

Accrediting in-house courses

Information, advice and guidance
for Further and Higher Education
(FE/HE) staff and collaborating
partner organisations, to assist the
accreditation of in-house courses.



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 Lifelong Learning Network
Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin

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Information, advice and Guidance Booklet for FE and HE institutions and collaborating partner organisations and staff

This information booklet is provided to help staff working in Further and Higher Education Institutions (FE/HEI) and those in partner organisations when collaborating in regard to accrediting work place education. The partner organisation or employer may be in the public or private sector or a charitable organisation. The education programme may already exist or be in the process of being organised or is an intended programme. All such programmes will be referred to as courses, within this booklet, regardless of length or level. Level of academic learning referred to in this booklet relates to the framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) levels 1-8 (QAA 2008).

The booklet will be of relevance mainly to staff development teams in partner organisations, but could also be used as a handbook by a learner, who is also an employee of the partner organisation. A generic term 'student' will be used to cover any member of staff/employee who maybe undertaking the courses.

Although the title of this booklet refers to 'accreditation' there are two types of collaboration that may be sought by partner organisations:

Endorsement

Endorsing or recognising the educational standard or value of a course.

Accreditation

The considerations of which are:

- Does the course already exist?
- Is a new course to be developed?
- Is it to be delivered jointly?
- Is it to be delivered by the partner organisation staff only?
- Is it to be delivered by the FE/HEI staff only?

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A procedure for each of the two collaboration activities has been developed which can be followed for both national and international organisations. Flowcharts identify the processes for each type of collaboration and aspects relating to development and delivery have been encompassed within these two types (Appendices 1 & 2). A 'phases of collaboration' template is included which highlights related activity, suggesting timings and facilitating costs. (Appendix 3) The flowcharts should be considered in conjunction with the phases of collaboration template.

When an initial approach is made regarding either endorsement or accreditation, the partner organisation may be seeking information about options, and may not be certain of what they actually require. They will know what they wish to achieve in terms of workplace improvement or greater recognition and/or assessment of their employees learning but not necessarily the processes by which this can be achieved. Consultation is essential, but can be assisted by providing written information about the options available to facilitate discussion.

Eliciting information about desired outcomes is crucial. Deciding on the feasibility of proceeding, for both parties, will be determined by factors such as costs (for course development and delivery), staff development needs and capacity, proposed level of learning, numbers of students, length of course, target audience, employer need.

In discussing options always commence with that which is most beneficial for the partner organisation. This may not always be the cheapest.

- Costs- per course, per student.
- Numbers of students involved.
- Number of students that can undertake a course at any one time.
- Potential progression options often called progression agreements.
- Utilisation of experiential learning.
- Existing workplace resources, such as supervisors time, IT facilities.
- Monitoring the arrangement.
- Resolving complaints, conflict or performance concerns.

Particular aspects for consideration

There are particular aspects of such collaboration that may be problematic. None of them should deter initial exploration of request. Awareness and consideration of these problematic aspects and following the information advice and guidance in this booklet will ameliorate these aspects. It is strongly recommended that phase 3 (Appendices 1 & 2) must be completed before proceeding further. This will prevent any misunderstandings or misconceptions regarding expectations, costs and timescales. Written formal signed documents are in everyone's interest, especially as it is likely that numerous staff will be involved in the collaboration and information sharing is more efficient. Documentation can vary in format, e.g. Memorandum of co-operation, Service Level Agreement, formal contract, a typical example is included in Appendix 5. Ideally the agreement should include timescales. Using a systematic approach will ensure quality and due regard of issues such as equality and diversity, health and safety, and brand identity are beneficial to all.

Particular aspects to be aware of and consider in any such collaboration

- Guaranteeing equity of accreditation activity.
- Other Partnership arrangements may be adversely affected if problems occur in the collaborative partnership.
- Partner organisations (employers) are often unaware of the complexity and time that the validation of academic credits process takes. The validation process needs to ensure that account is taken of national and local requirements e.g. Quality Assurance Agency.
- Partner organisations may not need to be involved in, or burdened by the full complexities of the FE/HEI accreditation process; therefore focus should be on the outcomes.
- Partner organisations know what they want their employees to be able to do, but are unused to translating work activity into learning outcomes.
- Lack of common language, always ensure that both parties mean the same thing e.g. work based learning – could mean a placement to some but employee directed learning to others.
- Roles and responsibilities within all stages need to be clear.
- Issues of documentation control including version control.
- Recruitment issues such as entry criteria and cohort numbers.
- Existing FE/HE admission/enrolment processes may not accommodate some course formats and types and pragmatic alternatives may need to be creatively developed.
- Retention of student numbers especially when conflicting with employment demands.
- Employer support especially in relation to study time.
- Submission arrangements.
- Quality benchmarks, processes and assurances need to be unambiguous and compatible between participating partners.
- The number of times a course is likely to run as well as the volume of learners is important in considering appropriate resources, especially time.
- Employers may see external validation of their courses as a solution to performance improvement and change. It is not in itself complete without accompanying management support to transfer learning to the workplace and embed new practices.
- Employment consequences of student failure coupled with employer expectations about release of student assessment/achievement data. Data protection may affect the release of data if the contract is with the individual student.
- Specific related employment criteria such as National Occupational Standards or NHS Knowledge Skills Framework.
- Specific Professional, Statutory or Regulatory bodies requirements or any other legal, policy or procedural requirements.

1.0 Endorsement

Recognition of the educational standard or value of a course.

An employer may wish to add value to a course that they already run or are intending to run, by external verification/assessment of the quality of the course. They may not wish/seek course accreditation, for example if the identification of a specific academic level would not be advantageous. The added value of endorsement is a form of 'kite marking' and may be sought for reasons such as:

- Quality assurance of delivery
- Marketing
- Identification of academic level
- Incentive for employees

The reasons endorsement is chosen rather than accreditation may be...

- Academic level is below FE/HE levels
- It is not appropriate to meet the costs of accreditation due to educational budgets, number of applicable students etc.
- Students undertaking the course are at a variety of academic levels making the choice of level too problematic. This option may be chosen together with the option for individuals undertaking the course to achieve academic credits via accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) rather than the course itself.

In endorsing the course the FE/HEI will normally assess the content and delivery of a course. Delivery can include, where and how a course is delivered as well as the attributes of those who are delivering it. It may also if appropriate include the resources/facilities and assessment of learning.

See phase 4.a appendix 3

2.0 Accreditation

Accreditation is the identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of learning and achievement.

Learning and achievement that occurs is assessed and given academic credits. The volume (amount of learning) and level (learning challenge), of the academic credits of a course is determined through the awarding FE/HEI's validation process. To allow credits to be accumulated and transferred between institutions and awards, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) developed a framework (QAA, 2008). The Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) identify employers benefit from the framework, as "enables work based training to be nationally recognised" (QCDA 2010)
http://www.qcda.gov.uk/docs/QCF_introduction.pdf

The five accreditation considerations identified above, (page 3) will affect the process, but not the outcome, that is, students once they have successfully completed the course will gain academic credits. What they can use the credits for will vary depending on the volume and level of credits as well as the volume, level and currency of credits students may already have. Ideally all accreditation agreements should be accompanied by a pathways agreement identifying specifically what the students may use the credits for. Once the students have been awarded the academic credits they should be clear as to what further academic courses they will now be able to progress onto. This encourages progression and is mutually beneficial for student, employer and FE/HEI. Students may be able to use the credits gained as access to other courses and/or awards or exemption from part of courses or awards.

See appendix 5 for an example of a progression agreement template and appendix 4 for frequently asked questions.

2.0 Accreditation examples

Examples of why accreditation has been sought from the School of Health and Wellbeing at the University of Wolverhampton.

- Staffordshire, Shropshire and Black Country Neonatal Network ran a Neonatal Nursing foundation programme which was accessed by nurses from a variety of Trusts. Completion of the programme enabled nurses to gain employment within all the neonatal units in the network.
- By this programme becoming an accredited course for 20 level 6 credits it will assist those who are at undergraduate level to complete a degree and those who already graduates to use the credits towards a selection of related Masters level courses.
- The Black Country Cardiac Network ran a Stroke Care Competency Course for staff, without professional qualifications, from a variety of different disciplines. The course was developed to raise the quality of care of patients following a stroke, and ensure consistency of care across disciplines. The course was accredited, as two 20 credit level 3 modules. This will enable students to gain HE level credits that many will not have at all, and additionally to trade the 40 credits in for a variety of foundation degrees, e.g. University of Wolverhampton Foundation Degree Health and Social Care.
- The National Association for End of Life Care assesses the standard of Care Homes throughout the UK. To enable Care Homes to apply for and achieve the 'Gold Standard' a course was established. The course is run by NHS co-ordinators covering all the information required to make necessary changes within the Homes and to provide suitable evidence of the Care Homes standards. It was acknowledged that Care Home staff that undertook the course and succeeded in ensuring their Care Home achieved the Gold Standards Framework, learnt a considerable amount about leadership and change management and should be given the opportunity through an accredited module to achieve academic credits at level 4, 5 or 6 depending on their current academic profile. Through such an accreditation the Care Homes will benefit from their quality assurance benchmark and the enhanced academic profile of their staff. The process could be used to offer this credit achieving opportunity to staff that have previously completed the programme as well as those about to commence.

The principles of accreditation practice in this booklet are in line with those of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and the University of Wolverhampton

QAA September 2004, Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/apl/APL.pdf>

University of Wolverhampton, 2006, Guidelines on the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

http://www.wlv.ac.uk/PDF/aca_apa_guidance.pdf

Although this information relates to courses any other work based learning either experiential or certificated may also be able to be accredited on a group or individual basis using the FE/HEI normal accreditation processes. In the case of Wolverhampton University this would be through an Accreditation of Experiential Learning (APEL) claim or Direct Entry Agreements (DEA) /Progression agreements respectively.

References

QAA, 2008. The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ). Gloucester, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/EWNI08/FHEQ08.pdf>

(Accessed 15th December 2010)

QAA, 2009. Academic credit in higher education in England – an introduction. Gloucester, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/standardsandquality/credit/leaflet.pdf>

(Accessed 15th December 2010)

QCDA, 2010 An introduction to the Qualifications and Credit Framework, Coventry, Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (England)

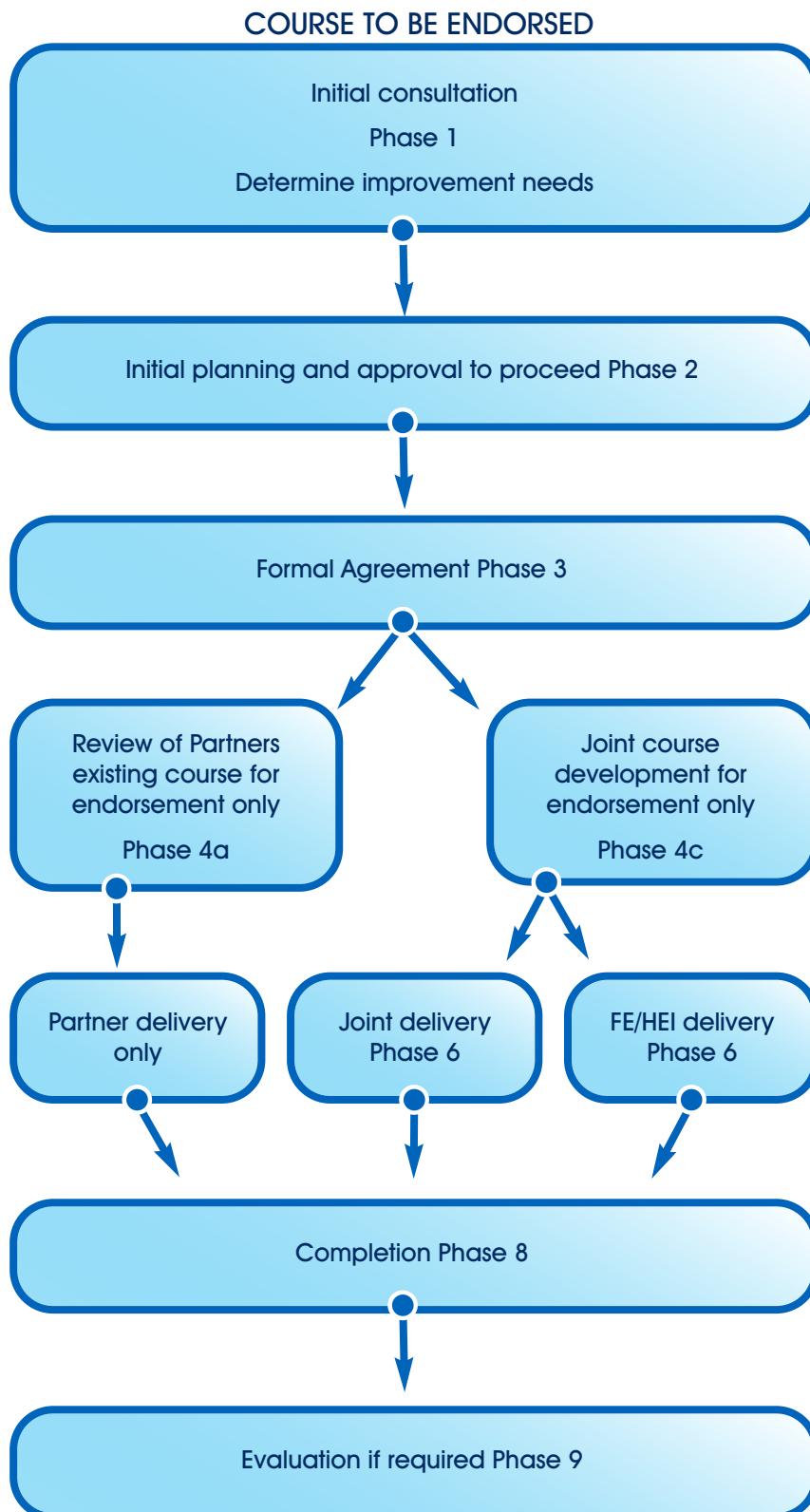
<http://www.qcda.gov.uk/error404.aspx?aspxerrorpath=/19674.aspx>

(Accessed 15th December 2010)

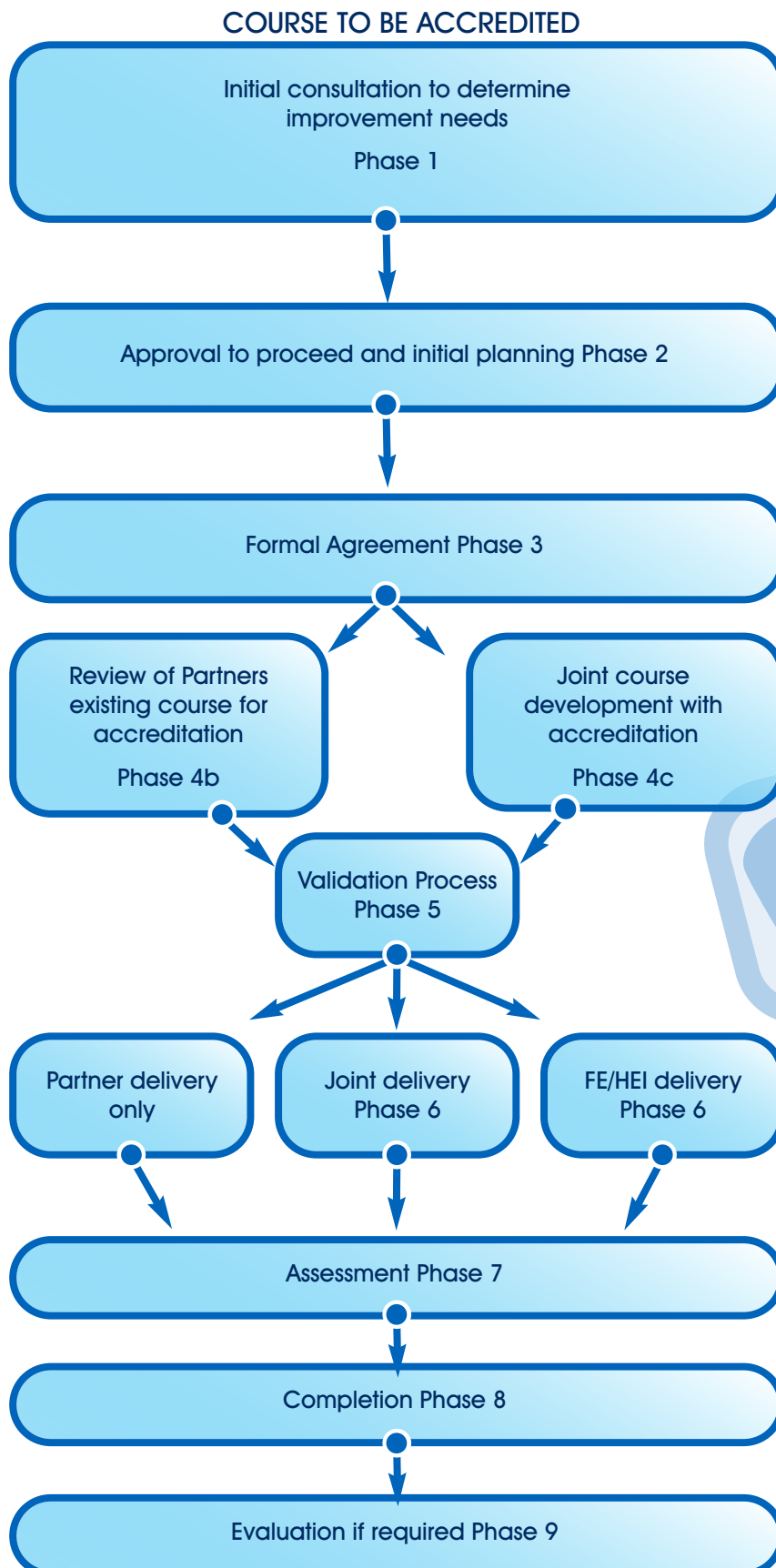
Appendices

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| Appendix 1 | Flowchart for endorsement |
| Appendix 2 | Flowchart for accreditation |
| Appendix 3 | Phases of collaboration |
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| Appendix 6 | Further sources of information |

Appendix 1 Flowchart for endorsement



Appendix 2 Flowchart for accreditation



Appendix 3 Phases of collaboration

Phase	Activities/Processes	Time	Cost
Initial request contact made Phase 1 Initial meeting	Request referred to APL/Collaborative lead for your FE/HEI <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Consultation – important at this stage to gauge what the partner organisation wishes to achieve, even though they may not be sure of the most appropriate means of doing so • Information given regarding the process • Approximation of costs for request 		No charge No charge
Phase 2 Approval to proceed and initial planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification meeting between Lead and partner organisation re product/service required • Preparation of documentation for necessary executive approval to proceed with request/collaboration 	To be determined based on complexity of institutional processes. Remember to include travel time if necessary	Hourly rate + travel costs
Phase 3 Formal agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive Consultation Joint working on formal agreement • The appropriate formal documentation is prepared If this is not signed, and funding if relevant agreed, it is not advisable to progress to the next phase 	To be determined based on complexity of institutional processes. Remember to include travel time if necessary	Hourly rate + travel costs
Phase 4 Academic planning and/or review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4a Review of existing course for endorsement only 4a.1 Endorsement of course content and delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and assess learning outcomes teaching materials resources – teaching staff, IT, library etc 4a.2 Endorsement of course content, delivery and assessment As above plus assessment processes 4 b Review of existing course for accreditation As for 4a plus academic profile of all staff involved in teaching, supervision and assessment and in addition phase 5 4c Joint Course development with endorsement only* Course jointly developed – Partner(s) and FE/HEI joint course development Full discussion of desired learning outcomes, academic level, indicative content, mode of delivery, venue and all involved resources. 4d Joint Course development with accreditation* Course jointly developed – Partner(s) and FE/HEI joint course development Full discussion of desired learning outcomes, academic level, indicative content, mode of delivery, venue(s) and all involved resources. Profile of teaching staff and specification of assessment requirements and processes and then in addition phase 5 <p>*Check what similar validated courses currently exist.</p>	Variable according to length and complexity of course	Hourly rate + travel costs

Phase	Activities/Processes	Time	Cost
Phase 5 Validation Process	Validation process Documentation Preparation including critical reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course specification guide(s) • Module/unit guides • QA Validation process/event including external advisors 	1 day 1 hour external advisor time	
Phase 6 Delivery phase for FE/HEI or Joint delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration, admission and induction of students • Delivery Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching (course teaching team) and tutorial support • Library • Accommodation • Travel • Printing • Photocopying • IT facilities and services • Specialist resources, e.g. clinical lab use, equipment, software • Student support (facilities and services) • Career development 	3 hours To be negotiated depending on partner requirements	
Phase 7 Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QA Assessment (submission arrangements) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st marking • 2nd marking • Moderation • External Examiner • Approval Board • Recording on information systems 	2½ hours per student	
Phase 8 Completion	Once development, delivery and assessment processes are completed as per formal agreement the final invoices should be sent even if phase 9 has been or may be requested	15 minutes	
Phase 9 Evaluation	Post delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review meeting post first course • Monitoring report • Optional evaluation report 	To be negotiated depending on partner requirements	

Appendix 4 Frequently asked questions

These are questions that may be asked by partner organisations

Q. We have developed our course and do not want the FE/HEI to use it for other students, can we make sure this doesn't happen?

A. It is difficult to monopolise knowledge or learning, although learning materials can be copyrighted. This is best discussed at the beginning to explore all the options. This will also be more unlikely if the FE/HEI has jointly developed the course or the course has had to be altered in any way to achieve accreditation.

Other options could be:

- The course is run separately for your students, even if other students are undertaking the same course
- The first one or two cohorts are exclusively for your employees only
- You provide added value or incentives for your own employees

Q. Can staff that have already done this course, before it was accredited, now have the credits?

A. No, you cannot turn a non accredited course retrospectively into an accredited one, but they may be able to gain the associated credits by undertaking an experiential claim or other such APL opportunities if the FE/HEI has them e.g. Challenge assignments.

Q. How long will students have to do the course?

A.i For an existing course the timescale can be kept the same if it complies with the normal amount of time for the same number of credits, in the collaborating FE/HEI, otherwise it will need to be altered by negotiation.

A.ii If a course is to be developed, the length of course will be appropriate for that number of credits and will normally comply with the normal semester and submission dates for the collaborating FE/HEI.

It is always possible to negotiate exemptions if there are specific essential timescale requirements.

Q. What will students be able to use the credits for?

A. Within the UK there is an agreed credit accumulation and transfer system. This means that the awarded credits may be transferred at the same volume and level to another FE/HEI. What they can be used for will vary greatly depending on course specifications and the institutions academic regulations.

The awarding FE/HEI should make, what the students can use the credits for, explicit via a progression agreement, see appendix 5.

NB. The QAA are currently reviewing the credit accumulation and transfer

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/faq/cidg08/draftcidg08.asp>

Q. How will gaining academic credits for an existing in-house course change what the students learn?

- A.** Accreditation may not change, what students learn, as the learning outcomes for the existing non-accredited course may be used for the accreditation.

It is often the case that non – accredited courses may not have specific learning outcomes, or the objectives of the course are not written in a learning outcome format. The process of accreditation and the subsequent clarification of learning outcomes is in itself advantageous to partner organisations and students.

It may also be that the process of accreditation improves the assessment of learning and hence students knowing what they are expected to learn, learning outcomes, and how that learning will be assessed engage and achieve learning at a deeper level.

As the learning outcomes will have been set by and with the employer, once assessed and achieved they will result in informed working practices, increased workforce knowledge and expertise, thus driving up quality and delivery in the work place.



Q. Will getting our in-house course accredited be worth the money?

- A.** Accreditation enables employers and students to have formal external acknowledgement of learning undertaken and the learning achieved. Accreditation offers added value to employers in that students are clearer about the learning they have achieved, e.g. a 20 credit level 6 module is a 1/6 of a top up degree or a 1/9 of a Masters degree. The academic achievement and clarity about the progression opportunities it carries promotes lifelong learning and academic progression.

Staff support is more quantifiable and tracking staff development is easier.

For students the formal recognition of learning adds value and can strengthen the employer/employee positive relationship.

It raises the profile of in-house education especially with shared delivery.

Staff delivering in-house training benefit by the FE/HEI collaboration and the status of the course is raised.

The quality assurance aspects of accreditation reassure employer and students of the robustness of the curriculum, delivery and assessment.

In some instances, students have additional access to university facilities, e.g. learning and information centres/libraries, IT training and support, study skills advisors etc.

Appendix 5 Progression Agreement Template

Progression Agreement with the University of Wolverhampton and:

For learners undertaking a range of _____

The primary aim of this progression agreement is to promote the progression of vocational learners taking the _____ at the education provider listed in part 1 of this agreement, into higher education at The University of Wolverhampton

THIS AGREEMENT IS DIVIDED INTO 3 PARTS:

- **Part 1**
Lists the names of institutions/organisations involved in this agreement.
- **Part 2**
Lists the criteria for achievement that learners must meet in order to progress to the Higher Education Institution involved in this agreement and the HE progression they can expect with any associated conditions and criteria.
- **Part 3**
Lists the range of activities that all signatories agree to undertake in forming this Agreement.

PART 1

This is a progression agreement between:

FEEDER EDUCATION PROVIDER(S)

PROVIDER - HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

*
*

The University of Wolverhampton

PART 2

School of...

The learner is guaranteed a place on the awards listed subject to the performance requirement criteria being met.

Feeder Education Provider(s)	APPLY THROUGH UCAS		APPLY DIRECT TO UNIVERSITY	
	University of Wolverhampton programme/s for progression FT	Performance required to progress to FT programme/s	University of Wolverhampton programme/s for progression PT	Performance required to progress to PT programme/s

PART 3

School of...

The higher level institution(s) – The University of Wolverhampton - involved in this Progression Agreement will guarantee interviews and/ or places (as outlined in part 2 of the agreement) to learners on the following basis:

Learners have completed:

- The a _____ from one of the education providers listed in this agreement at the appropriate level of credit;
- This offer is made on the basis that there is an understanding between staff in the participating institution(s)/organisation(s) that there is good curriculum match/learning preparation to enable successful progression for the learner.

All Institutions involved in this Progression Agreement will:

- Provide a named contact for all curriculum and liaison work to ensure all learners are made aware of the progression agreement opportunity open to them during and on successful completion of the study;
- Ensure all learners who are able to, can benefit from this progression agreement if they wish to do so;
- Ensure learners have a named contact within the higher level institution through which to pursue the progression agreement;
- Ensure learners are provided with feedback regarding the application and interview process for progression to HE where appropriate;
- Agree to participate in monitoring and evaluation of Progression Agreements by the Lifelong Learning Network;
- Encourage and facilitate any activities, including staff development, which enhances the process of developing and maintaining Progression Agreements;
- Will work with all admissions staff to ensure this progression agreement is acknowledged by all those involved in the recruitment and admissions process;
- Review the agreement and seek to maintain it after the life of the Lifelong Learning Network.

The feeder institution will:

- Ensure learners are made aware of the Progression Agreement and how they can benefit from it;
- Ensure learners are provided with a named contact within the designated HEI offering the progression route.

Approved by The University of Wolverhampton

School of

Print Name

Signature

Role/Title

Date

Approved by _____ Education provider

School of

Print Name

Signature

Role/Title

Date

Appendix 6 Further sources of information

Professional Bodies

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/>

[PolicyAndResearch/PolicyAreas/QualityAssurance/HowTheSystemWorks/Pages/ProfessionalBodies.aspx](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/PolicyAndResearch/PolicyAreas/QualityAssurance/HowTheSystemWorks/Pages/ProfessionalBodies.aspx)

Higher Education Funding Council for England Report of the Quality Assurance Framework Review Group
Phase three outcomes: Assessment of the impacts of reviews of collaborative provision

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2008/08_21/

National Occupational Standards

http://www.ukstandards.org.uk/About_occupational_standards/default.aspx

Qualifications and Credit Framework

Information on the QCF is available on the Qualification and Curriculum Development Agency's website

<http://www.qcda.gov.uk/8150.aspx>

The Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SEEC)

SEEC aims to advance the education for the public benefit by developing credit accumulation and transfer and promoting continuing education at Higher Education level.

<http://www.seec.org.uk/>

UK Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)

There is an Alliance of the 25 UK SSCs, the SSCs are employer-driven organisations that together articulate the voice of the employers of around 90% of the UK's workforce on skills issues.

<http://www.sscalliance.org/>



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