

HEFCE 01/73
December
Consultation

Respond by 22 March 2002

Partnerships for Progression

**Proposals by the HEFCE and the
Learning and Skills Council**

Partnerships for Progression

Proposals by the HEFCE and the Learning and Skills Council

To Heads of HEFCE-funded higher education institutions
Heads of further education colleges
Other organisations and individuals listed at Annex A

Of interest to those responsible for Learning and teaching, Widening participation, Skills

Reference **01/73**

Publication date December 2001

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Executive summary

Purpose

1. The Government has set a target that, by the year 2010, 50 per cent of those aged between 18 and 30 should have the opportunity to benefit from higher education. That is an ambitious goal. To achieve it we need to strengthen existing partnerships between higher education (HE), further education (FE) and schools in order to raise both the attainments and the aspirations of young people. This consultation document seeks views on how best that might be done.

Key points

2. Widening participation and raising attainment are high priorities for both the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). These proposals have been prepared jointly by the two Councils, which will together pursue implementation of the initiative.
3. To achieve the target of 50 per cent participation in higher education, we need to raise attainment at NVQ levels 2 and 3, in order to encourage more and better-prepared students to stay on in education at age 16 and then go on to HE. There is already an extensive reform programme to raise standards in schools, and to encourage post-16 participation. This project would aim to complement that. A particular priority is to raise attainment and participation among young people from disadvantaged groups, who are currently under-represented in HE. We also need to provide better routes for those already in work to increase skills levels and entry to HE through workplace learning.
4. The proposed joint initiative would build upon and encompass the extensive regional and local partnerships which already exist. It would link together into a more coherent framework the activities for successive age groups of school and FE students, and across different progression routes. It would build upon effective practice wherever this takes place, and be responsive to local needs.
5. We will need a significant investment to achieve our aim of increasing HE participation through stronger partnerships. This would be focused on:
 - a. Supporting and extending HE/FE partnerships, with dedicated staff to work with schools and FE education and training providers, and a programme of regionally co-ordinated activities including summer schools, mentoring and shadowing.
 - b. Raising quality standards in FE provision to increase attainment and retention in lower socio-economic groups.
 - c. Incentives for workplace learning and progression routes into HE.
 - d. A national programme of research, evaluation and dissemination.

Action invited

6. We invite responses to be sent by **Friday 22 March 2002** to Clare Streatfield at the HEFCE. Please use the template at Annex B which is accessible with this document on the web at www.hefce.ac.uk under 'Publications'. If you are not able to use the template on the web, please contact Clare Streatfield for a Word or paper version of the template.

Background

7. The Government has set a target that 50 per cent of 18-30 year-olds should have the opportunity to benefit from higher education by 2010. This was stated as a manifesto commitment in the June 2001 general election. The Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Estelle Morris, confirmed in a speech on higher education in October 2001 that this was one of the highest priorities on the Government's agenda. The target has both an economic and a social purpose. More graduates are needed to enable the UK to sustain and develop a knowledge economy able to compete globally. And fair access for those from disadvantaged backgrounds to all forms of education, including higher education, is an essential part of addressing social exclusion.

8. We recently undertook a comprehensive analysis of trends in supply and demand for student places in HE, to inform discussion about the actions needed to achieve the Government's target. The report, 'Supply and demand in higher education', was published in October 2001 (HEFCE 01/62). The main findings are that in the late 1980s and early 1990s there was a substantial increase in attainment and participation in schools and further education colleges (FECs), reflecting particularly the introduction of the GCSE and changes in the labour market. This fed through into a major expansion in demand for higher education.

9. Since 1994, however, there has been little increase in the proportion of 16 year-olds staying on in full-time education and training, or in subsequent educational attainment. On current trends, further increases in achievement at A-level are unlikely to be enough by themselves to lead to meeting the 50 per cent target. Similarly, on current trends, the growth in numbers studying advanced level vocational qualifications, and completion rates of these qualifications, will not produce a sufficient increase in the supply of qualified applicants to higher education.

10. There is a marked skew in HE participation by socio-economic group. Those in the highest socio-economic group are seven times more likely to enter HE than those in the lowest group. So the greatest scope for increasing HE participation lies in the more disadvantaged groups in society, who are currently significantly under-represented. Unequal participation by different socio-economic groups is unacceptable in terms of social equity and because it blunts our national competitiveness. Achievement of the Government's target depends crucially on widening participation.

11. There is, of course, already an extensive reform programme designed to raise standards in schools, at both primary and secondary level. And the LSC was established to drive forward the raising of attainment and participation among pupils aged 16-plus. So merely extrapolating from current trends is not a sufficient guide to the future. Successful implementation of the school and FE reform programmes would transform the situation. We recognise that that is primarily a matter for those working in schools and colleges, who are facing substantial challenges of their own. Nonetheless, we do not believe it would be right for higher education to appear to sit back and wait for others to deliver enough young people with the right qualifications and motivation to benefit from HE.

12. Higher education institutions (HEIs) have long recognised that the schools, FE and HE sectors are all inter-connected and inter-dependent: none can succeed in isolation from the others. HE needs schools and FE to equip young people with the right qualifications and motivation. But equally, if HEIs can help give young people in school and FE an awareness and understanding of higher education, and an expectation that they will go on to HE as a means of pursuing their career and life aspirations, that can be a powerful motivator. Consequently many HEIs are already working effectively in various ways

with schools and FE providers. We welcome that and we want to build on it. Only schools and colleges can achieve their own reform targets, but HEIs can complement and supplement their efforts through closer collaboration. By developing a nationwide infrastructure of mutually supportive links between schools, FE providers and HEIs, which builds on the best of what is already there, we can help all three sectors achieve their respective goals.

13. We recognise that school, FE and HE staff already have substantial demands on their time and commitment. In the school sector particularly, staff face a challenging reform agenda. So another new initiative would not be welcome if it merely added to the burdens on hard-pressed staff. We therefore take it as a guiding principle that we must work with what is already there, showing how stronger partnerships can lead to mutual advantage, so that school, FE and HE staff are all able to see a benefit in terms of achieving their own objectives.

14. There is also a significant pool of younger people in the workforce with level 3 qualifications, who missed out first time on HE entry (nearly a million 21-30 year-olds according to the Labour Force Survey). Hence there is also an opportunity to contribute to achieving the Government's target by improving progression routes into HE through workplace learning.

15. The Government's target is for 50 per cent participation in HE with no drop in standards. It would be self-defeating to expand HE by reducing standards, because that would devalue the currency of the qualifications which young people are seeking as a key step in achieving their career ambitions. But that does not mean that the range and nature of HE programmes currently on offer does not need to change. Higher education has come a long way in recent years to adapt to the widening range of student backgrounds, interests and study needs. The range of subjects and subject combinations has increased. There is a greater focus on promoting employability and the competencies and skills that employers need. There is greater support for those without traditional entry qualifications, to help them develop study skills. Programmes are offered in more flexible ways, at times and in places to meet student needs. Much progress has been made; but more will be needed as the nature of the student intake continues to change.

Context of widening participation

16. Extending access and widening participation in HE are not new issues. For many HEIs, it has been part of their mission from the outset to offer opportunities to students from under-represented groups. In recent years all HEIs have developed widening participation strategies, reflecting their individual circumstances, and supported by a range of HEFCE programmes.

17. Our approach to widening participation has evolved substantially over the past three years. It has become one of our top priorities. We published our proposals for the current round of funding for widening participation in HEFCE 01/29. The main elements are:

- a. Providing additional funding in proportion to the number of students from neighbourhoods with low rates of participation in HE, through a formula based on postcode area. This funding is to support action both to widen recruitment and to improve the retention of students once they enter HE.
- b. A new stream of funding to help raise the aspirations of pupils from all backgrounds to apply to the HEI which will best meet their needs. This programme allocates funds to those HEIs with

the lowest proportions of students from state schools and colleges, so that they can increase their efforts to broaden their intake.

c. A summer schools programme, now in its third year. The schools offer a taste of higher education to 16 year-olds – to increase their understanding of what HE is like, and to raise their aspirations to go to a university or HE college.

d. A request to HEIs to submit revised three-year strategies for widening participation. The first generation of such strategies was commissioned in 1998. The second generation, commissioned this year, covers the period 2001-02 to 2003-04.

e. A special funding programme to improve provision for disabled students.

18. In addition, since 1999-2000, we have provided £7 million annually for a regionally based programme of widening participation projects, administered jointly with the LSC (formerly with the Further Education Funding Council). Those projects focus on collaborative work between HEIs, FE providers and other partners. They provide the best starting point for the extended partnerships envisaged in this consultation document.

19. We are currently reviewing the progress of our widening participation policy, and plan to publish a report in early 2002. This project draws upon the first fruits of that work. We intend to consult the sector about our future policy in early 2002. We intend to make a clearer distinction between funds to support outreach initiatives by individual HEIs, and funds to support collaborative outreach partnerships. In addition, funds for individual HEIs will focus on actions to improve the retention of students following entry to HE, through to successful completion of their programme of study. Consequently, the proposals in this consultation are not concerned with retention, but rather with institutions working collaboratively to widen recruitment to HE. As part of our widening participation policy, we will of course wish to ensure that there is a smooth transition from the existing special projects in each region to the extended arrangements described in this document, and in particular, funding to ensure that staff continuity can be maintained.

20. In parallel, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has developed its Excellence Challenge programme, as a vehicle through which activities to encourage widening participation can be supported in specified areas of the country. Those areas are the designated Excellence in Cities local authorities and the Education Action Zones, listed in Annex D. Along with the existing HEFCE/LSC programme of collaborative projects on widening participation, the Excellence Challenge programme provides a major platform from which to build the partnerships now envisaged, so that we can support the extension of successful initiatives from Excellence Challenge areas to the whole country. It will be particularly important that the new activity relates closely to Strand 1 and 2 projects within the Excellence Challenge network, with the focus on those with the lowest participation in HE.

Role of further education

21. FE has a pivotal role to play in the initiative. All FE providers seek to equip at least some of their students with the qualifications to progress on to HE, and over 200 FE colleges also provide some higher education in their own right. FE providers are already working to widen participation, to provide programmes suited to the needs of non-traditional learners, and to support progression to higher education whether in the same college or at an HEI.

22. In 1998 we were assigned responsibility for funding most categories of HE in FECs. Since then, our policy has been to encourage partnerships between FECs and HEIs in the delivery of HE, through franchising, consortia and other means. This makes FECs particularly well placed to play a leading part in identifying the characteristics for effective partnerships and helping to build them across the country.

Aims and objectives

23. Against this background, we propose that the aims of the initiative should be to support the achievement of 50 per cent participation in HE by:

- a. Raising aspirations and motivation to enter HE among school and FE students from age 13, and particularly those from lower socio-economic groups.
- b. Raising the achievements of students from age 13, through actions which complement the school reforms already in hand, so that they gain the academic or vocational qualifications and learning skills that will enable them to enter HE.
- c. Strengthening progression routes via NVQ level 3 from schools and FE providers into HE.
- d. Raising achievement and strengthening progression routes into HE through workplace learning.

Priorities and principles

24. We propose that the project should have the following priorities:

- a. To encourage and support HEIs and further education and training providers to work together, with schools, to raise aspirations and achievement. In particular, we believe that HE and FE will need to play a greater role in working with schools to raise attainment at lower age and qualification levels, so that more students stay on to do A-levels or equivalent, gain appropriate qualifications and apply to HE. This activity needs to be focused on students from lower socio-economic groups. This would in no way detract from the current roles and responsibilities of school and FE staff, but would aim to reinforce and complement what they do.
- b. To support improvements in quality and standards in further education and training providers that work with students from disadvantaged areas, and in which rates of attainment and progression through levels 2 and 3 and into HE are low.
- c. To support increases in the demand for and completion rates of vocational courses – and progression from these routes into HE – given the limitations of A-levels as currently structured to secure the necessary growth in attainment.
- d. To support an increase in skill levels through incentives for workplace learning, and the creation of more progression routes from the workplace into HE. This would focus on encouraging those in the workforce who already have level 3 qualifications to consider HE. It would also encourage those with lower skill levels to consider higher level training with a view to HE

progression. And it would enable HEIs and FE providers to work with employers to encourage and provide higher level skills training.

25. We propose that the following principles should underlie the project:

a. Partnership. Just as the HEFCE and the LSC must work together, we recognise that our aims cannot be achieved except by comprehensive partnerships of local Learning and Skills Councils, HEIs, further education and training providers, and schools. Local education authorities, Regional Development Agencies and Regional Assemblies, Sector Strategy Councils, Local Learning Partnerships, employers and community groups also have major parts to play. The Government has set a lead for such partnership working in its Excellence in Cities, Education Action Zones and Excellence Challenge initiatives.

b. Coherence. The scale of the project and the partnerships envisaged should enable us to combine into a more systematic and consistent sequence the various 'interventions' to raise aspirations and achievements in students, from the start of secondary school through to HE entry. It should also enable us to put in place an infrastructure that can link together schools, FE providers, HEIs and workplaces to support flexible progression routes.

c. Building on what is already there. We should minimise the burden on HEIs, further education and training providers and schools by building the administration and monitoring of the scheme on existing procedures or approaches wherever possible.

d. Learning from what works. Because so much effort is already being put into schemes for widening participation, it is particularly important to assess what works most effectively, both in England and elsewhere in the world, and to disseminate this to achieve continuous improvement.

e. Flexibility. The corollary of the previous two principles is that we should recognise that different approaches will fit different circumstances. So local partners need to identify what will be most effective in their own areas.

f. Focus. Because there are so many initiatives already in train, there is a risk of dissipating further effort and funds by trying to do too many things on too small a scale. Although the priorities will vary from region to region and partnership to partnership, it is nonetheless essential that there should be a clear focus on a few chosen priorities in each case.

g. Stability. Much of the widening participation activity in recent years has been characterised by short-term project funding, which has given no guarantee of stability or sustainability to those involved. The normal timescales for public expenditure decisions tend to work against investing in building infrastructure for the longer term. But in this case we have nine years in which to achieve the 50 per cent target. That means working on a substantially longer timescale, so that the partnerships between schools, FE providers and HEIs can become firmly embedded as part of the infrastructure connecting the various parts of the education service. What we envisage is more of a campaign than a project.

26. Such principles are, of course, much easier to state than to apply. But we believe that they should be used to keep testing the proposed initiative as it evolves.

Scale of investment and range of activities

27. For both the HEFCE and the LSC, widening participation is a significant element in current discussions about the Government's spending review for the period 2003-04 to 2005-06. The conclusions of the review are expected to be announced in July 2002. As yet we have invested only modest amounts in the regional widening participation projects, but the HEFCE and the LSC believe that a very substantial increase in investment between the two organisations will be needed to enable us to meet the aims and priorities stated above.

28. It is too early to say how much investment will in fact be available, given the many competing priorities for funds. But we believe that the Government's 50 per cent participation target cannot be met without a concerted collaborative effort between HEIs, further education and training providers and schools. Although 2010 looks a long way off, the lead times are long if we are to change aspirations and attainments from age 13 onwards. Consequently, the forms of partnership envisaged in this document will be necessary in some form whatever happens. It is not too early to encourage debate and seek views now about the scale and nature of the actions needed, and about the most effective means of spending any additional funds secured through the spending review.

29. We envisage four primary strands of activity:

- a. The extension of HE/FE regional partnerships and their widening participation activities, which would be supported by both the HEFCE and the LSC.
- b. Support by the LSC for improvement in quality standards in further education and training providers working with disadvantaged students, as a means of securing an increase in the number of students achieving the qualifications needed to benefit from HE.
- c. Incentives by the LSC for workplace learning to provide progression to HE entry.
- d. A national programme of pilots, research and evaluation to assess what interventions have most effect, supported by both the HEFCE and the LSC.

HE/FE partnerships

30. The existing joint HEFCE and LSC special funding programme (see paragraph 18) has supported the establishment of widening participation partnerships within each region. In some cases (for example in the South-West) the partnership covers the whole region; in others, there are different partnerships in each sub-region. These have developed approaches tailored to local needs and circumstances to tackle local participation. We believe that we should provide further support to these partnerships, and build upon them to achieve the aims and objectives we have set for the initiative. We envisage the following broad approach.

31. Within whatever total funds are available to support the initiative, as a first step we would calculate a formula-based allocation to each region. This would be on the same principles as the allocations for current regional collaborative projects. The allocations would be weighted to reflect current levels of participation in HE by the population resident in that area, with more funds for low-participation regions. As with several other HEFCE funding programmes, these allocations would be offered to each region as

a 'conditional entitlement' – in other words, the funding would be given on condition that the region provided a satisfactory statement of how it would be spent.

32. The regional partners could choose to divide the funds and the activities into sub-regions. We hope that partnerships for the whole region will be formed where possible, to give greatest consistency in the range of support available across the region. But we recognise that some regional boundaries do not correspond well to the mapping of existing HE/FE partnerships. So long as all parts of each region have access to the forms of support provided by this initiative, it would be open to the partners to propose the sub-regional groupings that will best meet their assessment of needs.

33. In the first instance, we would invite existing regional bodies to come together to develop proposals. We would see the regional associations of HEIs, working with the regional groups of the Association of Colleges, as having the leading roles to initiate proposals, in consultation with local education authorities and Regional Development Agencies.

Targets

34. In association with the indicative regional allocations, we propose to provide data to inform the setting of targets as part of the proposals from each region. These data would set out the current pattern of progression to, and participation in, higher education among the population of each region. Information would be disaggregated so far as possible to show for each school and FEC the proportion of students staying on after 16, and progressing to HE. Identifying neighbourhoods or schools with low HE participation rates could help partnerships focus their efforts. We plan to model the contribution each region would need to make collectively, taking account of their varying starting points, in order to meet the 50 per cent target nationally. Against that background, we would then invite the regional partners to consider what targets to set themselves, both collectively and as individual organisations. Progress towards the 50 per cent target could be monitored from existing data, and regional partnerships could be encouraged to consider how their activities were influencing the participation of young people in their region.

35. We recognise the limitations on target setting in this area, given that many different factors influence the outcomes, some of them well beyond the reach of the education service. Nonetheless, we believe that it will be essential to quantify the distance that has to be travelled in each region, and the contributions expected. We also need to identify good practice and encourage continuous improvement so that we are using resources to maximum effect. We are taking specialist advice on how we can establish a robust target-setting and monitoring process that will provide incentives for continuous improvement and that is cost-effective to administer.

36. We do not propose to express targets in terms of additional students to be recruited by individual HE providers. HE recruitment operates nationally, not regionally or locally, and setting individual targets by HEI could lead to poaching and destructive forms of competition between HEIs and FE providers. Rather, the aim is for HEIs to work with FE providers and schools to encourage more young people from their region to enter HE, irrespective of which HE provider they apply to. There is no assumption that each HE provider will benefit directly in terms of its own recruitment as a result of its contributions to the initiative. We would expect all HEIs and all FECs to make a contribution towards the strategy, although the nature of that contribution will vary substantially.

Strategic action plans

37. Each region (or co-ordinated sub-regions) would be invited to put together a strategy for collaborative action to raise attainment and aspiration throughout the 'supply chain' of progression to HE, from the secondary school phase onwards. The activities to be undertaken would be for each regional or sub-regional partnership to decide. But the common elements would be:

- a. A map of existing collaborative activities in that region, and an assessment of how well they are working.
- b. Identification of gaps in the range of existing activities which the partners wish to fill, and priorities for expanding or developing existing activities.
- c. Quantified targets for assessing the effectiveness of the activities, and their contribution to raising participation in HE among the population of that region.
- d. A description of the infrastructure which the partnership will establish to deliver the activities proposed. This may be centred on the regional HE association or some other focal point. In some cases, particular HEIs may be prepared to take on the co-ordinating role, including accommodating and servicing the regional or sub-regional infrastructure. That infrastructure would need to include some form of co-ordination unit for the programme overall, as well as co-ordinators specifically for the summer schools/mentoring programmes.

38. We would invite partnerships to submit strategic action plans setting out how they would use additional resources to meet the aims and objectives of the initiative. Plans would be assessed at regional and national levels to determine that they were robust as a basis for funding; that local, sub-regional and regional priorities and coverage were being addressed; and that the aggregate of plans would contribute to realising the national aims and objectives for the initiative. Once strategic plans had been approved, we would invite partnerships to submit costed business plans for funding.

Priority areas for investment

39. The most effective mix of activities will vary from region to region, and would not be prescribed. Annex C contains an illustrative list of activities already undertaken by HE/FE partnerships around the country. The following paragraphs set out what we currently see as priority areas for significant investment.

40. A major element of each partnership would be identifying and supporting a group of staff in partner HEIs and FE providers who are dedicated to working with schools and colleges to raise aspirations and achievement. There is already a great deal of activity by HE/FE staff to raise aspirations and increase motivation in students from lower socio-economic groups, but much of it is localised and ad hoc. We would like to support the extension of that work so that all schools, FE providers and students that wish to can benefit. The support activities should also be available consistently to lower age groups as well as those aged 16-18.

41. We recognise, of course, the need to avoid undermining or duplicating the existing roles of staff. Staff in schools, FE and HE are specialists in their respective sectors, and already face heavy demands to carry out their existing roles successfully. Teachers in schools also require qualified teacher status,

which most HE and FE staff will not have. The issue is the impact that could be achieved by having more people with the specific task of spanning the boundaries between the sectors of the education service, complementing the contributions of existing staff by working with them in raising aspirations and attainment from age 13 onwards.

42. Such staff would focus on working with teachers to enhance, extend or accelerate the school curriculum, by reinforcing teaching of core subjects, offering a wide range of learning opportunities in specialist or shortage subject areas, or enriching the curriculum by providing support in subjects not traditionally taught in schools. Such work would need to be dovetailed with, but would extend beyond, the existing programme to support gifted and talented pupils in schools.

43. The number of staff involved from different HEIs and FE providers would vary. Staff should be linked together in extended networks across several HEIs/FE providers, which can provide a consistent service to schools and FECs across a wider geographical area and across age and educational levels. A significant element of staff development would be needed to support staff in these roles.

44. We administer a programme of HE summer schools targeted at 16 year-old pupils from schools in Excellence in Cities areas and Education Action Zones. Individual HEIs also provide their own summer schools. This approach has been evaluated and found to be effective in raising aspirations. One area for further investment is to extend the HEFCE summer schools scheme to disadvantaged students in other parts of the country and to younger pupils. We should also invest in longer summer schools focused on raising achievement, drawing on the experience from the DfES's Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth.

45. School students welcome, and are encouraged by, interaction with HE and FE undergraduate students. This has been identified as a particularly successful aspect of summer schools. Postgraduate students can also support school students through curriculum enrichment, as evidenced by the DfES National Mentoring project. Mentoring activities which raise attainment could be another area for significant investment. A further priority area might be support for collaborative projects to improve provision for students with disabilities.

46. It is important that parents and carers understand the opportunities being offered to their children and are able to give appropriate support to them. An aspect of the activity should be to reach out to parents and carers.

Quality standards

47. The second strand of the initiative would be action by the LSC to extend its programme for improving quality standards in further education and training. That would be designed to raise attainment and retention at levels 2 and 3 among lower socio-economic groups. Given the strong correlation between achieving qualifications at those levels and subsequent progression to HE, such action should contribute directly to meeting the HE participation target.

48. This strand would build upon the methods that the LSC has established for quality improvement, through the submission of annual self-assessments and development plans by providers. Funds would be targeted to providers that draw students from lower socio-economic groups and poorer neighbourhoods, and to those that have lower attainment and retention rates at levels 2 and 3 and HE entry. Against a statement of national priorities for use of the funds, further education and training

providers would be invited to set out how they would use their allocations, within the development plans that they submit annually and which are agreed with local LSCs. The funds would contribute towards achievement of the targets set for level 2 and 3 attainment more generally.

49. These funds would be monitored as part of the regular monitoring of development plans by local LSCs. We would also survey the best practice funded by the scheme, and disseminate this to feed into the development of all strands of activity supported by the initiative.

Workplace learning

50. Much of the focus of widening participation activity to date has been on encouraging more school and college leavers, and particularly those from under-represented groups, to progress directly to HE. But the Government target relates to those in the age range 18-30, many of whom went straight into jobs on leaving school or FE. One driving force behind the 50 per cent participation target is to upgrade the skills in the workforce and to establish the UK as a knowledge economy that can hold its own in the international marketplace. So the initiative must also address the needs of those at work:

- by giving better support to those who do not have qualifications at levels 2 and 3 to achieve them, as a basis for subsequent progression to HE if they wish
- by giving more encouragement to those who already have such qualifications to enter HE
- by offering more flexible delivery of HE, so that HE providers go to those in work, rather than expecting those in work to come to them. It remains the case that public funds cannot be used to pay for employers' training programmes. But there is more scope for HE providers and employers to work together to give those in the workplace better access to HE opportunities, including accreditation of workplace learning at level 4
- and through all these by addressing some of the major obstacles to participation – such as job and domestic responsibilities, cost, the difficulties for small to medium sized enterprises in offering training, and the acceptance of vocational qualifications in progression.

51. The LSC's Centres of Vocational Excellence in designated FE providers, the HEFCE's New Technology Institutes (which are partnerships between HEIs, FE providers and others in meeting skills needs in IT and advanced technology), and Foundation Degree programmes should have a major role to play in this strand of the initiative.

52. Workplace learning is a much more diffuse area to target than progression directly from school or FE to HE. So we propose to take a sector (employer/industry) approach to supporting and enhancing workplace learning to achieve HE entry, and to extending collaboration between HE providers and employers in the provision of HE. The focus should be on sectors which:

- already demonstrate evidence of direct HE/FE engagement with employers
- have a track record of joint working and a sense of sector identity
- have evidence of skills shortages which would appropriately be met through upgrading skills and qualifications to higher education level.

53. The approach would start by analysing existing skills levels within target sectors, assessing the gap between those skills and the level of attainment required to achieve HE entry, and developing programmes to bridge that gap. We would provide support for the analysis of skills and for the development and delivery of the new programmes by further education providers, although we would expect employers to at least maintain their support for training.

54. This area of activity will need to involve a different range of partners from the previous two strands. But it needs nonetheless to be fully integrated with the FE/HE partnerships, to ensure both progression for workplace learners onto HE programmes, and stronger collaboration between HE providers and employers in delivering HE programmes. So within the overall infrastructure for the HE/FE widening participation partnerships, there will need to be a dedicated resource to focus on support for progression routes from workplace learning into HE.

Research and evaluation

55. We envisage a major research programme as part of the initiative. This would identify effective approaches to overcoming participation barriers, including experience from overseas. We would also need an ongoing evaluation of the project (based upon national and regional monitoring) which would be linked to the research programme.

56. We would establish a national steering group for the project. In addition, the project would be overseen by the HEFCE's Equal Opportunities and Lifelong Learning (EQUALL) Committee, to ensure that it co-ordinates with our widening participation policy. The LSC has established through its Adult Learning Committee a group to compile advice to the Minister of State, Margaret Hodge, on widening participation, following her request for such advice in her letter to Bryan Sanderson, chair of the LSC. That group's remit will include overseeing this project.

57. We envisage that the regional advisory networks that we have established for our widening participation special projects would play a significant role in the set-up, assessment and monitoring of the activity. We would draw upon the expertise of the HEFCE regional consultants and regional teams. The LSC has established a number of groups comprising local LSC executive directors, usually one from each region, with an appropriate national director. Their purpose is to steer key programmes or functional areas of work. One such group is being brought together for HE. It will steer the LSC's operational management side of the project, including liaison with the HEFCE and, in particular, HEFCE regional consultants, and the HE and FE institutions involved in the project.

Consultation and next steps

58. We invite views on the approach set out in this consultation document. The specific aspects on which we would welcome comment are listed in the response template at Annex B, which is available electronically with this document on our web-site www.hefce.ac.uk under 'Publications'. If you are not able to use the template on the web, please contact Clare Streatfield for a Word or paper version of the template.

59. Responses, using the template, should be sent by **Friday 22 March 2002** to:

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tel 0117 931 7234
e-mail c.streatfield@hefce.ac.uk

60. We will copy all responses to the LSC, and we will jointly consider next steps. Subject to the responses, and the announcement in July 2002 of the results of the current spending review, we would expect to issue a publication in autumn 2002 inviting regional partners to prepare strategic plans, with a view to funding from April 2003.

Queries and regional consultation

61. Any queries about this consultation document should be directed to the National HEFCE/LSC Partnerships for Progression Team at the HEFCE (see page 1).

62. We are planning to organise regional discussions on the proposals. For information, please contact the HEFCE Regional Consultants:

- Eastern region: Derek Hicks, tel 0117 931 7460, e-mail d.hicks@hefce.ac.uk
- East Midlands: Tansi Harper, tel 0117 931 7313, e-mail t.harper@hefce.ac.uk
- London: Contact National Partnerships for Progression team
- North-East: Derek Hicks, tel 0117 931 7460, e-mail d.hicks@hefce.ac.uk
- North-West: Kate Murray (0117 931 7022, e-mail k.murray@hefce.ac.uk
- South-East: Rama Thirunamachandran, tel 0117 931 7024, e-mail r.thirunamachandran@hefce.ac.uk
- South-West: David Noyce, tel 0117 931 7349, e-mail d.noyce@hefce.ac.uk
- West Midlands: John Selby, tel 0117 931 7343, e-mail j.selby@hefce.ac.uk
- Yorkshire and the Humber: Roger Lewis, tel 0117 931 7027, e-mail r.lewis@hefce.ac.uk

Annex A

List of consultees

All HEFCE-funded higher education institutions in England
All LSC-funded further education colleges in England
All local Learning and Skills Councils
Chief Education Officers of all local education authorities in England
Sector Strategy Councils
Group Training Associations
Education Action Zone Co-ordinators
Excellence in Cities partnerships
Excellence Challenge partnerships
Regional Development Agencies
Local Learning Partnerships
Regional Connexions Service

Association of Careers Guidance Advisory Staff (ACGAS)
Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR)
Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)
Association of University Teachers (AUT)
Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
Girls School Association (GSA)
Headmasters and Headmistresses Conference (HMC)
Higher Education Liaison Officers Association (HELOA)
Institute of Directors (IOD)
National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)
National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)
National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE)
National Union of Teachers (NUT)
Professional Association of Teachers (PAT)
Secondary Heads Association (SHA)
Society of Education Officers (SEO)
Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE)

Annex B

Partnerships for Progression initiative: template for responses

This template can be accessed with the main document on the web at www.hefce.ac.uk under 'Publications'. If you are not able to use the template on the web, please contact Clare Streatfield for a Word or paper version of the template.

Annex C

Illustrative activities for raising attainment and aspiration

Raising aspirations and awareness among school and further education students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint FE/HE 'Aiming for College Education' (ACE) days: HE/FE staff go into schools to explain the nature of HE and FE to school pupils
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open days for parents/carers of secondary age pupils to be held at sixth form and FE colleges and HEIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide tasters for school students in specialist subjects, through HE/FE staff – for example, tasters in medical programmes for pupils from schools with few entrants to medicine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student shadowing/mentoring schemes: both HE students going into schools and colleges, and school/college students going to shadow the HE student at the HE provider
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of HE summer schools programme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HE staff 'ambassador' programmes, visiting schools and colleges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of single contact points at each HEI for each school and college
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better advice for school and FE students on the financial implications of HE study, and the range of financial support available for both full-time and part-time students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better advice for school and FE students on non-financial forms of support available, for example for disabled students or those with caring responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further development of student progress files and records of achievement, as a means of enabling students without traditional entry qualifications to demonstrate competences and skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better support, training and development for HE staff involved in recruiting students from schools and colleges
Facilitating progression
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More 'foundation' programmes to develop study skills and confidence in preparation for HE, ranging from one year access programmes to pre-HE summer schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of more local HE/FE progression agreements, so that FE students meeting certain conditions are guaranteed progression to places in an HEI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of more local credit consortia to credit rate the full range of LSC-funded courses to promote progression both within HE and between FE and HE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of more 'compact' schemes between HEIs, FECs and schools in a local area, offering HE places to school/FE pupils who meet certain conditions but who do not have traditional entry qualifications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of stronger HE centres within FE colleges, with a 'critical mass' of HE numbers
Raising attainment
<i>Widening range of specialist teaching for school and FE students</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint appointments or secondments of HE staff to clusters of schools to offer specialist teaching in areas outside the standard curriculum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Enriching, accelerating and extending the school curriculum</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HE staff offering enrichment, acceleration and extension to the school curriculum – within or outside the normal school day, including support to students taking GCSEs/A-levels on fast track
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HE staff contributing to programmes for gifted and talented children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint curriculum planning across schools, FE and HE

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extended summer schools, providing more intensive tuition by subject or in general study skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting the work of local consortia of sixth forms, sixth form colleges and FECs to ensure full access to academic and vocational subjects for all students, broadening the range of subjects available and enhancing the viability of minority subjects by increasing the pool of students who can access them
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing resources to enhance provision
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making HEI resources and facilities available to schools and FECs; making FEC resources and facilities available to schools

Annex D

Education Action Zones and Excellence in Cities areas in Excellence Challenge

Excellence in Cities Phases 1 and 2

Barking and Dagenham
Birmingham
Bradford
Brent
Bristol, City of
Camden
Ealing
Gateshead
Greenwich
Hackney
Halton
Hammersmith and Fulham
Haringey
Hartlepool
Islington
Kensington and Chelsea
Kingston Upon Hull, City of
Knowsley
Lambeth
Leeds
Leicester
Lewisham
Liverpool
Manchester
Middlesborough
Newcastle upon Tyne
Newham
North Tyneside
Nottingham
Redcar and Cleveland
Rochdale
Rotherham
Salford
Sefton
Sheffield
Solihull
South Tyneside
Southwark
St Helens
Stockton-on-Tees
Stoke-on-Trent
Sunderland
Tower Hamlets
Waltham Forest

Wandsworth
Westminster
Wirral

Education Action Zones

Barnsley
Bedfordshire
Blackburn with Darwin
Bolton
Brighton and Hove
Bromley
Calderdale
Cheshire
Cornwall
Coventry
Croydon
Cumbria
Derby
Derbyshire
Dudley
Durham
East Riding of Yorkshire
East Sussex
Essex
Gloucestershire
Hampshire
Herefordshire
Kent
Lancashire
Medway
Norfolk
North East Lincolnshire
North Somerset
Northamptonshire
Northumberland
Oxfordshire
Plymouth
Sandwell
Shropshire
Slough
Somerset
Southend-on-Sea
Telford & Wrekin
Trafford
Wakefield
Wigan
Wolverhampton