

4. Budget Update

The group was happy with the proposed template for budget updates and agreed to keep this format for future meetings. There is currently £86,122 that has not been committed from the 2006/2007 budget, it was therefore proposed that the majority of this be used to fund projects with partners. This proposal was approved by the Steering Group.

5. Projects

Projects for Approval at this Meeting

BA Leadership & Management (UW): The Steering Group approved the project funding of £3,700 to fund the development of a top-up award from business related Foundation Degrees to a BA (Hons) in Leadership & Management.

Foundation Degrees with Professional Qualifications delivered by Distance Learning (WCT): The Steering Group agreed to fund £10,000 towards the project to develop 3 Foundation Degrees in the area of leadership and management by blended learning, and also incorporate professional qualifications to increase their attractiveness.

Market Research in to Foundation Degree in Entrepreneurship (HCT): The project is in the early stages and will be discussed further with Ruth Johnson. The Steering Group were happy with the proposal and approved the funding of £550.

Professional Programme (Worcester Sixth Form College): This project form was briefly discussed, but will be amended and re-circulated to fit in with progression agreement work.

Action: DL to circulate revised Project Bid prior to next meeting.

Market Research in to Health & Social Care (LLN): This project bid was tabled at the meeting. The requirement for this market research in to understanding the need, demand and value-adding potential for Level 4 courses was identified at the Health & Social Care Conference in June. The results of this research will be circulated as appropriate. The total funding of £1,750 was approved by the Steering Group. It was noted that one of the objectives in the project form was incorrectly focussed on University of Worcester and the group agreed it should incorporate everyone.

Action: LD-W to amend Project Bid Form

Employer Engagement in Foundation Degree Design (NEW College): The total funding of £4,840 was approved by the Steering Group to fund a project which is looking to design an innovative and distinctive Foundation Degree in Business & Management. The project will develop an existing Foundation Degree but will base the redesign around the needs of local employers.

Projects in Development

DL reported that she had tried to set up an advisory group for the theme of Leadership & Management, unfortunately it had yet not been possible to find a date for a meeting convenient for everyone. However, this still attracted an interest from a number of partners who have submitted/will be submitting project bids.

The project bids currently in development are:

- Revalidation of FD Health & Social Care to include a professional award (Ludlow, HCT & UW)
- MBA Health & Social Care (with Hereford Acute NHS Trust)
- Top-Up Degree for Counselling (UW with input from HCT & WCT)
- ENVQs in Business (Evesham & Malvern Hills College) – DL to meet with Evesham this week to discuss the potential project
- Bridging Study Skills to access FD Health & Social Care and Social Work (H&W Social Services)
- CertHEs in Communication & Mobility (RNC & St Joseph's in Dublin)

The LLN are going to keep a chart to show which projects have been funded and the partners who have received funding. This will help ensure that the funding is shared around the partners of the Network.

Discussion took place regarding the opportunities available for the LLN to bid for EU funding. CM suggested that the LLN should liaise with someone from the consortium team to draw on their expertise in relation to EU funding bids.

Action: GE to liaise with CM regarding the appropriate person to attend the Regional Sub Group to discuss EU funding.

MR advised the Steering Group that the Open University will be looking to submit a project bid to the Steering Group for their Openings Courses. DL advised that the project would need to fit within one of the LLN's 4 themes and any project bids should be discussed with and then submitted through the appropriate theme lead within the LLN.

Report from LLN Funded Project

Study of LLN and Evaluation Instruments: JB highlighted the key findings of the evaluation. In response to the concerns regarding the LLN's links with employers, GE clarified that the intention is to look at the curriculum to make it more work-centred and work-based. A lot of the work will be based around making the curriculum more flexible in order to make it easier for people to study alongside work. DL also confirmed that the LLN is currently funding a project whereby learning champions are visiting employers to make them aware of the HE opportunities available locally. It was felt that employers would be more willing to fund their employees to undertake Foundation Degrees if there was an explicit benefit to the company (e.g. a certain percentage of the FD could include a work study of their employer that would help improve the quality of service or bottom line). It was also felt that there should be clear information for prospective students regarding the financial support available to part-time learners. Once JB has completed her Masters Dissertation, she will circulate a copy of this to the Steering Group for information.

6. Vocational Progression in to HE Fair for H&W

The group were shown the costing for the HE Fair which is currently projected at £14,582. It is proposed that this will become an annual event and the feedback received to date has been that this will be a useful event.

It was advised that similar events held in the past have proved disappointing in terms of numbers of people attending. It was suggested that the title and marketing of the event should be considered seriously with a focus on adults and employers. It was suggested that the title of the event was not snappy and a suggestion was that this could be renamed to 'HE 4 U'. When marketing the event to Schools and FE Colleges, it was

advised that the contacts be chosen carefully with each person having a clear understanding of the event in order to ensure that it is not misunderstood.

The chair confirmed that the LLN needs to try and firm up the commitment of people who might come in order to meet the target.

Action: DO to circulate programme for the HE Fair with the papers for the next meeting.

7. Annual Monitoring Report - Draft

The group considered the first draft of the Annual Monitoring Report which is due for submission in August. The report was felt to be very honest and the Chair advised that HEFCE are well aware of the challenges of this LLN.

It was felt that the terms 'I and my' should be replaced with 'we and our' to show that this is supported by the Steering Group. It was also suggested that actions should be put in text boxes so that these are made more clear.

Action: DL to change the terms 'I and my' to 'we and our'

A discussion took place regarding the requirement of a formal launch of the LLN as these have taken place at a number of other LLNs in the region. DL reported that H&W LLN have decided not to hold a separate launch as it was felt that it was more important to promote the opportunities that are available rather than the LLN itself. The LLN for H&W have instead decided to incorporate their launch in to the HE Fair and Annual Conference.

The first draft of the ASN information was tabled at the meeting for inclusion in the final version of the Annual Monitoring Report. The Chair confirmed that the LLN's ASNs are in addition to the University of Worcester's ASNs. In order to qualify as an LLN ASN, the H&W LLN are classing those courses that have benefited from some input from the LLN in terms of course development or funding.

Following the above discussion and proposed amendments, the Steering Group were happy with the overall structure and content of the report.

Action: DL to circulate final version of Annual Monitoring Report to the Steering Group before the next meeting.

DL also asked the group to note that Appendix 1 of the Annual Monitoring Report, which was the LLNs Development Plan, includes a 'Update' column for information.

8. Report on Work in Progress

Progression & Learner Support Co-ordinator: Bob Parker commenced this post on 1 June. Although Bob will be focussing on this area, he will also be assisting with the area of Leadership & Management.

Sport, Tourism, Heritage, Media & the Arts: The LLN hope to commence the process of recruiting someone to this post on a 0.3 basis (combined with 0.3fte for the University of Worcester). Once recruited, this person will begin working with the Partners of the Network.

Health & Social Care: Liz Davies-Ward has held a conference for Health & Social Care from which a number of projects have emerged.

Barriers to Progression from Level 3 to Level 4 Qualifications (with NEW College):

Following the submission of the completed surveys, Donna Obrey provided a brief summary of the initial findings of the research: 44% of students said they were continuing on to Level 4, 43% said they were not and 13% were still unsure. Of those that were continuing to Level 4, 86% were continuing next academic year whilst 14% were taking a gap year. The majority of the students were undertaking these courses at NEW College. Of those students who said they were not continuing on to Level 4, just over 50% said that this was because they either wanted to get a full-time job or they had already secured a full-time job. These percentages were approximate and the findings of the research will be circulated for information.

Student Services: Bob has begun visiting the Student Services at the various colleges. Rather than the LLN providing its own Student Services, Bob will be looking to develop those services already provided with a view to also facilitating workshops/meetings in the future whereby the student services from the partner colleges can all meet.

Electronic Hand Held Devices for Student Learning: CM reported that the DFES are offering money for a consortium bid for hand held electronic devices which can be used for student learning; it was felt that these could also be utilised to store progression information. Peter Kilcoyne and Graham Mason are going to get the details of this and report back to the Principals at their next meeting. As PK and GM are also members of the Executive Group for the OOOE Wider Horizons Development, they will also be invited to report on this at the next Executive Group Meeting in July.

Action: *DL to request that Viv Bell invite PK/GM to discuss this at the next Executive Group Meeting.*

e-Learning Baseline Study: Viv Bell has been visiting partners to identify what sorts of projects could be funded in e-Learning and has produced a report entitled 'e-Learning Baseline Study LLN Partner Colleges – Summary of Findings'. The Steering Group discussed the report and queried the terminology used under point 1 of the 'Findings' section and suggested that the term 'take-over' should be replaced with 'merger'.

Action: *VB to amend the term 'take-over' with 'merger' in Summary of Findings Report.*

9. Principles of Progression Agreements

The Group discussed the principles set out in the paper on Credit & Progression Agreements. In relation to item 2 of the principles, CM suggested that whilst progression agreements could provide bridging support they should also be looking to work with providers to redesign the vocational curriculum in order to remove the need for bridging support if possible. This view was supported by IP.

MR requested a definition of the terminology of 'courses'. It was confirmed that in relation to the Open University, this would relate to 'awards'.

In response to a query regarding those universities outside the H&W LLN, DL reported that work will be undertaken with other LLNs in the region to ensure that other universities are also covered in the progression agreements as it is acknowledged that some students progress to Gloucester, Newport, Cardiff, etc.

10. Network Membership Agreement

It was proposed that the Network Membership Agreement should be used as the LLN does not formally have anything that formally says who is a member of the LLN. DL confirmed that there is no requirement to have this however the aim of asking partners to

sign this was just to confirm that they are happy to participate as a member of the Network.

DL clarified that point 3.3 meant that the LLN team was not extensive so that there is additional money available to fund projects.

It was agreed that the title 'Membership Agreement' should be replaced with 'Memorandum of Association'.

Action: DL to amend title to 'Memorandum of Association'.

11. HE for Herefordshire Research – First Draft

The group agreed that the research was useful and requested that when the research is undertaken for 2006/2007, the student numbers are also included from Gloucester, Newport, Cardiff and Worcester College of Technology.

12. Update on Aimhigher Activities

The update on Aimhigher Activities was tabled at the meeting. DL also has regular meetings with Aimhigher to discuss current activities.

13. Any Other Business

Steering Group Minutes: IP proposed that the minutes of the Steering Group should be circulated to all of the partners of the Network for information.

Action: DO to circulate Steering Group Minutes to partners.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Item No	Action	By Whom
2	Respond to comments and circulate for information	DL
3	Circulate QAA booklet to LLN Steering Group Members	DO
5	Circulate revised Project Bid prior to next meeting	DL
5	Amend Project Bid Form	LD-W
5	Liaise with CM regarding the appropriate person to attend the Regional Sub Group to discuss EU funding	GE
6	Circulate programme for the HE Fair with the papers for the next meeting	DO
7	Change the terms 'I and my' to 'we and our'	DL
7	Circulate final version of Annual Monitoring Report to the Steering Group before the next meeting	DL
8	Request that Viv Bell invite PK/GM to discuss this at the next Executive Group Meeting	DL
8	Amend the term 'take-over' with 'merger' in Summary of Findings Report	VB
10	Amend title to 'Memorandum of Association'	DL
13	Circulate Steering Group Minutes to partners	DO