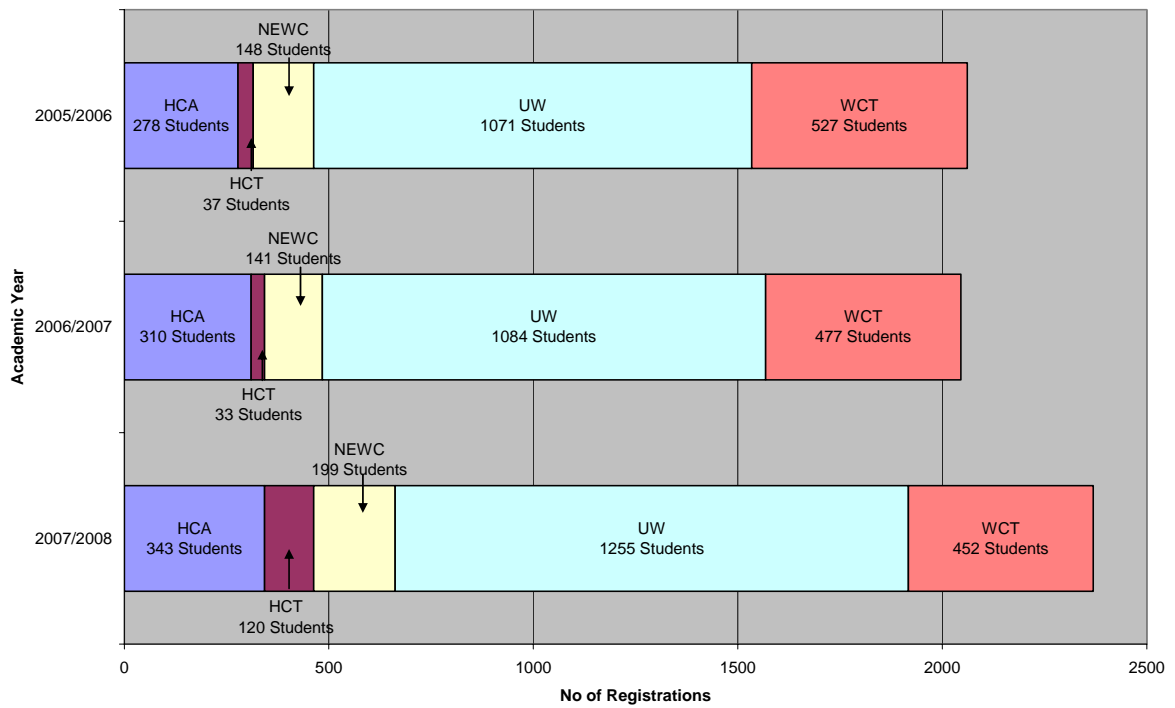
The only institution to have experienced a decrease in the number and percentage of students registrations in these curriculum areas is Worcester College of Technology with a 14% **decrease** (75 students).

Table 1 – Number of Registrations at Each Institution, shown by Highest Entry Qualification, in Academic Years 2005/6, 2006/7 & 2007/8

Academic Year	Name of Institution	APL/APEL/No Formal Qual	Level 2 Qualification	Level 3 Vocational Qual	Level 3 A/AS Level	Level 4 or Above Qualification	Not Known	Total
2005/2006	Hereford College of Arts	28	7	105	0	100	38	278
	Herefordshire College of Technology	1	1	5	0	16	14	37
	North East Worcestershire College	0	0	0	0	0	148	148
	University of Worcester	80	6	384	297	246	58	1071
	Worcester College of Technology	21	5	73	47	6	375	527
	<b>Total Registrations for 2005/06</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>567</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>2061</b>
2006/2007	Hereford College of Arts	35	6	184	2	73	10	310
	Herefordshire College of Technology	1	2	0	0	17	13	33
	North East Worcestershire College	0	0	0	0	0	141	141
	University of Worcester	77	9	359	245	271	123	1084
	Worcester College of Technology	5	7	63	52	21	329	477
	<b>Total Registrations for 2006/07</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>2045</b>
2007/2008	Hereford College of Arts	17	8	201	1	94	22	343
	Herefordshire College of Technology	0	2	0	0	11	107	120
	North East Worcestershire College	0	0	0	0	0	199	199
	University of Worcester	57	20	313	518	188	159	1255
	Worcester College of Technology	6	14	127	38	24	243	452
	<b>Total Registrations for 2007/08</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>730</b>	<b>2369</b>
	<b>% Increase/Decrease in Registrations from 2005/6 to 2007/8</b>	<b>-38%</b>	<b>132%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>-14%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>15%</b>

\* Includes data collected from HCA, HCT, NEWC, UW & WCT on students registered on those courses that fall within one of the LLN's curriculum themes of Health & Social Care, Leadership & Management and Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture & Media

Chart 1 – Total Number of Registrations on to Undergraduate Courses in Herefordshire & Worcestershire within the H&W LLN's Curriculum Themes

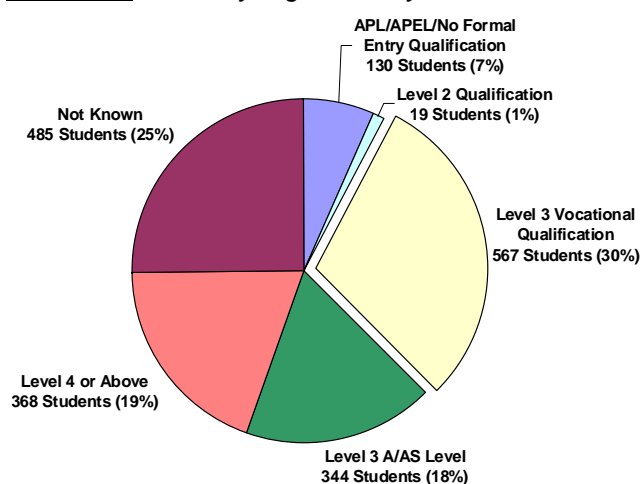


## Section 2<sup>†</sup> - Overall what Proportion of Students Registering for Undergraduate HE Courses in H&W were Entering with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification?

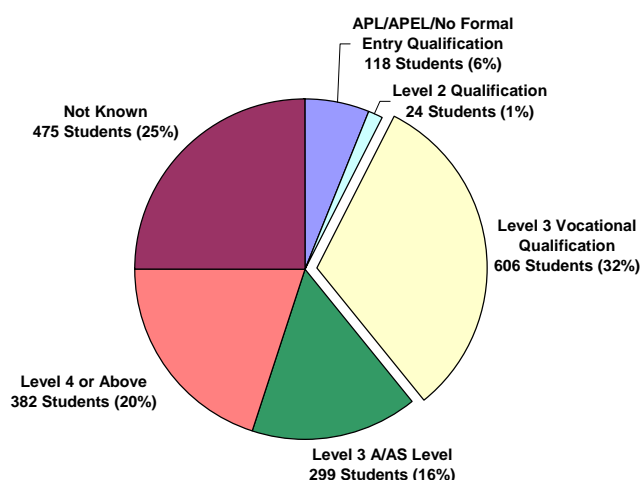
Charts 2a & 2b show that the proportion of students registering on HE courses with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification or A/AS Level remained consistent from 2005/6 to 2006/7, with the higher proportion being Level 3 Vocational students. However, Chart 2c shows that although the proportion of Level 3 Vocational students remained consistent from 2006/7 to 2007/8, this was not the case with A Level students who increased by 10%. Although the proportion of Level 3 Vocational students has slightly decreased, the number of students entering with these qualifications has continued to increase.

Overall the proportion of Level 3 Vocational students has remained higher than the proportion of students entering with Level 3 A/AS Levels. On average, 30% of students entered with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification as their highest level qualification compared with 20% that entered with A/AS Levels.

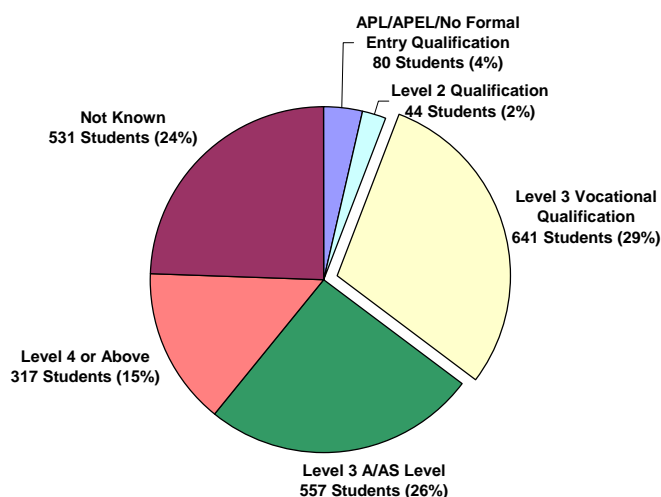
*Chart 2a – Overall Number of Registrations in 2005/2006 shown by Highest Entry Qualification*



*Chart 2b – Overall Number of Registrations in 2006/2007 shown by Highest Entry Qualification*



*Chart 2c – Overall Number of Registrations in 2007/2008 shown by Highest Entry Qualification*



<sup>†</sup> Includes data collected from HCA, HCT, UW & WCT on students registered on those courses that fall within one of the LLN's curriculum themes of Health & Social Care, Leadership & Management and Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture & Media

## Section 3<sup>‡</sup> - What Proportion of Students Registering for Undergraduate HE Courses at Each Institution were Entering with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification?

### Hereford College of Arts

Charts 3a, 3b & 3c illustrate that a significant amount of HCA's students entered with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification as their highest entry qualification (37% in 2005/6, 59% in 2006/7 & 60% in 2007/8). There were no students entering with A/AS Levels in 2005/6, only 1% (2 students) in 2006/7 and 0% (1 student) in 2007/8.

Chart 3a – Number of Registrations at Hereford College of Arts in 2005/2006 shown by Highest Entry Qualification

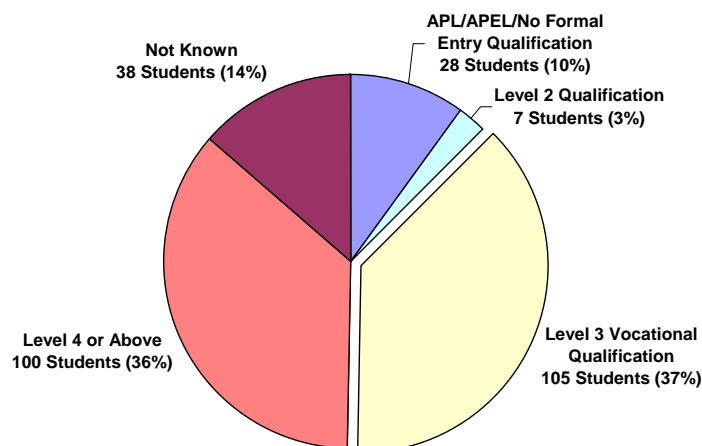


Chart 3b – Number of Registrations at Hereford College of Arts in 2006/2007 shown by Highest Entry Qualification

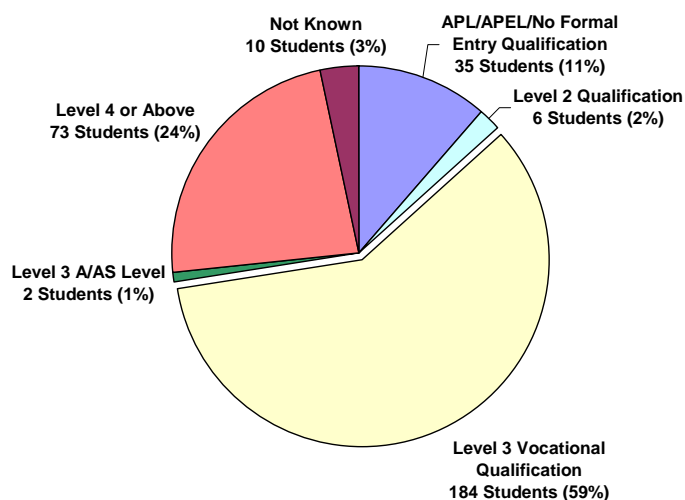
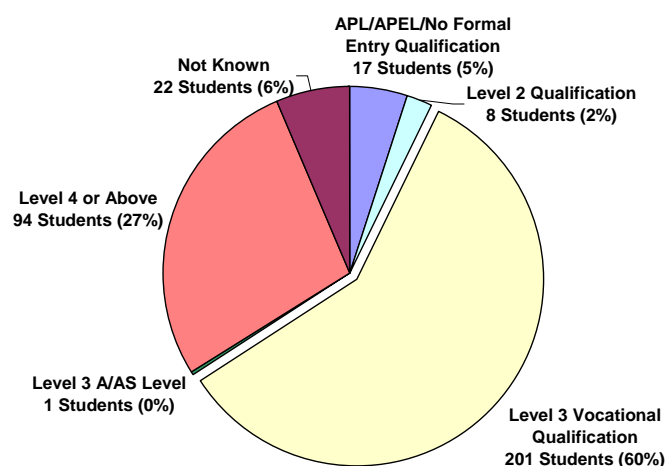


Chart 3c – Number of Registrations at Hereford College of Arts in 2007/2008 shown by Highest Entry Qualification



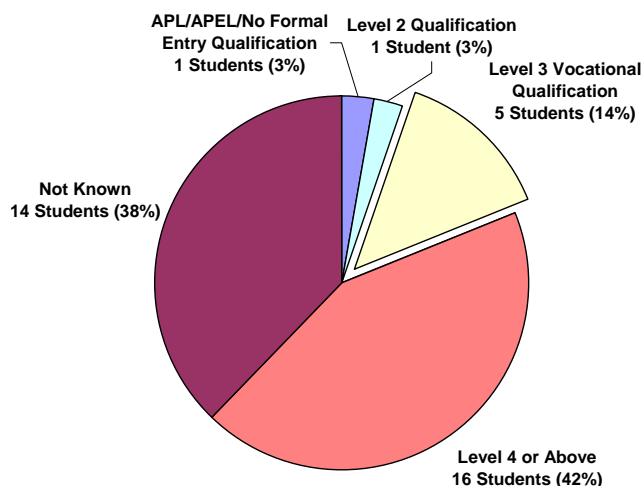
<sup>‡</sup> Includes data collected from HCA, HCT, UW & WCT on students registered on those courses that fall within one of the LLN's curriculum themes of Health & Social Care, Leadership & Management and Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture & Media

## Herefordshire College of Technology

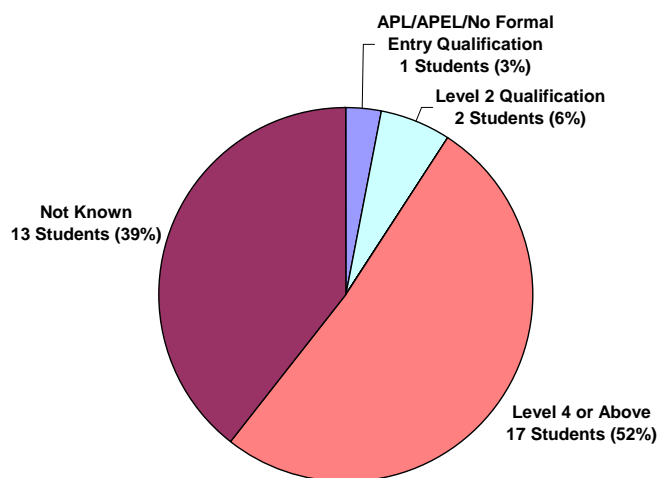
Due to the nature of the HE courses offered by HCT, a number of the entry qualifications were unknown as the majority of courses are non-prescribed HE.

However, Chart 3d demonstrates that of those entry qualifications that are known there were 14% (5 students) entering with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification in 2005/6. In contrast, Chart 3e shows that in 2006/7 there were no students entering with a Level 3 qualification as their highest entry qualification. As Chart 3f illustrates, in 2007/8 the percentage of known qualifications was not significant, it is therefore not possible to assess the entry qualifications for the 2007/8 students.

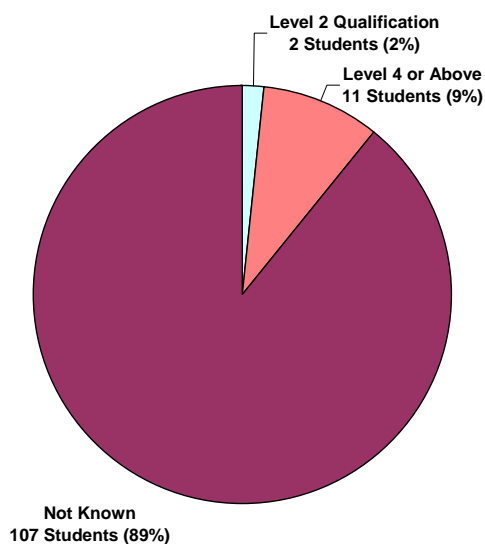
*Chart 3d – Number of Registrations at Herefordshire College of Technology in 2005/2006 shown by Highest Entry Qualification*



*Chart 3e – Number of Registrations at Herefordshire College of Technology in 2006/2007 shown by Highest Entry Qualification*



*Chart 3f – Number of Registrations at Herefordshire College of Technology in 2007/2008 shown by Highest Entry Qualification*

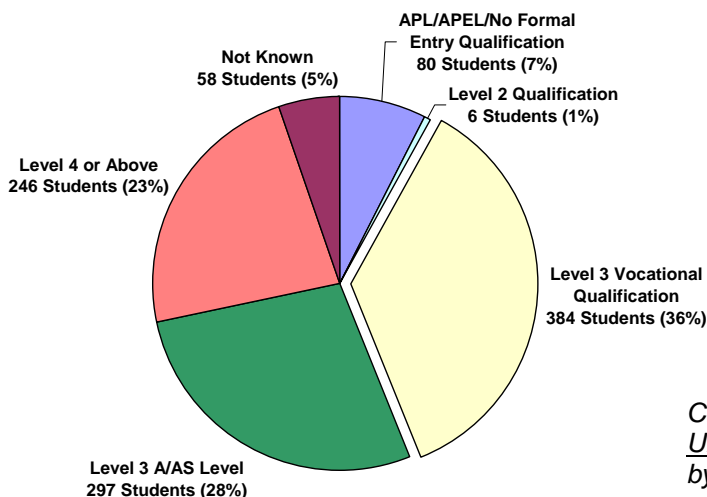


## University of Worcester

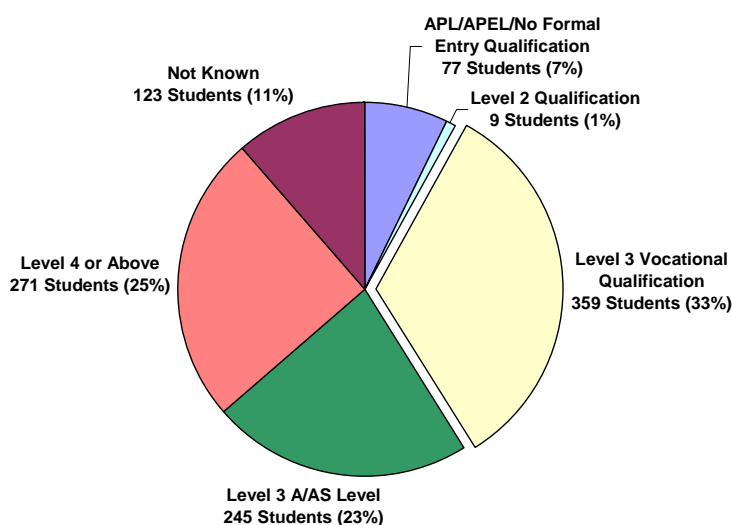
Charts 3g and 3h demonstrate that the split of Level 3 entrants was consistent year on year at UW, in 2005/6 and 2006/7, with an average of 34.5% of students entering with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification compared with an average of 25.5% of students entering with A/AS Levels.

However, as Chart 3i shows, the number of Level 3 A/AS Level students more than doubled from 2006/7 (245 students) to 2007/8 (518 students). This resulted in a significant decrease in the number and proportion of students entering with Level 3 Vocational Qualifications and Level 4 or Above Qualifications.

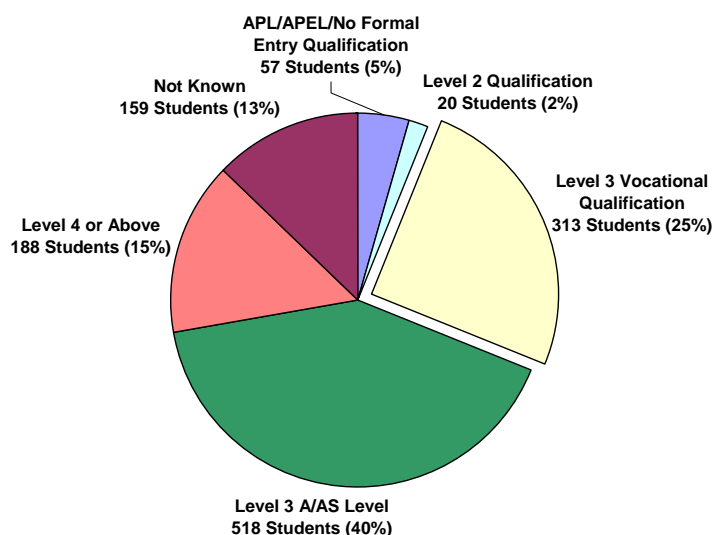
*Chart 3g – Number of Registrations at the University of Worcester in 2005/2006 shown by Highest Entry Qualification*



*Chart 3h – Number of Registrations at the University of Worcester in 2006/2007 shown by Highest Entry Qualification*



*Chart 3i – Number of Registrations at the University of Worcester in 2007/2008 shown by Highest Entry Qualification*

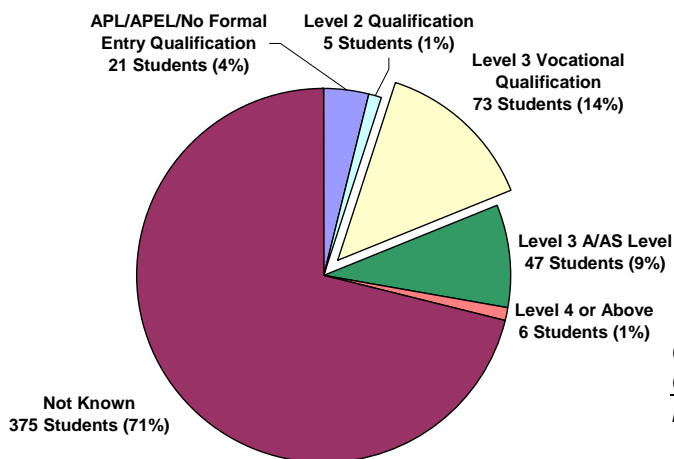


## Worcester College of Technology

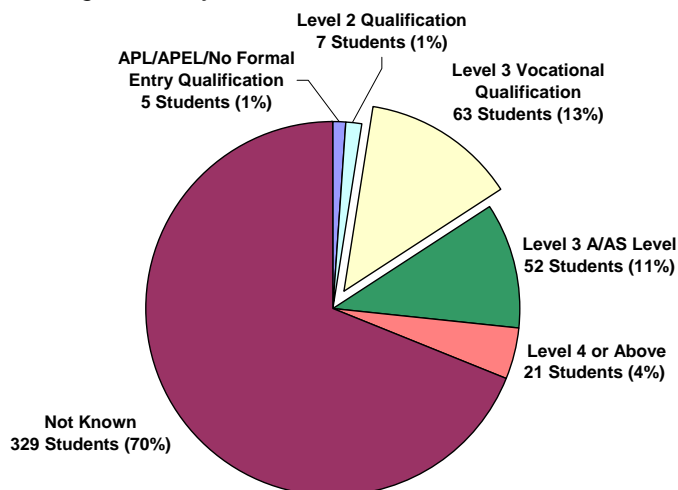
Due to the nature of the HE courses offered by WCT, a number of the entry qualifications were unknown as a number of the courses on offer are non-prescribed HE.

Charts 3j and 3k show that the split of Level 3 entrants remained consistent from 2005/6 to 2006/7 and of those entry qualifications that are known there were on average 13.5% entering with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification compared with an average of 10% entering with A/AS Levels. This ratio changed in 2007/8 when there were 28% entering with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification compared with 8% of Level 3 A/AS Level students.

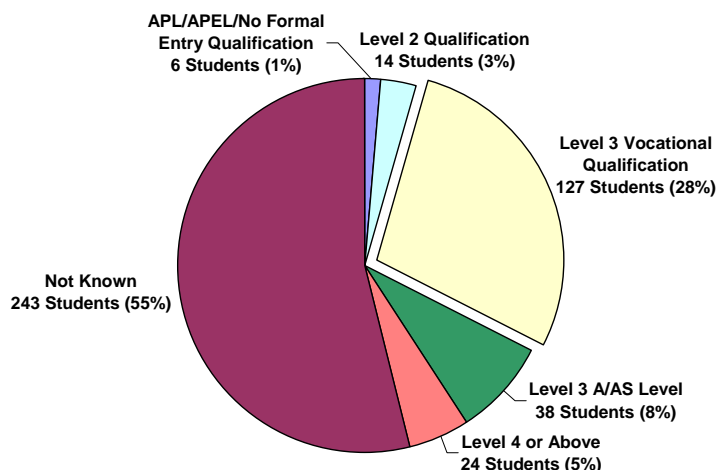
*Chart 3j – Number of Registrations at Worcester College of Technology in 2005/2006 shown by Highest Entry Qualification*



*Chart 3k – Number of Registrations at Worcester College of Technology in 2006/2007 shown by Highest Entry Qualification*



*Chart 3k – Number of Registrations at Worcester College of Technology in 2006/2007 shown by Highest Entry Qualification*



Overall, Hereford College of Arts recruited the largest proportion of students with Level 3 Vocational Qualifications with 37% in 2005/6, 59% in 2006/7 and 60% in 2007/8.

## Section 4<sup>§</sup> - Which Curriculum Theme had the Higher Number & Proportion of Students Registering with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification?

Chart 4a shows that the number of Health & Social Care students entering with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification has declined each year from Academic Year 2005/6 to 2007/8. The Level 3 Vocational students accounted for 28% of the total student numbers in 2007/8, however this was compared with 44% in 2005/6.

Chart 4a – Number of Registrations within Health & Social Care shown by Highest Entry Qualification

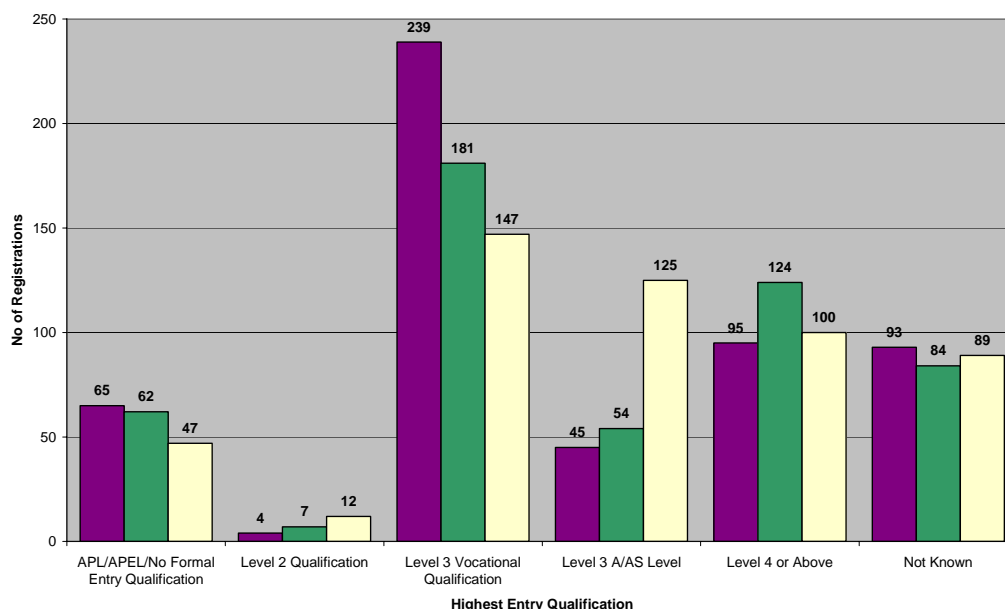
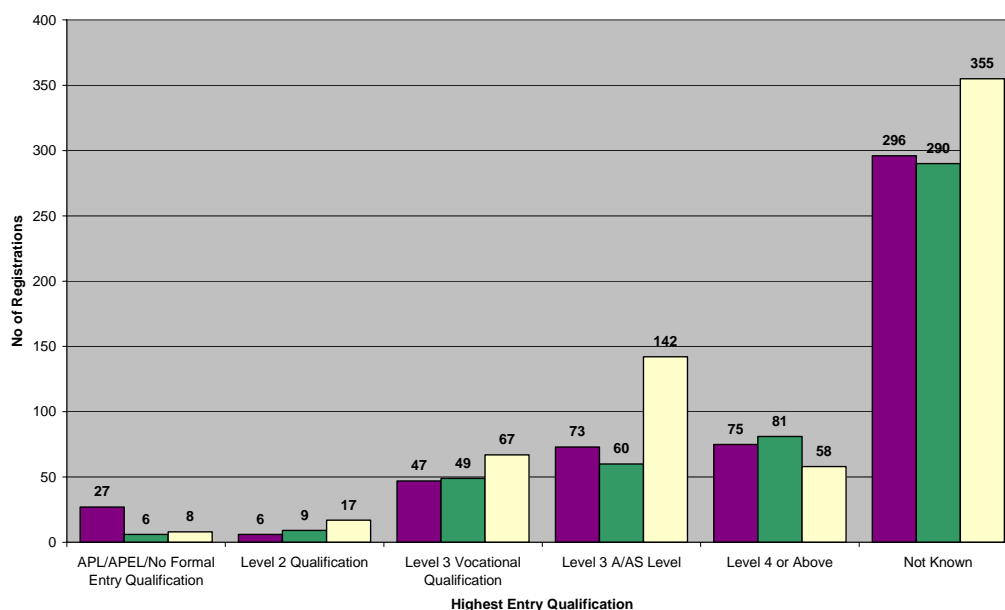


Chart 4b shows that there has not been a significant increase/decrease in the number of Level 3 Vocational students registering on an undergraduate course in Leadership & Management from 2005/6 to 2007/8. It is difficult to assess the actual proportion of Level 3 Vocational students due to the high proportion of qualifications that are unknown, however the average proportion over the 3 year period has been 10%.

Chart 4b – Number of Registrations within Leadership & Management shown by Highest Entry Qualification



Key:



2005/2006



2006/2007



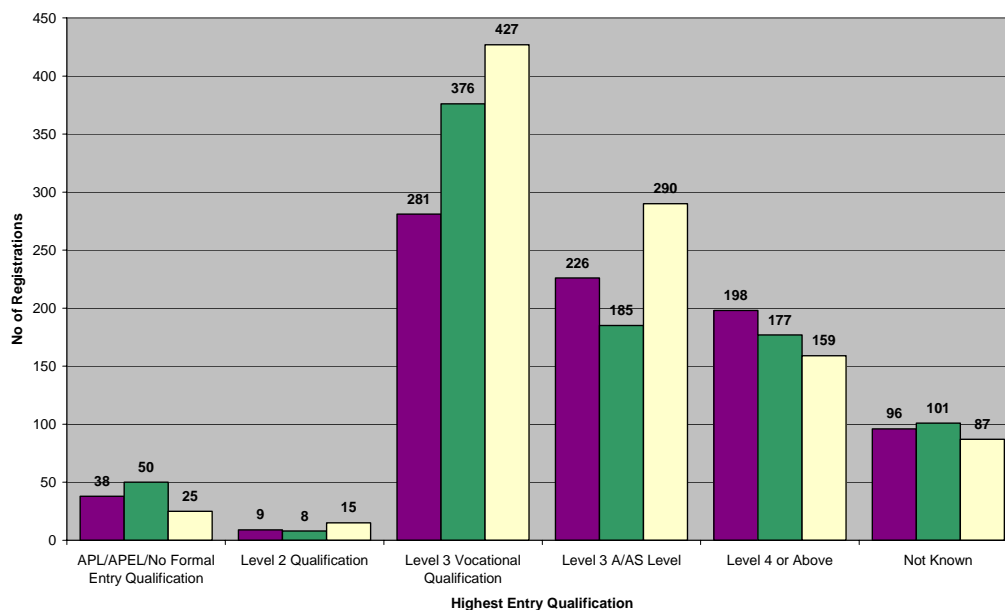
2007/2008

<sup>§</sup> Includes data collected from HCA, HCT, UW & WCT on students registered on those courses that fall within one of the LLN's curriculum themes of Health & Social Care, Leadership & Management and Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture & Media

Chart 4c illustrates that the number and proportion of Level 3 Vocational students registering on to Undergraduate courses within the curriculum theme of Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture & Media has increased each year. In 2005/6 there were 281 students entering with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification which increased to 427 students in 2007/8, this has resulted in an additional 146 students registering compared with 2 years previously.

The proportion of Level 3 Vocational Learners has also increased in line with this, they accounted for 33% of the overall number of students registering in 2005/6, in this curriculum theme, compared with 43% registering in 2007/8.

**Chart 4c – Number of Registrations within Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture & Media shown by Highest Entry Qualification**



<b>Key:</b>	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: purple; border: 1px solid black;"></span> 2005/2006	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: green; border: 1px solid black;"></span> 2006/2007	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black;"></span> 2007/2008
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Overall, the curriculum theme of STHC&M has experienced the highest increase in the number and proportion of students entering with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification as their highest entry qualification. Whilst the theme of L&M has remained consistent, the theme of H&SC has experienced a significant decrease in the number and proportion of the Level 3 Vocational students registering on to Undergraduate courses.

## Section 5\*\* - Overall where were the University of Worcester's Undergraduate Students Progressing from with their Level 3 Vocational Qualification?

This section focuses on those students that registered on to an Undergraduate course at the University of Worcester, within one of the LLN's Curriculum Themes (H&SC, L&M, STHC&M) and with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification as their highest entry qualification.

Chart 5a shows that in 2005/6 50% of the students who registered were progressing from local FE Colleges, this decreased to 43% in 2006/7 (see Chart 5b) and subsequently increased to 49% in 2007/8 (see Chart 5c).

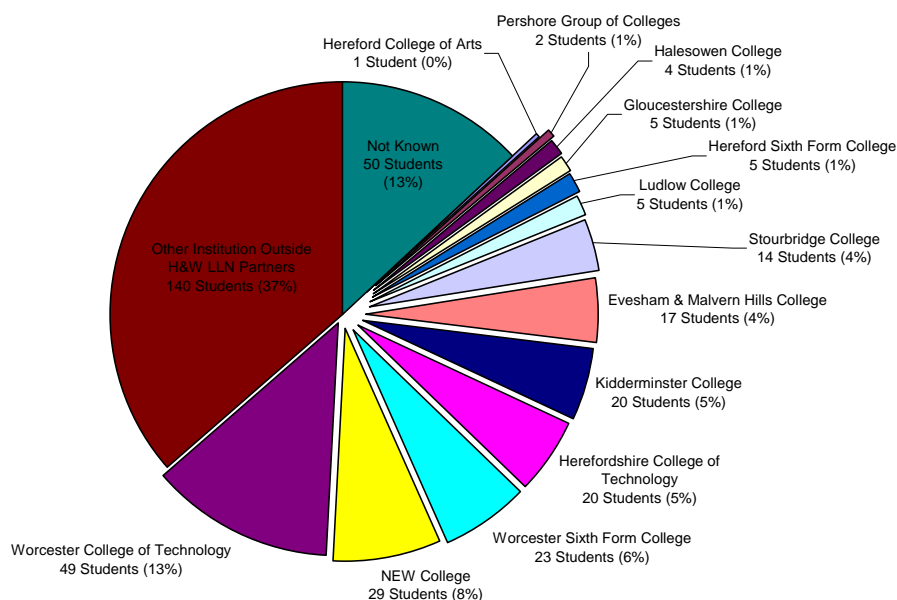
However, the overall number of students progressing from local FE colleges has decreased year on year. In 2005/6, there were 194 students registering from local FE Colleges with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification, this decreased to 157 students in 2006/7 and 152 students in 2007/8.

In each year, the institutions that consistently had the highest number of students progressing to the University of Worcester were:

- Worcester College of Technology - 49 students in 2005/6, 40 students in 2006/7 & 40 students in 2007/8
- North East Worcestershire College - 29 students in 2005/6, 31 students in 2006/7 & 28 students in 2007/8

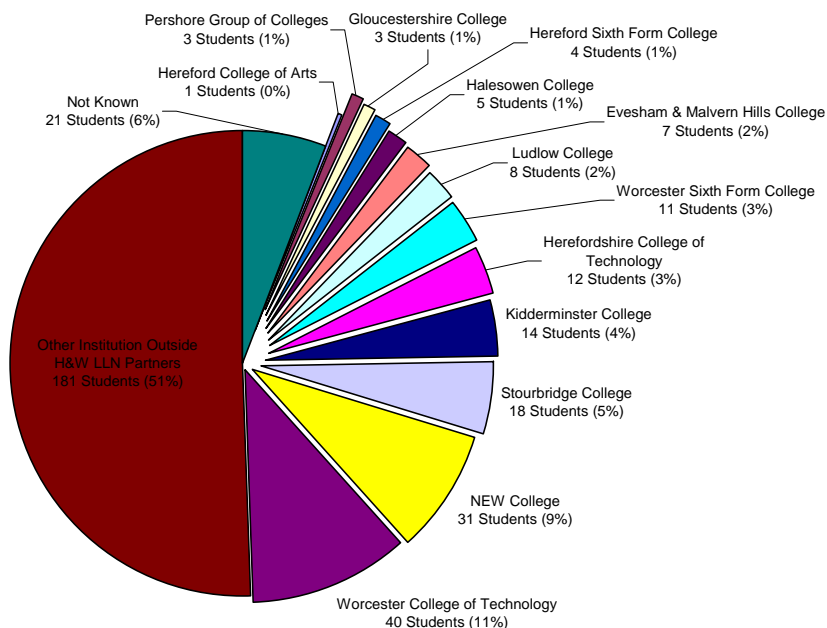
Over the 3 academic years, the average proportion of students progressing from WCT was 12%, the next highest was NEWC with 9%.

Chart 5a – Number & Percentage of Students Registering at the University of Worcester in 2005/2006 with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification, from a local FE College, as their Highest Entry Qualification

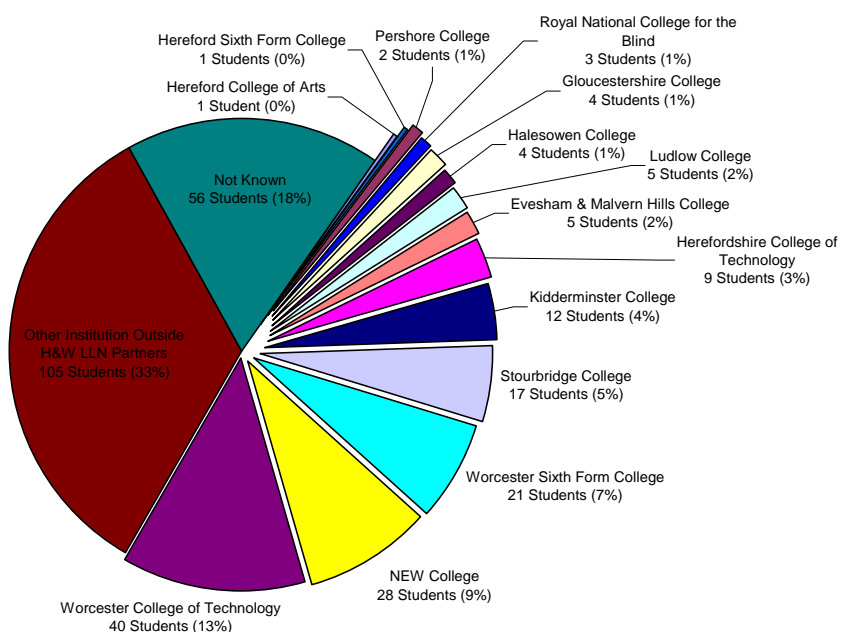


\*\* Includes data collected from UW only on students registered on those courses that fall within one of the LLN's curriculum themes of Health & Social Care, Leadership & Management and Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture & Media

**Chart 5b – Number & Percentage of Students Registering at the University of Worcester in 2006/2007 with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification, from a local FE College, as their Highest Entry Qualification**



**Chart 5c – Number & Percentage of Students Registering at the University of Worcester in 2007/2008 with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification, from a local FE College, as their Highest Entry Qualification**



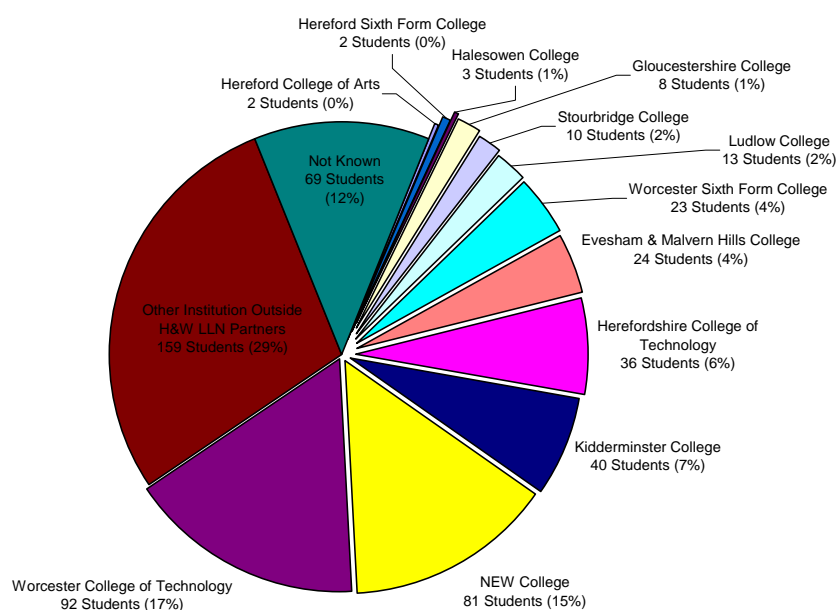
## Section 6<sup>††</sup> - Where were the University of Worcester's Undergraduate Students Progressing from with their Level 3 Vocational Qualification within each Curriculum Theme?

As with Section 5, this section focuses on those students that registered on to an Undergraduate Course, within one of the LLN's Curriculum Themes (H&SC, L&M, STHC&M), at the University of Worcester with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification as their highest entry qualification.

Charts 6a, 6b and 6c show that over the three years of registrations, the subject area with the highest number and proportion of local Level 3 Vocational students was Health & Social Care. The proportions within each curriculum theme were as follows:

- 59% of Health & Social Care students (334 students) progressed from local colleges, the institution with the highest number of students progressing to UW was Worcester College of Technology.
- 37% of the Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture & Media students (145 students) progressed from local colleges, the institution with the highest number of students progressing to UW was Stourbridge College.
- 24% of Leadership & Management students (24 students) progressed from local colleges, the institution with the highest number of students progressing was Worcester College of Technology.

*Chart 6a – Number & Percentage of Level 3 Vocational Students Progressing from a Local FE College on to an Undergraduate Course at the University of Worcester in 2005/6, 2006/7 & 2007/8 within Health & Social Care*



<sup>††</sup> Includes data collected from UW only on students registered on those courses that fall within one of the LLN's curriculum themes of Health & Social Care, Leadership & Management and Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture & Media

Chart 6b – Number & Percentage of Level 3 Vocational Students Progressing from a Local FE College on to an Undergraduate Course at the University of Worcester in 2005/6, 2006/7 & 2007/8 within Leadership & Management

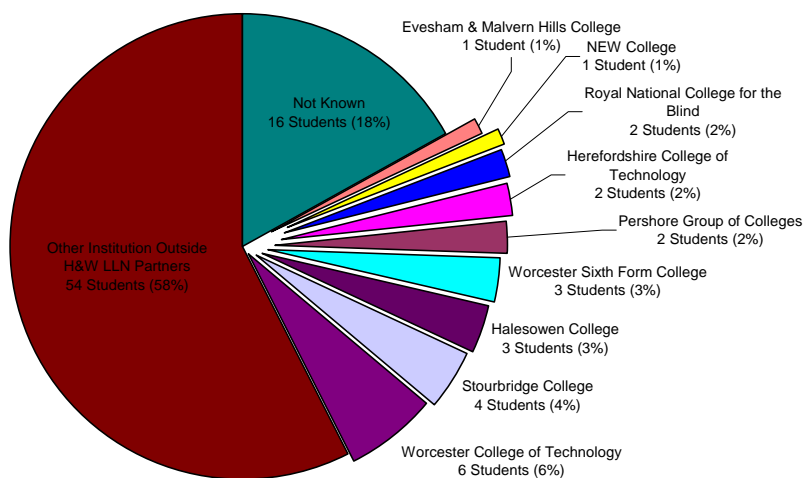
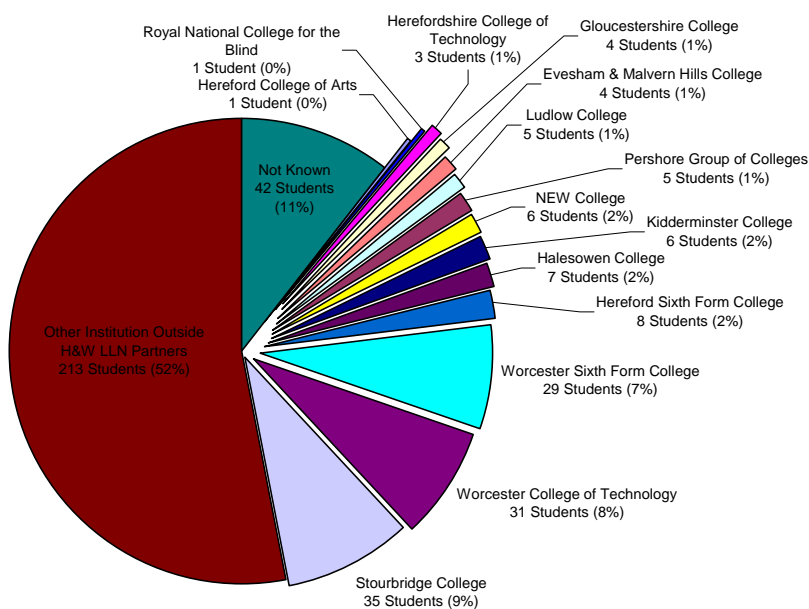


Chart 6c – Number & Percentage of Level 3 Vocational Students Progressing from a Local FE College on to an Undergraduate Course at the University of Worcester in 2005/6, 2006/7 & 2007/8 within Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture & Media



## Section 7 - Discussion of Research Findings

The main findings of the research were that:

1. The total number of students registering on HE courses at the 5 sampled institutions in H&W and within one of the LLN's curriculum themes was:
  - 2,061 students in 2005/6
  - 2,045 students in 2006/7
  - 2,369 students in 2007/8

This shows an increase of 15% in the total number of students registering within one of the curriculum theme areas, despite a slight reduction (0.7%) in numbers in 2006/7. The 2006/7 drop in registrations is unlikely to be significant as it is less than the year on year variability. However it should be noted that whilst the large increase in student registrations in 2007/8 is significant, it may reflect a combination of factors that include: changes in provision, changes in numbers of applications; changes in funding and socio-economic changes. Thus the data is not sufficiently detailed to demonstrate a simple causal relationship between curriculum development and student registrations. However it should also be noted that the 15% increase in registrations probably exceeds the capacity of pre-existing programmes and thus has some relationship to the development of new courses.

Within the data there are some notable differences between institutions, but overall the growth is widely distributed across the sampled institutions. Two key outliers can be noted: the 224% increase in numbers at HCT reflects an increase of 87 students in 2007/8 from a very low level of registrations; and the 14% decline of registrations at WCT is from a fairly high level of provision of 527 students.

The variation between institutions can be seen as a change in each institution's proportion of the yearly total of students across H&W registering on HE courses within one of the curriculum theme areas. This 'market share' approach shows that over 2005/6 to 2007/8: HCA has increased from 13% to 15%; HCT has increased from 2% to 5%; NEWC has increased slightly from 7% to 8%; UW increased slightly from 52% to 53%; and, WCT declined from 26% to 19%.

The changes in proportion may highlight different institutional responses to the 'Widening Participation' agenda, and the development of additional HE in FE as a means of diversification, it may also reflect structural issues within the provision of HE such as construction of new facilities, and the development of areas of expertise.

2. The proportion of students that registered on HE courses at HCA, HCT, UW & WCT (within one of the LLN's curriculum themes) with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification as their highest entry qualification was:
  - 30% in 2005/6 (compared with 18% that entered with A/AS Levels)
  - 32% in 2006/7 (compared with 16% that entered with A/AS Levels)
  - 29% in 2007/8 (compared with 26% that entered with A/AS Levels)

The data on registrations for students with Level 3 vocational qualifications as their highest entry qualification shows that the proportion has remained largely constant despite the increase in student numbers. This means that the 13% increase in students entering with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification is in line with the overall increase in registrations (15%). The most significant percentage increases have been in students entering with Level 2 Qualifications (132% increase) and Level 3 A/AS Level Qualifications (62% increase). In contrast to this there have been decreases in the number of students entering with APL/APEL/No Formal Qualifications (38% decrease) and Level 4 or above qualifications (14% decrease).

However these findings need to be approached with caution for two reasons: First, the recording of qualifications on entry is not standardised across institutions, particularly where students continue from L3 to HE within the same institution. Indeed it could be argued that many of the students with no formal qualifications, APL / APEL and level 2 qualifications should be included as level 3 vocational students as they must have L3 equivalence (presumably vocational) to be

accepted onto L4 programmes. Second, the data is skewed by the inclusion of UW. Thus, it should be noted that UW and WCT had over 99% of all registrations for students with A/AS levels as their highest qualification. Thus any comparison of vocational qualifications to A/AS relates primarily to relative size of these institutions. Indeed the increase in student number in the remaining institutions (excluding UW and WCT) closely mirrors the increase in students with a Level 3 vocational qualification as the highest entry qualification.

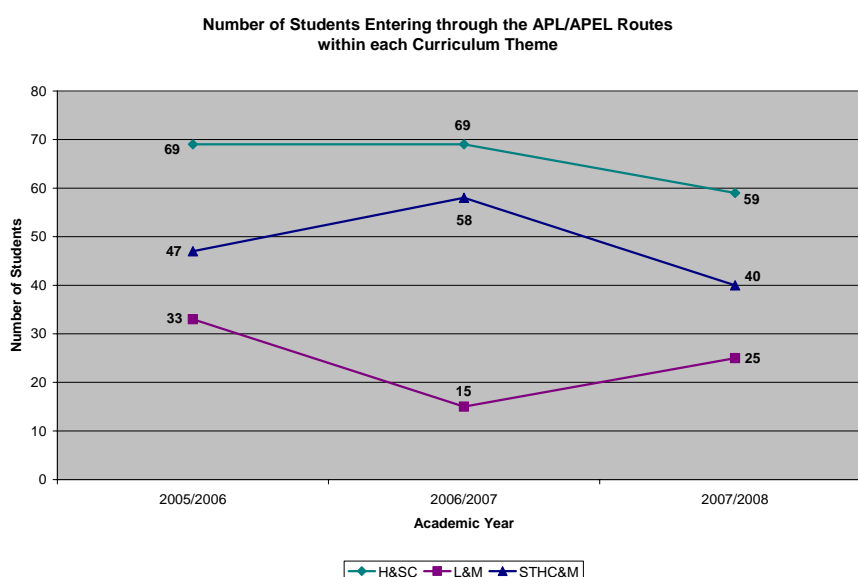
The statistics identify a large decrease in the proportion of L3 vocational qualifications to A/AS level awards at UW. This has changed from 56% of registrations in 2005/6, 59% in 2006/7, to only 37% in 2007/8. Despite a growth in overall numbers at UW, the data shows a decline in total number of students with vocational qualifications over the period, with a decline from 384 students in 2005/6 to 313 students in 2007/8. The reasons for this change are outside of the scope of the research, but may relate to changes in admissions criteria in particular in Health and Social Care.

It is noticeable that most HE courses that are run in FE institutions, do not recruit many students with A/AS levels, although they do recruit students with Level 4+ awards. The reasons for the absence of A/AS students within HE in FE lies outside the scope of this research, but may reflect a combination of socio-economic factors and student perceptions of progression from A/AS level qualifications. This area may require further research. The high number of students with a L4+ awards as their highest entry qualification may be explained by the provision of part-time HE programmes in FE colleges. These HE programmes are predominantly delivered within FE institutes, either as night classes or as part-time programmes and typically recruit mature learners motivated by career change or enhancement, or for personal reasons.

- Over the three years of registrations, 328 students entered HE either by APL/APEL or with no formal qualifications as the highest entry qualification. However, as this number has decreased year on year (130 students in 2005/6, 118 students in 2006/7 & 80 students in 2007/8),

The data points to a 38% decline in APL/APEL across the period. This finding needs to be approached with caution, as there has been a corresponding increase in the reporting of students entering HE with L2 qualifications. It seems likely that the decline in APL/APEL and the increase in L2 awards reflect changes in data collection rather than a trend away from APL/APEL. Indeed it is highly probable that students applying with L2 awards have other qualifications and experience acknowledged within the application and interview process, without recourse to formal APL/APEL claims. Thus the reduction in the proportion and overall numbers of student entering HE with their highest entry qualification listed as APL/APEL may signal changes in recruitment practice. The issue of APL / APEL further research.

However, if the data for students listing highest qualifications on entry as “L2 awards” and “APL/APEL/ No formal qualifications” is combined, then a picture emerges of students using prior learning to enter HE emerges. Here there is a decline across all areas, but with different curriculum areas showing different patterns of change.



4. In addition to collecting data and identifying trends in student registrations by region and institution, this report considers the data and trends within three distinct curriculum areas: *Leadership and Management*, *Health and Social Care*; and, *Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture and Media*.

The key findings were that the three Curriculum Theme areas have significantly different patterns of student registrations (although limited data on the *Leadership and Management* curriculum theme area makes it hard to compare with the other areas). Both *Health and Social Care* and *Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture and Media* have high numbers of students with vocational qualifications – however *Health and Social Care* shows a clear trend of declining vocational qualifications and increased numbers of A/AS level students. By comparison *Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture and Media* has seen a 51% increase in students registering with L3 vocational qualifications as their highest qualification (281 students in 2005/6 to 427 students in 2007/8).

The decline in students registering with L3 vocational qualifications in *Health and Social Care* probably relates to changes in curriculum and national training programmes and is likely to be repeated across the country. By contrast the proportional increase in *Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture and Media* may reflect significant curriculum development in institutions that also run L3 vocational qualifications as well as improved admissions processes.

The data for Leadership and Management is not sufficient for analysis of trends as there are a large number of unknown qualifications. These are often non-accredited professional qualifications that do not formally map onto the AQA framework. The low level of APL/APEL suggests that these qualifications are accepted as sufficient for entry to HE without recourse to APL claims, but without specific research this is speculative.

5. This research identified the numbers of students who registered at UW (within one of the LLNs curriculum theme areas) who were progressing from local FE Colleges.
  - 50% in 2005/6
  - 43% in 2006/7
  - 49% in 2007/8

Despite the apparent increase in 2007/8, the research found that the overall number of students progressing from local FE colleges has decreased year on year. In 2005/6, there were 194 students registering from local FE Colleges with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification, this decreased to 157 students in 2006/7 and 152 students in 2007/8. Within the data there are large differences between FE colleges, with the highest number of students progressing from WCT, NEWC and WSFC.

The research indicates that local FE colleges remain an important route into studying HE at UW. However the downward trend of numbers suggests that there may be a gentle trend towards recruitment from outside of the area.

Although the research provides no explanation for the importance of local FE colleges, it is likely that this may be due to a mixture of institutional and individual factors. In particular UW has a number of long established partnerships in each curriculum area, many of which are formalised through Strategic Partner agreements, and in some cases significant efforts have been made to articulate FE and HE courses, On an individual basis, there is evidence from previous HWLLN research that students at FE colleges in Herefordshire and Worcestershire consider travelling distance as a significant factor in decisions about progression, and this may also impact on the proportion of students choosing to progress locally.

6. Students progressing to UW by curriculum area

The research identifies students registering onto an Undergraduate Course at the University of Worcester from local FE colleges, within one of the LLN's Curriculum Themes (H&SC, L&M, STHC&M), and with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification as their highest entry qualification.

- 59% of Health & Social Care students (334 students) progressed from local colleges, the institution with the highest number of students progressing to UW was Worcester College of Technology.
- 37% of the Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture & Media students (145 students) progressed from local colleges, the institution with the highest number of students progressing to UW was Stourbridge College.
- 24% of Leadership & Management students (24 students) progressed from local colleges, the institution with the highest number of students progressing was Worcester College of Technology.

The research indicates that progression to UW from local FE colleges is not uniform, and that there are some areas of natural progression and curriculum articulation between L3 and L4. Given the predominance of WCT and Stourbridge College it is likely that the existence of joint delivery and long term partnership arrangements also has an effect on the progression rates to UW.

## 7. In Conclusion

The report provides some information on patterns of progression to HE within Herefordshire and Worcestershire, and tentatively identifies trends in the data. Extrapolation from the data is somewhat difficult as it is drawn from different sources and collected in different ways. However within these constraints the report provides a timeline through 3 years of HE provision and raises a number of interesting issues. It is hoped that the inclusion of data for 2008/9 and 2009/10 will allow further investigation of trends and patterns of progression

## Implications of this Research

### For institutions:

- The collection of data relating to highest qualifications should be reviewed in institutions who consider that it is helpful to know feeder qualifications. In particular, data relating to non-prescribed HE courses should be collected.
- Over the three years of registrations, 328 students entered HE either by APL/APEL or with no formal qualifications. However, as this number has decreased year on year (130 students in 2005/6, 118 students in 2006/7 & 80 students in 2007/8), institutions need to promote APL/APEL to people in work and make it as transparent as possible.
- Overall the biggest groups of students in Health & Social Care and Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture & Media are those with vocational qualifications. The marketing of these courses might wish to take this into account when describing entry requirements.
- There is a small proportion of students with vocational qualifications taking Leadership and Management courses (although there are a lot of unknowns for the non-HEFCE funded courses, for the HEFCE-funded provision the proportion of students with A levels is greater than those with vocational qualifications). Institutions might wish to place greater emphasis on recruiting students with vocational qualifications.

### For the HWLLN:

- There are significant numbers of students progressing from colleges to UW at both Level 4 and Level 6. The LLN should continue with its work to establish progression agreements to enhance progression routes into and within HE wherever it is delivered.
- For UW, the curriculum theme that had the highest number of local students progressing with a Level 3 Vocational Qualification as their highest entry qualification, were Health & Social Care students with 59% progressing from a local FE College. Establishing firmer links between staff teams may help to encourage and support students making this transition.

## Notes

- The qualifications classed in each category are as follows:
  - APEL/No Formal Qualification: mature student with previous experience, no formal qualifications
  - Level 2 Qualification: GCSE O Level, GNVQ Level 2, NVQ Level 2
  - Level 3 A/AS Level: A Level or equivalent
  - Level 3 Vocational Qualification: Access to HE, BTEC/SQA equivalent, Foundation Course, GNVQ Level 3, NVQ Level 3, ONC or OND
  - Level 4 or Above: CertEd/DipEd, Dip HE, First Degree of UK Institution, Foundation Degree, Graduate Equivalent, Higher Degree of UK Institution, HNC or HND, NVQ Level 4, NVQ Level 7, Other Credits from UK Institution, Overseas Graduate, PGCE, PGCert/PGDip, UG Qualification with QTS
- The research only looks at entry on to undergraduate courses in the H&W LLN's Curriculum Theme areas:
  - Health & Social Care
  - Leadership & Management
  - Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Culture & Media
- The student numbers demonstrated in this report are assigned to the institution which holds those student numbers. Therefore, the student numbers may not necessarily be shown against the institution where the course is delivered.
- Where a UW student has a Vocational and A Level qualification, the vocational qualification has been recorded
- The UW data does not include students studying individual Health modules or the Return to Practice course
- WCT only collect entry qualification data for HEFCE funded students