

West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network

**Minutes of the FE A level Student Progression to Degree Courses
in West Yorkshire project
Monday 15th November 2010
Start time: 1400 hours
Finish time: 1545 hours**

Present: Jonathan Higgins, Joanne Beaumont, Neelam Mirza, Caroline Holas-Clark, Judith Foreman, Lorraine Gearing, Wendy Chapman, Rob Rattray, David Smith, Tony Laycock, Oliver Limon and Joanna Puzo (note taker)

1. Welcome and introductions

2. Context Setting, The project was prompted initially through discussions with the University of Leeds. An observation had been made that the learners that studied A levels in FE colleges when compared to sixth forms and schools had a lower acceptance conversation rate into a University of Leeds degree course. The meeting was for members to consider whether they wanted to get involved in exploring FE A level progression issues and whether they wanted to research these issues via the network or individually.

3. Outline of proposal, The project proposal was presented and it was noted that the aims etc were only suggestions at this point. The project proposal has four components a) investigation and examination of the current situation i.e. data gathering b) analysis of the data, identification of issues, and selection of issues to be addressed c) development and delivery of activities to address issues utilising WYPAF as appropriate (e.g. students support, curriculum development, CPD, relationship building) d) monitoring and evaluation. It was noted that there is no funding available for the project however existing Aimhigher and WYLLN resources can be utilised.

3 Current activity and support programmes, the institutions gave their view of the issues. Wakefield College – Judith reported that she was interested to find out why their learners did not apply and or get accepted to the University of Leeds. Also interested at looking at where learners apply to and to find out the reasons behind progression choices.

Bradford College – Tony reported about 1/3 students go on to HE. Most stay in the area. He agreed that it would be interesting to understand why more learners do not many apply to the more traditional universities.

Leeds City College – Oliver reported that from an IAG perspective many students are under pressure from parents, some just follow their friends; some have a fear of large institutions. Often as an Aimhigher student their parents do not know the application processes themselves or how to best support their child. It is also sometimes difficult to get learners to see the benefit of work experience which would support their application to a specific HE route.

A general comment was made that the conversion issues may be course specific or may be broader. This needs to be explored within the data.

University of Huddersfield - Lorraine reported that for her school different subjects would present different conversion challenges depending on which courses learners were interested in. Lorraine is keen to build on the positive experiences she has had of using the progression agreements with vocational tutors at local colleges.

Leeds Trinity University College – Rob reported there is a big difference between schools and colleges and the control they have over students. The standard of personal statements and references provided for school based applicants is generally a lot higher compared to college based applicants.

University of Leeds – Neelam reported that her role has a focus to look at progression issues

and that analysing application/conversation data for the last 4 years had been a very useful exercise for the University. The majority of applications are received from college based learners however the majority of offers are made to school based learners. The university is keen to explore and address this practice both on a university wide and course basis. Wakefield MDC – Wendy reported that what had attracted her to the project was the WYPAF and the opportunity to explore using a framework to assist the coordination and targeting of Aimhigher activities, particularly within a college context.

It was suggested that a data set model would be useful to identify the conversion rates of A level students

The rate of those that apply to university compared to those that are accepted would be interesting to consider, alongside the profile of applications in terms of geographical location and type of institution. The IAG for learners should be considered and the learners and tutors understanding of courses and entry requirements before they apply. Student's aspirations and awareness of choices was noted.

4. **Tracking of A Level students**, Caroline reported on the Aimhigher tracking system which collects Aimhigher learners but could be used to gather some of the data. Aimhigher are also just launching the 'Pathways for professionals' project. It was noted that the circulation of Aimhigher data within individual colleges may need to be reviewed to ensure Directors of HE receive the information.
5. **Ways forward**, The key points of the meeting where Neelam **AGREED** to send to WYLLN a blank copy of the data set template she has used to date. Neelam **AGREED** to share her current information with the sending institutions it relates to. All present **AGREED** that each institution would gather data on their learner's progression and conversion rate of being accepted into HE. It was also **AGREED** that this item could be discussed at the Aimhigher HE Strategy Group. **NM**
ALL
6. **Date of next meeting**,
It was **AGREED** to arrange a meeting in January/February 2011. The focus of the meeting will be to review the benchmark data gathered by institutions and to decide how the project should progress.