



## **Exploring scholarship and scholarly activity in college-based Higher Education**

### **Part 1. Context and Issues**

## **Acknowledgements**

In 2013, the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) made research funding available to the Mixed Economy Group of colleges. The Education and Training Foundation, LSIS's successor body, has continued this support. Our remit was to examine the current arrangements surrounding scholarly activity in those FE colleges which also deliver HE and to draw up a Practice Guide which would be of use to the wide range of colleges currently providing HE in FE.

As a result of this funding we have been able to draw up three potentially standalone documents. This paper, Part 1, offers a literature review of the subject and leads into our main research output, the results of a survey of scholarly activity amongst 60 colleges. Part 3 is the Practice Guide which emerges from the survey. We are grateful to LSIS for enabling us to carry out this work.

A number of professional bodies also provided information about their approach to scholarly activity. This enabled us to compare definitions and expectations between those concerned with Prescribed and Non-Prescribed Higher Education and added to our information base.

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## **1. Introduction**

This paper seeks to explore the role of research, scholarship, scholarly activity and continuing professional development in supporting the delivery of programmes of HE in FE colleges. In doing so it reviews the definitions of these terms used by some universities, colleges, regulatory and professional bodies and considers how they have changed (or been interpreted) in response to changes in the HE landscape over the last three years.

### **1.1 Refreshing the Perspective**

The overview takes as its baseline two reports produced by the Mixed Economy Group of colleges (MEG) in 2010. It notes the changes that have taken place with regards to HE policy over the last three years and then raises a number of questions which will be pursued in more detail across the next stage of our research.

Whilst only 10% of all undergraduates study for their Higher Education in an FE college, HE in FE is a well-established part of the HE landscape. It is recognised as being distinctive and as making a major contribution to widening participation in HE. All political parties support the growth of college-based HE, partly in recognition of its distinctive nature, partly because it is perceived as offering better value for the public purse. In addition, the current Coalition government is keen to enable private institutions to receive public funding in order to deliver HE qualifications. All political parties, however, are clear that whilst the providers of HE may become more diverse, the quality of their product must meet stringent quality assurance standards. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) remains the uncontested guardian of HE standards and its expectations, set down in a number of documents, remain the baseline for the award of Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) and Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP) to any provider of HE in the UK.

As we will see in later sections, scholarly activity on the part of teaching staff is an expected component of the HE environment but no one definition exists which both succinctly describes this activity and is also accepted as such by all providers. Of the many in circulation, most are predicated on a traditional university-based setting and thus do not transfer easily to HE delivered in FE. (Or, it may be argued, a more diverse range of alternative providers.)

As the nature and validity of college-based Higher Education continues to be of interest to policy makers and practitioners alike (Parry et al, 2012), the concepts of teaching informed by research and scholarly activity continues to gain prominence. In their introduction to the report by the Mixed Economy Group of Colleges, “Scholarly Activity in Higher Education delivered in Further Education” King and Widdowson (2010, p3) suggested,

“there is an emerging need for a new dimension to both our definition and our approach to what constitutes appropriate activity by teachers in supporting the delivery of high-quality, vocational skills-based HE.”

The report reviewed the definitions in use amongst the MEG colleges, looked at those used by partner universities and examined the debate between universities and colleges and private providers such as BPP. The report proposed a definition of scholarly activity in HE in FE:

“An activity or activities with the potential to:

- create or affirm knowledge and/or expertise of a subject or discipline
- develop or enhance understanding of a subject or discipline
- develop or enhance methodologies for the delivery of a subject or discipline

To be accepted as R&SA this activity must be shared with peers, disseminated across the institution and possibly beyond and archived in ways which are easily accessible to all staff.”

Four research questions formed the basis of the 2010 research activity, underpinning the development of recommendations that were to provide

“a first step in giving shape and direction to the development of an approach to scholarly activity which satisfies the requirements of validating bodies, quality assurance agencies, employers and students” (King and Widdowson, 2010 p20).

The research sought to explore:

- How is scholarly activity defined in HE?
- Are existing definitions of scholarly activity fit for purpose in the developing HE landscape, including HE delivered in the context of the FE college?
- Do they need to be redefined or supplemented to apply to vocational HE delivered in FE?
- How can we measure the impact of such activity upon teaching, learning and the student experience?

The recommendations from the study addressed issues of both policy and practice. This included the need for political recognition of the value of ‘vocational scholarly activity’ (p21), professional and industrial development, and the development of teaching skills; the need for ‘equal and direct access to development funding’ (p21); the call for further development of communities of practice and ‘teaching-related scholarly activity’ (p22). The recommendations for colleges included the need for locally-published, supported and monitored definitions of scholarly activity appropriate to the professional development of staff teaching HE.

Later in the same year MEG produced what still remains one of the largest-scale surveys of English HE in FE, including a report on the CPD needs and sources of support for staff teaching HE in a college setting. In “Strategic Options, Operational Challenges” King et al concluded that

“...many staff felt that college managements were yet to establish a culture of scholarly activity as part of strategic approach to continuing professional development. Staff felt that this was vital both for the currency of teaching and credibility of HE programmes being delivered.”

The report concluded that

- Colleges delivering HE must have a clear strategy and rationale, which takes into account both the changing external environment and the College's own capacity and aspirations
- HE in FE is an emerging recognised brand. Colleges must ensure that the uniqueness of that brand is developed and sustained
- Colleges must allocate sufficient human and other resources to deliver HE to the highest levels of quality
- College staff should be encouraged to undertake appropriate professional updating and participation in related national networks

The report was produced as the full extent of the global recession became known. In the same year a Coalition government was elected which set out to address the economic difficulties besetting the country, with emphasis being put on the need to generate a high-skills economy. In short succession, the funding arrangements for HE were radically overhauled and a more market-based approach to the delivery of Honours and Foundation degrees was introduced. This has renewed the debate around scholarly activity. It has also raised questions about how strategic colleges are, in terms of their approach to the delivery of high-quality HE, in a much more competitive market.

This paper seeks to establish the extent to which definitions, expectations and practice have changed, with particular reference to the recommendations of the original reports.

## **2. Policy Perspectives**

### **2.1 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)**

The QAA publishes sectorial expectations for engagement with research and scholarly activity both in its criteria for Foundation Degree (or Taught Degree) Awarding Powers and in Section 3 Learning and Teaching of The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (“the Quality Code”).

The Quality Code avoids the use of the terms ‘research’ and ‘scholarly activity’ in its preamble, suggesting:

“Effective learning and teaching activities and practices are enabled through, and depend on, staff who are appropriately qualified for their role and who engage throughout their career in continuing professional development, in the evaluation of their practice, and in developing their understanding of their subject and the learning process as it relates to their subject.”

[p5]

However, the 'Indicators of Sound Practice' within this section are more specific. Indicator 3 states, "Learning and teaching practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship." The explanatory text expands on this expectation:

"Scholarship and research lie at the heart of higher education, but their nature will depend on the academic level of the programme, the subject area and the provider or providers of the programme. Scholarship may include conventional research (discovery of new knowledge), innovative application or integration of existing knowledge, for example in professional practice, or the study of learning and teaching processes and practices ... In subject areas such as clinical medicine, music or performing arts among others, or where learning is taking place in the workplace, evaluation of professional practice directly informs student learning. The requirements of professional, regulatory or statutory bodies are also taken into account where applicable."  
[p13]

In contrast, Indicator 4 publicises the expectation of appropriate levels of qualification and continued professional development, "*staff are expected to have the necessary skills and experience to facilitate learning in the students they are interacting with, and to use approaches grounded in sound learning and teaching scholarship and practice.*"(p14)

The Code touches on the impact of subject, level and provider context on scholarly activity:

"For example, scholarship in support of the Foundation Degree is likely to involve an employer-driven focus and a tightly structured approach to learning, reflecting the vocational orientation of the qualification. Bachelor's and taught master's degrees may also have a vocational orientation, as in the case of business, law and nursing for example, but they are also likely to have a greater subject focus and academic orientation, reflected in more open-ended enquiry and the development of students as independent learners."

The guidance provided for colleges seeking FDAP or TDAP makes explicit reference to 'scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff' (2013, p5). The advice notes that:

"The very nature of Foundation Degrees means that they have a clear vocational orientation which is based on the presumption of close interaction with employers to establish their wants and needs. Given the distinctive nature of the Foundation Degree, keeping up with employer trends is an important form of professional development. However, the positioning of the Foundation Degree as a higher education qualification calls for staff to have the necessary knowledge and understanding of current scholarly developments in their discipline area. This reflects a concern to integrate academic and work-based learning and to ensure an appropriate balance between intellectual and practical skills. The evidence submitted by an applicant needs to provide confidence that the staffing base is appropriate to support Foundation Degree students and enable them to demonstrate integration of, and balance between, theory and practice as part of their learning experience."

The text looks for the establishment of processes that underpin the monitoring of scholarly activity through the review of learning and teaching (including observations). Potential evidence includes publication, presentation, professional or commercial activity (exhibitions, reports, contribution to practice, speaking at professional events, consultancy etc.) as well as the demonstration of more personal skills based development. Whilst the distinction is clear in terms of the absolute and differentiated requirements in relation to TDAP and FDAP, the emphasis is put on the purposeful approach to scholarly activity, of all types discussed, and its impact on the development and delivery of curriculum and the learning experience.

A strategic approach to “*the development and maintenance of a well-founded, cohesive and self-critical academic community*” (p6) is anticipated. The range and nature of institutional expectations of scholarly activity should be clear and should reference both individual professional development and that appropriate to the enhancement and assurance of the community as a whole. The particular reference to the need for an inclusive community is further underpinned by explicit reference to both Full and Part Time staff, the mechanisms for the allocation of resources to support implementation of the strategy, and the promotion of a shared understanding of scholarship as a concept, in addition to its outcomes and impact.

This latter is important. Minutes from an early meeting of the QAA HE in FEC Policy Advisory Forum (2009) illustrate that at an early stage in the movement towards FDAP QAA recognised that there was a need for a shared understanding of the term “scholarly activity.” The Minutes record that members wanted to use the outcomes of review and scrutiny as part of the training and development of reviewers as well as a vehicle to share good practice and clarify uncertainties.

## **2.2. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)**

In March 2009, HEFCE proposed that all FE colleges which offered Prescribed HE, however funded, should produce an HE strategy. The intention was that this would become a benchmark document for both QAA and HEFCE and thus a key part of the HE in FE planning process. The HEFCE Circular March 2009/13 “Request for higher education strategies from further education colleges” sets out the expectations of HE strategies, which were to be developed and submitted to the Funding Council by FE colleges with Higher Education provision. The strategies were required to cover all provision at or above Level 4, a departure from the usual focus on Prescribed HE. No similar request was made of HEIs.

HEFCE’s expectations of the role of HE in FE are set out in Annex A of the Circular. The authors reiterate the policy indicated within an earlier consultation letter (HEFCE 2006/48) concerning the role of HE in FE. The document makes plain that there is recognition of sectorial diversity but nonetheless requires of FECs that they, “*ensure that staff involved in HE provision are appropriately qualified, have opportunities for scholarly activity and are supported by adequate learning resources, in order to ensure a high quality learning experience for the learners*” (p7).



Further explicit direction follows in the indicative content for HE Strategies. The listing indicates the need for “more specific information about the planned changes, or a brief statement about the existing position and how it is being taken forward unaltered, regarding ... .. continuous professional development and scholarly activity, which includes professional updating” (p8). However, no detailed definition of scholarly activity is offered in the document.

In parallel to the approach taken in the QAA publications, there is a requirement for a strategic approach to continuous professional development and scholarly activity, with an implicit acceptance of a wide range of activities. The emphasis is, again, upon the provision of a “*high quality learning experience*”. The Circular reflected the circumstances prevailing at the time: HE appeared to be secure, with no funding cuts in view, and college-based HE was growing. The priority in 2009 was to ensure that FE in HE developed on a planned basis with due regard to other provision in the same locality. Scholarly activity was not an overt priority at that point.

## **2.3 The Requirements of Professional Bodies**

Whilst the QAA and HEFCE have regard to Prescribed HE, the professional bodies are concerned with ensuring that individuals meet the standards required to practice in a particular profession. Prescribed HE (i.e. an Hon degree, Fd or HND/HNC) may be a stepping stone to a licence to practice but the professional bodies also require additional practical experience and often success in their own qualifications in order to reassure themselves that individuals are competent to practice. In some cases they offer alternative routes to a professional qualification via their own examinations.

There are also expectations on those who teach these higher level qualifications. Based in colleges and universities, teaching staff will have been required to meet the demands of an external approving or awarding body, some of which will have concerned CPD or scholarly activity. A wide range of approaches to these two areas was taken by the various professional bodies that were contacted as part of this research.

There is much current debate within the professions around the nature and purpose of CPD. Many professional bodies are reviewing their approach to the matter, most notably the legal profession, which in June 2013 published the outcome of the Legal Education and Training Review. Having studied a number of parallel approaches to CPD both within and without the profession, the reviewers concluded that the link between CPD and professional competence was not automatic, that informal CPD was as important as more formal, regulated CPD and that there appeared to be two approaches to CPD across most professions, namely one which focuses on compliance and another where the focus is on personal development.

In relation to this latter, the reviewers noted that

“ A related distinction can be seen between regulatory schemes which record and regulate inputs (hourages, participation in mandatory elements) and those which seek to achieve the much more difficult task of measuring and recording outputs (learning, impact on personal practice.) Evaluation, where it occurs, may be limited to a questionnaire focusing on quality of delivery rather than impact on practice (and if such impact is assessed in the questionnaire it will only, by definition, be immediate impact, see Muijs and Lindsay, 2008, p.196.) In the latter study, (p.201) which tested a possible model for more in-depth evaluation of CPD activity, evaluation questionnaires used in assessment of teachers’ CPD were found always to ask about “participant satisfaction” in 35.2% of cases, but about participants’ use of new knowledge and skills in only 6.2%”

In reviewing the perceived purpose of CPD across a range of professions, the authors note that *“The existence of a mandatory scheme (for CPD) may be seen as an appropriate regulatory defence”*. The general public expects their lawyers, engineers, accountants, etc. to maintain high standards of competency and thus regards the existence of a mandatory scheme of CPD as evidence of a means of ensuring at least minimum competence. Amongst professionals, there was a sense that individuals were best placed to decide on the areas of work that would benefit from additional attention and that they could be trusted to do this without having to log hours of CPD.

Some professional bodies, such as The Institution of Engineering and Technology have no formal requirement to evidence CPD: a voluntary opt-in scheme is in place. This suggests that 30 hours of CPD per year is appropriate and lists as qualifying activities training courses, work experience, academic study, volunteering, attending events and seminars and self-study. As in many other professional bodies, a random sample of scheme members is then selected to have their annual CPD records checked by a team of suitably qualified volunteers.

The Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEx) and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), like a number of other professional bodies, are now moving away from an hours-based approach to one of reflective study linked to impact measurement. Most professions would probably agree with the sentiment of the CILEx definition of the purpose of CPD, namely: *“To maintain, improve and extend the skills and qualities necessary for the proper performance of professional and legal duties and compliance required by IPS, to ensure confidence in the professionalism and competence of CILEx members.”*

However, there appears to be little agreement over what constitutes CPD as opposed to scholarly activity. A review of professional body websites carried out for this overview revealed some overlaps in definition around reading professional journals, attending conferences and courses but also examples where there was no definition of CPD (e.g. the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants) and others, such as CIEH which veer towards scholarly activity and research by including *“implementing research into issues and problems arising out of current practice which cannot be solved by existing knowledge and skills”* alongside general updating activities.

A similar range of variation is found with regards to the expectations of those who teach HE level professional qualifications. Amongst the majority, the view is that where entry to

the profession is at graduate level, the expectations of QAA and the institution itself (usually a university) are sufficient to assure the professional body that staff have the requisite level of expertise to teach their qualifications.

Exceptions to this include CIEH, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), where there is a strong preference for those teaching at HE level to be qualified and current in their membership of CIEH, RICS and CIPD and also to be undertaking scholarly activity. In their interpretation of this phrase, all three professional bodies veered more towards the "applied research" definition than the "maintaining currency" approach followed by most HE staff who teach in FE colleges. Similarly, the Chartered Institute of Builders seeks assurance, during institutional accreditation process, of a strategic approach to programme development that contributes to knowledge and best practice, links with industry and/or research projects, and engages with knowledge transfer. There is an expectation that lecturers engage with scholarly activity, in the form of active research and continued professional development, and that this is formally supported at faculty or institution level.

Research-led teaching was an expectation, in these cases, with the "dual professional" seen as the ideal person to do this. In reality, there was often a tendency for university staff, as a result of their contractual basis, to focus on the theory rather than current practice.

In conclusion, the professional bodies appear to seek the same ideal combination in those who teach their qualifications as do college Principals. However, most also display a similar lack of clarity over where CPD ends and scholarly activity begins.

## **2.4 Capacity-building: the work of other agencies**

### **2.4.1 The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS)**

Until 2013, LSIS was a key player in the promotion of college-based research and offered a number of important action research programmes with partners. These always included a focus on HE in FE matters and this area of college work was a priority within "Strategic Intentions 2011-2014", the Service's final planning document. With a strapline of "Research for the sector by the sector", it developed and delivered an extensive research strategy and practitioner research programme with an accompanying programme of support, particularly in regard to building research capacity. It organised research conferences which showcased and promoted practitioner research and published a research Newsletter (*"Inside Evidence"*.) During its time, LSIS provided a means of professional development for both senior staff and practitioners in delivering HE in FE colleges. In doing so, it often worked with other organisations which offered a supplementary expertise.

LSIS worked with the Leadership Federation for HE over the delivery of a three-module programme aimed at senior managers wishing to know more about college-based HE. Separately, the LSIS Research Development Fellowships (RDFs) supported practitioners to carry out their own action research projects.

First introduced in 2009, they provided the sector with small-scale, practice-based, research studies which could be used to improve teaching and learning. The Service funded Practitioner Research Programmes for some years and in 2011-2012, a number of these focused on HE in FE matters. The case studies which emerged from this plethora of activity were summarised in [Inside Evidence](#) and published on the Excellence Gateway. They include a review of the PRG projects which focused in HE in FE colleges.

#### **2.4.2 The Institute for Learning (IfL)**

The IfL was formed in 2002 and is an inclusive professional membership body for teachers, trainers, tutors and other professionals in the Further Education and Skills sector. Membership of the Institute is subject to formal qualifications.

Since April 2012 the Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status conferred by the IfL is recognised by the Department for Education as being equivalent to a teacher in the school sector holding Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Once an individual registers with the IfL there is an ongoing commitment to CPD with a formal annual requirement to submit the number of hours of CPD that have been completed. The Institute recommends a minimum of 30 hours CPD per year and publishes an annual summary of how members use their CPD time. However, there is no national agreement over the nature or the level of this expected CPD.

Whilst “Scholarly Activity” is not a term used in IfL publications, “Practitioner Researcher” is categorised and promoted. In September 2012 the IfL undertook a pilot in partnership with SKOPE (the Centre for Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance) at the University of Oxford aimed at developing research and publication skills for participants. The first research papers to emerge from this exercise are now available on the IfL website.

#### **2.4.3 The Learning and Skills Research Network (LSRN)**

Established in 1997 by enthusiasts from FE and HE, LSRN is a network rather than an institution. Its aim is “to help people, in going about their professional practice, engage with research and development”. It seeks to do this by:

- ☐ demonstrating the value of research and development
- ☐ helping build the capacity of the sector
- ☐ exploring ways of increasing the influence of findings.

After a decade of strong support by FEDA and then LSDA, it reorganised in 2006 as a voluntary association of individuals to which a range of sector bodies lent active support. In this form it has regional conveners, regional meetings, national research events, a website and newsletter. In recent years the principal funders and providers of services have been LSIS, NIACE, Pearson College, IfL and City

& Guilds. Administration, planning and regional coordination have been the action of volunteers.

## **2.5 A Perspective from Private Providers of HE**

### **2.5.1 BPP University**

BPP Holdings is part of the Apollo Group Education Network and has developed 16 University sites in England. In September 2007, BPP University made history by becoming the first publicly-owned private company in the UK to obtain degree awarding powers. The Privy Council's approval of degree awarding powers and the subsequent status as a University College enabled the company to expand its operations in the HE marketplace significantly. In 2013 BPP University College met the criteria for full university title and became BPP University in August 2013.

BPP's credibility has been underpinned by positive Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Institutional Reviews, the latest being 2012. QAA identified two areas of good practice from a national perspective:

- (1) The process of planning, design and approval of new provision
- (2) The approach to supporting and developing staff.

Support for research and scholarship is clearly made in all BPP University documentation, with a particular focus on applied scholarship. The point is specifically made that BPP does  
Not carry out blue skies research. The University describes scholarship as

“ the application of the most current knowledge of a discipline or professional specialism to broader activities and practice, communicated in ways which are validated by peers and influence others beyond the organisation. This definition is especially relevant in professional disciplines such as law, accountancy and tax, business and health”.

In defining scholarship, BPP takes the view that “...scholarship includes developing and updating curriculum, publishing, attending and giving papers at conferences and external work engagements with academic or professional institutions”.

BPP encourages scholarly activity amongst its employees, aiming to produce scholarship outputs which ensure evidence-informed learning and teaching alongside evidence-based practice which supports the professions they serve.

Asked to sum up the University's approach to scholarship, Sally-Ann Burnett, BPP Deputy Dean, Learning and Teaching and Director of Scholarship and Research, said “*Ensuring that all our faculty give scholarship priority, in our applied context,*

*means that learning and teaching is relevant to the professions that we serve and that our graduates are employment ready."*

### **2.5.2 Ifs University College**

The ifs School of Finance is a not-for-profit professional body and a registered charity. It began life as the Institute of Bankers in 1879. It was the first professional body to make its professional award a degree and the first to be able to award its own degrees. In 2013 it was granted the title University College.

Research and Scholarly Activity is perceived in a more traditional way than is the case at BPP University. Ifs describes a commitment to scholarly and research activity as being central to its academic community. The University College's Research Policy provides a rigorous set of Key Principles underpinned by statements of what is understood by research and scholarly activity. Ifs offers the following definitions, which parallel those of Boyer (1990).

#### **Pedagogic research**

Pedagogic research involves activity and investigation leading to the enhancement of the theoretical and/or conceptual understanding of the process of learning and teaching; the experiences of the teacher and learner; the impact of the environment, context or mode of study of learners; and the interrelationships between the teacher and learner and the learning process and outcome.

#### **Discipline-based research**

For the purpose of the HE Research Assessment Exercise, the broad definition of research is: 'the original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction'. Within the context of the research policy, discipline-based research is distinguished as that relating to a particular subject or cognate area, such as economics or accountancy, and as distinct from pedagogic research as defined above.

#### **Programme development research**

Programme development research refers to the systematic collection and analysis of data to provide a greater understanding of subject matter and to inform the design of products. In the context of the ifs, programme development research is undertaken in either primary (ie directly from respondents) or secondary form (by analysis of published information) so as to inform the development of educational programmes.

### **2.5.3 Regent's University**

Founded in 1984 Regent's College became only the second UK Private University in March 2013. The not-for-profit college gained degree awarding powers in 2012 and was granted University title in 2013 from the Department Business, Innovation and Skills. It is the largest provider of undergraduate education outside of the state system with 4,500 students. It is twice the size of the University of Buckingham (the first private university) which gained its title in 1983.

Like Ifs, Regent's University adopts a traditional approach to the delivery of HE. The Research & Enterprise section on its website signposts visitors to an extensive range of scholarly activity, research and consultancy opportunities through the University's research centres, specialist-interest groups, publications and events listing. The University plans to invest £30M over the next five years to achieve research-degree awarding powers (RDAP) by 2020.

These three private providers offer different perspectives on the style of HE delivery by the private sector. Their approaches echo the stance taken by a range of college and university-based providers but are notable for the clarity of their definition and purpose.

## **3. National Perspective on Good Practice**

### **3.1 The Higher Education Academy (HEA)**

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) sets out to provide the national focal point for the HE community in order to enhance the quality and impact of learning and teaching. It achieves this by recognising and rewarding excellent teaching through a number of initiatives and also provides the HE community with a professional recognition service, networking and development opportunities, and career advice and support.

The HEA provides Teaching Development Grants to stimulate evidence-based research and encourage innovations in learning and teaching that have the potential for sector-wide impact.

With respect to continuing professional development, the HEA provides an accreditation service for CPD delivered by higher education institutions. Accreditation provides external confirmation that institutional provision is aligned with the UK Professional Standards Framework. The UK PSF provides a general description of teaching and learning within the HE environment. The framework is underpinned by the Dimensions of Good Practice Guide and it is here that reference is made to aspects of scholarly activity. A further section focuses on the use of evidence-informed approaches, the ability to draw on and contribute to many sources of evidence and to use them to inform teaching and learning practice.

Recognising the different setting of college-based HE, the HEA has devoted a section within its Resource Centre to HE in FE and has included a section on scholarly activity which contains a number of useful documents.

### 3.2 The HEFCE Good Practice Guide

“Supporting Higher Education in Further Education Colleges” (HEFCE, 2009) was provided as an updated Good Practice Guide for colleges, being largely informed by practitioners across the HE in FE sector. Whilst much has changed in the HE landscape, this Guide is still often the first port of call for college-based HE staff.

An entire chapter of the Guide is devoted to staff development of different types and covers topics that range from the need for institutional strategies and policy, issues in relation to conditions of service of staff within colleges, the need for academic and professional qualifications, enhancement of teaching and learning, and subject updating.

The subject of Scholarly Activity is given particular attention, the range of appropriate practice being acknowledged. In one of the few attempts by any agency to define scholarly activity, activities suggested for inclusion in the term are:

- keeping up to date with the subject
- curriculum development, particularly foundation degrees, often with HEIs
- curriculum development that involves research
- updating ICT skills
- taking higher qualifications – masters, doctorates and teaching qualifications
- consultancy to industry and other agencies
- industrial secondments or work shadowing
- involvement with SSCs
- research and publications
- practitioner/applied research
- personal development – action research and reading
- attending staff development events within the college
- attending conferences and workshops externally.

[p166]

The majority of the activities listed under Scholarly Activity have appeared earlier in the Guide in the overarching chapter on staff development and yet the need for the formalisation of such activity under this descriptor appears to have merited the additional section. Certainly the text continues to reference the QAA guidance for those colleges applying for FDAP.

The Good Practice Guide celebrates the “*commitment and enthusiasm*” (p157) of colleges and the inventive forms of activity that support staff development in its wider sense. It brings to the fore the benefits associated with specific, disaggregated HE staff development funding and emphasizes the integral nature of the assumed equivalence with university provision in, firstly, the teaching allocation and by implication the higher fee levels.



“When the HEFCE Development Fund for Learning and Teaching was introduced for directly funded colleges, it made a significant difference to the amount of staff development available, not least by funding the time required. This funding was used to support activity for subject and support staff, including studying for higher degrees, industrial secondments, developing links with HEIs, personal development and specific training, especially in ICT. Although the funding did not continue to come into colleges separately and has been embedded in the mainstream grant, it is the same funding.” [p158]

The subsequent removal of this explicit targeting of the monies potentially lessened the external pressure on colleges to set aside development time for their higher education practitioners. This adds to the debate around the terms and conditions of staff teaching HE in an FE college.

### 3.3 QAA Good Practice Publications

The QAA publication “Outcomes from IQER 2008 - 10: Staff development” (2011) is suggested as a supplementary report to the guidance for those seeking Foundation or Taught Degree Awarding Powers. The report is intended to identify good practice which has been noted by the review team during the process. In this context, good practice is defined as *“practice that the IQER team regards as making a particularly positive contribution to the college's management of the student learning experience”* and as such considers both activity and impact. Although the report focuses on the wider remit of “staff development” or “continued professional development”, particular attention is paid to scholarly activity, both in the preamble to the report and in a designated section of the document.

The introductory section of the report refers to a number of publications in order to provide a context for the review teams’ findings. The authors reference the report “Scholarly Activity in the context of HE in FE” (HEA, 2006) and highlight the reported lack of contractual obligation in the case of staff employed at FECs to undertake research, asserting that scholarly activity is centred around the updating of subject knowledge. This is helpfully contrasted by consideration of the evolutionary development of scholarly activity within colleges and partnerships as indicated within “Scholarly activity in higher education delivered in further education: a study” (MEG, 2009).

Considerable variation of practice is noted, and in cases applauded, within the wider document, which provides examples that include and extend well beyond the updating of subject knowledge. However despite acknowledgement of forward movement in this domain, the reviewers noted a lack of strategic and inclusive staff development specifically designed to support those teaching on HE programmes. There was much reliance on the commitment of staff. This appears to be at odds with the QAA recommendations of a strategic approach to scholarly activity noted earlier in this overview:

“Scholarly activity is an important aspect of the staff development expected of staff teaching on higher education programmes, and it attracts some specific comments in the IQER reports, with slightly fewer identifications of good practice than recommendations for action. Where good practice was identified, it related to the commitment of staff teaching on higher education programmes to scholarly and research activity with the aim of enhancing the student learning experience ... most recommendations in this area concerned suggestions to colleges that they develop and implement policy and practice to encourage staff to engage with scholarly activities.” [p10]

The report concurs with the HEA suggestion that development activities are “in many cases natural extensions of staff development carried out by staff who teach on further education programmes” and suggests that scholarly activity is “more embryonic activity in further education colleges than in higher education institutions” (p11). It also agrees with the concept of scholarly activity as evolving practice as indicated in the report of the Mixed Economy Colleges (2009).

Although the QAA report was published in 2011, data collection took place within two years of the HEA report and in parallel with that of the Mixed Economy Group. Thus there is little expectation that the report would bring to the fore any new developments within the sector.

The importance to QAA of the continued development of scholarly activity in its broadest sense was highlighted by its regular inclusion on the agendas of the HE in FE Policy Advisory Forum and its work with the HEA and staff from the Plymouth Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) in providing development workshops. Papers presented to the Policy Advisory Forum (2010) describe the points considered in the workshops, and include topics with continued relevance for sectorial debate and discussion:

- The definitions of scholarly activity (and associated terms); the significance of the existing definitions; and the extent to which colleges should be encouraged to provide and justify their own definitions, given the diversity of HE provision in FEIs.
- The scope of scholarly activity. Those attending were keen to include ‘developing FD programmes’ and ‘participating in validation boards’ within the compass of scholarly activity.
- Once defined, the need to find a mechanism for recording the types of activity undertaken by staff, and the impact they might have on the student experience.
- The difference in the number of class contact hours required in FEIs and HEIs and the implications of this for scholarly activity in FEIs.
- The limitations on what can be achieved in colleges with very small HE provision

### 3.4 Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs)

The investment of £315 million in the establishment of Centres of Excellence for Teaching and Learning underpinned a very significant strategic drive by HEFCE to raise the profile and underline the importance of the teaching and learning agenda.

The HEFCE publication April 2005/18 presented the expectation:

“The purpose of the CETL initiative is to reward excellent teaching practice and to invest in that practice further in order to increase and deepen its impact across a wider teaching and learning community. We encouraged institutions to define their own areas of excellence, evidenced by scholarly practice and a successful track record of excellence in teaching and learning outcomes, and to demonstrate how their identified excellence is reflected in and advanced by the proposed focus of the CETL.”

[p1]

Despite directly funded colleges being eligible to apply for CETL status, none were included, although nineteen collaborative CETLS were established. Notably only the HELP (Higher Education Learning Partnerships) CETL established by the University of Plymouth named its further education partners within the collaborative CETL.

The HELP CETL provided a number of awards to HE in FE practitioners from the partner colleges to provide support for research or continuing professional development. Award holders were appreciative of the financial sponsorship in the context of what they perceived to be a more challenging HE in FE climate. Having undertaken small-sample research, Turner et al (2009) reported:

“Perceptions of their college’s commitment to developing higher education, however, were mixed. Some questioned whether the needs of higher education had been properly recognised, leading to inappropriate and inflexible requirements and insufficient time for higher education activities (e.g. scholarship and research). Others thought their college had developed an appropriate infrastructure and environment, although there was a lack of clarity about support and funding for scholarly activity and research.” [p1]

HELP provided the University of Plymouth Colleges with a Scholarly Activity Toolkit, basing its definition of scholarly activity on those of Boyer (1990) and the staff development activities suggested in the HEFCE Good Practice Guide. Staff were required to take responsibility for engaging in continued professional development:

“Within UPC and each partner institution there are mechanisms to take forward your interests and scholarship. What is crucial is that you are able to take advantage of these opportunities by demonstrating that you are aware of your own developmental needs. Through reflection on your own scholarly activities you will be able to recognise these and subsequently seek out the appropriate mechanisms to achieve these. Identifying where your scholarship priorities are will enable you to take control of your CPD.”

This clear emphasis on the need for the practitioner to be proactive in consideration of their own development needs provides a degree of balance to the view that the terms and conditions of teaching staff within HE in FE are the main disincentive to scholarly

activity. A common feature amongst many colleges working towards FDAP is the creation of a culture wherein teaching staff feel confident to discuss their CPD needs and to work with senior managers to develop a solution that benefits both HE staff and students.

The work of HELP extended beyond its own collaborative partnership and, whilst the resources and website are inactive, the team behind the activity and the nature of their continued engagement with scholarly activity are acknowledged.

### **3.5 The Perspective of the University and College Union (UCU)**

In 2011 - 2012 the UCU undertook research to analyse the working arrangements of staff teaching HE in an FE college setting. The resulting paper (September 2013) reflects the variable approaches taken to delivering an HE offer in a predominantly FE setting, including those surrounding scholarly activity undertaken by teaching staff. Whilst the paper offers no view on the distinction between CPD and scholarly activity, it highlights the expectations of QAA and HEFCE with regards to the delivery of HE. Senior college managers and HE teaching staff must work together to ensure that these expectations are met if the college HE offer is to retain credibility and viability in a competitive market. The report notes that colleges have evolved a range of methods of building an element of flexibility into standard FE teaching contracts in order to enable HE staff to meet these expectations.

## **4. The Research Perspective**

### **4.1 The Context**

In considering 'Teaching, Staffing and Scholarly Activity', Parry et al (2012, p52) bring to the fore a number of important issues for colleges delivering higher education. Unusually the authors address both Prescribed and Non-prescribed HE, together with the funding complexities (both direct and indirect) and expectations associated with mixed economy status. They reference the report of the Mixed Economy Group (2010), highlighting outcomes such as the mixed level teaching timetables of staff, "*the broad range of professional development activities undertaken by staff which was specifically addressed to their higher education teaching*" (p53), and the lack of a definition from HEFCE as to the nature of scholarly activity:

"In planning their higher education provision, HEFCE expected all colleges to ensure that staff were appropriately qualified, had opportunities for 'scholarly activity' and were supported by adequate learning resources. No definition was offered of scholarly activity but, in general terms, it is taken to cover any or all of the following: keeping up-to-date with the subject; curriculum development involving research; studying for postgraduate and higher degrees; providing consultancy to industry and other organisations; undertaking industrial secondments or work shadowing; pursuing disciplinary, pedagogic and practitioner research; and leading staff development events."

[p54]

Whilst Parry et al (2012) suggest that much scholarly activity undertaken is '*ad hoc*' (p53) there is acknowledgement of the fact that staff teaching within colleges have been required to undertake 30 hours of professional development, a situation colleges have had to monitor until fairly recently. Whilst the authors infer that such activity might be at odds with the uptake of scholarly activity, IfL activity is nonetheless not prescriptive in nature and requires associated reflection, as suggested by the HELP CETL.

The issues raised by Parry et al (2012) are reflected and extended in peer-reviewed papers that directly attempt to tackle the issues associated with scholarship in mixed economy colleges. Key concerns such as institutional culture, conditions of service for teaching staff and the nature of scholarly activity are illustrated below.

## 4.2 Institutional Culture

The nature and culture of mixed economy colleges is held accountable for the differences between that considered scholarly activity within the university sector and that supported or undertaken in colleges (Lea and Simmons, 2012; Harwood & Harwood, 2004). Lea & Simmons (2012) assert that the corporate accountability of employees of FE colleges works to counter the freedom of expression they associate with academic life within the university sector, and the dangers of managerialism associated with the '*target oriented and funding driven*' (p21) culture of Further Education is picked up by Feather (2011). Neither corporate accountability nor managerialist behaviours are exclusive to college-based Higher Education. Since 1998 there has been increasing discussion of impact of managerialism within HEIs (Deem, 1998) and the associated perception of a curtailment of academic supremacy within the structures and processes of universities. The issue is perhaps a matter of degree and of institutional expectation according to the remit of each. Lea and Simmons (2012, p181) comment:

"At the heart of the cultural differences between HE and FE is the fact that universities are autonomous institutions in a way that FE colleges are not ... at the heart of universities is an autonomy that FECs can never aspire to as they are currently constituted. While FECs are owned by their corporations, universities are constituted in relation to the Privy Council; traditionally FECs award other organisations' qualifications, universities award their own qualifications; FECs have to work with external validating bodies to construct their curriculum offer, universities are validating

Creasey (2013) prefers to take a less segregated view of higher education provision, suggesting that as "some institutions are concerned with both FE and HE it may be more useful to consider the post-compulsory education sector as constituting one continuum and seek to identify where each institution sits, HEI or FEC...HE is a contested concept and the HE sector is not homogenous" (p44/49).

## 4.3 Conditions of Service for teaching staff

Lea and Simmons (2012) consider the nature of learning at higher levels, asking 'if HE in FE is to develop the kind of culture that HE demands, we need to ask if the right kinds of

conditions exist in FE for this HE-ness to flourish. That is, that the conditions exist to take students beyond the fixed and into the realms of the contingent' (p184). They reflect that the higher teaching loads and mixed level timetables of many staff teaching college-based Higher Education (Harwood & Harwood, 2004; Lea & Simmons, 2012; Creasey, 2013) may create a barrier to research and scholarly activity, certainly as it is understood in a traditional university setting.

Davy et al (2006) expound the benefits of partnership working that supports the development of communities of practice that supplement formal arrangements for scholarly activity, '*These informal networks can cut through formal procedures to jump-start initiatives and meet extraordinary deadlines*' (p18), thus embracing the benefits of collaboration applauded by QAA.

#### 4.4 The Nature of Scholarly Activity

Lea and Simmons (2012) initially suggest that research might be considered as the generation of new knowledge and take the view that this type of activity would be difficult for teaching staff within a further education college to undertake. They assume that such (unfunded) activity would be unwelcome in that context. Creasey (2013, p43) extends the debate to include scholarly activity but notes that "*Research ... means generating new knowledge ... scholarly activity exists to underpin teaching*". Whilst Creasey remains unconvinced of the place of HE and scholarly activity within an FE setting, Lea and Simmons (2012) then go on to consider the work of Boyer and thus indicate their empathy for the outcomes of the MEG Report (2010):

"Paradoxically perhaps, there are grounds to be cautiously optimistic about an FE research agenda, and for a number of reasons. First, if research is reconceptualised as 'scholarly activity' and we utilise Boyer's four scholarships (Boyer 1990) in the context of HE in FE, several potential rich avenues begin to present themselves...The scholarships of integration and application, particularly in the light of the notion of knowledge transfer, and the importance that is increasingly being given to research having beneficial impacts on its participants, would seem to offer lots of scope for scholarly work to take place in FE contexts."

[p188]

Recent debate within the pages of the Times Higher Education magazine has centred around the concept of practice as research (7 March 2013.) Writing about the overlap between the professional arts practitioner, ever keen to develop their skills and extend their own knowledge, and the demands of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) Till notes that Art schools and Music and Design Conservatoires are often drawn into a process which was never designed for their sector. ("*As a result many artists teaching in universities are now putting themselves through elaborate contortions to justify their work as research according to the new criteria.*") However, he also notes

"I believe that artistic practice can be research. The Italian painters of the Quattrocento who investigated the artistic potential of the newly established geometry of perspective; the composers who around 1600 unwittingly invented opera as an outcome of scholarly research into the performance practices of Athenian drama; Stanislavsky's development

of his “Method” for acting; Braque and Picasso working alongside each other to forge Cubism; Schoenberg’s development of Serialism: all were undoubtedly engaged in systematic projects of artistic research.

These examples all have three things in common: a sense of common endeavour, sometimes collaborative and sometimes competitive; a clear relationship between theory and practice - whether the practice is employed to test a theoretical hypothesis, as was the case with the composers who invented opera in response to the theoretical speculations of classical theatre scholars, or whether the theory is parallel or post facto, as was the case with the group of lesser artists around Picasso and Braque who theorised Cubism as it evolved; and a belief that artistic innovation involves issues of cultural meaning and value rather than merely technical concerns. Such work would certainly meet the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s criteria for research: it was led by “research questions, issues or problems”

His views attracted a level of comment, many of which offered more modern examples of a professional pushing the boundaries of practice such that new techniques were discovered, honed and polished for the benefit of other professional practitioners.

## 5. Practitioner Activity

The continuum of activity that is considered to be “scholarly” appears to have changed little during the past three years. For example, practitioners are continuing to undertake published research, participate in practice or consultancy, develop pedagogical approaches and skills, meet the requirements of professional statutory bodies and study for academic or professional qualifications. The barrier between CPD and expected teacher professional activity and scholarly activity is a particularly permeable one. However, the ability to seek FDAP and TDAP has had an impact on senior managers and their HE teams. Institutions appear more aware of the need to have structures in place which support a distinctive entity called scholarly activity.

The original survey of colleges undertaken by the Mixed Economy Group (2010) took place at an early stage of the cycle of QAA visits under IQER. At this point the articulation of ‘staff development’ as a requirement in the review handbook suggested a qualitative openness to the entire spectrum of activity, despite the mention by HEFCE of the term ‘scholarly activity’ in its consultation on HE in FE (HEFCE 2006/48). Those colleges using IQER as a precursor to an application for FDAP presented, even at that stage, a more embedded approach to scholarly activity. For example the Summative Review for Newcastle College found as good practice:

“there is a focused and comprehensive approach to staff development, including an extensive programme of development events and active College support for research and scholarly activity; together these contribute to ensuring that the teaching staff profile is well matched to the needs and expectations of higher education” [QAA, 2009]

The review methodology for college-based HE has required a need for a stronger strategic or institutional emphasis on ‘scholarly activity’ (QAA, 2012) ahead of the more recent Guidance on Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (QAA, 2013). This emphasis has been supported through the production of research reports such as that of the Mixed Economy

Group (2010), and associated dissemination and discussion through (though not exclusively) the work of the HE Academy, the AoC and the HELP CETL. Thus college HE staff are more informed and engaged with academic perspectives and positions that underpin the wider definitions of scholarly activity.

New College Durham and Newcastle College, having achieved Foundation Degree Awarding Powers, have demonstrated strategic engagement with scholarly activity and a strong focus on the learning experience of the student. New College Durham offers this definition of scholarly activity:

“Scholarly activity involves a process of continuous review of professional currency at an appropriate level and, where relevant, pedagogical practice. Through this review process practitioners can ensure that in the teaching and learning relationship with their students the learners develop contemporary subject knowledge, understanding and skills, including graduate skills and can benefit from current approaches to good practice in higher education programme delivery. In this way value is added to their learning, and their employability prospects are enhanced.” [New College Durham, 2012]

The development of an explicit Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Scholarship Strategy at Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education highlights the impact of institutional support, through practice, monitoring systems and a dedicated staff team of HE Teaching, Learning and Scholarship Fellows. Scholarly activity is clearly defined by GIFHE as “*Activity which develops or promotes staff expertise in their discipline*”. This distinguishes it from research, which is viewed as ‘*Original enquiry into a matter of academic or professional interest resulting in publication in peer referenced journals etc.*’ City and Islington College, too, are taking steps to embed an ethos of scholarly activity within the college. It is this holistic, institutionally-supported approach for activities on the broader continuum of research and professional development that underpins the development of the strategic adoption of scholarly activity. In some colleges such as Blackpool and the Fylde, joint student/teacher research is undertaken as part of the HE curriculum.

As indicated in a previous section, private providers of HE also contributed to this Context and Issues paper. Many are sector-specific: BPP University College of Professional Studies Ltd, which took part in the earlier 2010 survey of scholarly activity, ifs School of Finance and Regent’s College each offer a curriculum firmly based in the accountancy, business and law professions. Whilst the precise definitions of scholarly activity varied, each made a direct link between this and the development of professional practice. All three have Taught Degree Awarding Powers.

The debate around the nature of scholarly activity in an FE college setting is not a uniquely English one. A similar discussion is taking place in Australia. In “Towards a culture of scholarly practice in mixed sector institutions” Williams et al (2012) begin by noting that:

“Some TAFE (Technical and Further Education) institutes have now been developing and delivering higher education courses for several years. Yet recent research findings and audit reports indicate that the scholarly culture required to support their higher education provision is still at an embryonic stage of development (AUQA 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Goulding &



Seddon 2011; Wheelahan et al 2009b). Thus, as sectorial boundaries continue to blur in the emerging 'tertiary education' sector, scholarship has surfaced as a 'hot spot' of reform. This is particularly evident in mixed sector VET institutions where the dominant legacy of VET culture and practice confronts new expectations about scholarly practice rooted in higher education traditions."

In this relatively new world of HE, Australian college-based HE teachers have come to value senior management support for their scholarly work. Comparing examples of scholarly practice and institutional dynamics, Williams and her colleagues note:

"The findings ..... reveal overlap in some of the features of VET and mixed-sector scholarly practice, such as industry focus, the emphasis on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning, and individualised ways of building knowledge. But they also reveal overlap between the distinguishing features of mixed-sector and higher education scholarly practice, such as recognition of the role of critical reflection and of literature in situating scholarly practice within theoretical frameworks and traditions. Thus scholarly practice in mixed-sector institutions can be characterised as a hybrid form that reflects the hybrid nature of the institutions in which it is produced." P29

Previous sections have illustrated that the research activity underpinned by this Context and Issues paper is situated in a changing climate for college-based HE. Significant drivers at both national and local level have encouraged a more strategic approach to institutional engagement with scholarly activity. Defining what this is, maintaining and enhancing its quality, and sharing good practice continue to inspire debate and will be the subject of our main report.

## **6. Conclusion**

This paper provides the background to a hypothesis that within HE in FE, scholarly activity has been underpinned by a greater level of strategic attention across the last 4 years. However, the extent to which this view is supportable remains open to question. It also raises the prospect of an extended definition of "scholarship" in the context of a curriculum which reflects the higher level skill needs of employers and the employment aspirations of students.

It is suggested that the drivers for this development have been regulatory in nature. The recognition given to good practice and the increasing opportunities for college based higher education, within a market driven HE economy, may become the new enablers of such development. Our future research will now explore these questions:

- Are extended definitions of scholarly activity evolving alongside the changing HE landscape? If so, what should be included?
- What definitions and interpretations are currently in use in HE in FE?
- To what extent is strategic engagement with scholarly activity realised within college based higher education?
- What are the drivers for change?
- What factors have supported strategic development?

- Are there any significant barriers?
- What impact has this had on the current range of practice?
- To what extent has this impacted on the learning experience of students?
- What expectations do HE in FE practitioners have of LSIS's successor body, the Education and Training Foundation?

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## **Website Links**

BPP University <http://www.bpp.com/>

Ifs University College <http://www.ifslearning.ac.uk/AboutUs.aspx>

Regent's University <http://www.regents.ac.uk/>

The Chartered Institute of Builders [www.ciob.org/](http://www.ciob.org/)

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health [www.cieh.org/](http://www.cieh.org/)

The Chartered Institute of Legal Executives [www.cilex.org.uk/](http://www.cilex.org.uk/)

The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants [www.cimaglobal.com/](http://www.cimaglobal.com/)

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development [www.cipd.co.uk/](http://www.cipd.co.uk/)

The Institution of Engineering and Technology [www.theiet.org/](http://www.theiet.org/)

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors <http://www.rics.org/uk/>

The Education and Training Foundation <http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/>

The Higher Education Academy <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/professional-recognition>

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/>

The Institute for Learning <http://www.ifl.ac.uk/membership/member-benefits/new-benefits-for-2013-14>

Mixed Economy Group of FE colleges (MEG) [www.mixedeconomygroup.co.uk](http://www.mixedeconomygroup.co.uk)

LSIS: <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/research> and  
<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/631>

LSRN [www.lsrn.org.uk/](http://www.lsrn.org.uk/)

QAA [www.qaa.ac.uk/](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/)