

## Foundation Learning in action project report

### Leeds City College and Education Leeds Post-16 admissions criteria for learners with spiky profiles

#### Project introduction

The purpose of the project was to produce a common set of business rules (guidance) for all post-16 learning providers in Leeds to use for reviewing and adapting existing admissions criteria so that they take account of learners with spiky profiles that have undertaken a Foundation Learning programme during Key Stage 4.

#### Joint partnership

Leeds City College (Leeds Further Forward  
[www.leedsfurtherforward.org](http://www.leedsfurtherforward.org))  
Education Leeds (local authority)  
[www.educationleeds.co.uk](http://www.educationleeds.co.uk)

#### Region

Yorkshire and Humber

#### Provider profile

FE college and local authority 14–19 team

#### Author name and contact details

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## Project objectives and intended outcomes

The ultimate aim was to issue all post-16 learning providers in Leeds with comprehensive guidance that would enable them to review and adapt their admissions criteria to take account of young people who have undertaken a Foundation Learning programme in Key Stage 4 and who have spiky profiles at the point of applying for post-16 education and training. The guidance would need to be generic enough to apply to providers from all sectors i.e. school sixth forms, FE colleges, work-based learning (WBL) providers and the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS).

There needed to be a move away from describing admissions/selection criteria primarily in terms of GCSE results and towards describing them in terms of Foundation Learning qualifications within the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). This would ensure that learners who achieve a portfolio of Foundation Learning units and qualifications rather than GCSEs will easily be able to recognise whether a particular course is suitable for them as their next step.

Objective	Outcome
Form a collaborative group of post-16 providers to produce a common set of business rules (guidance) for all post-16 providers in Leeds to use for reviewing and adapting existing admissions criteria to take account of learners with spiky profiles that have undertaken a Foundation Learning programme during Key Stage 4.	Post-16 providers are clear about the criteria they need to use to review their admissions/selection criteria in order to meet the needs of Foundation Learning learners progressing from Key Stage 4.

## Project activities and approach

1 A small steering group was established, consisting of 3 members:

- Catherine Liddle, 14–19 Team, Education Leeds
- Emma Dunstan, 14–19 Partnership Manager, Leeds City College, Thomas Danby Campus/Chair of Leeds Further Forward
- Sally Dexter, Leeds City College, Technology Campus/Projects Officer for Leeds Further Forward

Keeping to a small steering group enabled us to get the project moving very quickly.

2 Contractual relationships were established as follows:

- Education Leeds signed the contract with LSIS.
- Education Leeds then issued a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Leeds Further Forward – an FE college network in Leeds offering pre-16, offsite learning to the schools including vocational provision at Levels 1 and 2 and also provision for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Difficulties (LLDD) – to clarify expected outcomes, outputs, roles, responsibilities, partnership working arrangements and funding arrangements.

### 3 Consultation and planning meetings:

Two meetings were held on 4th and 24th February 2010. They were attended by 29 individual contributors from a wide range of partners across all sectors, as shown below:

- 3 representatives from the Connexions Service
- 5 representatives from the Work Based Learning sector
- 13 representatives from the FE college sector
- 2 representatives from the local authority
- 2 representatives from mainstream schools
- 1 representative from a Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre (SILC)
- 1 representative from the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS)
- 2 representatives from the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA), one from the data/point scores team and one from the Foundation Learning team

Although the project was focused on post-16 providers, the membership of the planning group was extended to include other relevant organisations i.e. the Connexions service, both mainstream and special schools to represent the point of view of learners transferring from Key Stage 4, and school sixth forms in their role as post-16 providers. The representatives from QCDA were valuable in ensuring that the planning group had a clear understanding of Foundation Learning qualifications within the QCF in terms of GCSE equivalencies, contribution to GCSE threshold, point scores and bandings.

The first meeting (4th February 2010) was, effectively, an all day event. The morning was a networking event for Leeds Further Forward. The afternoon session was linked to this and was a specific planning meeting for this project.

- The morning session included a (requested) presentation by the two QCDA representatives on point scores and GCSE equivalencies and how that maps into Foundation Learning programmes. The presentation used can be found as an appendix within the *Admissions Criteria Guidelines for Providers* that we produced as a result of this project.

The QCDA staff were questioned to clarify how Foundation Learning programmes could contribute to the accumulation of point scores and to the Level 1 and Level 2 thresholds and how a learner might perceive equivalencies in terms of GCSEs. There was a lot of discussion around these points which ensured that the providers understood that Entry 1, 2 and 3 qualifications within the QCF did not contribute towards the thresholds at Levels 1 and 2 but did still attract point scores. It was also emphasised that point scores are a way of measuring the performance of the provider, not for measuring the success of the individual learner.

There was a query about BTECs and how they fit in. It was apparent that there is a tension between delivering BTECs marketed as the equivalent of 4 GCSEs and delivering GCSEs at Level 1 compared to delivering a Foundation Learning programme. There was a discussion about how the emphasis had to be on destination-led programmes and whether or not the BTEC and GCSE Level 1 options would provide learners with appropriate progression routes or whether they would be barriers to successful progression.

- This was followed by a round table exercise in groups of four or five people. Each group was provided with three examples of Foundation Learning programmes for individual learners, based on the QCDA presentation (Appendix 1).

Each group was asked to look at the existing admissions criteria from the perspective of one of the three sample learners and to decide whether or not that young person would be able to apply for the different courses or even if it was clear whether the young person could apply. If it wasn't clear, the delegates gave reasons and specified what additional information would need to be added to the course descriptions in order to make it clear. This was recorded on the worksheet for each group.

The feedback was discussed as a whole group and recorded on a flipchart.

This information was taken away and written up into the draft *Admissions Criteria Guidelines for Providers*, which was circulated for comment then discussed and finalised at the second planning meeting held approximately three weeks later on 24th February 2010.

## Evaluation and impact

Having a small steering group enabled the project to get moving very quickly as the short project timescale was a potential barrier. Intensive and detailed preparation took place to ensure that the planning sessions were focussed and effective.

Engaging a wide range of stakeholders and targeting individuals in specific roles (e.g. admissions tutors in FE colleges) and staff with a good understanding of Foundation Learning allowed further development of that understanding. The collaborative working was a strength of the project, e.g. Leeds Further Forward staff were able to use their existing networks to identify relevant representatives from FE colleges and schools and to secure the commitment of those individuals and organisations. There were core members who attended both planning meetings although there were a lot of members who only attended one of the meetings. This could have been a potential barrier but actually turned out to be a strength as people at the second meeting looked at the draft guidelines with fresh eyes and suggested additions and improvements.

There was commitment from the senior management of all participating organisations and they were directly involved in the project, taking part in the planning meetings. This will ensure an effective rollout of the project outcomes across all networks and within individual organisations.

The involvement of QCDA provided benefits through their direct input into the project which informed the output. At our request, as part of this project, they produced a tailor-made presentation based on models of learners with spiky profiles within Foundation Learning which explained how point scores, GCSE equivalencies, contribution to GCSE thresholds and bandings worked. This enabled the planning group to have a comprehensive understanding of a complex area which informed their thinking in terms of developing the admissions criteria guidance for providers.

QCDA also presented at a Leeds Further Forward networking event, which was held on the same day as the first project planning meeting, and which meant that an even wider audience of education and training professionals had the benefit of a clearer understanding of how Foundation Learning qualifications fit alongside the other qualification routes.

The *Admissions Criteria Guidelines for Providers* document is the key resource produced as an outcome of this project. The guidelines include background and context (with reference to how they support the national implementation timeline for Foundation Learning), key recommendations, guidelines for structuring and formatting the curriculum offer, good practice guidelines, useful web links and appendices, including the QCDA presentation. It will be disseminated to all providers across the city via the appropriate networks.

The document is applicable to any provider revising admissions criteria for Key Stage 4 learners who are applying to post-16 programmes, as was the original intention. An additional benefit is that the guidance can also be used by providers who deliver programmes to pre-16 learners who require Foundation Learning within Key Stage 4 i.e. the large number of providers who currently deliver pre-16, off-site, vocational programmes, including the Key Stage 4 Engagement programme. Most of these are post-16 providers who also deliver pre-16 programmes.

The guidelines should have an immediate impact on Admissions staff across the post-16 sector in Leeds. The project has ensured that Leeds providers are now in a position to review the admissions criteria that they are currently producing (early 2010) ready for publishing their prospectuses for programmes and courses that will be starting in September 2011. The first cohort of learners to benefit from this revised guidance will be the Year 11 leavers in summer 2011. It is expected that they will find course information for post-16 programmes at Level 2 or further Foundation Learning provision at Level 1 and below to be more accessible and more easily understood. Learners will be aware of opportunities that are available to them whereas previously they may have been deterred by the admissions criteria for a post-16 course, e.g. if the criteria were described in terms of GCSE grades only then a young person with Foundation Learning qualifications may not have applied because they didn't realise that they could. With the new admissions criteria in place, a young person should be able to see clearly whether a particular course is suitable for them or not.

The ultimate impact should be an increase in the number of young people applying for and taking up appropriate post-16 education, employment or training, supporting the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) and increasing the number of young people in sustainable Employment, Education or Training (EET).

### **Next steps, ensuring sustainability**

To ensure that the momentum of our work is sustained, we intend to:

- Gain endorsement through the Leeds 14–19 Strategy Group.
- Disseminate the *Admissions Criteria Guidelines for Providers* via a range of networks in Leeds:
  - FE Vice-Principals' group.
  - FE colleges/schools and Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre (SILC) network via Leeds Further Forward.
  - West Yorkshire Learning Providers (WYLP), the work-based learning network.
  - Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) Integrated Youth Support Services Forum.
  - Providers currently delivering Entry to Employment or Key Stage 4 Engagement programmes (to be absorbed within Foundation Learning from September 2010).
  - The universal Connexions support services (Prospects) so that Personal Advisers can offer appropriate information advice and guidance to young people.
  - The five geographically based 14–19 Confederations (cross-sector strategic planning groups).
  - All providers who have been successful in the Leeds City Council Framework Contract procurement exercise.
  - As a resource within the Foundation Learning Interactive Toolkit for Leeds launched in February 2010. The toolkit is web-based which means that it can be accessed by all organisations and that any updates to the Guidelines can be made instantly available.

- Make recommendations to the Leeds Pathways Steering Group for further development of Leeds Pathways to meet the needs of Foundation Learning learners. Leeds Pathways is the area-wide prospectus and Common Application Process (CAP) for Leeds. The prospectus and CAP is a statutory DCSF requirement for all local authority areas and intended to be the first point of contact for young people, parents/carers and professionals in terms of learning choices and progression routes. The work around updating Leeds Pathways will be specifically followed up by the project team (Education Leeds and Leeds Further Forward).

### Areas for future development

It was identified that the work on the admissions criteria will trigger development work in other, related areas. It was hoped at one stage that some of this work might be encompassed within this project. However, short timescales meant that these areas of work remained outside the immediate scope of the project. They have been highlighted within the Guidelines as areas for providers to consider for future development:

- a Updating of Leeds Pathways – to be followed up by the project team
- b Marketing strategies
- c Curriculum planning and development
- d Admission staff training
- e Recruitment and selection processes
- f Admissions and interview processes
- g Diagnostic testing and initial assessment tools
- h Induction process

### Conclusions

The success of the project was very much due to targeting senior colleagues in appropriate roles from a range of stakeholders in terms of both their commitment to the project in principle and their direct involvement in it. Successful collaborative working then flowed from this.

Engaging senior staff with a good understanding of Foundation Learning and then improving this understanding means that this knowledge will be cascaded within their respective organisations.

Holding half-day, intensive planning sessions worked well.

### Project materials – Final output

*Guidelines for Providers to Support the Review of Post-16 Admissions Criteria for Programmes starting in September 2011*

The Guidelines include:

- Background and context, with reference to the national implementation timeline for Foundation Learning
- Key recommendations
- Guidelines for structuring and formatting the curriculum offer
- Good practice guidelines
- Useful web links and appendices
- The QCDA presentation on point scores, GCSE equivalencies, contribution to GCSE thresholds and bandings with the QCF
- Models of learners with spiky profiles (within the QCDA presentation)

## Appendix 1: Three examples of Foundation Learning programmes for individual learners (from the QCDA presentation)

### Mason

Mason is aspiring to progress to university one day. He is 15. He goes to a specialist technology high school and really likes computers. When he finishes Key Stage 4, he would like to work towards a level 2 qualification in IT.

#### Mason's Key Stage 4 FL programme:

Certificate in employability and personal development Entry 3,	15 credits
BTEC Award for IT users Level 1,	9 credits
Functional skills in English Entry 2,	5 credits
Functional skills in mathematics Level 1,	5 credits
Functional skills in ICT Level 1,	5 credits
Award in Business Administration Entry 3	6 credits

**Full programme** **45 credits**

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#### Mason's potential applications:

##### COURSE 1:

Title: IT Practitioners BTEC First Diploma (Level 2)

Provider: Leeds City College - Park Lane Campus

Entry requirements: The minimum entry requirements are 4 grade Ds or Es at GCSE including Maths and/or English OR an equivalent level 1 qualification with an appropriate level of English and Maths e.g. BTEC Introductory Diploma with GCSE Maths at grade E.

##### COURSE 2:

Title: IT and Business First Diploma level 2

Provider: Leeds City College – Technology Campus

Entry requirements: You will need 4 GCSEs at grade D or above including English and Maths or a GNVQ Foundation qualification, plus an appropriate level of English and Maths. Applications are welcome from learners with employment experience who have no formal qualifications.

##### COURSE 3:

Title: IT Gaming BTEC First Diploma level 2

Provider: Joseph Priestley College

Entry requirements: 4 GCSEs D - G grades.

## Michaela

Michaela is 19. She has Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and attends a local Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre (SILC). She lives at home with her parents and would like to learn how to be more independent. She likes more practical learning and enjoys spending time at her local stables where she helps groom and feed the horses.

### Michaela's Key Stage 4/5 FL programme:

Certificate in personal and social development	13 credits
Entry level certificate in skills for working life – land based Entry 3,	22 credits
Functional skills in English Entry 3,	5 credits
Functional skills in Maths Entry 1,	5 credits
Functional skills in ICT Entry 2,	5 credits

**Full programme** **50 credits**

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### Michaela's potential applications:

#### COURSE 1:

Title: Animal Care (Small Animal Care) Introductory Diploma BTEC (Level 1)

Provider: Leeds City College, Park Lane Campus

Entry requirements: An Entry Certificate in Skills for Working Life or related interests and experiences. You will also be interviewed for your suitability to the programme and your standard of literacy and numeracy will be assessed to ensure you are placed appropriately.

#### COURSE 2:

Title: Animal Care BTEC First Diploma (Level 2)

Provider: Leeds City College, Park Lane Campus

Entry requirements: One GCSE at Grade C and two Grade D's, especially English, Maths or equivalent (e.g.: a Level One qualification), although relevant experience is equally useful. In all cases we interview you to assess your ability to benefit from the course.

#### COURSE 3:

Title: Animal Care First Diploma

Provider: Wakefield College

Entry requirements: 4 GCSE Grade D or above including English. GCSE Mathematics Grade G or above. A commitment to animal care.

OR

Merit from GNVQ foundation or BTEC Introductory Diploma in a relevant subject.  
Communication Level 1 and Application of Number at Entry Level 3



## Aneel

Aneel is 17. His attendance at school was sporadic. When he started studying at college one day a week and found that vocational learning suited him, his attendance improved. He was however Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) for a time when he left school but now has a part time job in a local garage and really enjoys it. He realises that he will need more qualifications in order to become a motor vehicle engineer.

### Aneel's Key Stage 4 FL programme:

Certificate in personal and social development Entry 3,	13 credits
Certificate in Vehicle Maintenance, Level 1,	26 credits
Functional skills in English Level 1,	5 credits
Functional skills in ICT Level 2,	5 credits

**Full programme** **49 credits**

### Aneel's potential applications:

#### COURSE 1:

Title: Engineering Diploma Vehicle Technology BTEC

Provider: Askham Bryan College

Entry requirements: Usually 4 GCSEs at grade E or above (including maths and science) or an appropriate Level 1 qualification.

#### COURSE 2:

Title: Heavy Vehicle Maintenance and Repair (NVQ level 2)

Provider: Hargreaves Training Services

Entry requirements: Learners should have achieved a minimum of 3 Grade C GCSE's or above.

In addition, candidates should:

- Be good with their hands
- Be able to solve practical problems
- Be prepared to get dirty
- Be able to get on with customers
- Be able to work from written instructions, data and displays
- Be able to study the theoretical aspects of the job and put this into practice
- Like working as part of a team

#### COURSE 3:

Title: City & Guilds 4101 Motor Vehicle Service & Repair Certificate Level 2

Provider: Wakefield College

Entry requirements: Achievement of Progression Award 4100 or 4101 Certificate Level 1 or equivalent and a keen desire to progress into the motor industry. You will also need Level 1 Literacy and Numeracy qualifications. If you do not have the relevant level of qualification, we can assess your current level of literacy and/or numeracy.