

Understanding College Higher Education

Literature review

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Higher education: what is it and how is funded?

HE courses in colleges are characterised by greater heterogeneity than courses in higher education institutions. High-level distinctions between prescribed and non-prescribed, validated and franchised, 'academic' and 'vocational' courses only scratch the surface of this heterogeneity. This makes it difficult to make valid generalisations about HE-in-FE. (Page 18, Parry et al, 2012)

Higher education has not been clearly defined historically but increasingly there is consensus that, in England, it is provision at or above level 4 (or above level 3 in some formulations) as currently defined on the national qualifications frameworks.

From 1997, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) included all general and vocational qualifications accredited from that point. The NQF now¹ consists of nine levels, entry level to level 8. It was aligned at levels 4 to 8 with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) in 2004². Prior to that, higher levels were described only as 4 or 5. NVQs have not been re-defined.

The FHEQ is aligned with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-HEA)³: intermediate/short cycle, first cycle, second cycle and third cycle.

The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) now includes the regulated vocational qualifications⁴ offered by the recognised 'awarding organisations' (including some professional bodies, employers, HEIs and colleges). At levels 4 to 7 this includes 'non-prescribed' higher education (NPHE).

The 1988 Education Reform Act (schedule 6) listed the 'courses of higher education' that constituted higher education provision under the Act and subsequently the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act and related statutory instruments amended this. This is known as 'prescribed' higher education. 'Non-prescribed' higher education (NPHE) is, thus, a default term for that higher level provision (mainly professional awards) which was not included⁵.

This primary and secondary legislation determines the provision the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) (and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)) are empowered to fund directly at further education colleges (FECs)⁶. This includes, where these are awarded by a recognised body:

- higher degrees (such as masters)
- postgraduate diplomas
- Postgraduate Certificates of Education
- first degrees (BA, BSc, BEd and foundation degrees)
- foundation degree bridging courses
- Higher National Diploma and Certificate
- Diploma in Higher Education
- Certificate in Education
- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector⁷.

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA)⁸ and the Education Funding Agency (EFA)⁹ have the power (under the 2000 Act) but not the obligation to fund NPHE.

Non-prescribed HE

There has been little work focusing specifically on NPHE; as Clark (2002) put it: Where does it fit? She reported on NPHE after the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in 2001 to carry out a survey of the size, scope, location and importance of NPHE; to assess how it would be affected by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) work on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF); and to make recommendations to the LSC about the future provision and funding of this work (page 6).

The report concluded:

The research has looked in detail at which NPHE qualifications LSC is funding in the FE sector and the profile of their take-up. Overwhelmingly the qualifications are in the business area and undertaken by older students. However, this should not obscure the fact that there is take-up in small niches, which meet very precise local or sub-regional needs. Colleges view this provision as chiefly vocational in nature, arising from long-standing relationships with particular employers. Because of their breadth of mission colleges also have collaborative relationships with local higher education institutions (HEIs), which at present are largely seen as separate from their involvement in NPHE. National policy now views the vocational orientation of further education as significant for widening participation in higher education and for contributing to up skilling the workforce, and NPHE could play an important part in both these policy initiatives. One of the problems which has obscured the role of NPHE to date is its classification and nomenclature. If QCA is able to locate it firmly in the national framework for qualifications at sub degree level or higher there will be over 60,000 more students visible as participants in higher education, for which the FE sector will be given credit. However, if this were to be counted as growth in participation, it would be a falsehood, and so participation in NPHE would have to be tracked back and included in the baseline. (Page 8)

Despite a policy commitment to expanding part-time higher education there has been a decline in SFA funding for NPHE – which is largely part-time¹⁰.

Higher apprenticeships

A higher apprenticeship is not a qualification; it is a learning framework¹¹. Higher apprenticeship frameworks can now be developed at levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 on the national frameworks¹² and must meet the Specification for Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE)¹³. The framework specification allows for a range of component qualifications and combinations of QCF, higher education (FHEQ) and professional (NPHE) qualifications (see para 3.3.1 Carter and Ferguson, 2013).

Funding

Colleges receive funding for prescribed higher education either directly from HEFCE or indirectly via an HEI (franchise). Where funding is direct they are required to return the learners on the ILR and also on the early statistical return, HEIFES, directly to HEFCE. Where it is indirect the HEI makes the returns to HESA and on HESES; however the college is required to make a summary return on an additional form with part-time and full-time numbers by subject area.

Where colleges offer directly funded prescribed HE and also other (NPHE) higher level provision they are required to complete the 'Learning Delivery HE' data set. This data set includes a field for 'mode of study' and this is defined using the HEFCE definition of part-time. Additionally, there is a field for FTE which equates to the HEFCE definition¹⁴.

For the Apprenticeship frameworks the funding for the component qualifications is credit based¹⁵.

See, 'How is the data collected?' and 'What is part-time?' below for detail.

Policy

The strategy for Skills for Sustainable Growth (BIS 2010) included expansion of higher education in colleges:

We will increase competition between training providers to encourage greater diversity of provision, including, for instance, FE college offering more Higher Education courses (Para 10, page 7)

And, with regard to Apprenticeships:

We will not only increase numbers, but we will also improve the programme. As an advanced economy needs advanced skills, we will reshape Apprenticeships so that technician level – Level 3 – becomes the level to which learners and employers aspire. To widen access, there will be clear progression routes from Level 3 Apprenticeships to higher level skills, including Level 4 Apprenticeships or higher education. (Para 13, page 7)

The White Paper, Students at the Heart of the System (BIS 2011a) was supportive of the provision of HE by colleges. Chapter 4 'A diverse and responsive sector' noted that around 250 colleges (in the UK) provide higher education and that:

Colleges have displayed particular strengths in reaching out to non-traditional higher education learners including mature and part-time students. They also have a distinctive mission particularly in delivering locally-relevant, vocational higher-level skills such as HNCs, HNDs, Foundation Degrees and Apprenticeships.

Further education colleges also offer professional qualifications and awards which are predominantly studied part-time by people over 25 in employment. This kind of learning is increasingly being offered on a very flexible basis, including distance and online learning. Students are often able to take a break from their courses, which helps them build their study around their working and family responsibilities. We recognise the importance of this type of higher education provision (sometimes called "non-prescribed") and will consider how it relates to other forms of provision. (Paras 4.3 and 4.4)

New Challenges, New Chances (BIS 2011b) published later in the year was more specific; the key elements of the reform programme for the system included:

A ladder of opportunity of comprehensive Vocational Education and Training programme: from community learning and basic skills through to high-quality Apprenticeships to clear and flexible progression routes to Higher Vocational Education. (Page 3)

A section focused on 'Opening up Higher Vocational Education' in the light of the White Paper commitment to creating 'a system which is more responsive to student choice, provides a better student experience and helps to improve social mobility' (Page 12):

The White Paper acknowledged the main barriers faced by institutions seeking to expand and new providers were around student number controls and the complex processes for obtaining, for example, taught degree-awarding powers. It also made a commitment to drive competition and innovation across the sector, by freeing student numbers and removing the regulatory barriers that are preventing a level playing field for higher education providers of all types, including FE colleges and alternative providers.

These changes will have significant implications for many FE providers. Further education already provides nearly 40% of new entrants to higher education (HE). The sector is an increasingly significant HE provider in its own right, hosting around 180,000 students on HNCs, HNDs, Foundation Degrees, degrees, Apprenticeships and professional awards. Colleges have a distinctive mission in delivering locally-relevant, vocational and technical higher-level skills across the country. (Page 12/13)

And:

Whilst many colleges and providers have long and established track records in offering Level 4 technical and professional qualifications, this has been a neglected area in policy terms for some time, particularly around what has become known as ‘non-prescribed higher education’. We will develop and promote the concept, identity and value of our ‘Higher Vocational Education’ portfolio with clear, flexible and articulated progression routes into Levels 4, 5 and 6. (Page 13)

The concept of ‘higher vocational education’ is explored further below.

How is the data collected?

Currently colleges are asked to make returns on the ILR for their higher education which is directly funded by HEFCE (including non funded students) and also to make an early statistical return to HEFCE using HEIFES in November. Where prescribed higher education is funded by HEFCE via an HEI (franchise), the HEI makes the returns on HESA and the early returns on HESSES; colleges are directed to return totals on a form covering sub-contractual relationships¹⁶ but not to include students on the ILR (however, in the past the advice was not clear on this matter and it is known that colleges returned (and some still do) franchise students leading to double counting which is stripped out by HEFCE before the publication of figures (in [Regional Profiles](#), see para 10 Annex A of profiles 2009-10).

Colleges are requested to complete the HE data set for all learners (other than franchise) with learning aims at level 4 and above as listed on the learning aims data base (from 2013/14 the Learning Aim Reference Service (LARS), previously the Learning Aim Reference Application (LARA) and the Learning Aims Database (LAD)), thus including NPHE and all funding streams (HEFCE, EFA, SFA and full-cost)¹⁷.

Parry and Thompson (2002) contains (in, A note on statistics, p75) a comment on data coverage and quality and outlines the historic approach to data collection in the Further Education Statistical Record (FESR) which covered all publicly funded FE and HE institutions other than universities funded by the UFC. After 1994, responsibility passed to the FEFC and HESA. The report notes the

discrepancies between the Individualised Student Record (ISR) of the FEFC and the HESA record, including level and mode.

In a parallel publication for LSDA in 2002 Clark noted:

In conducting the research a number of issues arose in relation to the integrity of the data, anomalies and inconsistencies of classification, lack of equivalence between HEFCE and LSC's data collection systems, size of course and inconsistencies in current funding policy and practice. (Page 8)

Pye and Legard (2008) in their analysis conducted for the LSC some years later prefaced the report with 'A note on statistics' and commented:

There are some significant problems with the statistical base used to estimate the size and scope of provision at Level 4 and above in the further education (FE) sector.

As well as these general issues, there are some additional problems that are specific to the current research project. Originally it was hoped to co-ordinate HESA and ILR data systematically. But unfortunately, the release of the HESA data was subject to so many delays, and the data released was too incomplete to permit learning aims taught through FECs to be filtered out. It consequently proved impossible to combine the two datasets, still less to ensure that the data was properly cleaned and matched.

This means that a robust, comprehensive synthesis of 'HE in FE' is not possible at the moment. (Page 1/2)

Leading them to warn the reader (emphasis original):

.... **all statistics should be regarded as approximate**, and appropriate caution exercised in their interpretation, especially when they are used in time series.

(Page 4)

Applications for part-time courses are made directly to the institution rather than through UCAS. This removes a source of data (and an early indicator of numbers for the year) and additionally opens up the issue of the recording and definitional mechanisms used by individual HEIs and colleges when their application and enrolment data is used for comparative purposes.

What is part-time?

Studies and literature reviews have consistently pointed to the absence of a single definition of 'part-time' study in England (e.g. Callender et al 2010b, p12; Bennion, et al 2011, p147; Pollard et al, 2012, page 24 and 43; Parry et al, 2012, page 197; Thompson and Bekhradnia, 2013, p10; UUK 2013, Annex D, p1). The definitions used by HEFCE and HESA and by the SFA and EFA (and predecessor organisations) for official returns in both cases define (differently) what is 'full time' and 'part-time' is therefore by default. Fractions of full-time may be calculated, usually using credit as a measure in the HE system and guided learning hours (GLH) (see below) in the FE sector; these measures may also be used to calculate fees and to allocate teaching resources internally.

Pollard et al (2012) include a comprehensive section in their report on 'Defining part-time' (section 2.1) discussing the official definitions¹⁸ and the definitions used in practice based on their case

studies; they note the problems that may lead to a mismatch between the institutional numbers and the official statistics.

Most studies of higher education use the HESA definition for HE studies (see below) but note its 'limitations' (UUK 2013, Annex D, page 1) and increasingly there are calls to conceptualise provision as 'flexible' rather than 'part-time' (e.g Callender 2009; Pollard et al 2012; Widdowson 2012; UUK 2013).

The problems are compounded for the study of higher education provided in further education colleges since data must be derived from two funding bodies which use different approaches and definitions for the purposes of funding. The SFA (and its predecessor organisations) do not use 'mode' or 'full-time equivalents' (FTEs) for FE provision but instead, until now, deemed full-time to be programmes of 450 or more 'guided learning hours' (GLH) and part-time to be less than 450. GLH were strictly defined in terms of contact¹⁹.

However, for 2013/14 the funding for both under 19s²⁰ and adults²¹ has been changed and GLH has been replaced by 'Planning Learning Hours' (PLH): the 'total planned timetabled hours for learning activities for the teaching year' (ILR field, page 52). Programmes of 540 or more hours are now deemed to be full-time and less than 540 is part-time²². This raises issues of comparability in analysis of time series data. Programmes of GLH of 450 to 539 would be full-time in previous years but equivalent to part-time from 2013/14. However, since PLH is less strictly defined in terms of contact, the 'additional' hours might be timetabled study time rather than contact; detailed analysis of the nature of the programmes of study offered would be necessary to determine equivalence accurately.

The EFA does not normally fund prescribed higher education but may fund certain amounts within a full-time level 3 programme²³; similarly, NPHE may be funded²⁴. Learners with these learning aims should be returned on the ILR in the Learning Delivery HE data set (see below).

HEFCE classifies mode of study by: full-time, sandwich year-out or part-time. Full-time is defined as periods of study, tuition, learning in the workplace which amount to an average of at least 21 hours per week over 24 weeks; with part-time as a default category. HESA provides guidance on mode²⁵.

Colleges completing the Learning Delivery HE fields in the ILR are directed to use this definition (field: Mode of study, p152 ILR specification 2013/14) as expressed in the Higher Education in Further Education (HEIFES)²⁶. Since this data set is collected for all learners with learning aims at level 4 and above this should cover prescribed and NPHE.

For funding purposes, HEFCE counts students by full-time equivalents (FTEs) with a full-time student equalling one FTE. Part time students are funded on the basis of FTEs calculated as:

The FTE of part-time students depends on the intensity of their study by comparison with an equivalent full-time student, based either on how long it takes them to complete their qualifications, or on how many credit points they study in the year.
(HEFCE 2013/25, para 120)

In order to count accurately provision where students are taught at more than one institution or studying more than one subject HEFCE uses 'full person equivalents' (FPEs)²⁷.

HEFCE note the continuing challenges in obtaining data on part-time students in FE in the recent report on widening participation indicators:

We are continuing to develop the methodology to cover part-time students in the HE in FEC indicators, as we recognise that they account for a substantial proportion of HE provision registered at FECs. Because of the flexibility within part-time provision, developing these indicators is much more analytically challenging, and further work will be needed to ensure a fair and consistent methodology. (HEFCE 2013c, para 10, page 4)

In the recent study conducted for BIS on HE in FECs (Parry et al 2012), students in 25 case study colleges completed a questionnaire and one of the issues identified was a mismatch between the data supplied by the college regarding the students' mode of study and the understanding of the students:

More students thought they were studying full-time and fewer part-time, when compared with their college's records (Table 5.4). This highlights issues associated with defining part-time study, the numerous different definitions used by various government agencies, and a disconnect between formal classifications of mode of study and students' subjective experiences of studying. For instance, some students on HEFCE funded provision who were full-time were doing work related programmes and only attended college one day per week. (page 108)

And, as noted above, the concept of part-time may not be helpful in developing and evaluating policy on part-time provision and volume. In a paper arguing for making our higher education system accessible to all, Widdowson (2012) suggests as a starting point:

... curriculum delivery models and course structures could be made truly flexible. Arriving at precise, all-purpose definitions of 'full-' and 'part-time' study has proved elusive. Rather than pursue this seemingly impossible task, the opportunity should be taken to make the curriculum open to all, irrespective of their mode of study. Universities and colleges have the opportunity to make the artificial boundary between full and part-time study much more permeable.... (Page 50)

A further consideration which impacts on colleges and the availability of courses to students is the Department for Work & Pensions requirement that job seekers should be available for work. Advice to part-time students on the DWP website is that they can obtain the Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) if they can combine the course with a job, or are willing to give up the course for a job²⁸. No hours are mentioned in the literature but colleges usually operate to the '16 hour rule' and tailor marketing of the course offer accordingly.

What is higher vocational education?

Following on from the White Paper, Students at the Heart of the System (2011a), New Challenges, New Chances (BIS 2011b) used the term 'Higher Vocational Education' in the context of a vision for 'a ladder of opportunity of comprehensive Vocational Education and Training programme' (page 3) but without further elaboration as to the distinction of HVE from higher education in general.

Parry (2013a) in a piece for the QAA has queried its import:

In the latest turn from the further education division of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), a concept of higher vocational education was announced in a 2011 strategy document but was neither defined nor elaborated. Nevertheless, the identity and worth of this entity is to be developed and promoted. Is this another version of higher-level skills? What is its relationship to student number controls? Whose regulatory responsibility is it? (Page 3)

In the literature, the term 'vocational higher education' has more commonly been used or 'higher level' (usually with reference to higher education provided outside HEIs), or 'higher-level skills' or 'higher-level vocational' and, usually as a separate category, 'professional'.

In 2002 in a report written to provide an international context for the, then current, development of 'intermediate-level higher qualifications in the UK'²⁹, i.e. Foundation Degrees, Robertson (2002) noted:

Current policy in the UK seeks to strengthen vocational education at all levels from schools through to higher education, and to improve the employability of qualified leavers. The Foundation Degree is regarded as a key intermediate link both for academic progression within higher education, but also for routes of a more specifically vocational character. (Para 2, page 8).

He concluded that:

By definition, all intermediate-level qualifications must be 'less' in some way than the relevant final undergraduate qualification. In common parlance, they will be 'sub-degree'. (Para 17, page 12)

and adopted two criteria (which the FD would meet): to be recognised for progression and recognised by employers in their own right for labour market entry (para 19). Despite this focus on vocational contribution, Robertson did not talk about 'vocational higher education' – except in passing in discussing the French system where the phrases 'vocational higher level qualifications' and 'vocational higher education' are used (Para 86, page 28).

Little et al (2003) focused on vocational HE at the sub-degree level: the study sought to 'provide a comprehensive map of vocational HE provision in England using existing data sources....' (page 1)³⁰. For the report, this was taken to be 'sub-degree HE qualifications' that is, Level 4 in the [then] QCA NQF framework and other qualifications accredited at NVQ levels 4 and 5 with first degree study generally excluded (Page 2).

In their survey for the LSC, Pye and Legard (2008) grouped 'higher-level' provision in FECs into three categories:

- A wide range of higher-level courses is available through FECs, but they can be grouped into three basic types:
- higher-level vocational courses, primarily higher national diplomas (HNDs),

higher national certificates (HNCs) and national vocational qualifications (NVQs);

- ‘traditional’ higher education, primarily undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and certificates/diplomas of higher education; and
- professional and technical qualifications awarded by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies. (Page 4)

In Students at the Heart of the System (BIS 2011a) the term ‘higher vocational education’ was not used. Instead ‘vocational higher-level skills’ (such as HNs, FDs and Apprenticeships) was used (para 4.3) and, as an additional category, ‘professional qualifications and awards’, ‘sometimes called “non-prescribed”’ (Para 4.4).

Gavin Moodie provides an international perspective in a recent contribution to the English debate. While he does not use the term ‘higher vocational education’ he does address it in considering ‘What is higher about higher education?’ given it can take place in HEIs and in vocational colleges and indeed in the professions (Moodie, 2012). He suggests that higher education is defined both by context (where it takes place) and by level; with level reflecting (following UNESCO’s *International Standard Classification of Education*) the degree of complexity of knowledge, skills and capabilities that a programme imparts. Moodie argues that this can be ‘distinguished more richly’ by the degree of independence required. He concludes:

This paper has argued that education differs by the extent to which it prepares students for productive practice which is based heavily on a context external to academic disciplines and by the extent to which it conveys disciplines which are based heavily in an academic context. It has also argued that education differs by level and particularly by the level of the students’ independence. From this I conclude that higher education is education which develops graduates as independent learners of knowledge which is weakly or moderately contextualised by productive practice, such as in the workplace.(Page 22)

Parry (2013b) has recently drawn on the findings of projects funded by the ESRC, HEFCE and BIS to provide an international contextualisation of ‘higher-level education’ (p315) provided in colleges that offer other types of education and training, noting that while in some systems (such as the US), the location of study (in a university or in a multi-purpose college) is not the basis for the distinction of types of education while in England (and Scotland and Australia, see Moodie above) further education colleges are allocated to discrete sectors (p 318-9). There are ‘definitional difficulties, especially in relation to the categories of ‘higher’ and ‘vocational’ education’ (Page 319).

Joslin and Smith in their update of data on the progression of apprentices (2013) used an inclusive definition of higher education (i.e. including NPHE) in the context of the reference to HVE in government policy:

The phrase “Higher Vocational Education”, used in *New Challenges, New Chances* (BIS, Dec 2011) to describe the whole range of higher education found in colleges, has been noted in a recent study of higher education in further education colleges undertaken for BIS (Parry, Callender, Scott, & Temple, 2012) and following consultation with AOC (Association of Colleges) members, it was agreed to include a breakdown along these lines for the first time in this report. Higher Vocational Education has been found to be the destination for the majority of apprentices. Using it brings together the complex range of higher education offered by colleges and for the first time expresses their contribution on a like for like basis with universities. (Page 16)³¹

And:

The recent reinvention of a more unified higher education role for colleges embraced within the title of “Higher Vocational Education” brings together both their non-prescribed and prescribed HE offer in a name, but it won’t be until they appear side by side in college prospectuses that there will seem to be parity. Apprentices progress onto higher education covered by both funding streams and because it shows trends over the past six years, the data derived from this research can provide indications of where policy changes have affected progression flows. (Page 16)

The framework for higher apprenticeships has recently been revised at levels 4 and 5 and extended to levels 6 and 7 (after consultation³²). Carter and Ferguson (2013) emphasise the distinction from ‘traditional’ higher education:

To be successful, Higher Apprenticeships must be employer-led, and if they are to be seen as a different route to achieving high level skills from traditional higher education programmes, they must have parity with existing Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) qualifications. Parity does not, however, mean ‘the same’; Higher Apprenticeship is different to traditional, full-time higher education programmes and these differences must be celebrated and promoted. *‘Learning while earning’* and *‘Acquiring the knowledge and competence for a specific job role’* will be key messages in establishing the Higher Apprenticeship brand. Higher Apprenticeships can incorporate higher education qualifications, so a simplistic statement that Higher Apprenticeship is an alternative to university is inappropriate and it undermines the key message that Apprenticeships at this level can lead to, or include, a higher education qualification. (Para 3.1.2)

In the Foreword to the Implementation Plan for English Apprenticeships (HM Government 2013), Mathew Hancock, the Minister for Skills and Enterprise comments:

Whilst Apprenticeships are already central to raising our nation’s skills and delivering strong returns for the economy, for employers and for apprentices themselves, we must ensure they become more rigorous and responsive to the needs of more employers. Our goal is for it to become the norm for young people to go into an Apprenticeship or to university or – in the case of some Higher Apprenticeships – do both. (Page 3)

Notably leaving colleges out of the picture.

McCoshan (2013) in a report prepared for the UK Commission for Employment and Skills as an input to the OECD Review of Postsecondary Vocational Education and Training, *Skills Beyond School*, notes that it is difficult to ‘delineate and define’ post-secondary vocational education and training (PSVET) within the English system:

It is a complex matter to define PSVET in England. The term “VET” is not often used (“vocational learning and qualifications” being perhaps the most common generic term, and “Further Education and skills” being prominent in policy debates). Use of terms such as post-secondary VET”, “initial VET” and “continuing VET” is uncommon. This puts England at a disadvantage in international comparative studies as it can make it difficult to locate and compare vocational education, qualifications and institutions within this framework. (Para 1.1 page 1)

The McCoshan report does not focus on full-time versus part-time study. It records data on higher vocational qualifications as defined by levels 4 and above on the QCF (see table 2.3, page 16/17) plus higher apprenticeships (Para 2.3) and foundation degrees (Para 2.4)

Musset and Field (2013) in their contribution to Skills Beyond School with regard to England, define postsecondary VET³³ as qualifications at levels 4 and 5 (on the QCF and FHEQ) and note:

Numerically this field is dominated by foundation degrees, higher national diplomas and certificates, but a few other qualifications including higher apprenticeships are also relevant. (Page 12)

However, see the table quoted in the section on recent data and trends below, this appears to exclude much of the provision in FECs although they note the wide range of provision offered in colleges³⁴.

In June 2013 Williamson et al (2013) reported to BIS on their review of the impact of enterprise education. They had been commissioned to review the international literature and carry out a comprehensive analysis of initiatives as well as to 'map the landscape of the provision of enterprise and entrepreneurship education initiatives in FE and HE in England' (page 6). They mapped provision starting with a search of all the FE and HE institutions' websites (see template, Annex 3) but identified only a few relevant HE level qualifications in FECs (page 62), including HNCs and FDs and professional awards; no data is given on mode.

A recent report to HEFCE and OFFA (Bowes et al 2013) summarised international research on the effectiveness of widening participation reporting on six case study countries: Australia, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, the USA. For each country the report includes an overview of the education system including its HE system and pathways to HE, in Chapter 3. Table 3.1 (page 20/21) compares the countries in terms of the size and level stratification of the HE provision. However, it focuses on access to HE and pathways rather than on types of HE accessed, i.e. vocational or academic.

Regulation and quality assurance

Parry et al (2012) includes a summary of the quality regimes relating to HE in FECs (section 2.5).

The Regulatory Partnership Group (2013) has, on behalf of HEFCE, explained how higher education providers in England are held to account and regulated. A detailed register of providers (including FECs that offer higher education courses) will be established:

By August 2014 a detailed register of designated higher education providers and a database of publicly available information about them will be published by HEFCE. It will be known as the HEFCE register of designated higher education providers, to distinguish it from the existing UK register of learning providers (UKRLP) held by the Skills Funding Agency. UKRLP covers learning organisations in all sectors, not just higher education, and the information it provides is less detailed than that proposed in the HEFCE register which will be a detailed database (see Figure 3). Exceptionally, the HEFCE register will show which higher education providers are not meeting the relevant accountability requirements. (Para 22)

Parry (2013a) poses ‘the unasked questions’ for HE in FECs in a QAA briefing.

Qualifications

The Review of Adult Vocational Qualifications in England led by Nigel Whitehead for UKCES (Whitehead 2013) builds on the earlier reviews by Richards of apprenticeships and Wolf of vocational education and the Commission for Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL) and the Further Education Learning and Technology Action Group (FELTAG). Whitehead argues that adult vocational qualifications should be ‘relevant, rigorous and recognised’ (page 7) providing both entry routes into occupations and continuing professional development for those in work. In order to be relevant, rigorous and recognised, adult vocational qualifications must be ‘aligned with the skills employers need and the modes of delivery that industry requires’ (page 9); they should be regulated but they do not necessarily need to conform to the format of the QCF.

Our vision is of a de-cluttered skills landscape, making it easier for industrial partnerships to use the regulated qualifications system to align skills with vocational qualifications in their sectors. Through this approach adult vocational qualifications will support workforce development, leading to growth and competitiveness for businesses, and career success for individuals.(Page 9)

Qualifications at lower levels not linked to occupations may be described as ‘vocational’ but should not be (page 7); those ‘likely to confer occupational competence’ are at level 3 and above: ‘clearly there is scope for significant growth in the market for regulated vocational qualifications’ (page 10). Table 2: Number of regulated qualifications funded by level 2011/12 (page 11), reports that at level 4, 5 or Higher there were:

Education and Training: 31,520
 Work Place Learning: 4,220
 Apprenticeships: 5,270
 Community Learning: 70

learning aims delivered through public funding.

Literature Reviews

A series of literature reviews focusing on part-time study have underpinned the recent research on the extent and contribution of part-time higher education.

In 2009, Callender and Feldman (2009) prepared a review for the Higher Education Careers Service Unit (HECSU) to inform *Futuretrack: part-time students* a research project on the career decision-making and career development of HE students, focused on part-time undergraduates. The review reported on aspects of previous research with regard to: the methodology used; studies of students (entering part-time HE, the experience of study, employment and part-time study); outcomes of part-time HE studies (earnings, career development and change, personal and social benefits of part-time study); careers guidance and part-time students and includes a comprehensive bibliography.

The authors noted that, while part-time students had been recognised for some time as a significant section of the HE population the population was very heterogeneous, varying in terms of qualification aim, proportion of full-time equivalent credits, length of study and funding (Introduction page 3).

The review brought together two main bodies of literature, social and education policy and sociological literature and literature relating to careers guidance. The authors in their conclusion identified a conceptual consideration:

Within the first body of literature the review has identified an important conceptual and practical difficulty in the literature on part-time students in HE. A general neglect of the importance and diversity of part-time students, linked to a preoccupation with widening participation, has resulted in much discussion of part-time students being subsumed under other headings. Thus “part-time” is often added to descriptions of students as diverse as, non-traditional, working-class, mature, or having low entry qualifications.

This has the effect of seeing part-time students as just another disadvantaged group within the literature on widening participation. “Part-time” ceases to be seen as a mode of study, but becomes an attribute of students. However, even where part-time students are included among these groups, the *specific* barriers they face, and, even more, the *different* needs they may have, are often not specified. (Pages 24-25)

And:

The [careers guidance] literature reflects the profession’s concern to address student diversity, and many reports recognise that part-time and mature students are often not catered for. However, like the more sociological and social policy literature, with some exceptions, they also tend to subsume part-time students under other characteristics, particularly mature or disadvantaged, without addressing in detail their different needs from those of full-time students. These relate, above all, to the fact that part-time students are predominantly already in full-time employment, and therefore may have needs for advice with career advancement or career change, rather than first introductions to the labour market. (Page 25)

The authors concluded that there was a need to differentiate more clearly – in the Futuretrack project – the varying needs and trajectories of different groups and to challenge the undifferentiated assumptions embedded in the concept of the non-traditional students, to which part-time students were too often confused.

The reports included in the review rarely referenced HE delivered in FE (though Callender et al 2006 did so. More recent work following on from this is addressed in Callender et al (2010).

In 2011, Bennion et al (2011) published a review undertaken for the Open University designed to contribute to the policy debate about the future of higher education in the UK, in particular part-time undergraduate study - a sub-set of the almost 40 per cent of all higher education students identified by the UUK in 2006. It concluded that, while new research had been conducted, ‘research on the impacts of part-time study on graduates and any benefits that accrue to the individual or society as a result of part-time study is still rare.’ (page 150) and limited in its generalisability.

As had Callender and Feldman, the authors concluded:

All too often research tends to subsume part-time students under other characteristics, particularly 'mature' or disadvantaged' and, thus, part-time study ceases to be seen as a mode of study but becomes an attribute of the student. (Page 160)

For the literature search the concept of 'part-time studies' was extended to include lifelong learning occurring at higher education level (page 150) but the majority of the research identified focused on undergraduate study 'in its various forms' including degrees, foundation degrees, diplomas and certificates of higher education and higher national diplomas and certificates (page 152). However, there is no mention in the review of any distinction between part-time study in higher education institutions and further education colleges.

Pollard et al (2012) conducted a literature review for their study of part-time higher education and concluded:

The literature and data available on part-time study illustrates that part-time students are quite different to the traditional image of a HE student. They tend to have vocational qualifications, are more likely to be female and tend to be older. The existing materials also highlight that there is no typical model of a part-time HE course. Part-time provision involves study with varying intensity (of time and credit) and expected length, and study towards a wide range of qualifications including first degrees, HNDs/HNCs, foundation degrees, certificates of higher education, professional qualifications and courses which offer institutional credits. A part-time course may be delivered alongside full-time provision, provided separately or as a mixture of the two. It may be delivered in partnership with another institution, often a further education (FE) college, at an employer's premises, or via distance learning. It may be delivered during normal university working hours (9 am to 5 pm), on weekday evenings or at weekends, or delivered in small blocks of intense study. This creates a complex mixture of provision, particularly at undergraduate level, which responds to a complex market(s). (Page 24)

Recent data and trends

See [Annex: secondary data sources](#), for a summary of the recent quantitative surveys and their data sources.

HEFCE's analysis of foundation degrees (2010) used HESA, ILR, HESES and HEIFES as data sources and reconciled the HESA and ILR returns to identify HEI provided, franchised and directly funded FDs at FECs. By 2009-10, nearly 100,000 students were following FDs (p2); around 40% were part-time (p3). In 2006-07, 275 FECs were involved with FD provision (p13)

A series of studies was conducted focusing on the impact of part-time higher education from 2006 by UUK (with Guild HE) and by HECSU but generally these did not analyse data for provision at FECs. Where national data was used it was based on HESA, thus franchise students were included in the HEI data but not separately analysed. Where primary data was collected, it was usually from HEIs.

The study by UUK with GuildHE (UUK 2006) had three strands:

Strand 1: A quantitative data analysis of 2003/4 HESA data was conducted to inform strands 2 and 3. An appendix (15.1) dealt with part-time students in FECs. It noted that data for students enrolled in FECs was not collected by HESA but by the relevant funding body in each part of the UK and that data definitions varied. It also noted an identified problem concerning duplication of records of students studying in FECs under franchise arrangements who had been returned on both the LSC funding record by the college (incorrectly) and HESA by the HEI; thus numbers from the two returns could not simply be aggregated. It was reported that over 76,000 students had been reported to the LSC in 2003/04 enrolled in 316 colleges (but that this was an overestimate). A pie chart broke the numbers down by qualification aim with 43% being 'other'. It is not clear whether this is NPHE; it would seem from the text that it is an unspecified qualification which appeared to be short course/modules.

Strand 2: A survey of the issues facing institutions was based on interviews with 26 HEIs

Strand 3: A survey of students' attitudes and experiences of study and its costs selected 25 HEIs which then sent an email with a link to the survey instrument to all their part-time undergraduates. 2,654 responded of whom:

- 30% were studying at an old university
- 47% at a new university or institute of higher education
- 16% at the OU
- 7% at an FEC.

The results were not broken down by these categories in the report.

In 2010, UUK published a further study by Callender et al (2010b) on the supply of part-time higher education. This report used HESA data but does reference the provision of higher education in FECs and also addresses the technical difficulties of mapping FEC provision. The report notes that a significant amount of part-time provision was provided by HEIs through partnerships with FECs (page 7 and 38), i.e. franchised prescribed HE. Additionally it references the directly funded prescribed HE provided by colleges. It notes (page 14 and footnote 15) the difficulty in collecting and interpreting data on indirectly and directly funded HE in colleges. NPHE is not included.

The Futuretrack project (http://www.hecsu.ac.uk/current_projects_futuretrack.htm) is a longitudinal survey exploring the relationship between higher education, employment and career planning. It includes a series of studies of students originally surveyed in 2007/08 in their final year of HE (Callender et al 2010a, Callender and Wilkinson 2012 and 2013). It includes undergraduates, FDs and HNs but the students were drawn from 29 HEIs only. The most recent follow up was conducted in 2010/11. Additionally, Mason (2013) focused on employers and summarised interviews of employers of part-time students initially interviewed in 2009 and followed up in 2011 (and in other studies by Callender et al, 2010 and Callender and Wilkinson 2012).

In 2011 UKCES published a report on the impact of higher education for part-time students (Callender et al 2011). This examined the impact of HE on the labour market experiences of graduates who studied part-time and full-time as undergraduates. It reported a multivariate analysis of HESA's data from the Longitudinal Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey³⁵. This data presumably includes students taught at FECs but registered at HEIs (franchise) but they are not distinguished in the data. Table 1.2 includes 'type of institution' but this is defined as: Russell Group, 1994 Group, Pre 1992 HEIs and Post 1992 HEIs (page 43).

In 2012 the report commissioned by BIS on part time higher education (Pollard et al, 2012) was published. National student data was analysed to inform selection of the case studies for primary data collection and to map the size and shape of the part-time undergraduate market (p35). The HESA and ILR records were interrogated separately, and for different years – 2007/08 and 2009/10 and 2008/09 and 2009/10 respectively. With regard to provision in further education it was reported that:

In 2009/10 there were also just under 60,000 individuals studying part-time at HE undergraduate level in the FE sector – this includes students on non-prescribed HE courses funded via the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). Overall 52 per cent of all undergraduate students in FE institutions study part-time, and part-time study is considerably more common at undergraduate level here than in the HE sector.

- The North West, Yorkshire and Humberside, West Midlands and the South East regions account for the largest number of part-time undergraduate HE students in the FE sector. The East of England, North East and Greater London have smaller proportions of part-time students, and there is a much lower concentration of part-time HE students in the FE sector studying in London (compared with those in the HE sector).
- Almost all of those part-time undergraduate HE learners in the FE sector were studying in FE colleges (95 per cent). The largest providers of part-time HE in FE were Blackburn College, The Manchester College, Loughborough College, Bradford College, South Staffordshire College and New College, Durham. (Pages 44/45)

The figure quoted above is significantly lower than the figures given in Parry et al, table 3.4 (see below) where the total taught at FECs is 177,260 of which 60% are part-time. It may be that in the Pollard et al report the term 'studying' refers to registered rather than taught (i.e. excluding franchised in).

Analysis of the HEI numbers is based on registered students (page 52). Section 2.4 deals with part-time provision in the FE sector. It references the 2006/07 integrated data set analysed by Rashid et al (2011): 121,323 UK students registered at FECs but 170,932 taught at FECs (page 70). The authors

then turn their attention to the HE level students returned on the ILR but note the difficulties and limitations of this approach:

Identifying the number of HE level students in the ILR and their level of study, and whether they were studying full- or part-time, threw up a number of challenges. The level of study could only be accurately determined by coding from the title of the student's learning aim. Mode of study was based on two variables – one indicating whether the course itself was deemed to be full- or part-time and the other identifying study load (full-time equivalence/FTE), and students were coded as part-time students if they had both a FTE of less than 75 per cent and were coded as part-time or missing on the other variable.

Using data from the ILR, our analysis shows that in 2009/10, there were approximately 120,530 individuals studying at HE level in a FEI – this includes over 7,000 individuals studying at postgraduate level. If these individuals are excluded to focus only on undergraduate-level study, there were 113,198 individuals studying at HE level in the FE sector. This represents a slight increase (1.7 per cent) over the 2008/09 figure. Of these, 58,912 individuals or just over half (52 per cent) of students in 2009/10 were studying part-time. Among those studying at undergraduate level in the FE sector, part-time students outnumber full-time students – which is not the case for those in the HE sector. (Page 71)

Noting in a footnote:

Although we refer to the students in our analysis of ILR as HE in FE students, we do not capture *all* HE in FE students. Franchised HE students in FECs (those registered with HEIs but taught by FECs) are excluded from the ILR. It is estimated that group is therefore under-enumerated by close to one-third, and that part-time students comprise a significant number and proportion of this missing category. (Page 71)

Further detail is given for regional distribution and type and size of provider.

The investigation of HE in FECs conducted for BIS at the same time (Parry et al 2012) involved a range of qualitative and quantitative approaches:

- a review of recent relevant literature;
- a statistical analysis of administrative data on higher education students and courses taught in further education colleges;
- fieldwork in 25 further education colleges offering courses of higher education;
- interviews with senior managers in colleges and partner higher education institutions (HEIs);
- a questionnaire survey of over 2,500 higher education students taught in FECs;
- in-class discussion groups of higher education students in FECs;
- interviews with over 100 employers involved with higher education in FECs.

The statistical analysis used data provided by HEFCE using an integrated data set (combining the ILR and HESA) for 2009-10. This allowed reporting of all levels and types of higher education (4 and above) and a distinction between registered and taught students at HEIs and FECs. Chapter 3, 'Patterns of provision and participation', provides a comprehensive analysis including by: qualification aims, mode, highest qualification on entry, subject, age, gender, ethnicity and disability, polar profile and employment of learners as well the volume of provision at FECs by type and region and funding route.

Table 3.3 reports on the number of HE students taught at HEIs and at FECs in 2009-10 by qualification aim; full time numbers with the % part-time.

Table 3.3 Higher education students taught at higher education institutions and further education colleges by qualification aim in England 2009-10 [Percentage part-time in brackets]

	HEIs		FECs	
Postgraduate	475,620	[48%]	4,935	[74%]
Bachelor's Degree	1,159,130	[16%]	24,995	[22%]
Other undergraduate:	112,670	[39%]	83,025	[45%]
<i>Foundation degree</i>	45,565	[54%]	52,470	[32%]
<i>HND</i>	7,500	[19%]	10,510	[17%]
<i>HNC</i>	3,260	[99%]	13,815	[95%]
<i>DipHE</i>	49,130	[14%]	2,200	[88%]
<i>CertHE</i>	7,210	[98%]	4,025	[93%]
Other higher level	248,930	[93%]	64,305	[91%]
All qualification aims	1,996,345	[35%]	177,260	[60%]

(Page 64)

In FECs, three out of five students (60%) were taught on a part-time basis whereas in HEIs part-time higher education was undertaken by a minority of students (35% or around one in three). Yet, undergraduate education in the college sector was mainly taught on a full-time basis (60%). Only the HNC (and the handful of students pursuing the DipHE and CertHE) was predominantly part-time. Two-thirds of Foundation Degree students in colleges were taught on a full-time basis. This was in contrast to HEIs where just over half of FD students were studying on a part-time basis. (Page 65)

The data shows that HE was taught at 283 out of 349 colleges [then] in the FE sector but the volumes were very uneven (as noted too by Pollard et al):

Higher education was taught in the great majority of colleges: at 283 out of 349 FECs in the further education sector. Nevertheless, higher education was a small presence in all but a minority of colleges. Fifty-two FECs taught one-half of the higher education students in the sector. Most of these colleges had more 1000 students and nine of them had over 2000 students. Another 80 FECs had numbers between 500 and 999, followed by 108 colleges between 100 and 499, and 43 with less than 100 students. At one end of the sector were the 'mixed economy' colleges where higher education was a significant share of the total activity, although always a minority of the student numbers. At the other end of the sector were colleges – mostly sixth form colleges – with small pockets of provision. (Page 65)

Table 3.4 Higher education students taught at further education colleges by type of establishment and qualification aim, England, 2009-10 [Percentage type of establishment in brackets]

	Postgraduate	Bachelor's Degree	Other undergraduate	Other higher level	All qualification aims
General FEC	4,705	21,450	76,885	61,700	164,715 [93%]
Specialist FEC	210	3,075	5,350	1,255	9,890 [6%]
Specialist designated	20	150	160	360	695 [0%]
Sixth form College	0	320	605	990	1,915 [1%]
Total	4,935	24,995	82,980	64,305	177,215 [100%]

(Page 65)

The Mixed Economy Group of colleges (MEG) and the 157 Group conducted a survey among their member colleges in May 2012 (a total of 34 colleges responded). The report used HEFCE data for 2009-10 (p 4), and reported the numbers from Parry et al, above, as well as SFA data to 2010-11 (page 5) which demonstrated a decline in SFA funded NPHE:

.... all responding colleges received funding for non-prescribed higher education (NPHE). This is normally obtained directly from the Skills Funding Agency, but changes in funding eligibility have led to an increasing proportion of this provision being offered on a full-cost basis. This has meant an overall national decline in Skills Funding Agency-funded NPHE over the last three years. Although not explicitly requested in the survey, the breadth of NPHE provision referred to by our respondents suggests that many colleges have a range of relationships with other validators, including City and Guilds of London Institute (City & Guilds) and professional bodies for higher-level courses. (Page 15)

Data from the Skills Funding Agency suggests that NPHE enrolments, i.e. headcount, at level 4 have declined sharply since 2008 –09:

Table 2

Qualification	2008 –09	2009 –10	2010 –11
Higher Apprenticeships	300	1,700	3,500
National vocational qualifications (NVQs)	27,000	21,300	7,900
Other level 4	30,600	26,800	26,700
Total level 4	57,900	49,800	38,100

(Page 15)

Million+ and the NUS recently collaborated on a study of mature students in higher education (Morris and McVitty, 2012). The report notes that mature students are more likely than young students to study part-time:

The balance of part-time and full-time mature enrolments varies significantly between universities but mature undergraduates are much more likely than their younger counterparts to study on a part-time basis. The overwhelming majority of part-time students at UK universities in 2009-10 were mature students: of the 212,815 first-degree undergraduates studying on a part-time basis at UK universities in 2009-10, 181,885 (85.5 per cent) of these students were mature and 30,930 (14.5 per cent) were young. (Page 14)

These figures relate to universities (though they may include franchised out students). Although FE colleges are mentioned in the report (e.g. page 3: 'universities and further education (FE) colleges that offer higher education provision value mature students....' and page 7: 'mature undergraduates are more likely to have non-traditional qualifications, to apply to just one university or FE college...') the data does not appear to include directly funded (prescribed or non-prescribed) HE students in colleges. The primary data source is HESA and table 30 in the Appendix shows the percentage of mature students at each HEI in the UK. It is unclear what the data source for the online survey (with around 4,000 responses) was.

For the current OECD review *Skills Beyond School*, Musset and Field (2013) report with regard to England on postsecondary or higher level vocational education which they take as qualifications at levels 4 and 5 (on the QCF and FHEQ)³⁶:

Numerically this field is dominated by foundation degrees, higher national diplomas and certificates, but a few other qualifications including higher apprenticeships are also relevant (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Postsecondary vocational education and training programmes in England:
Number of students enrolled in programmes at level 4 and above in 2011-2012

Skills Funding Agency/Education Funding Agency funded Further Education	41 100
<i>of which:</i>	
Higher Apprenticeships	5 700
NVQs	1 400
HND/HNC	900
Other	33 200
Higher Education Institutions	2 065 100
Undergraduate	1 597 800
<i>of which:</i>	
First Degree	1 280 200
Foundation Degree	76 700
Higher National Diploma	8 100
Higher National Certificate	5 100
Diploma of Higher Education	36 900
Certificate of Higher Education	10 400
Other Undergraduate	180 400
Postgraduate	467 300

Source: Data Service (2013), Quarterly Statistical First Release. Further Education and Skills, www.thedataservice.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/C7B94140-F88A-4D12-AE57-6C04526079E2/0/January2013_FEandSkills_Demographics. (Pages 12/13)

It is unclear in the text whether this is full time numbers or both full and part-time. Nor is it evident where the HEFCE funded (directly and indirectly) students both enrolled (registered) and taught under franchise at FECs are recorded. However, the Data Service FE Data Library provides access to the source table (Learner Participation on Level 4 and above courses, 2005/6 to 2011/12) and this indicates it covers both full and part-time students of all ages and domiciles. The data sources are the ILR (though the further education figures do not include SFA funded learners on HEI ILR returns) and HESA but there is no clarification of the numbers of HEFCE funded learners in FECs (registered or taught).

Musset and Field note the low numbers of people 'pursuing postsecondary vocational qualifications beyond upper secondary level, but at a lower level than a bachelor's degree' and 'For school-leavers in England, the overwhelming dominant postsecondary qualification route remains the bachelor's programme in university.' (Page 38).

Joslin and Smith (2013) reported in the BIS commissioned project on their updated longitudinal research into the progression to higher education of advanced level apprenticeships over a seven year period from 2004-5. The project uses matched ILR and HESA data sets for 2004-05 to 2010-11 (apprenticeships only, see section 1.4). They report that of the 2004-05 cohort, 15.4% progressed to HE over the period. Fifty-six per cent of those progressing went on to study HE in FECs; 30% to NPHE and 26% to prescribed HE (page 8 and 45). Of all the students progressing, 78% progressed to part-time provision (Pages 8 and 64).

Since 58% of those progressing to first degree did so full-time while for FDs it was 66% part-time and for HNC/HND and NVQ level 4 it was 95%, we can speculate that the proportion of those studying part-time was higher in FECs than in HEIs. It was noted that the proportion of advanced level apprentices progressing to HEIs was increasing while those to FECs was decreasing but this was related to the shift from HNs to FDs³⁷.

The authors conclude:

This study examined for the first time where advanced level apprentices chose to study and revealed the important role that FE colleges have to play in delivering 56% of the higher education for these part-time work based learners. (Page 77)

Brentwood and Baker (2013) reported to LSIS on the current status of Higher Apprenticeships and their potential. Analysis of the Higher Apprenticeship records on the ILR for 2011/12 and 2012/13 showed 3,700 starts in 2011/12 and 3,600 to April 2013. (Page 19).

In March 2013 HEFCE published its evaluation of the 2012 reforms (HEFCE 2013b). It reported that enrolment figures showed significant falls in entrants to part-time study in 2011-12 and 2012-13 at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, with the numbers of part-time undergraduates having fallen by 40 per cent since 2010 (figure 3, page 13). The figures were based on HESSES and HEIFES,

headcounts for the years 2008-09 to 2012-13 (i.e. will include franchised students from HESES and directly funded from HEIFES but not NPHE).

The report included an analysis of recruitment performance by type of institution for full-time undergraduates (by average tariff scores in the case of HEIs) and noted that specialist HE institutions and FECs were the only groups to maintain similar numbers of full-time undergraduates between 2010-11 and 2012-13; indeed, FECs demonstrated an overall increase of 11.8% (Figure 9, page 35, source: HESES/HEIFES).

The position of FECs was further analysed in a section addressing: 'How have further education colleges which offer higher education been affected?' This noted that the numbers of full-time undergraduates taught at a college as part of a franchise agreement fell by slightly more than 4,000 (almost 15 per cent) between 2011-12 and 2012-13 while the number of directly funded places increased by 7,500 (or 26 per cent); thus an overall increase of students counted for HEFCE funding of around 3,500 (almost 6 per cent). This would be partly accounted for colleges with new directly funded numbers replacing franchised places. (See, paragraphs 98, 99, and page 42.)

However, with regard to part-time recruitment, the Council reported a 19 per cent fall in directly funded students between 2010 and 2012. This was with new providers included and when they were excluded the drop was 27 per cent (around 3,000) fewer students. The report did not include changes in franchised part-time places. It was noted that 'The falls continue and intensify a longer-term trend.' (Page 42).

HEFCE also reported on a survey conducted of FECs between November 2012 and January 2013 to gauge the impact of the reforms and the opportunities and challenges. A total of 98 responses were received, mostly from directly funded colleges. Twenty-one colleges reported a drop in demand for part-time courses because of a reluctance to take on student loans, particularly among mature students (para 33, page 14). While almost two-thirds of colleges identified opportunities for growth in their higher education (mode unspecified); nearly half reported under challenges, finding difficulties with the viabilities of some courses because employers were less willing to fund part-time students following the increase in fees (Summary table, page 43).

In July 2013, the OFFA annual report was published with the press release highlighting the Director's concern about the decline in part-time and mature numbers in the context of the new fees and support system. The Director's foreword responded to the HEFCE report:

Early data shows that applications from disadvantaged 18 year olds are at record levels. However, the significant downturn in application rates for part-time study is a cause for deep concern, and application rates from mature students for full-time courses have not recovered to the same extent as those from the younger population. HEFCE's *Impact of the 2012 reforms* analysis reports a 40 per cent reduction in students studying part-time since 2010. I am very concerned by the significant decline in part-time and mature numbers as students in these groups are more likely to be from groups under-represented in higher education. If higher education is truly to meet the needs of all those with the talent to benefit from it, it must be flexible enough to support those who choose to study later in life, whether part- or full-time, as well as those who go straight to university from school. It's

vital that we understand the reasons for the downturn and I therefore look forward to publication by Universities UK of its review of the decline in part-time numbers. (Page 5)

In October 2013 Thompson and Bekhradnia (2013) published an update of their 2012 report on the impact of reforms on full-time undergraduates and added an analysis of part-time. It notes that, despite the 2011 White Paper's intention to provide more opportunities, demand has declined and describes changes which may have led to this.

The report notes the definitional difficulties relating to part-time: 'Part-time provision is more diverse than full-time' (para 25). For the report 'entrants' uses the HESA definition of 'UK domiciled, first year, part-time undergraduate' with a 'more stringent' definition applied to create a reliable time series (see Annex A1).

Using HEIFES³⁸ returns ('Further education colleges in England', page 22/23, Figure 7 presents: the numbers of 'home part-time undergraduate entrants registered with FECs in England') the authors conclude that:

Overall, FECs have seen a smaller decline in the numbers of part-time entrants than HEIs, indeed between 2011-12 and 2012-13 they saw a small increase in the number of entrants to 'other' courses. In contrast to HEIs, the FECs have far more students starting HND and foundation degree programmes than entrants to first degree courses. Demand for these courses has been buoyant, which has helped FECs to maintain their overall student numbers. (Para 53)

'Other' here is defined as: 'sub-degree other than FD and HND, credits' (para 26)³⁹. As these are HEIFES figures they do not include learners returned on the ILR who are not HEFCE fundable (i.e. NPHE), additionally they do not include provision leading to institutional credit (para 55) and they do not include students taught at FECs under a franchise arrangement. The authors speculate that the 'core and margin' system introduced in 2012-13 may have helped to keep FEC part-time entrant numbers stable (para 54); while noting that as part-time numbers are not controlled the core and margin effect should not apply:

However, the HEI full-time losses and the FEC gains were sometimes achieved by entrants who would previously have been taught at an FEC, but registered at an HEI, being registered and taught at the FEC. If this resulted in an end to a 'franchise' agreement, part-time HEI and FEC numbers could be affected. The little evidence we have suggests that this movement was not large, and does not explain the overall fall in HEI entrant numbers, but it may contribute to the picture we see in figure 7. (Para 54)

This paragraph was covered by a footnote:

HESES (table 5, column3) gives the total numbers, rather than entrants, of students 'franchised out'. These show a decrease between from 2011-12 to 2012-13 which is smaller than the overall decrease in entrants but greater than the overall decrease in total numbers. Because we do not know the proportion of entrants 'franchised out', these statistics are difficult to interpret, but they do suggest that changes to franchising arrangements are not a dominant factor. (Footnote 30, page 23)

Also in October 2013, the review conducted by UUK into part-time and mature higher education at the behest of BIS was published (2013). The report headlined the drop in part-time numbers:

While full-time undergraduate enrolments have gone up over the last ten years in the UK, part-time undergraduate enrolments have gone down. This trend has been more significant for women and mature learners. **Following a decade of slow decline, the numbers of students recruited to undergraduate part-time courses in England suddenly fell by 40% in two years (2010-11 to 2012-13); equivalent to 105,000 fewer students.** Indications for 2013-14 are that the level of decline will not be stemmed.

The figures above include entrants to part-time higher education courses in further education colleges, which fell by around 3,000 between 2010-11 and 2012-13. (Page 3)

A footnote to the comment on FECs explained that this was 'enrolments to part time directly funded HE courses in FE colleges, excluding new providers in order to allow comparisons with previous years'. The figure was derived from the HEFCE impact report (see para 99 of that report, addressed above, which reported a 19% drop when new providers were included and a 27% drop, around 3,000 students, when they were excluded).

The report's technical annexe (Annexe D) notes the problems of definition of part-time and notes (see Callender and Feldman 2009) that:

Mature and part-time learners are not the same thing. While most part-time undergraduate students are mature, most mature undergraduates are full-time. (Page 1)

Data collection

HEFCE is aligning the gathering and publication of information on HE in FECs with that for HEIs, see the recent reports below. Similarly QAA has been aligning its review methods and its use of the Key Information Statistics (KIS) which include information drawn from the DLHE.

HEFCE reported in January on the destinations of leavers from HE in FECs (2013a). This provided comprehensive information for the first time about the destinations of students registered at FECs (for prescribed HE provision). It provides information regarding graduates' employment, further study or training, six months after qualifying. It is derived from the Further Education Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (HE in FE DLHE) for the years 2008-09 to 2010-11.

The HE in FE DLHE was first undertaken for 2008-09⁴⁰. It provides comparable data⁴¹ for students registered at FECs with those from HEIs provided by the DLHE. Franchised provision is captured in the HEI partner's DLHE return. The report provides comparative data for qualifiers **registered** at FECs and at HEIs (i.e. including the franchise students) by mode. Additionally, there is a section 'Destinations of leavers by teaching arrangements' (page 22 to 26) which reports on destinations by numbers:

- Registered at FEC
- Registered at HEI, taught at FEC
- Registered and taught at HEI

for first degrees, foundation degrees and other undergraduate. However, this is only for full-time students.

And in August HEFCE (2013c) reported on the widening participation, non-continuation and employment indicators for FECs in the second publication reporting on the widening participation and non-continuation indicators and the first publication of employment indicators. The first report on WP in August 2012 was the first step to matching the data for HEIs published since 1999. Data is taken from the ILR and HESA records 2009-10 and 2010-11 and the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education for 2010-11. This report takes a comprehensive approach to HE and distinguishes between students taught at and registered at FECs⁴²:

This report provides a second year of data to enable consideration of the participation and non-continuation indicators relating to the entirety of HE provision registered at HEIs and FECs in England, as well as the first opportunity to do the same for the employment indicator. It provides participation, non-continuation and employment indicators for the following categories of full-time HE provision at a sector-wide level:

- a. HE students registered at HEIs.
- b. HE students taught at HEIs.
- c. HE students registered at FECs.
- d. HE students taught at FECs.
(para 11, page 4)

This publication relates to students following a programme of prescribed higher education who are registered at an FEC (i.e. directly funded) and includes full-time students only. The methodology is being developed for part-time and the attendant problems are highlighted:

We are continuing to develop the methodology to cover part-time students in the HE in FEC indicators, as we recognise that they account for a substantial proportion of HE provision registered at FECs. Because of the flexibility within part-time provision, developing these indicators is much more analytically challenging, and further work will be needed to ensure a fair and consistent methodology.

(Para 10, page 4)

However, the data on full-time undergraduates may provide some pointers. Analysis of the data using the Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) data for the young full-time entrants (to first degree and other undergraduate) showed that (Table A, page 7) the percentage from low-participation neighbourhoods (LPNs) was greater both for students taught at and registered at FECs than at HEIs, but also was greater for students registered at FECs than those taught at FECs. The report also provides comprehensive figures on non-continuation for young and mature full-time undergraduates and the employment rates of learners obtaining an HE qualification.

The indicators will be produced regularly; it is planned to publish two sets in early 2014.

And again in October 2013, HEFCE published a further report on the young participation rate (HEFCE, 2013d). This presents the latest trends in participation in higher education among young people (aged 18 or 19 on entry to HE) using national data for 14 cohorts aged 18 in the academic years

1998-99 to 2011-12. The population is entrants to ‘full-time and part-time HE-level courses at UK higher education institutions and FECs in England and Scotland’ (para 13). The data is derived⁴³ from the HESA record, the Data Service, the Scottish Funding Council and UCAS (footnote 4, page 4). UCAS application data is used to allow reporting on recent participation trends (para 17).

The report does not disaggregate the data – the tables do not distinguish by either mode or institutional location of study.

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Annex: Secondary data sources for recent projects

All headcount

Project/Report	Date published	Data source(s)	Years	Population	Reference
Foundation degrees: key statistics 2001-02 to 2009-10	April 2010	HESA and ILR reconciled HESES HEIFES DLHE	2001-02 to 2009-10	Home entrants to FDs, FT and PT	Page 6/7
UUK The supply of part-time higher education in the UK	Sept 2010	HESA	2003/04 to 2007/08 1996/7 to 2007/08	UG and PG part-time, focus on UG UK domicile and overseas For FECs	Page 15 Page 14
Never Too Late To Learn: Mature students in higher education	2012	HESA	2009-10	UK UG	Page 44
Expanding and Improving Part-time Higher Education, BIS no 68	June 2012	HESA and separately ILR	2007/08 and 2009/10 2008/09 and 2009/10	HESA: Students registered at HEI in UK ILR: Students registered at FEC for UG level (franchise and NPHE)	Page 35
Understanding higher education in further education colleges, BIS No 69	June 2012	Integrated set – fuzzy matched HESA and ILR	2009-10 (2006-07 used for sampling)	All HE students in England (level 4 and above). Focus on HE students taught in FECs	Page 24, 62
Progression of Apprentices to Higher Education, BIS no 107	February 2013	Integrated data set – fuzzy matched HESA and ILR	2004-05 to 2010-11	Apprentices on advanced level (3) programme. ILR level 3 and 4 and HESA first year HE	Page 19, 21/22
Higher Education in England. Impact of the 2012 reforms, HEFCE 2013/03	March 2013	UCAS (FT) HESES/HEIFES HESA	2010-11 to 2013-14 2008-09 to 2012-13	All UK and EU applicants to (prescribed) HE in England; UG and PG, FT and PT Includes analysis of HE in FECs (direct and franchise)	Page 7 Page 42
The impact on demand of the Government's reforms of higher education, HEPI, no 62	October 2013	UCAS (for FT) HESA HESES HEIFES	2003-04 to 2011-12 2008-09 to 2012-13 2008-09 to 2012-13	Update on FT UG data (2012 report) and new PT data. Home and EU UG, England, Scotland and Wales Section on FECs (home part-time UG registered with FECs) Uses HESES and HEIFES because that is all that is available for 2012-13	Page 1-2 Page 13 Page 22
The Power of Part-time. Review of part-time and mature higher education, UUK	October 2013	HESA HESES HEIFES (occasionally)	HESA: 2002-03 to 2011-12 HESES/HEIFES : 2012-13	Part-time, UK-domiciled, UG all UK HEIs (though OU excluded from most analysis) Includes some references to franchise.	Page 10 Annex D, page 3
Trends in young participation in higher education, HEFCE	October 2013	UCAS HESA ILR	1998-99 to 2011-12 Integrated data	Entrants to full and part-time 'HE-level' courses at UK HEIs and FECs in England and Scotland. Focus on England	Page 4 Original data methodology described Annex C 2005/03

Notes:

UCAS: doesn't cover part-time applications

HESA: HEIs return data for their registered students taught at FECs (franchise)

ILR: colleges make returns for directly funded HE as well as SFA fundable level 4 and above. In both cases the Learning Delivery HE data set is completed, this includes 'mode' as defined in HESA/HESES/HEIFES.

HESES: HEIs make returns for all registered students in December

HEIFES: FECs make returns for all HEFCE directly funded (and non-fundable) in November

Endnotes

¹ See Clark (2002, para 3.3) for an analysis of the, then, national qualifications frameworks of the QAA and QCA.

² <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/The-framework-for-higher-education-qualifications-in-England-Wales-and-Northern-Ireland.aspx>

³ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Bologna-Process-in-HE.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/popups/explaining-qualifications/>. Whitehead (2013) summarises the oversight and design of the adult vocational qualification system, see page 12).

⁵ See Parry and Thompson (2002) for an historical account including definitions and funding streams.

⁶ See 'Higher education in further education colleges: HEFCE's funding powers: prescribed courses of higher education', Circular letter 22/2008, August 2008 <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2008/cl222008/#d.en.62700> and guidance in HEIFES, Annex G which includes the definition of 'recognised HE' for the purpose of the return. The most recent guidance is provided in: HEFCE (2013) Guide to funding and student number control 2013-14. How HEFCE allocates its funds and controls student numbers. October 2013/25, HEFCE. Para 36 (and footnote) explains the funding of prescribed HE in FECs and para 40 (d) elaborates:

Higher education in further education colleges: As explained in paragraph 36, we are only empowered to fund 'prescribed' courses of higher education in further education colleges. These include HNCs, HNDs, foundation degrees, bachelors degrees, postgraduate degrees and certain teacher training qualifications; the awarding bodies include institutions with degree-awarding powers and Pearson Edexcel. Prescribed courses do not include other higher education courses at further education colleges, such as some professional courses or modules taught to students who may be taking parts of a prescribed course but have not declared an intention to complete the whole qualification. These other higher education courses are the funding responsibility of the further education funding body, the Skills Funding Agency.

⁷ A new suite of teaching qualifications for teaching in the FE sector has been introduced from September 2013 and the DTLLS will be replaced by the Diploma in Education and Training (DET). From September 2014 DTLLS will no longer be eligible for student support.

It should be noted that DTLLS are offered by HEIs and may be taught in colleges under validation or franchise relationships. HEFCE can fund NPHE in HEIs, including where it is franchised by an HEI to an FEC (para 15, Regional profiles of higher education 2009-10, March 2012/07, HEFCE) – this would include DTLLS. However, the qualification is also offered by some of the national awarding organisations – historically the more common provision (as NPHE) offered by colleges.

⁸ Paras 56 and 57, 2011/12 Learner Eligibility and Contribution Rules, Version 2.1, August 2011, The SFA explained: Responsibility for the funding of all prescribed Higher Education lies within HEFCE. Prescribed HE encompasses Foundation Degrees and, since August 1999, Higher National provision. The Agency has the power to fund non-prescribed HE learning aims in Agency funded Providers. Non-prescribed learning aims are those that fall outside the schedule of prescribed learning aims of Higher Education as defined in the Education (Prescribed Learning Aims of Higher Education) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 1998. These higher-level learning aims generally encompass vocational qualifications at Level 4 and above, which may have a primary purpose of confirming occupational competence, or be about preparing for further development, learning or training. This elaboration was not included in subsequent guidance. Funding Rules 2012/13, Version 3, July 2012 stated: We do not fund 'prescribed higher education', such as degrees, foundation degrees and Higher National Qualifications. This is the responsibility of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). Where The Agency has confirmed higher-level qualifications (Level 4 and above) for funding these will be listed in LARA. (Para 32). Funding Rules 2013/2014, version 2.1, July 2013 includes only the first sentence; inclusion in LARA/LARS remains the criterion (para 6) and guidance on completion of the Learning Delivery HE data set.

⁹ Paras 99 and 100 of Funding guidance for young people 2013/14. Funding regulations, June 2013, version 1.01, EFA explain:

The EFA has the power under Section 5(d) of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 to fund courses falling within paragraph 1(g) or (h) of Schedule 6 to the Education Reform Act 1988.

Non-prescribed learning aims are those higher-level vocational learning aims that are generally professional learning aims leading to accreditation by a professional body and do not include, for example, part-time certificates in HE or the high level qualifications that are delivered to students of high ability on dance, drama, and music courses. Changes in the volume and type of this provision should be considered by the funding body in the context of local needs analyses.

¹⁰ Parry et al (2012) found that in 2009-10 in both HEIs and FECs, over 90% of students studying Other (i.e. NPHE) were part-time, table 3.3, page 64. MEG and 157 Group (2012, page 15) and Parry (2013a, page 4 and response by Davy, page 8) note the decline in funding.

¹¹ English Apprenticeships are currently governed by the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (ASCL). This contains some rules and provisions incompatible with the Government's planned reforms and it intends to amend the ASCL through the Deregulation Bill (paras 87 and 88, The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Implementation Plan, October 2013, HM Government.

¹² See Carter J and Ferguson I (2013) Developing quality Higher Apprenticeship frameworks for England. Guidance for framework developers. Version 1, 2nd April 2013

http://www.afo.sscalliance.org/mcims/mediafiles/2307E655_F206_DC7E_5FA1BE4336441F92.pdf

The framework and its components are defined by credit:

A key revision to SASE at levels 4 and 5 has been to increase the minimum credit value of a Higher Apprenticeship to 90 credits. At levels 6 and 7 SASE specifies a minimum credit value of 120 credits. The minimum credit values specified are the mandatory **MINIMUM** requirements for the competencies and technical knowledge qualification component(s) of the Higher Apprenticeship. Higher Apprenticeship frameworks should specify a higher credit value if a higher credit value is needed to develop the competency and technical knowledge requirements of the job role. In setting a credit value, framework developers should also be mindful of the need to support progression to the next level of learning associated with the next level job role. Higher Apprenticeships should support the development of a work-based learning route to senior and professional-level job roles.

For Higher Education qualifications credit is based on estimated notional learning hours (where one credit represents 10 notional hours of learning). Similarly, for qualifications that use the rules of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) one credit will usually take 10 hours of learning. In addition, the descriptions of the 'level' of credit for the QCF and Higher Education qualifications are also very similar and the QCF and FHEQ use the same numerical levels (4 to 8) to describe higher-level learning. This 'common currency' of credit will help framework developers utilise and combine both Higher Education qualifications and QCF qualifications in the development of Higher Apprenticeship frameworks. Framework developers should recognise that the total amount of credit associated with the qualification(s) specified in a framework corresponds to a number of hours of learning as described above. The approach to using a non-credit bearing professional qualification to contribute to the minimum credit requirement of SASE is outlined in paragraph 3.4.1. (paras 3.2.1 and 3.2.1)

¹³ Specification for Apprenticeship Standards for England, revised March 2013, paras 26 to 32:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/specification-of-apprenticeship-standards-for-england>

¹⁴ Field: Student instance FTE (page 155 ILR 2013/14). This 'represents the institution's best academic judgement of the full-time equivalence of the learner (for this record) during the reporting year...' And 'Full-time full year students would normally be returned as 100 and part-time students returned as a proportion of an equivalent full-time course..... The proportion of part-time study can be estimated on either a 'time' or a 'credit' basis. Colleges are referred to the HESA specification for full guidance about the field.

¹⁵ Para 47, A New Streamlined Funding System for Adult Skills.

¹⁶ See paras 68 to 70 of the Provider Support Manual 2013/14 and Appendix I of the ILR Specification 2013/14, form ILRSUBCON. (Prior to 2011/12 the form was known as ILFRANIN.)

¹⁷ The Provider Support Manual 2013/14, version 1 – May 2013 instructs (paras 254 to 256):

The Learner HE entity is collected for learners with aims that meet the following criteria where the collection requirements for the field apply:

- Learning aims that are HEFCE funded, as indicated in the Learning Delivery Funding and Monitoring fields using code SOF1.
- Learning aims funded by the EFA that are level 4 or above on the Data Service Learning Aim Rates Service (LARS).
- Learning aims that are level 4 or above on LARS, are funded by Adult skills funding, code 35 in the Funding model field, and are not workplace learning (no Workplace learning indicator is returned in the Learning Delivery Funding and Monitoring fields).
- Learning aims that are level 4 or above on LARS and are not funded by the EFA or Skills Funding Agency, code 99 in the Funding model field.

For learners with workplace learning aims, Community Learning and ESF funded learning aims, HE data is not returned.

HE data is requested by HEFCE and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

See also page 141 of the ILR Specification for 2013/14, Version 4

¹⁸ Some of their information now needs updating, e.g. reference to the YPLA, now the EFA, and to the SFA definition of 450 GLH which is now 540 PLH.

¹⁹ Guided learning hours are:

‘All times when a member of staff is present to give specific guidance towards the qualification or module being studied on a programme. This includes lectures, tutorials, and supervised study in for example; open learning centres and learning workshops. It also includes time spent by staff assessing learners’ achievements, for example in the assessment of competence for NVQs. It does not include time spent by staff in the day-to-day marking of assignments or homework where the learner is not present. It does not include hours where supervision or assistance is of a general nature and is not specific to the study of the learners’.

- Providers should note particularly the final sentence of the definition and only include as GLH supervision or assistance where provided by a member of staff able to give specific support to the learner. General study time for example in a library should not be included, even though a member of staff is in attendance. (Specification of the Individualised Learner Record for 2012/13, The Information Authority Page 101. http://www.theia.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/9539174E-C34A-4043-A77A-2B9A6D307ADB/0/ILRSpecification2012_13v4_18Oct2012.pdf)

²⁰ The funding for young people 16-19 and those 19-14 funded by the EFA are set out in: Funding guidance for young people 2013/14. Funding regulations, June 2013, version 1.01, EFA. Young people are funded for a programme of study of planned learning hours:

Planned hours are those that are timetabled, organised and/or supervised by the institution, and take place in line with the institution’s normal working pattern to deliver the study programme during the funding year 2013/14, and can include the following.

- a. Planned tutor led activity on qualification bearing courses for the student.
- b. Planned hours of tutorials, work experience or supported internship, and planned hours on other activities that are organised and provided by the institution, such as sport or volunteering.

(para 65)

The funding rate is set as equivalent to 600 hours (para 72); total hours will vary but there will be at least 540 to qualify as full-time (para 71). Programmes are determined to be either academic or vocational by type and size of the qualifications offered (para 82).

²¹ The funding of adults is set out in: A New Streamlined Funding System for Adult Skills, March 2013, SFA 2013/14 has seen the implementation of the new 'streamlined', 'demand-led' funding system for adult skills, including apprenticeships. Funding is determined by the learner's learning aim (as listed in the Data Service's application the Learning Aim Rates Service (LARS) which will replace the Learning Aim Reference Service (LARA); it is in pounds (£) for the qualification. Funding is allocated on the basis of the size of the qualification measured in credits and regardless of level with an element of programme weighting (for costs of delivery). (There will also continue to be an uplift for certain learners based on postcode or delivery location.) This is set out in a matrix (pages 7 and 11 and 13):

Award:

- 3 credits
- 6 credits
- 9 credits
- 12 credits

Certificate:

- 13 to 24 credits
- 25 to 36 credits

Diploma:

- 37-48 credits
- 49-72 credits
- 73 to 132 credits
- 133 credits or more.

Apprenticeships fall within the framework but take account of component qualifications (p12).

Funding becomes available after a qualifying number of days for each learner dependent on the planned number of days in learning (1 for fewer than 14; 14 for 14 to 167 and 42 for 168 and greater (page 15)). Achievement element is 20% (para 65). Although programme duration is not specified there will be a funding cap per learner per year (para 71).

²² The EFA defines full-time and part-time in relation to the expectation that young people will be on a full-time programme:

For funding purposes a full time student is one enrolled on a programme of at least 540 study hours and a part-time student is engaged in a study programme of less than 540 study hours in the academic year.

Para 94, Funding guidance for young people 2013/14, Funding regulations

The Information Authority references it in relation to employment status for EFA funded part-time programmes (less than 540 hours in the teaching year), para 226, Provider Support Manual for the Individualised Learner Record for 2013/14, version 1 – May 2013, the Information Authority and pages 78 and 80 in the Specification of the Individualised Learner Record for 2013/14, Version 4 – July 2013, The Information Authority.

²³ 96. The EFA will support qualifications which enable students on level 3 programmes, where appropriate, to study at a higher level than level 3.

97. Section 105 of the Education Act 2005 gives governing bodies of maintained schools in England (and Wales) the power to arrange the provision of Higher Education (HE) for students in the school.

98. Institutions can deliver limited amounts of prescribed HE as part of a full time level 3 programme for an individual 16-to 18-year-old student, and the EFA will fund that HE learning aim, subject to the following conditions.

a. The HE provision must fall within either paragraph 1(g) or 1(h) of Schedule 6 to the Education Reform Act 1988. This provision includes vocational courses at levels 4 and 5, modules of first degrees and components of Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) (but not the full award of degrees or HNDs).

b. The HE provision must be a small part of the provision, typically instead of an AS-level and the young person must be enrolled on a full level 3 programme including the HE provision.

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- c. Institutions must substitute higher-level and more stretching provision in place of courses and qualifications that students might otherwise pursue.
 - d. The provision must involve an appropriate amount of teaching or appropriate distance learning; it would not be acceptable for HE provision to be undertaken purely as private study.
 - e. Where distance or online learning is involved, there must be no charge to the student for course materials, supporting books, access to IT and similar activities or matters.
 - f. Other than in these circumstances, the EFA will not fund prescribed HE.

²⁴ Paras 99 and 100

The EFA has the power under Section 5(d) of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 to fund courses falling within paragraph 1(g) or (h) of Schedule 6 to the Education Reform Act 1988.

Non-prescribed learning aims are those higher-level vocational learning aims that are generally professional learning aims leading to accreditation by a professional body and do not include, for example, part-time certificates in HE or the high level qualifications that are delivered to students of high ability on dance, drama, and music courses. Changes in the volume and type of this provision should be considered by the funding body in the context of local needs analyses.

²⁵ **Full-time** includes students recorded as studying full-time, normally required to attend an institution for periods amounting to at least 24 weeks within the year of study, plus those enrolled on a sandwich course (thick or thin), irrespective of whether or not they are in attendance at the institution or engaged in industrial training, and those on a study-related year out of their institution. During that time students are normally expected to undertake periods of study, tuition or work experience which amount to an average of at least 21 hours per week for a minimum of 24 weeks study/placement.

<http://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/1902/#mode>

²⁶ A year of programme study is counted as full-time if it meets the following criteria:

- a) The student is normally required to attend the college, or elsewhere, for periods amounting to at least 24 weeks within the year of programme study; and during that time they are normally expected to undertake periods of study, tuition, learning in the workplace or sandwich work placement that does not meet the criteria to be sandwich year-out, which amount to an average of at least 21 hours per week.
- b) Full-time fees are chargeable for the course for the year.

Annex M, HEIFES

²⁷ This methodology is used in the regional profile reports which report on the numbers of students based on the institution (region) at which they are taught. See Regional Profiles of higher Education 2009-10, March 2012/07, HEFCE, para 21.

²⁸ See: <https://www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance/eligibility>

²⁹ The Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-HEA) derived from the Bologna Process consists of three main cycles with the intermediate (or short cycle) being within or linked to the first cycle. See QAA (2011) The Bologna Process in Higher Education:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Bologna-Process-in-HE.aspx>

³⁰ The figures quoted were for enrolments by type of institution – HEIs and FECs – and the data source was HESA 2002 and ISR 2001/02. This would, presumably, mean that any franchised provision was counted within the HEI figures.

³¹ The Parry et al definition is: A broad definition of higher education – as adopted in this study – would include prescribed and non-prescribed provision. A definition based on prescribed courses has followed conventional usage

by HEFCE, as reflected in its standard tables of statistics and many of its documents on higher education in FECs. The definition is also reproduced in the organisation of some colleges, with that described as higher education reserved for HEFCE-supported programmes (direct or indirectly funded) and that related to higher-level education and training funded by the SFA (or another organisation) managed as part of the further education provision in the institution (Parry et al 2012, page 24/5).

³² *Meeting Employer Skills Needs – Consultation on Criteria for Higher Apprenticeships at Degree Levels* and experiences of the partnerships funded through the Higher Apprenticeship Fund, see Carter and Feguson para 3.1.1

³³ They note (in footnote 1, to page 12) that in England, ‘The term vocational education and training is not used, “vocational learning and “qualifications being perhaps the most common generic term, and “further education” being prominent in policy debates.’

³⁴ Colleges offer a wide range of courses at all levels, from basic skills to university degrees. The student body is diverse, and includes both full-time students, and part-timers (often working adults). Provision of vocational programmes at levels 4 and 5, especially of longer courses, takes place mainly through FE colleges along with some universities, notably those universities created from the abolition of polytechnics in 1992. FE colleges and training providers are also the major providers of vocational programmes for adults (UKCES, 2013a). The 341 colleges in England include general FE colleges, sixth form colleges (focusing on A level provision) and specialist colleges such as design and performing arts colleges (see Table 1.4). Historically, FE colleges mainly concerned themselves with vocational courses, but they now offer many general qualifications such as GCSEs, A levels, university degrees such as bachelor’s and master’s, alongside the occupational and vocational provision with which they are traditionally associated. FE colleges can also offer a second chance route for those who did not succeed in school.

(page 21).

³⁵ The DLHE was extended to directly funded colleges from 2008, see data trends above.

³⁶ They summarise the English qualifications framework by level, pages 14/15, Table 1.2.

³⁷ It is unclear from the report whether franchise students are counted as HEI or FEC.

³⁸ The authors note that the latest year of HESA data is 2011-12 and this must be supplemented with the early statistics collections for 2012-13, therefore:

Unfortunately a full picture of recruitment in the most affected year in policy terms (2012-13) will not be available until early 2014 when figures from the HESA student record for 2012-13 are published...

(Page 3)

³⁹ i.e. not as defined in Parry et al (2012)

⁴⁰ Because of the relatively small numbers involved, it was initially run centrally by a survey agency on HEFCE’s behalf (see Circular letter 25/2008) but for 2014 onwards the DLHE will be funded and completed by the colleges. In November 2012 HEFCE wrote to the heads of the HEFCE-funded FECs setting out the intention that for 2014-15 the colleges would have to fund and complete the survey themselves, with 2013-14 acting as a transitional year. This was followed in April 2013 by circular letter 08/2013 and in October 2013 by 26/2013 with confirmation of the final arrangements.

⁴¹ The proportion of 2010-11 qualifiers who provided a full response to the HE DLHE and the DLHE was 61% and 75% respectively (page 6 and Table 1).

⁴² para 13, page 5 explains:

Note that category b is likely to be a subset of category a: HE students registered at an HEI may either be taught at that same HEI, or franchised to another institution. Under a franchising arrangement, a student who is registered at an HEI may be taught by a partner HEI or FEC of that registering HEI. It follows that category c is likely to be a subset of category d: HE students taught at an FEC may be those who are registered at that same FEC or franchised from

another institution. Note also that all HE students, regardless of where they were taught or registered, would be included in the coverage if categories a and c were combined, or if categories b and d were combined.

⁴³ The methodology is described in the initial report on trends (January 2005/03, Annex C). The section on 'counting the HE entrants' (C.1) notes the data sources for England are: HESA student record; the Individualised Student Record (ILR) 1997-98 to 2001-02, then the ILR (then collected by the funding council, FEFC, then LSC). Section C2 describes the linking process to allow tracking of students across UCAS, the ISR and HESA.