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Annual Review of Higher National provision in Licensed Higher Education Institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

1. Introduction

This review covers Edexcel's Higher Education programmes delivered under licence at Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in England, Wales[1] and Northern Ireland, for the academic year 2006/7. Licensed HEIs are termed licensed institutions, and a list of these institutions is given at Annex A.

The review is structured as follows:

- Section 2 briefly summarises the background to the QA protocols for licensed institutions
- Section 3 presents data on types and numbers of programmes, and numbers of Higher National diplomates (awards)
- Section 4 summarises other data/information recorded on the Institutional Review Reports (IRRs)
- Concluding remarks are given in section 5
- Proposed amendments to the IRR proforma are set out in section 6.

2. Background

This is the third year for the Edexcel reporting protocols for Higher National provision under licence, introduced in 2005. In summary, the procedures are:

- In accordance with the terms of Licence Agreement, each licensed institution is required to submit an annual Institutional Review Report (IRR), covering its provision under licence, including that offered in collaborative partner institutions.
- Licensed institutions may use one of two methods of reporting for the Institutional Review Report. Method 1 is to use a bespoke proforma, supplied by Edexcel. Method 2 is to provide a portfolio of evidence from internal documents, covering the same quality points as the proforma. However, experience and feedback gained from the 2004/5 review indicated that completion the Edexcel proforma (Method 1) was considered less onerous than compiling the portfolio of evidence (Method 2) and, consequently, licensed institutions were encouraged to use method 1 for their 2005/6 and 2006/7 IRRs. A copy of the 2006/7 IRR proforma is included at Annex B.
- Edexcel, in consultation with licence institutions and the QAA, devised this reporting protocol as part of its quality assurance procedures for Higher National provision delivered under licence at Higher Educational Institutions. This annual review is therefore used by Edexcel, the QAA and other interested parties a means of monitoring the health of Higher National programmes under licence in England Wales and Northern Ireland.

3. Licensed institution responses

Guidance issued to licensed institutions asked for their IRRs to be submitted to the University Chief Examiner by 31st March 2008.

A total of 53 IRRs were received, 45 from institutions in England, 7 from Wales and 1 from Northern Ireland. All IRRs were submitted electronically.

[1] A separate Annual Review covering licensed institutions in Wales is available from Edexcel

3.1 Higher National awards for the 2006/7 academic year

Data provided by licensed institutions on the number of Higher National awards in the 2006/7 academic year are grouped into Edexcel sector codes as shown in Table 1, which gives the distribution of Higher National awards across the 11 sectors. For comparison purposes, data for 2004/5 and 2005/6 are also included in this table.

Table 1: Higher National awards for 2006/7, 2005/6 and 2004/5, by sector, including awards under licence outside the UK in collaborative partners

Sector	HN awards 2006/7	HN awards 2005/6	HN awards 2004/5
100: Land & Countryside	527	668	740
200: Business	2515	2370	3159
300: Computing & Information Technology	1434	1957	2728
400: Construction & Built Environment	1597	1391	1431
500: Art & Design	774	1184	1198
550: Media & Performing Arts	535	734	745
600: Hospitality & Catering	290	263	174
650: Leisure & Tourism	499	595	1105
700: Engineering	1684	1836	2543
900: Science	216	261	241
950: Health & Social Care	397	329	372

The total number of Higher National awards for the 2006/7 academic year was 10468[2], comprising 5292 awards delivered by licensed institutions and 5176 awards delivered by their collaborative partners. In addition, there were also 189 Professional Development awards made by licensed institutions. This means that 50.55% of Higher National awards were delivered in licensed institutions.

A total of 10 licensed institutions did not operate any Higher National programmes with collaborative partners and 10 institutions only offered Higher National programmes with collaborative partners ie, they did not deliver any Higher National programmes on their university campuses.

A further breakdown of the 2006/7 awards data presented in Table 1 into HND and HNC awards reveals that:

1. The ratio of HND and HNC programmes *awarded by* licensed institutions was 6333:4083, which means that 60.90 % of all HN awards by licensed institutions were HND. The corresponding figure for 2005/6 was 67.2%.

[2] Note, that for the 2005/6 and 2004/5 academic year, the total number of Higher National awards under licence was 11588 and 14492 respectively.

2. The ratio of HND and HNC programmes *delivered* in licensed institutions was 3729:1563, which means that 70.46% of awards delivered in licensed institutions were HND. The corresponding figure for 2005/6 was 69.86%.

3. The ratio of HND and HNC programmes *delivered* in collaborative partner colleges was 2782:2394, which means that 53.75% awards delivered in partner colleges were HND. The corresponding figure for 2005/6 was 65.1%.

A total of 254[3] Higher National awards were gained by students studying programmes run on a collaborative basis in overseas centres. This involved 3 institutions and comprised 126 awards for computing programmes; 85 awards for business programmes and 43 awards for engineering programmes. Removing awards data for overseas collaborative programmes, the number of Higher National awards, by sector, made by institutions to students studying in England Wales and Northern Ireland is given in Table 2. Again, to enable comparison, the figures for 2005/6 and 2004/5 are included in this table.

Table 2: Higher National awards in 2006/7, 2005/6 and 2004/5 made by licensed institutions to students studying in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Sector	HN awards 2006/7	HN awards 2005/6	HN awards 2004/5
100: Land & Countryside	527	668	740
200: Business	2430	2283	3010
300: Computing & Information Technology	1308	1752	2386
400: Construction & Built Environment	1597	1391	1431
500: Art & Design	774	1184	1198
550: Media & Performing Arts	535	734	745
600: Hospitality & Catering	290	263	174
650: Leisure & Tourism	499	595	1105
700: Engineering	1641	1309	1829
900: Science	216	261	241
950: Health & Social Care	397	329	372
Totals:	10214	10769	13231

3.2 Award trends

Further analysis of the data presented in Tables 1 and 2 enables some conclusion to be drawn. For example:

- For the 2006/7 academic year, overall licensed institution awards fell by some 1120 awards (9.66%). Excluding overseas collaborative awards, this fall was 555, which represents a 5.15% reduction in Higher National awards. Regionally, the reductions are 325 awards in England, 148 awards in Wales and 82 awards for Northern Ireland.

[3] The number of awards gained by students studying programmes run on a collaborative basis in overseas centres was lower for 2006/7 i.e. 254 awards compared with 819 awards in 2005/06.

The reduction in higher national awards made by licensed institutions since 2004/05 is 30.18%, or 22.80% when overseas collaborative awards are excluded.

- Four sectors: Construction & Built Environment; Engineering; Hospitality & Catering and Health & Social Care recorded increases in the number of awards. Notably, awards for the Construction and Built Environment and the Business sectors were, respectively 14.8% and 9.33% higher in 2006/7 than they were in 2004/5 and Engineering sector awards were up by 25.3% on the 2005/6 figure.

- The other seven sectors recorded reductions in the number of awards, namely; Art & design (-34.63%); Media & Performing Arts (-27.1%): Computing & Information Technology (-25.34%); Land & Countryside (-21.1%); Science (-17.24%); Leisure & Tourism (-16.1%) and Business (-11.8%).

A number of additional observations can be made on the data presented here.

1. Just over a quarter (26.57%) of the 555 reduction in awards for 2006/7 came from the 6.12% reduction of awards for students studying in Wales, and 17.77% was the result of the fall of 82 awards in Northern Ireland.

2. Licensed Institutions in Wales accounted for 66.32% of the increase of 332 Engineering Sector awards in 2006/7.

3. The 14.8% increase in awards in the Construction and Built Environment sector includes a 24.81% (60 awards) reduction in awards for this sector in Wales.

It is possible to rank the sectors by number of awards, which by considering Table 2, is computed and shown in Table 3, again, to enable comparison the figures for 2005/6 and 2004/5 are included in this table. Table 3 shows that the Business sector continues to be the sector with the highest number of awards, which has been at approximately the same percentage since 2004/5. Engineering, Construction & Built Environment and Computing & Information Technology sectors are the next three largest. The bifurcation between larger and smaller sectors occurs after the Computing & Information Technology sector, such that such that the first four sectors in Table 3 represent 68.21% of the total Higher National awards for 2006/7 in England Wales and Northern Ireland.

Recruitment to sub-degree provision is a difficult area because of demographic trends and easier access to degree programmes. It is considered that this is the main contributor to the 5.15% reduction in Higher National awards reported in Table 2. An additional contributory factor for the reduction in Higher National awards is the movement by some licensed institutions to replace their Higher National provision with Foundation Degrees. For example, 17 licensed institutions (15 in England and 2 in Wales) reported less than 100 Higher National awards for 2006/07. A number of these 17 institutions have traditionally recruited low numbers of Higher National students and are fully committed to continuing their provision, others in this group are phasing out their Higher National provision. At the other end of the spectrum, 12 institutions (10 in England and 2 in Wales) reported more than 300 Higher National awards.

It is, however, worth noting here that Higher National registrations for 2007 starts are currently (August 2008) standing at 31214 for UK/Ireland and 22851 for International, giving an overall total of 54065. The breakdown of the 31214 UK/Ireland registrations is 13783 for licensed institutions and 17231 for colleges in the UK and Ireland. Corresponding figures for 2006 were 33428 registrations for UK/Ireland and 22015 for International, giving an overall total of 55433. These data show that Higher National registrations are reasonably healthy and that the 2007 registrations are only very slightly down on those for 2006. It should also be noted that the registration figures given here are for the first year of two-year programmes, so a reasonable estimate is that more than 60000 students are currently studying Higher National programmes in the UK and Ireland.

Table 3: Rank order of sectors, by percentage of total Higher National awards for 2006/7 in England Wales and Northern Ireland

Sector	% of HN awards 2006/76	% of HN awards 2005/6	% of HN awards 2004/5
Business	23.79	21.20	22.75
Engineering	16.07	12.16	13.82
Construction & Built Environment	15.64	12.92	10.82
Computing & Information Technology	12.81	16.3	18.03
Art & Design	7.58	10.99	9.05
Media & Performing Arts	5.24	6.82	5.63
Land & Countryside	5.16	6.2	5.59
Leisure & Tourism	4.89	5.53	8.35
Health & Social Care	3.89	3.05	2.81
Hospitality & Catering	2.84	2.44	1.32
Science	2.11	2.42	1.82

4. Institutional Review Reports

The information presented in this section has been compiled from the IRRs submitted and from correspondence between licensed institutions and the University Chief Examiner.

4.1 Academic standards, assessment and student performance

It is again pleasing to report that all institutions stated that External Examiners had confirmed that the standards set for their Higher National programmes were appropriate for the level of the qualification, and that the standard of student performance was at a level appropriate for the programmes studied.

4.2 Quality assurance

All institutions provided information about their quality assurance processes, in many cases citing institutional web pages where more detailed information was available.

4.3 Good practice

The majority of IRRs received for the 2006/7 Annual Review contained examples of good practice that had been highlighted by External Examiners in their annual reports to licensed institutions. By the very nature of annual reports, such comments are related to specific programmes and it is difficult to extract generic examples of good practice for the sector. However, some common themes identified in last years report have again been highlighted and new themes have emerged: Items 1 to 5 below list the areas of good practice identified in last year's report and which were highlighted in IRRs received for this annual review. Items 6 and 7 are new for 2006/7.

1. Praise by External Examiners for constructive feedback on students' assessed work

2. The opportunities for students to progress on to higher-level programmes

3. Policy and Procedures documents for collaborative programmes, which supplement other university Codes of Practice and tailor university policy specifically to the needs of the collaboratively provided programmes

4. Inculcation of an HE ethos through annual joint meetings of staff from the university and franchise partners seeking to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment practices are consistent across programmes and collaborative partners.

5. Modification of External Examiner report proformas, asking External Examiners to comment specifically on Higher National programmes

6. Professional practice underpinning practical activities together with assessment assignments that are well-framed in industrial scenarios

7. Procedures to deal consistently and fairly with unfair practice.

4.4 Changes and enhancements

Reports varied from details of validation of new programmes, revalidation of existing programmes and lists of programmes being discontinued to details of new collaborative arrangements. It is interesting to see how institutions take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the Licence Agreement to develop Higher National programmes which articulate to their degree programmes and/or innovative a new programmes, which would not be available as directly funded programmes. Examples of such Higher National programmes validated in 2006/7 include: Facilities Management; Interior Design; Property Development; Computer Games Programming and Game Design.

4.5 Major issues

Several IRRs included comments in the Major Issues section of the IRR. However, these generally related to relatively minor observations from External Examiners and usually included the institutions` response and actions taken to address the issues raised. It is suggested that the guidance notes for this section (section 5) on the IRR should be amended to indicate that only major issues need to be reported.

It is pleasing to record that there were no significant major issues identified in the IRRs received for this annual review.

4.6 Tardy submission of IRRs

In last year's annual review it was reported that of the total of 51 IRRs received, (approx 70%) were submitted by the 31st March 2007 deadline, 4 IRRs were submitted in April, 7 in May, 4 in June and 1 in July. In order to try to ameliorate the tardy submission problem and to meet the June/July target for publication of the annual reviews, personalised reminders to institutions were sent out shortly after Christmas. Despite this reminder the number of IRRs arriving before the 31 March deadline was lower this year, only 24 (45%) compared with 35 (70%) in 2007, a total of 44 (83%) IRRs had arrived by the end of April and 50 IRRs (94%) by the end of May. The slower start this year is in part due to the exceptionally early Easter break. Nonetheless, it is disappointing that 2 institutions were not able to submit their IRRs until June and that the final IRR was not received until July 9th. At the other end of the spectrum, it is worthy of note that the first IRR arrived on January 24th and a further 8 IRRs were submitted by the end of February. It is appreciated that the 53 institutions will all have different protocols and processes for the completion, approval and release of their IRRs. However, the fact that 9 institutions were able to submit their IRRs by the end of

February appears to demonstrate that the previously agreed 31 March submission date is perfectly reasonable.

5. Concluding remarks

In completing this annual review of licensed provision of Higher National programmes, it has been possible to build upon the experience gained from the first two annual reviews, covering 2004/5 and 2005/6. In particular, analysis of awards data enables a clearer picture of the range of Higher National awards, (HNC and HND) and also provides the basis for some thoughts on trends. However, it should be remembered that with only three annual reports available it is unsafe (statistically) to base any predictions on the data gathered to date. In addition, the analysis presented in this review is solely based on data and other information provided in the IRRs and, as such, cannot encapsulate the detail which licensed institutions will hold. In order to gain a better appreciation of the significance of awards data contained in IRRs, it is proposed that the awards sections of the IRR proforma for 2007/8 is amended, asking institutions specifically to comment on significant changes in award patterns.

Discussions with a number of licensed institutions on the usefulness of the various sections on the IRR identified the need for a section where institutions could outline their future plans for their HN provision. It is proposed that the IRR proforma for 2007/8 will have an additional section added to allow for this.

Finally, the effort, time and care spent by licensed institutions in completing IRRs is gratefully acknowledged, and special thanks are due to the 44 institutions who submitted their IRRs by the end of April. From the information provided by institutions, it is clear that there is effective stewardship of the Edexcel/BTEC brand and the Higher National awards offered by licensed institutions.

6 Proposed amendments to the IRR proforma

Four amendments to the IRR proforma are proposed:

1. Invite licensed institutions to comment on significant changes to award patterns, to be added to the awards data section of the proforma
2. Amend the guidance notes for Section 5 on the proforma to indicate that only major issues need to be reported.
3. Introduce an additional section so that licensed institutions can provide information on long term plans for Higher National provision.
4. Amend Section 7 of the proforma to include IQER engagement (for licensed institutions in England).

Annex A: Licensed institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2006/7

Note: Six Licensed institutions changed their names during the 2007/8 session. Their new names are included here, with a footnote giving their previous names.

A1: England:

Anglia Ruskin University	University of Brighton
Bournemouth University	University of Central Lancashire
Buckinghamshire New University[4]	University of Chester
Birmingham City University[5]	University of Chichester
Canterbury Christ Church University	University of Derby
Coventry University	University of East London
De Montfort University	University of Gloucestershire
Harper Adams University College	University of Greenwich
Kingston University	University of Hertfordshire
Leeds Metropolitan University	University of Huddersfield
Liverpool John Moores University	University of Kent
London Metropolitan University	University of Lincoln
London South Bank University	University of Northampton
Manchester Metropolitan University	University of Northumbria
Middlesex University	University of Plymouth
Oxford Brookes University	University of Portsmouth
Sheffield Hallam University	University of Salford
Southampton Solent University	University of Sunderland
Staffordshire University	University of Teesside
Thames Valley University	University of West England, Bristol
University of Bath	University of Westminster
University of Bedfordshire	University of Wolverhampton
University of Bolton	University of Worcester

[4] Previously known as Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College

[5] Previously known as the University of Central England

A2: Wales:

Aberystwyth University[6]
Bangor University[7]
Glyndwr University[8]
Swansea Metropolitan University[9]
University of Glamorgan
University of Wales Institute Cardiff (UWIC)
University of Wales, Newport

A3: Northern Ireland

University of Ulster

[6] Previously known as University of Wales Aberystwyth

[7] Previously known as University of Wales Bangor

[8] Previously known as North East Wales Institute of Higher Education

[9] Previously known as Swansea Institute of Higher Education

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ANNEX B: 2006/7 Annual Institutional Review Report of Edexcel Licensed Centre BTEC programmes

This annual Institutional Review Report (IRR) should relate to all BTEC programmes run as institutional awards under the Licence Agreement (in most cases this will mean Higher National programmes).
Please send your IRR to the Edexcel University Chief Examiner to arrive before the end of March 2008

Note that any of the following tables may be scrolled if necessary.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROGRAMME DETAILS

Centre:	**Centre number:**
Review sent by: **Position in institution** **Name of Committee/Board approving submission of the IRR**	**Date of submitting IRR:** **E mail address:**

FOR EACH BTEC PROGRAMME RUN AT YOUR CENTRE, PLEASE GIVE:

Title of programme: **Notes:** 1. *Indicate with a * programmes that are also run at partner institutions.* 2. *For integrated HNC/D programmes please indicate HNC and HND awards separately eg. 12/21 for 12 HNC and 21 HND awards).*	**Number of students receiving award in IRR period**	**Comments:** *Please add comments as necessary. In particular, if no awards are made for any programmes.*

FOR EACH BTEC PROGRAMME DELIVERED BY A COLLABORATIVE PARTNER CENTRE, PLEASE GIVE:

Partner institution **Title(s) of programme(s) run at institution**	**Number of students receiving award in IRR period**	**Comments:**

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ANNUAL REVIEW OF BTEC PROGRAMMES

1 ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENT

Do the External Examiners for each programme covered by the Licence Agreement confirm that the standards set are appropriate for the level of the qualifications?

YES/NO

If this is not the case for any programme give details here and refer to Section 5 if appropriate.

2 ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Do the External Examiners for each programme covered by the Licence Agreement confirm that the standard of student performance is at a level appropriate for the programme they have studied?

YES/NO

If this is not the case for any programme give details here and refer to Section 5 if appropriate.

3 QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS FOR BTEC PROGRAMMES

Describe briefly how the institutional quality assurance processes used for producing this report provide an effective focus on the programmes covered by this review and ensure consistency of practice across all programmes. (Include the procedures in place for franchise programmes, where relevant). If this focus is apparent from your published quality assurance review and monitoring procedures, simply attach these procedures to the Review (or provide an electronic link to them).

4 SIGNIFICANT CHANGES AND ENHANCEMENTS

Give any significant changes in provision, such as newly validated Higher National programmes, changes in franchise position, cessation of programmes, etc. Also, any enhancements to individual programmes you wish to report.

5 MAJOR ISSUES

Summarise the situation over any major issues with regard to the BTEC programmes, including issues that have arisen from External Examiners' reports and with respect to student experience (including teaching and learning resources and issues from programme committees):

- *unresolved issues raised in previous session(s): action taken*
- *new issues and action planned to resolve them: where possible, state where the responsibility lies for action and give a time scale.*

6 GOOD PRACTICE

Give any examples of good practice at institutional level in relation to BTEC programmes that you wish to draw to the attention of Edexcel, including examples of good practice raised by External Examiners, and Internal and External Reviews of BTEC programmes.

Assessment, Learning and Teaching:

7 OTHER COMMENTS

Mention any points you may wish to make that would not otherwise be covered in the report. If you have received any relevant (non-confidential) reports during the year from bodies external to your institution (eg Collaborative Audit, Professional Accreditation reports, etc.), use this Section to make any comments, or to provide a reference to such reports.