

Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network: Progression Agreements

What are Lifelong Learning Networks?

The Lifelong Learning Network (LLN) Initiative was launched by HEFCE, the LSC and the then DfES in 2004. The networks bring together groups of institutions and organisations, including HE institutions and FE colleges, across a city, area or region to offer new progression opportunities for vocational learners. The northern sub-region of the South West is served by the Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network (**WVLLN**), created in March 2005. Seven HE institutions and their associated FE colleges form the core partnership. The HE institutions are:

University of Bath (Lead)
University of Bristol
University of the West of England
Open University South West

Bath Spa University
University of Gloucestershire
Royal Agricultural College

What are the Progression Agreements for?

Whereas transferability of skills and knowledge within A-levels is well-recognised, the same cannot be said for BTEC National Diplomas or NVQs and the assumption is often made by learners, advisers and tutors that progression from Level 3 to Level 4 will be within the same, or closely related, subject area. However, detailed mapping of National Diplomas and NVQ qualifications carried out by WVLLN progression coordinators has highlighted the range of transferable skills found in these vocational qualifications. This information has become the basis of a range of Progression Agreements whereby universities guarantee to give consideration to students coming via a range of National Diplomas and NVQs.

What can I do?

For the WVLLN Progression Agreements to bring benefits to learners, it is important they are made aware of the progression options the Agreements present. Even if a student is not thinking of progressing to HE at the beginning of their qualification, this may become of interest as they work through their course. There are now a range of flexibly delivered higher education programmes in the region which enable learners to balance work and home commitments. It is also important that staff within Colleges who are in contact with students about progression options (tutors, programme leaders, IAG, Careers and Connexions staff), are aware of the Agreements and the opportunities they present.

What happens now?

Details of the Progression Agreements are below. This briefing paper is intended to raise awareness of the Progression Agreements among staff at Further Education Colleges. If you would like to discuss these in more detail, a member of staff from the WVLLN can visit individual staff, make a presentation to a team meeting or another appropriate forum. Alternatively you can contact the WVLLN via phone (10783 328820) or email www.wvlln.ac.uk to arrange a meeting or discussion.

WVLLN Progression Agreements: the detail

The WVLLN has developed two types of progression agreement:

- *Type 1 - Transferability into a regional priority subject¹*

promotes opportunity to enter learning at HE level in a regional priority subject, by recognising the transferability of skills and knowledge from a range of vocational disciplines at Level 3. The intended outcome is the progression of more vocational learners progressing to local HE institutions, and an increase in the supply of people skilled to, at least, Level 4 in the target subject.

- Transferable progression into Business – Eight BTEC National Diplomas into Level 4 Business and Management programmes
- Transferable progression into Creative Industries – Eight BTEC National Diplomas into Level 4 Creative Industries programmes
- Transferable progression into Engineering – Six BTEC National Diplomas into Level 4 Engineering programmes
- Transferable progression into Health and Social Care – Eight BTEC National Diplomas into Level 4 Health and Social Care programmes

in development

- Transferable progression into Community and Voluntary Sector – BTEC National Diplomas into Level 4 Community & Voluntary Sector programmes
- Transferable progression into Land Based – BTEC National Diplomas into Level 4 Land Based programmes

- *Type 2 – Subject-to-subject*

builds opportunity around a specific qualification used extensively in vocational training i.e.: NVQ Level 3 delivered by FECs within the WVLLN region. NVQs underpin Apprenticeships, so recognition will enhance HE progression options for learners pursuing these qualifications.

- NVQ3 in Health and Social Care, Play work, Youth Work and Early Years into Level 4 Health and Social Care and Early Years (Foundation Degree) programmes
- NVQ3 Children's Care, Learning and Development into Level 4 Early Years and Early Childhood Studies (Foundation Degree) programmes.

The WVLLN's partner HE institutions are in the process of formally approving six Progression Agreements and others are in development. Approval indicates that signatories will give parity of consideration to applications from prospective learners, and in the case of Type 2 Agreements, a guaranteed interview to applicants where an interview is part of the institutional application practice².

¹ WVLLN regional priority subjects are: Business and Management, Creative Industries, Engineering, Health and Social Care, Community & Voluntary Sector and Land Based Industries.

² However institutional autonomy is fully acknowledged and the admissions function within each of the receiving institutions has the final decision on all matters relating to the admission of learners, based upon the full profile (including reference) presented by the applicant.