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Partnership Forges a Firm Foundation for Cast Metal Engineering

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A new foundation degree run by Bradford College, which aims to develop skills within the cast metal engineering industry, will start accepting students from September 2009. The new foundation degree in Castings Technology was devised by the WYLLN (West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network) in collaboration with several industry representatives and academic organisations. Final validation of the new degree course, which was received in June 2009, is the culmination of successful partnership working between WYLLN, Bradford College, Leeds Metropolitan University, the Institute of Cast Metal Engineers (ICME) and private casting organisations, including Newby Foundries Ltd, Goodwin Steel Castings Ltd and Chamberlin plc.

WYLLN, which has supported the project from start to finish, is in no doubt that partnership working has been the key to its success. "Without effective collaboration between all partners, the new Castings Technology foundation degree would not have been possible," said Dr Paul Denton, WYLLN sector officer. "Input from ICME and industry organisations throughout the development of this foundation degree was vital. It allowed us to devise a course that equips students with the industry relevant skills they need to make a difference in this growing marketplace," he added.



As the course is aimed at individuals who are already employed within the industry, Bradford College is offering students the opportunity to study on a flexible part-time, basis. "Again, by working together we've achieved a format for the foundation degree that makes it possible for students to work and study at the same time," said Richard Brown of Bradford College.

Incredibly impressed by the approach and successful development of the Castings Technology foundation degree, a member of the validation panel, commented: "This is one of the best examples of employer engagement I have seen in 17 years as an academic... wouldn't it be great if we could bottle the team's enthusiasm."

The global castings market is significant; 90 million tonnes of castings were made in 2006, a 7% increase on 2005. And the market is still growing, providing significant opportunities for those companies who can innovate and offer a high quality service to customers. Yet, the UK castings industry in contracting, down from over 600 foundries in 2004 to just over 400. It is hoped that the new foundation degree will create a new generation of skilled cast metal engineers, which long-term will give UK companies a competitive edge at a global level.