

***fdf* National Workshop - June 12th 2008**

**“Demand - Led” Foundation Degrees:
Recognition and the Way Forward**

Case Study Two

***fdf* Yorkshire & Humber Region**



**Developing an employer led
Foundation degree in
Construction Project Management**

***fdf* Humber Construction Project**

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Project Background & Context

Why fund a project in this area?

A Combination of Factors:

- Opportunities for progression to HE limited for WBL
- FDF evidence of limited FD Provision in Humber.
- Regional skills intelligence & research.
- Major Construction Investment.
- Opportunities to work with Sector Skills Councils.
- Opportunities for synergy with related organisations interested in higher level skills & HE progression.
- Employers with Higher Level Skills Needs & Recruitment Problems.

Overall Project Aim

- To develop a new employer-led Foundation degree progression route to help to address some of the higher skills needs of the Construction sector in the Humber region.
- Targeting specific needs affecting the growth, development and performance of SMEs in particular, and
- Construction departments generally, in a range of public and private sector organisations.

What we wanted to achieve

1. Improvement in the numbers of foundation degree programmes in the Humber.
2. Raise levels of awareness of, and engagement in, development of foundation degrees.
3. Create Targeted Workforce Development Tool for SMEs & other construction employers.
4. Collaborate with sub regional Construction Technologies CoVE based at Hull College.
5. Successful Collaborative Partnership:
Between *fdf*, YHELLN, Aimhigher, SSCs, employer organisations, employers & other related agencies.

The Regional Construction Picture

1. Major Construction Investment

In Hull alone, £1.5 billion is being spent on large scale projects involving all levels of the construction sector.

Major Public Sector construction projects – NHS and BSF.

2. Skills Shortages & Skills Gaps

20% of Yorkshire & Humber construction employers have skills gaps. Significantly higher than the national average.

3. Demand for Higher Level Skills in Region

30% of the 6,090 new staff required between 2007 and 2011 will require higher level skills.

4. Lack of HE Progression Opportunities

For work based learners and non traditional learners who have not come through the academic route.

The Employer Voice

6 Stages of Employer Engagement

1. Establishing Sector Partnerships & Links
2. Consolidation Phase
3. Detailed Employer Engagement Phase
4. Collating the Employer Feedback
5. Developing an Employer Led Programme Brief
6. Detailed Curriculum Development

The Employer Voice

1. Establishing Sector Partnerships and Links 1

Why is this important?

1. Create a number of critically productive project partnerships.
2. Confirm our understanding of what we thought were the issues and priorities facing the sector in our region.
3. Enabled us to build upon our range of employer contacts in the sub region.
4. Gave us credible information, intelligence & priorities to consolidate & take forward to detailed employer engagement phase.
5. Enabled us to get SSCs to produce a Statement of Priorities for FD development!

The Employer Voice

1. Establishing Sector Partnerships & Links 2

Some Examples:

1. ConstructionSkills - Sector Skills Council.
2. SummitSkills - Sector Skills Council.
3. Training to Gain Construction Brokerage for Yorks and Humber.
4. Humber Training Group – Best Practice Club – CSkills Supported.
5. Employers who understand supply chain skills issues.
6. Business Link.
7. Construction Works – local SME support agency.

The Employer Voice

2. Consolidation Phase

1. **Consolidation of the feedback** – from Stage 1 with the local and regional skills intelligence and skills and knowledge issues we had already identified prior to the start of the project.
2. **Informed Content of Documentation** – that was used in discussions with employers or that was sent to them - leaflets, info sheets, emails, questionnaires etc
3. **Credibility of the information is critical** – what you present to employers when trying to engage with them about skills issues, progression and course development.
4. **Confidence in your understanding is essential** – employers need to have confidence that you understand their patch.
5. **Credible Partners Essential** - employers need to know you're working with right partners

The Employer Voice

3. Detailed Employer Engagement Phase 1

The Reality

1. Not an easy task - persistence is the key.
2. People are mostly busy and are reluctant to talk immediately.
3. Employers generally have limited resources for education and training.
4. You are seen as an irritation!!
5. Phone messages and emails unanswered.
6. Constant telephone and email tag.
7. Book appointments with people so you have a time slot!
8. When you finally get the time to meet and talk its great – rewarding – a relief!

The Employer Voice

3. Detailed Employer Engagement Phase 2

Methods of Engaging

- Introductory email contact
- Initial telephone contact
- Mailshots
- Detailed telephone discussions with questionnaire
- Detailed telephone discussions without questionnaire
- One to one meetings with employers
- Employer contribution at steering group meetings

The Employer Voice

3. Detailed Employer Engagement Phase 3 300 companies contacted in total

- 200 companies sent Mailshot – no response!
- Contacted 100 others via email/phone
- Follow up contact/discussions with 40
- Leading to 30 in depth discussions
- Each requiring multiple different methods of engagement over a period of weeks

The Employer Voice

4. Collating the Employer Feedback 1

1. Analysing responses.
2. Pulling common threads together.
3. Clear that many were clustered.
4. Cluster was around developing skills & knowledge in Construction Project Management.
5. Employers keen on a Foundation Degree in Construction Project Management
6. Two Distinct Employer Groups Emerged with the same requirements

The Employer Voice

1. SME Construction Companies

- These companies are involved in a wide range of construction projects for client organisations.
- **Target Staff** - site supervisors, assistant site managers, contract managers, project managers, etc

2. Construction Client Organisations

- Estates, Capital Development, Property Departments in NHS Trusts, Local Authorities, City Councils and in large non-construction Plcs in the region.
- **Target Staff:** Project Officers, Trainee Project Managers, Project Managers, Technical Officers - staff from various construction backgrounds involved in key aspects of project work and those responsible for managing construction projects.

The Employer Voice

Construction Companies

- Promanex Ltd (formerly Jefco Services Ltd) - SME
- Heritage Construction - SME
- Britcon (Scunthorpe) Ltd - SME
- Roche & Son Ltd - SME
- Robinson & Sawdon Ltd - SME
- Gelder and Kitchen – Consult
- HBG Construction - National
- Shepherds Construction - Natl
- Federation of Master Builders – SME representative body.

Construction Client Organisations

- Hull and East Yorkshire NHS Trust
- North Lincs and Goole NHS Trust
- Rotherham Doncaster and Sheffield NHS Foundation Trust
- Scarborough & North East Yorkshire NHS Trust
- North East Lincs Council
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Hull City Council
- Smith and Nephew

Some of the employers involved in detailed discussions – many of who contributed to developing the content of the programme brief for the foundation degree

The Employer Voice

Typical Profile of Target Staff

1. Mature non traditional learner.
2. Already employed in the construction workforce.
3. Unlikely to have experienced higher education already.
4. More likely to have undertaken a Level 3 vocational course such as an NVQ, Advanced Apprenticeship or similar.
5. Experienced in one of a range of skilled trade, technical, supervisory or first line management roles.
6. Already developed a considerable amount of experience and knowledge of their particular area of construction.
7. Need to improve their range of relevant work based knowledge & skills at a higher level, in breadth & in depth.

The Employer Voice

5. Developing an Employer Led Programme Brief

1. Core group of 12 employers

Contributed to the initial stages of developing the programme brief.

2. 2 key employers committed to whole process

Carefully groomed to make a significant contribution, making detailed recommendations on content, breadth, depth, level of understanding, giving of their time, attending meetings,

3. Both completely representative employers

of their particular part of the construction sector:

1. Head of Capital Development from an NHS Trust

Representing the Construction Client Organisation desperately needing some form of development programme for in house staff and new appointments for managing a range of construction projects.

2. Health, Safety & Training Manager Large Regional SME

Also Chair of the Humber Construction Training Group & representing the SME view.

4. Core Group Informed Updated on Progress

Continually invited to contribute to process, informed of progress, & tended to agree with changes made and with the final document.

The Employer Voice

6. Detailed Curriculum Development

1. Employer Led Evaluation of Programme Brief

Employers led the evaluation process of the Colleges' response and plans for curriculum development.

2. Detailed Curriculum Development Sessions

The College managed the curriculum development process & involved employers directly & got them to evaluate work produced by the writing team during sessions. Very successful.

Main Employer Messages 1

Common Thread Coming Through

FD in Construction Project Management required

1. To broaden their existing knowledge & skills base.
2. To develop a clear understanding of the construction process.
3. To understand the major contributors to and components of a construction project.
4. To understand and apply the fundamental elements that contribute to project success.
5. The ultimate objective is to enable these employee students to take successful responsibility for increasingly larger & more complex projects.

Main Employer Messages 2

Employer Skills Issues Translated into FD Modules

1. Construction Health and Safety
2. Building Law
3. Managing and Communicating with the Teams
4. The Construction Process
5. Construction Technology
6. IT for Construction & Financial Management for Construction
7. Contractual Procedures
8. Building Services Engineering
9. Sustainable Construction and the Environment
10. Supply Chain Management
11. Applying Sustainable Construction Technology
12. Construction Project Management
13. Incorporating the recommended PDP & WBL

Main Employer Messages 3

Other Emerging Skills Issues/Lack of Provision Issues

1. **Building Services Engineering**
 - No provision in the Humber sub region.
2. **Contract Administration/Management**
 - For office based support staff working on all aspects of projects/contract admin.
3. **Design Teams**
 - Nationals, regional companies and public sector organisations experience problems recruiting/procuring Architects, M&E Design & Design Teams generally.
4. **Construction Contracting and Planning**
 - Companies struggle to find planning staff at Level 4, bigger ones able to address with internal training.
5. **Civil Engineering**
 - South Humber - no provision currently

Main Employer Messages 4

Other General Issues Identified

1. Attendance Patterns

- Most employers are flexible – whatever suits!

2. Work Based Learning

- Seen as an important factor – making it real!

3. Committed to Supporting Students

- Mentoring, fees, WBL projects

The Way Forward

Issues to be resolved / taken forward

1. **Progression to Professional Bodies – ie CIOB**
 - Considered to be very desirable by employers & SSCs.
 - Idea of repeating an honours programme after an FD to get professional membership is impractical for learners.
2. **Honours Degree Top Up Routes**
 - Important that there are relevant top up routes available.
3. **Interim Awards – Cert HE, etc**
 - Employers like the idea, motivational, record of achievement,
 - Level 4 award required to access Train to Gain Level 4 funding, HEFCE non completion funding issues if part of an FD.
4. **CSCS Achievement through FD**
 - Generally desirable by employers, “how“ to integrate into programme being considered by CSkills.
5. **Awareness Raising Training for Skills Advisors**
 - Higher Level Skills Training tailored for construction FD & HE programmes in their region for Train 2 Gain Advisors, Cskills Company Development Advisors..

The Way Forward

Critical Success Factors

1. Get the right sector people on board

1. Interested and Representative Employers with Skills Issues!
2. Regional Strategy Advisor for Cskills
3. Regional Operations Manager for SummitSkills
4. Regional Train to Gain Construction Brokerage
5. Regional Construction Training Groups
6. Regional Director for Federation of Master Builders

Work with them to help you promote your FD to their clients/members.

2. Work with the SSCs to get them to articulate their regional priorities for Foundation Degree developments.

3. Identify a strong learning provider and/or collaboration of providers.

4. Get the view of a broad range of employers, from different parts of the supply chain – this will help you to identify priority areas.

5. Target employers who have recruitment or workforce development issues that an FD could help to resolve.

6. Be persistent and resilient!



Additional Information

Main Employer Messages & Issues

CSkills Regional Priorities for FDs 1

1. Leadership, People Skills & Communication

Identified by two-fifths of employers as skills held by managers that most need to be improved.

2. Project Management, Procurement & Client Handling

Identified as important new skills that are required in the construction process.

3. Current & Future Impact of Sustainable Development

Consideration also needs to be given to all the areas on which it will impact.

Main Employer Messages & Issues

CSkills Regional Priorities for FDs 2

4. **Delivery Method**

Must be determined by the Employers/Learners

5. **CSCS or Equivalent Alignment**

The provision should align with the industry commitment to a fully carded workforce reflecting an appropriate skill level.

6. **Progression Routes are Essential**

Foundation Degree provision should form part of professional body validated routes and should seek industry recognition.

Main Employer Messages & Issues

SummitSkills Priorities for the Region 1

Through its sector skills agreement highlighted the following key skills issues:

1. There is a skills gap between craft and first line supervisory which is not being addressed.
2. Staff on their “tools” are being placed into supervisory positions without relevant training & development.
3. Higher level business and management skills are required to improve productivity and competitiveness.

Main Employer Messages & Issues

SummitSkills Priorities for the Region 2

4. Very few colleges and universities are offering relevant courses for Building Services Engineering.
5. Content of current programmes needs to be re-evaluated as many are out of date and not suitable.
6. Environmental technologies and renewables do not form part of the content of qualifications on offer.
7. Links between employers, manufacturers and colleges/universities need to be established to ensure courses at degree and sub degree level are developed which meet the needs of the sector.