

Bridging Project

We asked Stratagia to work with partners to: work is to support a project looking at bridging from certain level 3 courses to level 4. A number of FE colleges are looking at how they might develop and sustain bridging programmes for students from courses such as BTEC national diplomas, NVQs, Apprenticeships and 14-19 Diplomas.

The contract was to:

- Identify current practice and effectiveness among the partners
- Identify key components of a framework eg: Study skills, HE awareness and experience, 'Specialist skills and knowledge', Other activities or needs
- Research into availability of suitable current materials and others experiences of bridging support programmes within and outside of the LLN, and identify need for developments
- Suggest and explore funding opportunities for the pilot activity, based on cost estimates and known financial support
- Agree action plan, and submit any proposal for funding to LLN meeting on 30th June

I attach the report (additional appendices are available).

At the last meeting I informed the group that we would like to fund different models of delivery as pilots in order to evaluate effectiveness. We have a contract for the evaluation with Stratagia, but need to approve the funding for the pilots, as set out below

Potential Pilot Bridging Programmes

A follow-up brief telephone survey was carried out with the partner colleges to determine the potential demand for pilot bridging courses. The people contacted were those who had expressed a definite interest in testing the different options that were reviewed in the previous report. It may be possible to reach agreement with the others to follow an accredited option if that is desirable.

An overall view from the interviews was that staff costs were the hardest to be funded by FE colleges and actually the most vital part of any project. We mentioned the possibility of matched funding to all interviewees and while they do not have control of the budget as such, they thought that if the LLN provided staff costs then the college would be willing to provide all materials etc needed to complete the project. More detail can be added if the LLN can give a positive steer to them. Hopefully this can give the LLN enough information for now to make a decision to support these pilot programmes.

Overall the indicative cost of piloting the provision is estimated to be in the region of £6,800.

College and contact	Start date	Target Group	No of students	Length of programme	Accreditation	Funding required
Kidderminster College – Anna Place	Jan 2010	BTEC Nat Dip Years 10 and 11	20	1 week intensive programme – taking part in HE lesson at college related to, e.g. performance	None	£1,500
Worcester College of Technology –	June/July 2010	BTEC and C&G	50	1 day for 4/5 weeks – people from		£800

Judy Lage				HE invited to college and work-based project and HE skills		
Sth Worcester College (formerly Evesham and Malvern College) - Sheila Jervis	Jan 2010	BTEC/NVQ	'across the board'	2 days per week 6-8 weeks – study skills	NOCN Progression Qualification	£1,000
Sth Worcester College – Celia Barradell	Possibly 19 April to 20 May 2010	BTEC Nat Dip A&D	10	12 days	Extended project or NOCN Progression qualification	£1,500
Hereford College of Arts – Helen Vine	9, 10 and 11 November 2009	BTEC Nat Dip	120	3 days intensive programme including cultural capital trip	None	£2,000
Total Estimate						£6,800



Draft Review of Bridging Options
prepared for
Hereford and Worcestershire LLN

Date 21 August 2009

Hereford and Worcestershire Lifelong Learning Network

Report on Options for Bridging Courses to Higher Education

1. Introduction

This project was commissioned by the LLN to review different options for bridging provision that would support vocational learners to move into higher education. There are a number of providers in further and higher education working in partnership with the LLN who wish to develop make this opportunity available to different target groups of Level 3 learners including BTEC National, NVQ, apprentices and other learners. The providers were surveyed about what kind of bridging programmes they might be interested in developing and what kind of support they would need from the LLN. A meeting was subsequently held on 3 July to consider the results of the survey, exchange ideas and outline models of bridging programmes that could be considered, after which an action plan was agreed. Further research was undertaken during the rest of July and August and this report represents the results of that activity, designed to:

- a) review the relative merits of different types of bridging provision (Annex 1)
- b) Identify learning materials that were suitable and could be used to support such programmes (Annex 2)
- c) assess whether public funding could be used to support them (Annex 3)

Other actions were identified such as mentoring students modelled on the Aimhigher initiative and the possibility of providing incentives to students that might encourage them in the extra effort that would be required for them to meet the objectives of these types of programmes. Unfortunately due to the summer vacation, it was not possible to obtain the relevant information and make an assessment of it in time for this report. However, this aspect of the project will be concluded as soon as possible following this report. Other actions were identified for the longer term and these are included in a separate programme of activity that the LLN has commissioned to begin in the autumn.

The LLN indicated that it would consider funding pilots within the partner institutions in the upcoming academic year in order to support this development.

2. General Characteristics of Bridging Programmes

Before comparing the different models that are of interest in this context, some brief explanation of what is meant by bridging provision may help to set the context. Generally bridging programmes or courses are fast track routes into higher education, relative to full-time A Level or Access to HE Programmes, being more focused and intensive for the learner. They are designed to build on skills and knowledge that individual already have so as to prepare them for entry to higher education through either UCAS or specific universities, such as in the Access to Birmingham Scheme run by Birmingham University. They may provide a route to more generic higher education programmes of learning or to HE programmes requiring particular specialist knowledge.

The core curriculum is therefore usually focused on academic and generic study skills such as note taking, exam techniques, team working, presentation skills etc. At the same time there may be an emphasis on building confidence and self-esteem, as learners can often have low expectations of what they can achieve and their potential for success in higher education. The rest of the curriculum of bridging courses may be directed to more subject specific content relevant to particular undergraduate disciplines.

Bridging courses are offered to a whole range of people, including mature students, who need at the very least to be 17 or over. There can be a range of types of courses aimed at different target groups covering a wide variety of social groups although tend to fall into three types; individuals who have been out of education for a while; those who have vocational qualifications and need to improve the academic skills; and those who already possess level 3 qualifications but want to improve or refresh them.

While students may be interested in a specific subject area such as Sports Science, Computing or Business Management, most of the course content is likely to be primarily geared to the development of study skills albeit within the context of their chosen subject.

Bridging courses may be full time, but most of them are part-time. Generally courses are free to students and provided at a college or university, in the spring/summer or academic year before the first semester or trimester of higher education programmes begin.

The most common approach to learning styles or approaches is that the programme is delivered by tutors who are experienced in teaching and supporting young people or adults who need support and encouragement to achieve in education. The course is normally assessed through assignments, projects and coursework.

Bridging courses are often accredited by a recognised awarding body such as the National Open College Network. It helps too if they are included in a local or regional progression agreement as often students from these programmes choose to stay within their own locality when they progress to university.

Successful completion of a bridging course, evidenced through accreditation, can be recognised for entry into higher education by the allocation of UCAS points or within a specific progression agreement into specified universities.

3. Comparative review of four types of bridging programmes

At the meeting in July, a number of options were identified as potential ways in which bridging provision might be developed with the help of the LLN within the partner institutions. In the chart (Annex 1), these options are compared and evaluated in terms of their relevance and appropriateness for supporting learners who may be following vocational Level 3 courses, such as BTEC National, to prepare for entry into higher education.

The options reviewed are as follows:

1. The Extended Project within the 14-19 Diploma
2. NOCN Level 3 Certificate in Progression
3. BTEC National Art and Design Personal and Professional Practice Module
4. BTEC Early Years Professional Practice Module
5. Access to Birmingham Scheme provided by the University of Birmingham

These options for bridging provision were reviewed against a number of criteria, indicated by the headings on the chart. Issues about funding of the different options are considered in a separate report attached. A brief list of sources of relevant learning materials (Annex 2) that are readily available and could be used to underpin the learning activities for bridging programmes is attached as Annex 2 to this report.

With the exception of the NOCN progression qualification, UCAS points and/or a progression arrangement into HE institutions are available within these options if learners are successful in completing the relevant programme. All of the programmes focus on the skills needed for study in higher education, although the two BTEC modules are likely to be more related to

the content of the vocational area in which they are located than the other options, while the 14-19 Diploma, the NOCN Progression Qualification and the Access to Birmingham schemes are all good examples of free-standing modules that can be provided independent of the subject of the vocational course that the learner is studying.

All of the programmes reviewed offer opportunities for a range of appropriate assessment activities and variety of evidence of achievement, focusing on the skills needed to undertake research, gather evidence, analyse and produce a research report, building a portfolio along the way that may include a reflective log of their experiences. Some of the assessment tasks are more specifically mandated, such as the test and essay required on the Access to Birmingham scheme, but generally the opportunities to tailor delivery and assessment to the needs of the individual learner seem ample.

This is also true of the delivery of the programmes as, with the right kind of guidance, advice and mentoring, learners could pursue their learning in a flexible way, supported by group work and tutor support and using blended learning activities to deepen and extend their knowledge and skills. In fact there are some very user friendly and practical online free learning resources, designed by experienced HE lecturers, who take learners through the steps involved in researching material that is generic and/or directly relevant to their subject specialism, including the way in which to identify sources by using the Harvard or a similar system of referencing. These are listed in the annex to this report.

The advantage of the Extended Project and NOCN Progression Qualification is that they can be taken as free-standing nationally recognised qualifications, whereas the BTEC professional practice modules are not recognised as separate qualifications, thus making them less available to learners on other programmes such as NVQ or apprenticeships.

4. Recommendations

- a) The LLN identifies with individual partner institutions their interest in taking forward one of the options reviewed in this report on a pilot basis with a limited number of learners from one of the target groups identified for such provision.
- b) The LLN provides funding to support one or more institutions in the provision of such a pilot during the academic year 2009-10.
- c) The LLN evaluates the success of these pilot/s in encouraging and increasing the numbers of students progressing into higher education from within the target groups of vocational learners.

Annex 1						
Title of programme	Target Group	Content/Units	Assessment	Accreditation	UCAS points	Funding / student support
Extended Project	L3 Diploma students, but could be used to infill learners from other L3 courses	4 components a) managing project b) using resources c) developing and realising a project d) reviewing a project	Students must demonstrate skills of structuring information, using appropriate style and form of writing and terminology Depending on awarding body and the nature of the project: OCR - Either a 5,000 word dissertation or 1,500 to 2,500 written component Or AQA - Production Log, a written report, the evidence, a presentation WJEC exemplary in teaching guidance	This is currently available from 5 awarding bodies: WJEC, VTCT, AQA-C&G, Edexcel, EDI and OCR. It is classified as 14 Preparation for Life and Work 14.1 Foundations for Learning and Life	Depending on grade achieved: A* 70 A 60 B 50 C 40 D 30 E 20	120 GLH ¹ Funded if part of diploma or full-time programme

¹ Guided Learning Hours (glh) indicate the approximate number of 'teacher supervised or directed study time and do not include any self directed study time that may be required by the learner' (QCA, April 2007).

NOCN L3 Progression Qualification	For a range of learners who have limited Level 3 qualifications, e.g. NVQ or other types of vocational learners or those with experiential learning There are no specific entry requirements Must be 16 or over	Relevant mandatory units Developing and using research skills Building a Personal Career Portfolio	Internally assessed – Written Description is prescribed although other assessment activities can be included in the portfolio of evidence, including essay, group discussion, log and so on.	NOCN L3 Certificate in Progression 30 QCF credits	Not listed on UCAS Tariff	Eligible for funding by LSC but not guaranteed.
Art & Design Personal and Professional Practice ² Module	BTEC National Certificate or Diploma students in Art & Design	The extended unit covers the whole design cycle so that learners can demonstrate their creative, innovative thinking within their specialism	Internally assessed through Portfolio of Evidence including CV and business cards, UCAS applications, mock interviews and HE visits. Also looking at researching into relevant creative industry jobs	Edexcel for BTEC National Certificate or Diploma	There is a generic progression agreement between A&D L3 courses and HCA. UCAS points for whole qualification only: D 285 M 225 P 165	Funded as part of full time or part-time BTEC National programme
Early Years Professional Practice module	BTEC National Certificate or Diploma students in Early Years Employees in Child Care or in practical placements	Work placements in early years settings – practical application of knowledge and skills in work settings	Internal assessment Logbook Longitudinal Child Study Evidence of plans, reports and evaluation of activities	Edexcel for BTEC National Certificate or Diploma CACHE for people in employment (not sure if this is still valid)	UCAS points for module depending on grade achieved Distinction 120 Merit 80 Pass 40	Funded as part of full-time or part-time BTEC National programme

² There have been two pilot bridging courses linked to this module within a consortium through a national LLN A & D initiative. This will be delivered to 120 students in BTEC National A & D cohort in the coming year.

			Critical analysis of daily work in practice			
Access to Birmingham Scheme ³	<p>Students from family/communities with little experience of HE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non professional background • Areas with low representation in HE • Recommended by tutor because of special circumstances 	<p>3 components</p> <p>a) Online study support module – academic writing skills</p> <p>b) Student shadowing</p> <p>c) Essay specific to course</p> <p>Invited to enhanced induction day before starting university.</p>	<p>Online Test</p> <p>Attend student shadow day</p> <p>Essay set and marked by University of Birmingham tutors</p>	University of Birmingham	<p>Mutual Recognition Scheme</p> <p>Special consideration given to successful applicants by Bristol, Exeter, Kings College London, Leicester, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Southampton and Warwick.</p>	<p>Successful students eligible for scholarship £1,200 for each year of study at UB.</p>

³ Colleges need to complete University of Birmingham application form to accompany UCAS application form.

Annex 2

Resources to support teaching and learning

Case Studies Guide – Developing Case Studies: CPD activity (attached)

Extended Project Student Guide (Chapter 1) attached

Case Study – Solihull Early Years Programme (attached)

Learning by listening (attached)

Reading Skills (attached)

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/index.htm>
Aimhigher website

<http://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/tlp/progression/index.html> Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) website

http://www.gre.ac.uk/studyskills/assignment_writing excellent site on Greenwich University for study skills from which most of below has been taken

<http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/detective/brief.html> - free online user friendly tutorial for research skills development – good for making sure that students learn how to use the internet for research properly

<http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/> free online internet tool to help develop research skills in own subject area

<http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/tutorial/artanddesign/?sid=586191&itemid=12025> this is an example of one for Art & Design

<http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/tutorial/healthandsocialcare/?sid=586196&itemid=12025> this is an example for Health and Social Care

<http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/tutorial/nursing/> this is an example for nursing

<http://www.gre.ac.uk/studyskills/referencing> for advice on how to reference sources of information

<http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=3359> Open University OpenLearn resource in essay and report writing skills