

West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network

Progression from 14-19 Diplomas

1. Background

1.1. This report considers the work the WYLLN is undertaking to support progression from the 14-19 Diplomas into higher education.

1.2. In West Yorkshire new diplomas were introduced for three of the five learning lines: Society Health and Development, Construction and the Built Environment, and Creative and Media. To explore how the WYLLN could support the progression from these Diplomas, a meeting was convened with representatives of the five West Yorkshire Local Authorities, the Yorkshire and Humber 14-19 Regional Advisor from the DCSF, the four universities and representatives from the other HEIs and the FECs. The view that the success of the Diplomas would depend on progression into HE was endorsed and it was suggested that a piece of work could be carried out, supported by the WYLLN, which would improve and streamline the several conversations taking place between different providers of HE and Diploma Consortia.

1.3. As a consequence of that meeting the WYLLN commissioned the work, which would:

- Identify which consortia are offering Advanced Diplomas within the respective Diploma Line within West Yorkshire
- Research and report on current curriculum developments and progression relationships around the respective Advanced Diploma/Diploma Line within West Yorkshire
- Review and report on approaches to delivering PLTS (personal, learning and thinking skills) and Extended Project
- Identify barriers and levers to progression into HE from the respective Advanced Diploma
- Research and review Advanced Diplomas to inform a series of staff development events organised by WYLLN, e.g. curriculum myths and realities, admissions requirements, PLTS
- Provide information on progression routes for respective Advanced Diplomas into HE
- Facilitating and brokering contacts for the development of progression agreements
- Convening meetings to identify progression offers for the respective Diploma Lines
- Prepare a statement of which consortia and HEI are prepared to enter into progression agreements for the respective Diploma Line
- Actively promote the WYLLN Progression Agreements

- Report on any barriers/blockages to the development of progression agreements
- Identify and evaluate the opportunity for the development of a sub-regional approach to Progression Agreements within the respective Diploma Lines

1.4. Following a competitive process, the University of Huddersfield was commissioned to carry out the work for the first three Diploma lines offered in West Yorkshire.

1.5. It was agreed at the last Management Board that individual institutions could be funded to carry out further work on this agenda. The amount of funding available would depend on the outcome of the review of funding for sector activity.

2. Current Situation

2.1. While the take up of Diplomas has been quite healthy, this was not the case for the Level 3 Diploma. Across West Yorkshire there are fewer than 30 learners studying at this level and some in some Local Authorities there are none.

2.2. Although there are only three learning lines offered in the current academic year, from September 2010 all ten available subjects will be on offer. The original intention was to use the current offer to inform the decisions on the support WYLLN could offer to the new Diplomas coming on stream. With the small numbers of learners on Level 3 Diplomas, this approach could be questioned.

2.3. WYLLN's partners approach to the Diplomas differs greatly. Some of our FE partners lead on their delivery; others are actively involved in consortia; while the remainder are not involved at all. All of the universities support the progression from Diplomas in principle, but this support is variable at departmental level.

3. The National Position

3.1. The approach of other LLNs to Diplomas also varies greatly. Some consider the Diplomas to be outside their current remit, as they are not vocational courses, and have made a decision not to support them. Others have been central to the piloting of Diplomas in 2007/8 and have made a significant commitment to their success. Indeed, across the country 17 progression agreements have already been developed for the diplomas with a further 23 in draft.

3.2. At a recent LLN conference, Michael Eastwood the Chief Executive of HEFCE, made it clear that he saw the LLNs will have a major role to play in ensuring Diplomates could progress into higher education.

4. Conclusions

4.1. It is proposed that the project with the University of Huddersfield is extended to embrace all the learning lines delivered in September 2009. It is also proposed that some of the funds are allocated to partners institutions to support the development of progression agreements into their courses. Further consideration will have to be given as to how this is achieved with the limited amount of funding currently available.

4.2. The Board is asked to consider the issues around supporting the 14-19 Diplomas and to continue to endorse the approach the WYLLN is taking to the Diplomas.