

Progress South Central is a partnership of the University of Reading, Oxford Brookes University, University of Surrey, Buckinghamshire New University and their partner colleges. Our aim is to promote, support and develop progression opportunities for vocational learners, into and through higher education. We are funded to November 2010 by HEFCE (Higher

Education Funding Council for England). We are working with a wide range of stakeholders, including Sector Skills Councils, Learning and Skills Council, Local Skills for Productivity Alliances, guidance services, Aimhigher, Foundation Degree Forward, SEEDA, Train to Gain, 14 – 19 Partnerships, employers and most importantly colleagues across our partner academic institutions.

Welcome to our first newsletter

After a Development Phase in 2006/7, we are now *fully operational*. The Leitch agenda underpins our work – to support the development of a better skilled workforce, at the level of higher education. HEFCE and the Learning and Skills Council stated the vision for LLNs as follows: “higher education institutions and further education colleges that *come together across a city, area or region* to offer new progression opportunities for vocational learners”.

We are doing this through partnerships with a range of providers and associated colleagues. We are *one of the last LLNs* to move into our delivery phase – this gives us an advantage in learning from others. It is also clear from the latest HEFCE Grant letter that our work is here to stay, as universities are charged with “encouraging and rewarding innovation across higher education...particularly applicable to *building new partnerships with employers, widening participation and making HE more accessible to students*”

Our work is focused around 4 key vocational areas (see inside) and in addition we are working across all sectors.

If you have any comments or views, or would like to contribute to the aims and objectives of the Progress South Central LLN, we would love to hear from you.

Fay Croft, Director

What kinds of things do we do? For example:

- *Funding for curriculum development for new kinds of courses*
- *Development of Progression Agreements to support students*
- *Pre-sessional and bridging courses to support progression*
- *Events for employers, college and university staff and guidance workers*
- *Information materials for students and staff*
- *Mentoring for students*

We are developing work across all sectors on:

- *Employer engagement*
- *Information Advice and Guidance*
- *Staff development*
- *Best practice in work based learning*
- *Research into demand*
- *Evidence of what works*

Our priority is to respond to the needs of current and potential students, and to work with employers to develop higher level learning opportunities for now and the future.

The Team



The Progress South Central team:

L to R - Chris Esser, Fay Croft, Liz Starbuck Greer, Rachel Hill Kelly, Danny Wright, Anna Price, Jude Brindley, Catherine Falkner-Lyne.

Construction

The first *Construction Strand Sector Forum* meeting was held on 7th February 2008 at Oxford Brookes University. The setting up of the group was welcomed by all partners, and it will now meet once each term.

We are developing a number of new initiatives across the region for the Construction Strand. These include:

- A *collaborative Masters programme* delivered by

two universities, mapped against SECBE's 5 priority areas: Planning, People, Planet, Procurement and Productivity

- *Stand-alone CPD modules*
- A *region-wide competition for level 3 students* resulting in a 6 day working field course for the winning team
- *Guidance leaflets* for level 3 students and employers
- A number of Foundation

Degrees in construction-related disciplines

We have also conducted a *survey of major employers and contractors* to discover their



perceptions of Foundation Degrees, 14-19 Diplomas and other areas – the results are available on request.

If you would like

further information on the above, or support with any existing initiatives within construction and the built environment, contact Anna Price.

Contact us:

Email:
psc@reading.ac.uk

Telephone:
0118 378 2330

Land-Based Industries

Following the first meeting of the *Sector Forum for Land-Based Industries* in November 2007, partners identified Horticulture as an area of potential for Progress South Central and a number of activities and new initiatives are now being developed.

- A *Foundation Degree in Horticulture* by Guildford College from 2008/09, which will be validated by the University of Reading.
- A joint project with West London



Lifelong Learning Network in development of a London Foundation Degree in Horticulture with progression to the *BSc (Hons) Horticulture* at the University of Reading.

- Progression through the provision of *guidance materials* and the

facilitation of a *bridging course* for level 3 learners who wish to progress to higher education.

Horticulture is only one area of development in this sector. For more information on the range of work being developed, contact Anna Price, Development Manager.

Foundation Degree Development

We are currently working with a range of Further Education Colleges, Universities, employers and other organisations to support the development of high quality foundation degrees. This will increase opportunities for vocational learners and people in the workplace across all sectors to study at a higher education level.

Creative Industries

Building on a successful development year with almost 200 students completing pilot programmes of the pre-sessional courses, the Creative Industries Strand is moving forward, encompassing:

- *Pre-sessional Courses.* Year 0 style courses hosted at FE and HE venues for anyone 17 years and over, wishing to bridge the gap to studying a course at a higher education level. The courses give students an opportunity to improve skills and abilities as well as a taste of higher education.
- *Sector Specialist*



Forum - an opportunity for sector specialists from higher education & further education institutions as well as employers and other creative organisations to meet on a regular basis. The Forum will discuss work already undertaken by the Strand as well as identify new areas and projects for development. Contact Danny Wright for more information.

Progression Agreements

One of the main tasks for Lifelong Learning Networks is to support the development of Progression Agreements.

Progression Agreements are *signed between colleges and universities*. They are designed to offer clear and understandable routes into and through higher education, for the *benefit of students and employers*. The agreements may include a guaranteed interview for a specific course, or even a place.

For more information on Progression Agreements already signed, contact Liz Starbuck Greer.

Health & Social Care

Progress South Central has hosted an extremely successful *Partnership Conference*, managed an employer survey, set up a *Specialist Forum* and played a pivotal role in the development of new Health & Social Care courses across the region. Much of this early work is helping to shape the direction of this sector over the next 3 years, including:

- An *employer toolkit* in partnership with Berkshire Skills for Care, aimed at giving *advice and guidance to employers* interested in become involved in Foundation Degree programmes
- Network wide Progression Agreements aimed at *increasing and simplifying pathways* for



students progressing from different courses

- Network wide framework for Foundation Degrees
- *Mentoring*, to aid students in their progression
- *Networking and liaising* with a whole host of different organisations and societies involved in Health & Social Care

If you would like any further information or would like to become involved in projects like these, please contact Danny Wright, Development Manager.

Working with children and young people

Progress South Central has just commissioned high-level *research into workforce development and higher level learning* for those working with children and young people.

The research will take place over the next few weeks through *surveys and in-depth interviews* with employers and training providers. Information from this will be used to build a picture of the training and education demands of this growing vocational area. The report is due at the end of *June 2008* - for more information please contact Danny Wright.

We are funded until November 2010 by the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

How to find out more?

psc@reading.ac.uk
0118 378 2330

Fay Croft
Director

Email – f.croft@reading.ac.uk
Office – 01183782331 Mobile – 07894598403

Liz Starbuck Greer
Deputy Director

Email – e.c.s.greer@reading.ac.uk
Office – 01183782336

Anna Price

Development Manager

Construction and land-based industries

Email – a.l.price@reading.ac.uk

Office – 01183782325 Mobile – 07894599027

Danny Wright

Development Manager

Creative industries and Health and Social Care

Email – d.wright@reading.ac.uk

Office – 01183782332 Mobile – 07894599028

Catherine Falkner-Lyne

Partnership Project Officer

Email – c.falknerlyne@reading.ac.uk

Office – 01183782334 Mobile – 07515190528

Judith Brindley

Information and Communication Officer

Email – j.brindley@reading.ac.uk

Office – 01183782339

Christoph Esser

HE/FE Liaison Officer - Oxford Brookes

Email – cesser@brookes.ac.uk

Mobile – 07515 190 526

Rachel Hill Kelly

Project Administrator

Email – r.hillkelly@reading.ac.uk

Office – 01183782330

Diary dates:

Progress South Central Launch Event - University of Reading - 10 April 2008.

Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) into Higher Education - Staff Development and Awareness Day - Joint conference with Progress2Succeed and Aimhigher Hampshire and Isle of Wight - De Vere Grand Harbour Hotel, Southampton - 7th May 2008

Creative Industries Sector Forum - University of Reading - 24 April 2008

IAG Conference - Changing Routes to Higher Education - venue to be confirmed - 24 September 2008

Our partner HEIs and their associated colleges



Academy of Contemporary Music
Amersham and Wycombe College
Aylesbury College
Basingstoke College of Technology
Berkshire College of Agriculture
Bracknell and Wokingham College
Brooklands College
Chartered Institute of Professional
Development Training
East Berkshire College
Farnborough College of Technology
Guildford College of Further and
Higher Education
GSA Conservatoire
Highbury College

Life Academy
Newbury College
North East Surrey College of Technology
Oxford and Cherwell College
Royal Academy of Dance
Ruskin College
Solihull College
Southern Theological Education and Training
Scheme
Sparsholt College
St Mary's University College
St John's Seminary
Swindon College
Uxbridge College