



Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network

WVLLN

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Newsletter

Editor's comment

In this edition, which focuses on work based learning and links to higher level skills, you will find a report on the UALL annual conference by Wendy Monteith, Progression Co-ordinator at University of Gloucestershire; a briefing on the QCF by Ruth Waring, Progression Co-ordinator at the University of Bath; a report on the Work Based Learning Day held at UWE by Kate Thomas, Progression Co-ordinator at UWE and an update from Assistant Director Progression.

Invitations to WVLLN events—'Application to Offer—preparing students for entry to HE' and 'Diplomas & Higher Education: Progression and Curriculum' have been sent. Hope to see you there.

If you would like further information about the events then please contact us at Carpenter House—details on page 2.

Our next edition will be in November.

Work Based Learning Network Annual Conference—University Association of Life Long Learning, University of Wales Institute 3-4th July—W.Monteith

With delegates from a wide range of higher education institutions across the UK and an extensive and varied programme, the Work Based Network Annual Conference, 2008, promised to be both stimulating and thought-provoking, and it didn't disappoint.

With a welcome by David Holfield (UWIC) and an introduction to the themes of the conference by Carol Costley, (Convener of WBL network, UALL / Middlesex University), the conference got off to a great start.

Peter Treadwell (Dean of Academic Development & Participation, UWIC) was the first keynote speaker, with a presentation entitled "Building a culture of employer engagement—the barriers and opportunities linked to work based learning". Through his presentation, he discussed a UWIC feasibility study he had been involved with entitled "Strategic Development of High Level Learning for the Workforce in Wales", designed to lead to the establishment of an All-Wales Centre for Workforce Development.

Treadwell identified the key objectives of the project as follows: 'expand awareness/use of the CQFW credit system (building credit, building qualification); encourage growth in high level learning; build a 'business case' for sustainable workforce development and offer innovative 'learning solutions' and design user-friendly approaches to the accreditation of WBL and CPD'.

He then reviewed the project within the context of current HE policy, highlighting the project objectives in relation to government reports such as Leitch review of Skills (2005) and the DIUS 'HE for the Workforce' report (2007).

Upon examining the results of the study, he noted the key issues as funding, building HE/FE status with employers and building strategy and capacity. Finally, he concluded that there was a need to build a real 'Learning Society' (adapted from Carneiro R, 2007), create 21st Century knowledge management and offer a new 'landscape of learning' which creates communities of practice via employer engagement.

Treadwell set the tone for the conference and his speech was followed by a number of extremely informative sessions during which many delegates presented papers, sharing their experiences of work based learning and development. Elaine Fisher, Assistant Director for the WVLLN, co-presented a session entitled "Crafting Sustainable futures for the Work Based Learning: Potential Blue Oceans for post-compulsory education". This focused upon critically analysing the opportunities available to WBL praxis and provision.

The second day of the conference followed a similar pattern, with Ken Toop (SEMPTA, Wales), presenting on "The Transfer of Suitable Company Learning Programmes onto the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales".

In conclusion, the conference was a definite success for UALL, greatly benefitted by the active participation of so many delegates active within the field of WBL & development. I look forward to next year.

The World's First Regulated Credit and Qualifications Framework (QCF) — R. Waring, WVLLN Progression Co-ordinator (Bath)

At a recent event organised by the South East London LLN, Peter Wilson, Development Officer for Credit and Qualifications at NIACE talked about the radical change of the national QCF which is already underway. The QCF will cover England, Wales and Northern Ireland and apply to qualifications and credit outside higher education.

The revised framework will be a radical reform of the qualifications system with the aim of making it more inclusive and accessible to many more learners. The system will be more flexible and more responsive to both individual and employer needs. It is planned as one which is easy to understand and simple to use with a reduction in the current burden of bureaucracy on users.

The key design feature of the QCF will be a standard format for all units which will form

the building blocks of all qualifications. Credits will be awarded for completion of units, recorded in a Learner Achievement Record and accumulated towards qualifications. Qualifications will be based on rules of combination and a learner will not have to do a whole qualification.

The key changes from the current national qualifications framework are that the framework will be based on a set of simple design specifications applied uniformly across the QCF with regulation being based mainly on recognition and monitoring of organisations rather than qualifications. Credits are the currency of achievement with mutual recognition of credits by all awarding bodies. (There are no qualification types—yet).

There are implications for the infrastructure of FE. New LSC funding arrangements are

being trialled between 2008 and 2009 with a view to changing to a unit and credit-based funding between 2009 and 2010. A new credit success rate measure will be trailed from 2008 to 2009. New ICT systems developed between 2008 and 2009 will be in place by 2010 and will involve a unique learner number and learner achievement record for all learners.

The implications for FE in terms of curriculum are that curriculum design will be based on units which are shared across qualifications and awarding bodies. Colleges will have more freedom to plan curriculum and design assessments to meet the ends of different learners rather than around qualification design. The QCF is, and will remain, separate from the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and the Credit Framework for HE.

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Our aims for the next month

Elaine Fisher



Since our last newsletter the LLN said farewell to Oakfield Campus and 'hello' to Carpenter House, Bath. We are now settled in our new offices and are enjoying all that Bath has to offer. We welcome Alana Coyle to the LLN as Steve's new PA.

Over the summer we have been busy planning for the forthcoming events in October and November. The first event 'Application to Offer—preparing students for entry to HE' will be held at Gloucestershire Cricket Ground, Bristol on October 21st. This will offer FE tutors and advisors the opportunity to talk to HE admissions tutors as well hearing from a range of speakers including Steve Dear, WVLLN Director on the transferability of qualifications.

We are delighted that Ken Spours and Ann Hodgson have agreed to be keynote speakers for 'Diplomas and HE—Progression and Curriculum' which is being held on November 6th at the Thistle Hotel in Bristol. This event will offer Diploma Consortia and representatives from HE the opportunity to develop

links as well as building on already developed collaborative practices.

The IAG 'signposting' guide has now been completed and we will be sending copies out during September.

The Apprentice agreements will be presented to the Management Board on 22nd September and we anticipate that they will be formally agreed with formal signing at the November Board meeting.

The second round of the FE Development Fund has been successful and we are pleased that 7 of the bids have been agreed and the successful colleges will be receiving their first round of funding in the next few weeks. Projects include Access to HE video production; improving teaching and learning for offenders in order to raise aspirations to enable access into HE; working with employers and heads of centres to build confidence of BME staff and prepare them for a bridging course; bridging progression gaps by creating a customised modular, sector specific course to respond to a deficiency of basic IT skills in the Care sector and a pilot

to test the possibilities for APEL in the Environment/Heritage/Land based sector.

The first round projects are coming to a close and we anticipate uploading resources and reports from this round onto our website. The projects have produced extremely interesting reports and resources and it has been a good opportunity to work more closely with colleges.

Work continues on a learner's guide to APEL together with a protocol agreement which, it is anticipated, will be presented to the Management board in November.

Upcoming Events

- 16th September—Team meeting, UWE
- 22nd September—Management Board meeting, Carpenter House, Bath
- 21st October—Application to Offer—preparing students for entry to HE, GCG, Bristol

QCF—Continued from page 1

At the moment there is no formal decision to bring 'A' levels into the QCF, but a decision will be taken later in 2008. If they are brought into the QCF this would not be until 2013. 'A' levels would still be graded and it is expected that the current grading arrangements will be carried over to the re-specified qualifications. Although the QCF will bring some changes to the use of the terms 'Certificate' and 'Diploma' it will still be possible for awarding bodies to use particular brand identities for qualifications such as BTEC.

However, NVQs will be one qualification type that will disappear, although it is possible that the letters 'NVQ' might appear in qualification titles for a transitional period to indicate that a qualification in the QCF was derived from an NVQ. In terms of the progression agreements which LLNs have developed around existing qualifications, the transition to the new QCF qualifications will take time to complete.

In the long term, HEIs will be likely to ask for credit achievement on particular units as part of admissions requirements and will refer to the learner achievement record for this information. HEIs may get involved in devising units for delivery in revised 'A' levels and/or 14-19 Diplomas.

More information about the QCF is available at www.qca.org.uk/qca_8150.aspx

Work-based Learning (WBL) Day

Kate Thomas, WVLLN Progression Co-ordinator based at UWE, contributed to a Work Based Learning Day held by UWE's Bristol Business School on 1st July 2008. The intention of the Day was to review current activity and developments in WBL, within UWE and nationally, and for BBS Faculty members to consider the opportunities and challenges of developing WBL modules and routes within the Faculty. Following an introduction by Jane Harrington, Associate Dean, BBS, Kate gave a brief overview of WBL provision in the UK including WBL as an articulated progression route for Foundation degrees; single and combined Honours degrees in WBL and comprehensive WBL award frameworks including learndirect's Learning Through Work.

A wbl 'top-up' for Foundation degrees is increasingly being seen as an appropriate progression route for learners who have been successfully combining work with learning in a vocationally-orientated discipline. Middlesex University offers a range of WBL Studies undergraduate programmes and currently have 100 students on Honours year, 28 students of whom have progressed from Foundation degrees in 2007-8. WVLLN partner, the University of Bath have introduced a WBL Honours year for 9 of its 14 Foundation degrees in a range of subjects, while Bath Spa University will run a BA (Hons) Early Years Education (Work-Based) from September 2008. There is also an increasing number of full degree programmes in work-based. The Universities of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church have recently introduced part-time Honours degrees by WBL which allow students to combine work-related study with other academic disciplines.

While provision is clearly varied in content and delivery method, the overview enabled Kate to summarise key characteristics of WBL programmes. Participants were then invited to consider the experiences of developing a WBL Honours year by Dr Anita Walsh of Birkbeck College, University of London and the lessons learned from developing & running WBL modules at UWE by Lesley Moore, Faculty of Health & Life Sciences, UWE. Jane Harrington thanked all three contributors for providing a stimulating foundation for the workshops & discussions which were due to take place in the afternoon.