

Introduction

In considering the specific areas set out in HEFCE's grant letter under the theme of 'employer engagement', the Higher Education Academy has identified four UK-wide priority areas. These priorities have been informed by the Academy's study on work-based learning which focused on learning which accredits or extends the workplace skills of employees, and a national symposium and conference on work-based learning, as well as discussions with key partner agencies and bodies notably DfES, HEFCE, QAA, fdf, SSDA, CIHE and UVAC. The upskilling and reskilling of the workforce is therefore seen as a strategic priority for the Academy.

Key activities

The key activities being supported by the Academy are outlined under each of the four priority areas.

Priority 1: Building stronger working relationships with key partner organisations as part of a more joined up approach to policy development and delivery of work-based learning

Key activities include:

- Working with the DfES, HEFCE and QAA to influence how Government policy on employer engagement/workforce development can positively impact on the HE sector
- Scoping the potential to establish an 'Observatory for Workforce Development' to review policy/strategy/research documents and disseminate the key findings to key stakeholders (e.g. policy makers, senior managers in HEIs, practitioners)
- Collaborating with key partner organisations (e.g. fdf, UVAC, CIHE) engaged in supporting workforce developments and work-based learning
- Organising and facilitating a joint Academy/UUK by invitation 'Think-Tank' focused on how HEIs can respond to the post-Leitch agenda.

Priority 2: Working with senior managers in HEIs (including HE in FE) to expand the nature and extent of the workforce development offer by helping them to shape up their strategic intent and explore structural issues

Key activities include:

- Facilitating a special interest group for PVCs (or equivalent), who are responsible for driving forward how their institutions support workforce development, to help address strategic and infrastructural issues
- Supporting the University of Chester in leading on a pedagogic special interest group for practitioners engaged in designing and delivering work-based learning
- Engaging with the three Higher Level Skills Pathfinders and employer engagement pilots funded by HEFCE to support networking and sharing lessons learnt across thematic areas of interest (e.g. staff development, course design and delivery, learner support)
- Organising an Annual Conference and a seminar series on work-based learning in response to the expressed needs of HE institutions.

Priority 3: Supporting the Subject Centres working with HEIs in developing discipline specific practice in conjunction with the relevant SSCs

Key activities include:

- Facilitating a 'community of practice' for Subject Centres engaged in tackling the workforce development agenda to support the sharing of learning and building stronger relationships with bodies such as the SSCs
- Co-ordinating the implementation and supporting the evaluation of six Subject Centre development projects in building longer-term strategic relationships with SSCs

for the benefit of their respective communities and supporting HEIs to respond to identified workforce development needs by developing discipline specific practice.

Priority 4: Engaging in more research and evaluation of practice to inform curriculum design in response to the expressed interests of practitioners

Key activities include:

- Organising and facilitating a 'community of practice' that draws together researchers engaged in work-based learning
- Co-ordinating and co-funding a programme of research in response to the expressed interests of senior managers and practitioners in HEIs (e.g. supporting learning in the workplace, funding and costing provision, determining impact on learners and employers).

The activities are being co-ordinated by the Academy's Employer Engagement Team comprising Freda Tallantyre (Senior Associate), Iain Nixon (Consultant) and Rebecca Dodgson (Project Officer).

How to get involved

For further information and to find out how to get involved in any of the activities, please contact the Rebecca Dodgson at Academy (York) on 01904 717574 or rebecca.dodgson@heacademy.ac.uk.