UUK Review of part-time and mature higher education: survey of stakeholder evidence

1 Methodology

1.1 Introduction
In April and May 2013, Universities UK (UUK) issued an open invitation to provide evidence to the review of part-time and mature higher education. The review seeks to examine why part-time undergraduate higher education has declined and how provision can be developed to:

- meet the UK’s future skills needs
- meet the needs of part-time mature learners
- contribute towards enhancing social mobility

UUK was particularly interested in hearing from as many universities and colleges as possible, whatever the size or type of their part-time offer, as well as students, employers and other interested bodies. The survey was promoted by the NUS, Federation of Small Businesses, CBI, HECSU and widely online, as well as being sent directly to a targeted list of stakeholder organisations.

1.2 Methodology
Stakeholders could fill in an online survey via SurveyMonkey or a questionnaire in Microsoft Word. There were eight key open-ended questions (questionnaire appended) seeking to examine why respondents thought recruitment to part-time study had declined, the role of employers, and what more could be done to improve the experiences of part-time and mature students. The review and questionnaire were focused on part-time undergraduate provision; postgraduate provision was not in scope. Respondents were also asked two questions about their respondent type and three questions about re-contact and confidentiality. In addition, higher education providers (in both the higher and further education sectors, as well as private providers) were asked a short set of questions about part-time undergraduate higher education at their institution, including characteristics, change and fees.
1.3 Sample

141 respondents contributed to the survey, as shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent type</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher education institution UUK (response on behalf of the institution)</td>
<td>38*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education institution UUK (response from an individual member of staff within the institution)</td>
<td>27*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher education institution (GuildHE member)</td>
<td>9*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher education institution (other)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Further education college/representative body</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students’ union/student representative body</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No type given</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
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*Four respondents are members of both UUK and GuildHE and have been included in both counts above. For simplicity and to avoid double counting they have been included with GuildHE in the narrative analysis which follows.

1.3.1 Higher education institution UUK

There were 61 responses from members of staff or management at 38 named UUK higher education institutions (excluding the four respondents with dual membership of UUK and GuildHE). Twelve additional UUK higher education institution respondents didn’t name their university, but assuming they were different would mean responses from 50 UUK universities in total.

Thirty-five responses were from a senior staff member at the institution (such as a pro-vice-chancellor, head of admissions, director of academic services, head of continuing education/centre for open study/lifelong learning), providing an ‘institution response’. A further 26 responses were individual responses from lecturers, course leaders, administrators and other staff at UUK higher education institutions.

We can only tell for responses from higher education institutions which nation they are from. All of the devolved nation responses were from UUK higher education institutions: seven responses were from four Welsh universities (five ‘institutional’ responses); seven responses from five Scottish universities (five ‘institutional’ responses); and two responses from two institutions in Northern Ireland (one of these is the Open University in Ireland).

The responses encompassed a good spread of institutions from university mission groups. Four members of the 1994 Group replied, as did the 1994 Group on behalf of
all its members. Eight million+ members replied, and million+ responded on behalf of its members. There were responses from ten Russell Group universities and nine in the University Alliance. In addition, there were responses from seven non-aligned universities.

Responses came from providers with large and small numbers of part-time students. Sixteen of the 25 UK universities with the highest proportion of part-time undergraduates responded, but so did nine of the 53 universities with less than 0.1% of part-time students. Just under two-thirds of part-time students in the UK (if calculated as full-time equivalents) attend a university that responded to this survey.

1.3.2 GuildHE
Nine GuildHE members responded, including four who have both GuildHE and UUK membership. The four respondents with dual membership tended to have a low proportion of the UK’s part-time students (as expressed as full-time equivalents). The respondents with dual membership have been included with GuildHE analysis.

1.3.3 Further education colleges and representative bodies
The analysis of further education colleges and representative bodies includes responses from 13 colleges across the country as well as the Mixed Economy Group of further education colleges (MEG) and the 157 Group.

1.3.4 Other institutions
The other institutions responding include Kaplan Open Learning, University Campus Oldham, University Campus Suffolk and one other private provider who wished for its identity to remain confidential.

1.3.5 Employers and employer representative bodies
There was a disappointing response from employers and their representative bodies. Two individual employers responded and one representative body, The Construction Industry Council, and their helpful and illuminating responses have provided valuable evidence of the employer perspective in this survey.

1.3.6 Students and students’ unions
Twenty-four individual students responded to the survey, as did three students’ unions. Only a few students indicate where they were currently working or studying. For those that did provide the detail, the roles they are working in and organisations they are working for suggests a mix of private and public sector employers.

1.3.7 Other organisations
‘Other’ organisations that contributed survey responses include: 1994 Group, Disability Rights UK, Higher Education Liaison Officers’ Association (HELOA),

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1 UK domiciled part-time undergraduate students at UK higher education institutions 2011–12. Number of students is full person equivalents. Proportion is proportion of this total.
Linking London (based at Birkbeck, University of London), million+, National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA), National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), Trades Union Congress (TUC), Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL), University and College Union (UCU) and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). There were three additional responses in this group from individuals.

1.4 Timing
The surveys were completed between 18 April and 24 May 2013.

1.5 Analysis
All responses have been read in detail and carefully analysed using a code frame of approximately 70 codes that considers the relationships between students, employers, institutions, policy and the wider economy. Comments have been split between those that highlight issues and those that offer solutions.

This report incorporates analysis by the Association of Colleges (AoC) of further education college responses (including the views collated by the Mixed Economy Group and the 157 Group) and analysis by the GuildHE office of the responses from its members. We are very grateful to the AoC and GuildHE for their contributions.

Quotes have been included to give flavour to the aggregated findings. They have only been included where respondents specifically agreed at Q10 for their response to be quoted in the final report. For each quote, respondent type, job title and institution or organisation have been given.

Care has been taken in this document not to identify any organisation, provider or individual that asked to have their response treated as confidential. All replies to the HE provider only section about part-time provision and fees have been treated as confidential and aggregated.

1.6 Order of report
Following a summary of the key findings from the stakeholder evidence is a detailed examination of the written responses in the following order:

- Tuition fees, student loans and the economy (sections 3.2 and 3.3). This includes a discussion about student fees, student loans and in particular the ‘equivalent or lower qualifications’ (ELQ) policy, the economy in terms of the economic downturn, and the effect these have on students and employers. This section also considers maintenance grants, part-time premium, student
number controls and tuition fees in Scotland and Wales. The sections look at highlighted issues followed by possible solutions.

- **National perceptions and knowledge (section 3.4).** This section considers stakeholder evidence around the need for a national campaign to raise perceptions and knowledge about part-time higher education and which agencies (eg UCAS, SLC and National Careers Service) may be involved in this.

- **Pathways to part-time higher education (section 3.5).** This section considers respondents’ views on improving pathways to higher education such as further education, Access to Higher Education Diplomas, short courses, a centrally organised system, and credit accumulation and transfer.

- **Employers (section 3.6).** This section considers the importance of employers as a pathway to higher education. It firstly considers how respondents view the relationship between institutions and employers, how dialogue can be opened up and improved and how they can work together to create courses that are valuable to employers and employees. It then goes on to consider whether the economy has reduced employers’ resources for part-time higher education and looks at the value respondents think employers place on higher education.

- **Institutions and the student experience (section 3.7).** This section really gets into the practicalities of flexible courses and delivery for part-time students. Many solutions were given in this area under the general headings of short courses, flexible timings, information and induction, and flexible delivery.

- **Joined up thinking (section 3.8).** Consideration is given to the complexities of providing part-time higher education and how these could potentially be addressed with joined up thinking.

- **Higher education providers only section (section 4).** This reports on the findings of the questionnaire section asking higher education providers only about part-time higher education provision, strategy, recruitment and fees.
2 Summary

The responses to this review paint a compelling picture of a part-time higher education market under intense pressure.

Respondents describe how, in their experience, enrolments to part-time undergraduate study have declined in recent years. They also set out how, in their experience, fees have increased, certainly in England and to a lesser extent in the devolved nations. In the evidence to this survey, the increase in fees is given as the principal reason for the fall in part-time higher education in England and is cited by well over half of contributors across all of the different respondent types (students, students’ unions, higher education institutions, further education colleges, employers and employer bodies and other organisations). The general consensus amongst respondents is that the increase in fees, alongside the absence of loans and course subsidies for ‘equivalent or lower qualifications’ (ELQ), in the current economic climate, has resulted in many potential part-time mature students no longer feeling the cost of part-time higher education is ‘worth it’. Respondents note that the fee and loan regime mean it is harder for students to self-fund, especially for those planning to undertake a second degree and no longer economically viable for those pursuing study as a leisure interest.

In Scotland and Wales, only UUK members responded to the survey. Institutional responses are keen to point out that fees for home students have generally stayed the same or only had small inflationary increases in recent years. Several of these institutions also point out that part-time numbers have not recently declined in their institutions to the same extent they have in England.

A key recommendation from many stakeholders is to remove (or relax) the ‘equivalent or lower qualifications’ (ELQ) policy in England. Relaxing ELQ could be in the form of loans to students studying certain subjects or for certain student groups such as non-traditional students. This recommendation was made by a large number of stakeholders; having said that, the view was not unanimous nor the recommendations detailed.

A widely held view amongst all stakeholder groups is that, due to the recession and increased fees, employers’ financial resources for part-time study are reduced and they are less willing to fund higher education courses. A few respondents feel that employers are cutting training budgets and may look at cheaper alternatives for training outside of the sector. In addition, some responses to the survey suggest that the economic climate can affect employer support for higher education in other areas such as flexibility in time off for employees.
A recommendation from several stakeholders is to give employers incentives in the form of tax breaks/credits. This could be in the form of loans they give to staff or on the money they spend on training.

There is a widespread call amongst respondents for a nationwide campaign to raise perceptions and knowledge of part-time higher education by promoting it alongside full-time education. Respondents suggest that full-time and part-time marketing could be more integrated and covered in the same campaigns so that both are given as options to all potential students. Stakeholders suggest that agencies such as UCAS, the Student Loans Company (SLC), the National Careers Service (NCS) and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) should be involved. Respondents stress that messaging should be clear and the ability to compare across different providers made easier. A few respondents suggest this would help to demonstrate the government’s commitment to part-time study as a way of up-skilling the nation. Others suggest including high profile advocates and case studies of students and employers benefiting from part-time higher education.

Stakeholders point out that as many pathways as possible to higher education need to be open. Specific pathways mentioned in the evidence of this review are further education, short higher education courses, access and foundation degrees and employer support. The general feeling is that some of these pathways have been eroded over recent years, such as the ending of funding that allowed subsidised short courses. Comments made about the pathway from further education to higher education generally recommend giving more information and suggest the possibility of making assessment and accreditation more flexible. More could be done amongst those who have already started their journey toward higher education to ensure that they get there.

Despite few employers responding, those groups of stakeholders that did respond agree that employers are a particularly important pathway for part-time mature students. Respondents stress that communication between employers and institutions needs to be open and that there needs to be an increase in common language and course planning. Respondents recommend that higher education providers and employers work together (potentially in consortiums) and ideally at regional or local level. It is suggested that higher education providers should lead on bringing employers and agencies together but they need to have the resource to make these links, lead these partnerships and take them forward.

Respondents urge institutions to value part-time alongside full-time. There are differing opinions, however, on whether part-time delivery should be focused on as a completely separate entity or whether it should be completely integrated with full-time. There is a call from a few respondents to remove the distinction between full-
and part-time and use terms such as ‘flexible’ and ‘blended’. In other cases, respondents call for very specific measures just for part-time mature students. It is noted by higher education institutions that external agencies need to ensure that they treat part-time provision on a par with full-time, but also understand the differing needs of part-time students.

To improve part-time students’ experience, respondents suggest higher education providers consider:

- short courses (taster or bite-sized, flexible funding for these or free)
- flexible timings (52 weeks of the year rather than terms and long holidays, remove restrictions on time to complete, adapt timetables to evenings or same day of week)
- information and induction (pre-course information to help with planning, manage expectations to reduce dropout, mentors)
- flexible delivery (online, distance, ‘massive open online courses’ (MOOCs), webinars, recorded lectures, flexibility around deadlines)
- infrastructure (family-friendly and 24-hour campus, specific facilities for part-time students)

Woven throughout the evidence given in this review is a desire from all stakeholder groups for a more coherent approach to part-time higher education. Respondents agree that there needs to be joined up thinking across the sector and other agencies involved and that part-time provision needs to be valued and marketed alongside full-time provision.
3 Findings of the survey of stakeholders

3.1 Introduction

This document brings together the written views of 141 interested stakeholders to examine the reasons why part-time higher education has fallen and how this trend could potentially be reversed.

The review focuses on part-time mature undergraduates. A large proportion of part-time students are mature, but by no means are all mature students part-time. Many of the issues and solutions are relevant for all part-time students whilst others are focused specifically on mature part-time undergraduates. Mature part-time students are a heterogeneous group with a diverse range of reasons for studying, backgrounds, employment, previous experience of education, and access to financial resources for studying. Some recommendations will be more appropriate for certain sub-groups. Significant sub-groups identified by contributors to this survey, and referred to in this document include:

- Those who left education before age 18 and didn’t consider higher education at that time, but now, later in life, want to enter higher education. Often this is to improve their job prospects. Their current role with their current employer is therefore likely to change once they are qualified.
- Those undertaking higher education because their employer requires them to and is funding the study. These people are often in public services such as the NHS and are working for an employer who should benefit from their studying.
- Those who have already experienced higher education and are undertaking a further first degree for a ‘second career’ or to further a specialism.
- ‘Leisure learners’ or ‘hobbyists’. These are often more mature students who are studying more for the pleasure of learning than for employment reasons.

It is worth noting that in the evidence provided by stakeholders although part-time mature students were often characterised by their reasons for studying and employment status as in the descriptions above, demographic and minority groups, such as gender, ethnicity and disability were rarely mentioned. Several respondents, however, mentioned the relationship between widening participation (WP) and part-time mature students.

The responses to this survey highlight the diversity of part-time undergraduate provision across the UK. It ranges from ‘limited’ or ‘non-existent’ to a ‘significant’ number or ‘practically all’ of the students at an institution. In a handful of institutions there are specific departments for lifelong learning or continuing education, in some there are specific part-time courses and flexible learning options, whereas in others, part-time is simply an add-on or included in full-time provision.
As well as this diverse part-time population and landscape, to put the evidence to this review in context, the situation over the last few years in higher education regarding fees and loans must also be taken into consideration. In the last few years funding from the government to higher education institutions has changed and providers now pass on some of the cost to students in the form of fees. In England, fees for part-time undergraduate courses at most providers contributing to this review have increased over recent years, often in line with the increases to full-time fees and often ‘significantly’.

In Scotland and Wales there have only been modest increases to part-time fees and these are generally not passed on to home students. Section 4 of this Annexe evidence covers this in more detail.

Another significant factor is changes to the ‘equivalent or lower qualifications’ (ELQ) funding in England. In 2007, the government announced the phasing out in England of most support for students on courses leading to a qualification equivalent to, or lower than, one they already held (ELQs). There were only a small number of exceptions (including PGCEs; medical, nursing and veterinary qualifications; and those in receipt of Disabled Students’ Allowance). Although not all universities moved immediately, most reluctantly moved to charge ELQ students full fees. In 2012–13, following reductions to HEFCE teaching funding fees increased for all students. Part-time students were eligible to apply for a fee loan, but, critically, applicants holding an equivalent or higher qualification were ineligible for this loan.

Fees, the loan system and the economic downturn are widely cited by respondents as the reasons why part-time higher education has declined in recent years. These issues are therefore considered first in this document. This report then broadly follows the student lifecycle in the consideration of other issues that contribute to the downturn of part-time provision and solutions for reversing this trend: information, pathways, employers and institutions.

Although the review is UK wide, the majority of contributors are English and so it is generally assumed the responses refer to the English situation, even if not mentioned explicitly. As the fee and loan system differs in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland it has been indicated where responses relate directly to any of those nations.
3.2 Tuition fees, student loans and the economy

3.2.1 The increase in fees is a significant factor in the decline of part-time higher education

In the evidence to this survey, the increase in fees is given as the, or one of the, principal reasons for the fall in part-time higher education and is cited by well over half of contributors. This is across all of the different respondent types. Although most respondents simply write ‘fees’ or ‘an increase in fees’, a student sums up the reason why respondents believe fees are one of the main factors contributing to the fall in recruitment to part-time higher education as, ‘Money! The new fee structures are far too steep and rule out many.’ Another student goes on to explain, ‘Distance learning part-time used to be a good way to continue work and study at the same time but the increase in fees has made it very difficult’.

Higher education providers support the views of these students. The pro-vice-master for student experience at Birkbeck, University of London, clarifies, ‘the threefold increase in fees has brought about a major decline in application numbers as mature part-time higher education students, particularly those who are over 30, have more complex financial issues than the average full-time higher education 18-year-old student who still lives at home and is financially and otherwise supported by their family.’ GuildHE reports that the responses from its members indicate a concern that the increase in fees has been a major factor in the drop in applications to part-time courses. The Association of Colleges reports that the major cluster of issues that respondents identify for the decline in part-time higher education in colleges relate to student fees policy, including issues associated with the increase in fees. One further education college respondent pithily noted ‘higher fees’, which is a reasonable summary of the further education responses.

3.2.2 Student loans and the ELQ policy

The second biggest reason given for the decrease in part-time mature higher education is around the issue of loans. In particular, the ‘equivalent or lower qualifications’ (ELQ) policy is mentioned in around a third of responses. Fees and loans in the context of barriers to part-time mature higher education are to a large extent inextricably linked. As one response from a university explains, the ‘raising of fees combined with the withdrawal of the Government grant ... led to a three or four fold increase in fees. It is the removal of the grant and the fee increase (not the introduction of loans itself) that is the fundamental factor which has influenced part-time participation rate’. More specifically, a student asks, ‘how can a system where a course that two years ago cost £300 now costs £1500 and requires a loan to be taken out and paid back possibly [sic] encourage people to study part-time?’ Like students and higher education institutions, further education colleges also point to the loans system and the ELQ policy as key reasons for the decline in part-time higher education recruitment. A few further education college respondents believe
that part-time higher education was, in policy terms, less valued, and the ELQ policy
was noted in this context.

Survey responses strongly argue that the increase in undergraduate fees presents a
barrier for some people to enter higher education. Student loans were meant to
mitigate this problem by allowing students to borrow the money to pay for fees
upfront and repay the loan over time whilst earning. However, respondents from
across all of the different respondent types suggest that these basic assumptions do
not appear to take the situation of many part-time mature students into account. The
reasons why are summarised below.

A significant proportion of part-time mature students are those undertaking an
additional first degree. For them, the ELQ ruling means that the loan is not available.
In addition, as the higher education institutions no longer receive funding for these
students their fees are no longer subsidised at an institutional level and have
increased. The current fee and loan system therefore makes further undergraduate
study ‘in a different discipline … a barrier to people using part-time higher education
for a change of profession’ (Head of the Centre of Excellence for Learning and
Teaching, University of South Wales). Higher education institution responses point
out that this is against the government intention of up-skilling the workforce.

Contributors suggest that for ‘leisure learners' the increased fees make studying a
higher degree no longer financially viable or worthwhile; instead they will switch to
other forms of study or short courses.

Self-funded part-time mature students may have typically paid for their study with
savings, redundancies or inheritances, or paid as they progressed through the
modules with earnings from employment. It is felt by stakeholders that the current
levels of fees no longer allow for these ways of self-funding and may be too big a
commitment upfront for those who are considering higher education.

Stakeholders point out that mature part-time students are more likely than a typical
full-time 18-year-old undergraduate to already have financial commitments. They
may not want to take on a loan for study, and have a ‘fear of assuming massive debt
from fees’ (student), especially if they are older or are also supporting dependents
who are also in higher education. Several contributors suggest part-time mature
students may be more debt-averse or from WP backgrounds and unable or unwilling
to take on a loan and ‘so the headline increase in tuition fees will have acted as a
major deterrent.’ (Head of policy and research, million+)

The majority of the students who responded blame increased fees: ‘The tripling of
tuition fees for undergraduate courses would … be one factor which would determine
whether a student would think it worthwhile to return to study, particularly if that student already had many financial commitments.’ (student)

Several of the highlighted issues connected with fees, loans and part-time mature higher education are summed up by the National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA):

Despite Fee Loans being available, it would appear that the perceived debt is off-putting to mature students. … There is also the impact of part-time students now only being able to secure funding for one ‘course’ and no longer being able to dip into a mixture of subjects being offered across a range of full-time programmes. This, combined with recent changes to ELQ rules means part-time study is less attractive, particularly to mature students (wishing to re-train) who may already hold a degree. There is also widespread misunderstanding and mistrust of the loan repayments scheme, which is no less applicable here and is an additional barrier to part-time (and especially mature) students.

3.2.3 The economic climate
Around a fifth of respondents (across the stakeholder groups) cite the current economic climate and/or recession for amplifying the financial pressure on part-time mature students and their employers, and being a further contributor in reducing the number of part-time higher education students.

The recession has certainly had a negative impact on those who wish to work and study at the same time. Respondents point out that the current economic climate means people are: less equipped to be able to pay higher education fees; concerned about job security and whether they will be able to pay back loans or if there will be a new job to go to if they upskill; more risk averse; less likely to be able to afford to drop from full-time to part-time work; worried about asking employers for flexible working arrangements and risking their job; and less likely to undertake study ‘just for enjoyment’. A very small number also mentioned welfare reforms and changes to benefits.

The prevailing economic environment has affected PT numbers 2 fold. Firstly, little growth, lower company profits and great uncertainty has impacted negatively on company HR budgets, with training and education often being one of the first casualties during periods of economic downturn. Consequently, fewer firms are willing to fund (as well as support employees in other ways - e.g. time off for study) on part-time undergraduate courses. Secondly, the economic down-turn has meant that a greater number of
people who may have chosen part-time study are now unable to leave work, or reduce hours as they require their salary to live.
(Pro-vice-chancellor student recruitment, University of Wolverhampton, UUK member)

3.2.4 Tuition fees, loans, the economy and the implications for employers
A widely held view amongst all stakeholder groups is that, largely due to the recession, employers’ financial resources for part-time study are reduced. Further education college responses point to the recession impacting on employer training budgets and readiness to release staff in a difficult business climate: ‘wider austerity measures’, ‘economic environment’, ‘significant reduction in employer support’.

The Construction Industry Council and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) highlight the issue of employers reducing or cutting training budgets and the effect that has on diminishing funds available for part-time higher education. A member of staff from the University of Central Lancashire sums up, ‘In a negative economic climate often one of the first budgets to be reduced by employers is the learning and development budget’. Respondents argue that employers are less likely to have budget for training or to have resources to allow for flexibility to release staff for training. Some employers are concerned about the long-term prospects of their business and whether it is worth funding training for their staff.

The increase in fees further affects employers’ willingness to fund employees taking part in higher education degrees: ‘I employ and have funded people through part-time degrees, but the increase in fees will make this more difficult in future’ (employer). A pro-vice-chancellor at Sheffield Hallam University recalls a training manager telling them, ‘If the fees go up, I have to reduce the number of employees I send to you’.

Instead, employers may look for cheaper alternatives and short courses. It is suggested by a very small minority of respondents that employers may even start to question whether they actually require formal qualifications for their staff and that they are already increasingly looking outside of the higher education sector for their employee training needs.

Reduced employer financial support for part-time higher education is considered an issue across stakeholder groups, as illustrated by the following quotes:

‘... little growth, lower company profits and great uncertainty has impacted negatively on company HR budgets, with training and education often being one of the first casualties during periods of economic downturn. Consequently, fewer firms are
willing to fund (as well as support employees in other ways – e.g. time off for study) on part-time undergraduate courses.’
(Pro-vice-chancellor student recruitment, University of Wolverhampton, UUK member)

‘Employers are less inclined to accommodate employees attending courses as it's an employers' market and they simply don't have to be accommodating.’
(Student)

‘The changes we have heard about have been in the last year where individuals are now expected to bear the cost and provision has become more expensive, leading to a lack and withdrawal of support.’
(Director, Linking London, based at Birkbeck, University of London)

‘The Futuretrack survey found that employers have been contributing less towards their employees’ part-time tuition fees than in previous years … Probably the main reason for the reluctance to pay for the full cost of their employees’ education is the massive increase in HE tuition fees. An added complication may be the relationship between employer support and new tuition fee loans (for example, to what extent it may be classified as a taxable benefit).’
(Policy officer, University and College Union)

Respondents gave very few specific examples of which industries or employers have been particularly affected by a decline in employer financial support. As the public sector, and organisations such as the NHS, have a strong tradition of financing higher education to employees it is not surprising that, as the head of Kaplan Open Learning notes, ‘Public sector cuts have hit hard, with services such as Health and Policing pushing the responsibility for higher education pre-qualifications required before entry into service over to the students, where they are expected to fund these qualifications themselves’. Several further education respondents identified reductions in local authority training budgets such as, ‘social work, education and child care’ as problematic. The Association of Colleges also reports that education and teaching assistant foundation degrees are a big market for college higher education.

Amongst SMEs the picture painted by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is even bleaker: ‘the uncertainty caused by the global financial crisis has made businesses [SMEs] more risk-averse towards investing in education provision which is often viewed as expensive, inflexible, time-consuming and with benefits which are imprecise’.
Worryingly, the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning points out that confusion over the loan system may make employers feel exonerated from paying fees for their employees. A handful of responses mention that employers may be reluctant to advise employees to take out loans and get into debt, especially if they are low paid.

Several of the issues discussed here are summed up in this response from the University of Leeds:

In the past, when fees were lower or subsidised by ESF, ECIF or LLNs, employers were willing to pay for the cost of very short, bespoke courses, and/or Foundation Degrees. They have been much less likely to pay for lower skilled employees (ie below management) on new regime fees unless there is a statutory requirement. This is evident for areas such as the children’s workforce where there are such requirements in place compared to care for the elderly. Employers who had been discussing with us ways of supporting low paid workers onto FDs and short courses pulled out of discussions as soon as the new fees were discussed. They could (a) not afford to pay the fees themselves (b) there would have been ethical considerations for them doing so, given that it would have drawn funds away from other essential services/caring and (c) were unwilling to ‘encourage low paid employees into debt’. NHS funded mature and part-time students are a particular case: there is a great deal of interest from mature students for such courses, and some such as midwifery and nursing here would be heavily over-subscribed; number caps keep numbers down in those areas.

(Director of lifelong learning, University of Leeds, UUK member)

3.2.5 Complexities of the student loan system

The system of applying for loans is well established amongst full-time students but not so amongst part-time students, who come to this without the support systems 18-year-old potential students have such as schools and parents. In addition, unlike full-time students they may not have applied online and centrally to do their course and so completing a loan application is not the natural progression it is for a school leaver.

Several organisations, including the 1994 Group, point out that communication about who is eligible for a student loan has not been clear. The Open University, Birkbeck and million+ specifically argue that in England in 2012 there was lack of timely communication to potential part-time students about how the new fee and loan system worked. They believe this has contributed to the drop in part-time recruits.
3.2.6 Lack of maintenance grants and childcare
Alongside the increase in fees and issues surrounding loans, the lack of maintenance grants and childcare support become additional barriers for certain groups of potential learners to enter higher education. Respondents believe that this is particularly likely to affect those students who are also likely to be part-time mature students. This view was held particularly by further education colleges, those who work in lifelong learning or continuing education centres at universities, and those who particularly focus on widening participation and supporting minority groups.

3.2.7 Tuition fees in Scotland and Wales
In Scotland and Wales, home students do not pay tuition fees, and the institutional responses are keen to point out that fees have generally stayed the same or only had small inflationary increases in recent years. Several of these institutions (but not all) also point out that part-time numbers have not declined in their institutions in the same way they have in England. They therefore place a large amount of blame on fees for the reduction in part-time uptake. Respondents such as Birkbeck, University of London and NASMA also mentioned the effects of different fee arrangements in the nations.

The different fee arrangements across the nations create disparities and confusion for employers across the UK, as explained by The Open University:

> Other employers, such as the Armed Services, who we engage with at an organisation to organisation level, are concerned that the devolved position on national fees means that a soldier living in Scotland, for example, will be paying considerably less for an Open University degree than another based long-term in Yorkshire. This change has made transparency on pricing of HE and communication of the OU value proposition more challenging where the client operates UK-wide. In turn this has caused some employer dissatisfaction.

(Director of government and external affairs, The Open University (England), UUK member)

3.3 Overcoming barriers to entry within the current economy and fee regime
Realistically respondents understand that fees are not likely to be abolished or reduced in the immediate future. Just one contributor, a student, advocates eliminating fees. Around half the students do suggest reducing fees as a way to increase part-time higher education but few other stakeholders do (just responses from staff in three higher education institutions). No further education responses argue for a fundamental review of the new fees policy, although several argue for a reintroduction of maintenance grants. Other potential fee arrangements students and
higher education institutions suggest include returning to an upfront paying model, paying in ‘monthly instalments instead of completely upfront or in two instalments’ (student), individual pricing for modules, pay-as-you-go (PAYG), and a reduction in fees being used to incentivise people to return to work.

Changes to the loan system are also suggested and include: relaxing the ELQ restriction; employer loans and specific part-time loans, for example with no repayments until qualification awarded irrespective of years taken to complete; or loans for ‘chunks’ of qualifications rather than the whole year’s fees.

Several stakeholders mention funding with no suggestion of where the funding should come from or go to. More specific mentions suggest funding to employers, higher education institutions and a suggestion of funding being channelled through the Sector Skills Councils.

GuildHE responses call for flexibility in fee models to make part-time study more affordable and to recognise the different financial situations of part-time students, for example those working full-time with families and/or those who are debt-averse.

3.3.1 Relax or remove the ELQ restrictions in England

Removing or relaxing the ELQ restrictions is the most frequent solution with regards to fees and loans put forward by students, higher education institutions and other stakeholders. It is specifically spontaneously mentioned by over a quarter of respondents and alluded to by others. Many argue that removing the restriction and allowing all part-time higher education students to take out a loan if they desired would make it easier for those already with an existing higher education qualification to upskill or change professions.

Alternatively, a few respondents suggest that the ELQ policy could be relaxed or exemptions made. This could be for certain subjects or industries. NIACE writes, ‘consideration should be given to relaxing the ELQ policy in particular subjects (whether those strategically important for growth or where labour market shortages are imminent).’ The Open University in England adds, ‘policy changes to allow students with first degrees to benefit from subsidised fees if they are retraining in an area of workforce need could be a solution. Revisiting the ELQ policy and considering an extension of the range of exempt subjects to match current skills shortages could also be a positive move.’ In addition, the Open University in Wales points out that there are no ELQ restrictions there and believes this policy aids the re-skilling agenda. The ELQ could also be relaxed for certain groups of students, such as students from a WP background or disabled students. A pro-vice-chancellor at The University of Sheffield suggests, ‘potentially implementing an age-restriction or WP criterion would ensure effective distribution of loans’.
Removal of the ELQ policy does, however, come with one warning of caution from the university think-tank million+, based on their report Never Too Late To Learn:

Caution should be exercised in relation to the relaxation of ELQ regulations that some in the sector having been pushing for. The new fee regime has exacerbated some of the challenges around ELQ participation but this is by no means the only factor contributing to the dramatic fall in part-time enrolments and given spending constraints there is a significant risk that funded numbers and student support would not be additional but rather diverted from first-time entrants to university. If the main issue relates to debt aversity and fee levels then the case for re-instating the Part-Time Premium is much stronger than the case for revisiting ELQ regulations.

(Head of policy and research, million+)

3.3.2 Part-time premium

A couple of the higher education institutions point out that part-time provision can have higher associated costs than full-time and call for the reintroduction of the part-time premium alongside other measures to reverse the trend of declining part-time higher education in England. This view is supported by NIACE, million+, and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA).

Several higher education institutions and ‘other’ organisations also mention increased funding straight to the sector. Where increased funding to higher education institutions is mentioned it is frequently in relation to requiring a general government increase in funding to tertiary education and/or to develop skills vital for the economy.

The University and College Union (UCU) suggests:

One of the specific changes in this direction is to restore the HEFCE teaching grant to institutions. However, this should be part of a wider campaign to raise the level of public investment in tertiary education. For example, the UCU-led ‘Knowledge economy’ campaign aims to persuade the UK governments to take a lead in raising funding for tertiary education to the OECD average of 1.6% of GDP

(Policy officer, University and College Union)

Three respondents suggest the government gives financial incentives to institutions to increase part-time provision.

3.3.3 Student number controls

A minority of higher education institutions and further education colleges mention student number controls. They agree that part-time students should continue to be excluded from the student number controls, yet a small number of higher education
institutions seem to suggest that the existence of controls may disadvantage mature learners. One respondent explains that as higher education institutions are only allowed to offer a certain number of courses to students with A-level grades ABB or lower, mature students who are less likely to hold these will be disadvantaged. Another suggests that non-ABB+ students should be able to shift between part-time and full-time provision without being penalised by the student number controls.

A very small number of respondents, including the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL), argue that student number controls ‘could be managed to incentivise institutions to offer more part-time and flexible provision’. The Construction Industry Council suggests that the government could use student number controls to encourage part-time provision if the, ‘enrolment of a particular number of part time undergraduates by a higher education institution produced a particular amount of full time undergraduate places outside the institution’s controlled number.’

3.3.4 Introduce maintenance grants
A small number of students, a students’ union and several further education colleges suggest reintroducing maintenance grants for part-time higher education. In particular, they suggest needs-tested bursaries, learning grants for unemployed and disadvantaged groups, and help with childcare.

On a similar theme a higher education institution suggests additional central funding made ‘available to support people from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially those with learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia, but also those who had reduced educational opportunities in the past.’

3.3.5 Financial incentives for employers
Several respondents across the stakeholder groups suggest financial incentives for employers, such as providing tax relief, breaks or credits, or even giving funds to employers to make their costs of funding part-time students more affordable and desirable. Most respondents don’t give any further detail as to how they would see the system working, although one further education college argues for the tax incentives for employers to stimulate the higher-level training market. Some of the other more descriptive suggestions are given below:

Tax credits for employers who sponsor staff (through paid time off and/or paying fees – provided no attempt is made to ‘tax back’ the fees from the employee).

(student, res25)
The Government might … in the longer term, examine how the tax and national insurance systems might be developed to encourage individual and employer investment in higher education.

(NIACE)

Development of a funding or tax relief scheme for business to support employees to take up part-time study if economic benefit to the community can be demonstrated.

(Pro-vice-chancellor student recruitment, University of Wolverhampton, UUK member)

A couple of institutions suggest that the employers should get tax relief for loans for employees. It is not always clear whether the respondents mean employers taking out loans to pay for their employees or whether it means employers giving their employees a loan. In a couple of cases, however, it is the latter, as the 1994 Group clarifies:

There might also be value in encouraging employers who cannot directly fund their employees’ study to instead provide employees with interest-free or low-cost loans for training at Higher Education Institutions. Loans from employers to employees are not subject to income tax if the total loan value is less than £5,000. However, annual tuition fees are now typically above this level. There might be value in HMRC providing an extra-statutory concession for employer loans to cover the costs of study at Higher Education Institutions.

(1994 Group)

A couple of other contributors point out that employers may also see the benefit of retention of staff if they administer the loan. Further issues relating to employers, aside from fees and the increased costs, are discussed in section 3.6.

3.4 National perceptions and knowledge of part-time higher education

A positive national perception of higher education in general, and in particular of part-time mature higher education, is important to raise aspirations, not only so that people value it and want to take part, but also so that they are endorsed by those around them such as family and employers. Specific knowledge is therefore needed about pathways to entry to enable potential learners to apply.

3.4.1 National perception and knowledge of part-time higher education needs improving

There is a general and strong feeling from respondents that the image and perception of part-time higher education needs to be improved in the UK. There are two strands to this: firstly, that there is a lack of knowledge about the value of
returning to study later in life, and secondly, that there is a lack of awareness of part-time higher education options.

If education has the power to transform lives and livelihoods, we need to get that message over. All we hear through the media is about students who are in full-time study, their loans and their debts, and high levels of graduate unemployment. We need to get the good news out about earning while you learn thus escaping from the low wage, low productivity trap in which too many of our citizens are caught.

(Chief executive, Workers’ Educational Association)

Respondents criticise a perceived lack of visibility in the sector of the part-time offer and the inability to compare it to full-time when considering higher education options. Contributors particularly concerned with reaching out to potential part-time mature students point out that despite wide reporting of higher education tuition fees and loans in media, they are rarely mentioned in relation to part-time. This results in very little general awareness of part-time options, such as provision, delivery options and finance. Some argue that this is reinforced by there not being a ‘part-time equivalent of UCAS’ (Director, Linking London) or other central admissions service.

3.4.2 Improving perceptions and knowledge through a national campaign
To improve national perceptions of part-time higher education there is a very strong call from all stakeholder groups ‘for a national and co-ordinated public awareness campaign in England to inform potential part-time students of the opportunity and benefits of part-time study along with details of the public support they may be able to access’ (NIACE). Personal, social and economic benefits of part-time higher education need to be promoted. The benefits of lifelong learning need to be demonstrated including better life chances for graduates, improved income levels and job satisfaction, and next-generation benefits. The Open University suggests that, ‘the part-time sector’s “earn while you learn” message is particularly powerful in the current economic climate.’

As well as improving perceptions, a national campaign could provide clear and consistent sector information to improve knowledge about part-time higher education options. Contributors agree that key elements of such a campaign should be finance, information on enrolment and access options, and age or life-stage-specific information. Several responses indicate that all communications should draw on, or mirror, the information already available about full-time higher education, but be specific to part-time study. This is particularly pertinent with regard to fees and loans, as the general consensus is that there is still a lot of misunderstanding about how these work for part-time students.
GuildHE sum up its members’ responses as follows: ‘Providing information to prospective students, employees and employers on the benefits of part-time study is cited as a way of improving understanding of part-time study. It is felt that the focus in the public’s eyes is still on the young, full-time student. The use of success stories and high profile spokespeople to advocate part-time is recommended.’

The Association of Colleges adds that the vast majority of further education responses argue for the need for a thorough information campaign explaining the changes and benefits of the new system: ‘Case studies demonstrating improved prospects/ pay after completion’; ‘Better promotion of the HE loans system’; and ‘Good advice and guidance is crucial to enable an informed decision of mode of study to be made’.

Like others, a few further education college responses also note that mature students are more risk averse than younger students and for this reason promotion needs to be clearly focused on explaining the benefits of gaining higher education qualifications such as career progression, increased earnings and job satisfaction, and the detail of debt repayment.

Responses indicate that a national campaign to improve perceptions should be targeted at everyone, but in particular potential part-time students and employers. It is these two groups who should then be targeted with additional information to improve knowledge about part-time higher education options.

Campaigns should make use of media and social media and be targeted anywhere employers and potential students are. Suggestions include leisure centres, major sporting events, schools and colleges, parents/carers/families, Facebook, leaflets to households in areas of economic decline and high unemployment, and supermarket flyers. There are certainly advocates for ensuring part-time higher education is integrated into full-time campaigns, so that higher education is promoted to all groups and then the options of part-time and full-time are explained. This would mean that the usual marketing routes such as school, college and family are utilised to promote part-time as well as full-time higher education.

Several contributors propose that a national media campaign should include success stories of people who have studied part-time and high profile advocates who have benefitted from part-time higher education. Case studies can have great impact, opening up pathways to potential learners and conveying advice and knowledge about part-time higher education. Indeed, mature part-time students themselves feel that they should be used as a resource more, and their knowledge should be spread at an institutional and national level. One respondent stresses that any higher
education marketing campaign should feature people of all ages, celebrating age
diversity in the same way that gender and ethnic diversity are.

There was also a suggestion to model campaigns on private providers, making use
of financial discounts such as two-for-one deals and time-limited discounts.

3.4.3 Improving perception and knowledge of part-time mature higher
education amongst employers

Respondents generally consider public sector employers to be more receptive to the
value of part-time higher education than the private sector, particularly SMEs.
Improving the value employers of all sectors across the UK place on part-time higher
education is largely considered a national issue that needs a national solution.
Contributors suggest that to improve perceptions amongst employers it would be
useful to demonstrate the financial advantages to businesses of sending employees
on part-time programmes and the asset part-time learners can be to an organisation.

The Trades Union Congress is keen to point out the role it can play promoting higher
education in the workplace:

With over 30,000 union learning representatives (ULRs) trained nationally providing
support to learners in a range of workplaces, ULRs can play a significant role in
providing information and advice to employers and employees about part-time
student finance and the benefits of higher learning. Around 4,000 learners a year
undertake HE programmes via the union route. However, our figures for 2012/13
reveal a 25% fall in union learners undertaking HE programmes. ULRs are trusted
workplace intermediaries that can help stimulate interest and demand for part-time
HE study. For example, last year a ULR at HMRC Benton Park View in Newcastle
organised a workplace HE taster event which resulted in 55 workers enrolling on OU
courses. Unionlearn has found that delivering workplace HE taster events is an
effective way to encourage workers to take the first step into part-time HE. ULRs are
uniquely positioned to access those hard to reach learners that are often the most
vulnerable and disadvantaged in society. In addition, union reps are making the case
to employers about the need to invest in higher skills and have been negotiating
learning agreements with their employer to include all levels of learning.

(Trades Union Congress)

3.4.4 Responsibility for leading a national information campaign

Despite there being a widespread desire for a national campaign to improve
perceptions and knowledge, there is no clear suggestion about who should take the
lead on this. To enable potential applicants to make informed choices at the enquiry
stage (about funding, timetable flexibility/constraints, credit accumulation and
clear and consistent information across institutions is beneficial and this requires joined up communications across the sector. One higher education institution (a UUK member) suggests it should be sector led, but considers it does not offer good returns on investment.

Student respondents consider an information campaign should be national and therefore needs government direction. Six respondents (two higher education institutions, one student, Linking London, UCU and a students’ union) specifically suggest UCAS could provide clear and concise information about part-time options. Two respondents specifically said this information should be on the UCAS website alongside full-time options.

The head of Kaplan Open Learning warns, ‘The first priority should be dramatic improvements to the communication and promotion of the funding changes, as opposed to leaving it to individuals such as Martin Lewis (MoneySupermarket.com) to promote the changes as a positive step (it’s not a loan, it is a tax etc).’ The University and College Union states that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Student Loans Company (SLC), ‘should … invest in a national publicity campaign to promote the value of mature and part-time higher education, including the welcome – albeit limited – improvements in access to tuition fee loans’. One ‘other’ organisation notes that Student Finance England could focus more on marketing the financial support systems specifically available to part-time students.

Birkbeck, one ‘other’ organisation and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) put forward the National Careers Service (NCS) to promote a national campaign, as they are, ‘well placed to provide high quality impartial advice and guidance on part-time higher education opportunities through their face-to-face interventions, the advice line and online services’ (TUC). The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) agrees that it would be beneficial to potential part-time students if ‘additional training was made available to career advisors’. NIACE also mentions the NCS when discussing a collaborative approach and highlighting the need for several organisations such as, ‘HEIs and FE colleges, community education and union learning representatives and broadcasters as well as the National Careers Service’ to work together, In addition, NIACE would, ‘expect the Office for Fair Access to play a leading role in identifying and promoting good practice’.

As well as NIACE, the University and College Union, the Construction Industry Council and three higher education institutions specifically mention the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) in their response. Their comments suggest that although money is currently targeted at schoolchildren, OFFA’s remit could be widened and usefully go to adult learners from non-traditional backgrounds to encourage widening
participation and include part-time students at higher education institutions. One UUK member suggests, ‘More could also be done with schools to ensure that students that elect not to progress to University are aware of the opportunities for part-time learning at a later date. If we could implement a system to track student destinations following interventions provided through OFFA activities, potentially we could contact students who do not progress intermittently to remind them of the opportunities still available to progress to HE through PT study.’

OFFA certainly indicates in its response to this survey that over the next few years, as part of the HEFCE/OFFA national strategy for access and student success, it has identified part-time study and mature learners as one of the emerging priorities that the strategy will address. It acknowledges the need for an increased analytical focus on part-time mature students and is currently reviewing how it assesses institutions’ commitments to part-time students.

3.4.5 Government’s value of part-time higher education

A view of a small number of respondents from higher education institutions, mainly staff rather than ‘institutional’ responses, is that the government does not really value part-time higher education or lifelong learning. They feel the main focus is on full-time higher education and interest in part-time has shifted to further education and apprenticeships. The ideological shift to short courses, further education and apprenticeships may reflect, or be reflected in, employers’ shift of focus.

Several contributors agree that any national policy changes must have a long-term commitment from the government in order to be taken seriously by employers and institutions.

3.5 Pathways to part-time higher education

Improving national perceptions and knowledge can drive interest in part-time higher education by raising aspirations, but the pathways to entry must exist and be easily accessible to enable those making their first steps or repeat steps into higher education. Typical pathways into higher education such as school are not relevant to potential mature students. More relevant, and mentioned in the evidence of this review, are further education, short higher education courses, access and foundation degrees, and employers. The general feeling is that some of these pathways have been eroded in recent years, such as the ending of funding that allowed subsidised shorter courses including foundation degrees that often served as a route into education, and ‘changes to state funding policies for FE-level adult education which is reducing the supply pipeline’ (Birmingham City University, UUK member).

Other barriers to entry cited by respondents, include: the lack of centrally organised systems such as admissions; the loans system (in the context of applying rather than
actually having a loan per se); 'closure, in many institutions, of specialist departments of continuing education or lifelong learning which often acted as “points of entry” for mature and part-time students’ (NIACE); entry requirements; and assessment methods. These are discussed in more detail below.

As discussed above, information may be more accessible if it was organised by central organisations. Seven respondents even put forward the idea that this same theory may hold true for part-time admissions into higher education (UCU, two private providers, three higher education institutions and a further education college). The mature and part-time students’ adviser at the University of Bristol suggests, ‘Part time students would benefit from being able to apply via UCAS rather than confusing, inconsistent direct entry routes (which can vary both within and between HEIs).’ The head of Kaplan Open Learning adds that if UCAS applications included part-time alongside full-time it would ‘highlight the value placed on part-time provision as an alternative to full-time’. Birkbeck additionally points out that a central admissions system including part-time alongside full-time would benefit those who were looking at full-time study and knew very little about part-time. Without part-time being included they may currently be dropping out of the system altogether rather than finding out about part-time.

In contrast to the centrally organised idea, NASMA puts the emphasis back on improving local access and suggests, ‘liaison through regional networks to promote availability of local PT HE opportunities, liaison with HE careers services.’

Current part-time mature students stress the need for help in overcoming barriers with returning to study such as study skills and exam techniques, as, ‘people may feel intimidated about returning to study, overwhelmed by learning and generally confused about what is required’ (student).

With regards to comments made about the pathway from further education to higher education, it was usually around giving more information and the possibility of making assessment and accreditation more flexible. More could be done for those who have already started their journey toward higher education to ensure that they get there. The director of lifelong learning at the University of Leeds highlights the need for ‘improved careers education and IAG at pre-Access stages, and during Access to Higher Education Diplomas (and equivalents) in order to broaden learners’ horizons, along with a better match between level 3 provision (especially on AHE Diplomas) and local HE provision’. She goes on to explain that mature students may enter further education with a specific vocational career aim in mind. She worries there is lack of information about other career options that open up to the student once they are studying and that by improving this career information, students may be empowered to progress their studies even further and not drop out.
The Association of Colleges reports that, ‘in general, the need to tailor courses to student, and to a lesser extent, employer demand was identified [by FE College respondents] as a major issue for the decline in enrolments. Some form of repository or clearing-house of blended/e-learning courses could be one way of addressing this issue; one respondent indicated UCAS could play a role in such a system. It is also the case that there is insufficient knowledge of just how much blended/e-learning is actually being offered in the sector.’

Million+ and the Higher Education Liaison Officers’ Association point out that withdrawal of funding of Access to Higher Education Diplomas for people aged 24 and over will have put some learners off. Million+ writes, ‘When Access to HE courses were co-funded, they were seen as low-risk pathway back into education which enabled adult learners to “dip a toe in the water”; with the withdrawal of direct funding and implementation of a loan system Access to HE qualifications assumed much greater risk in the eyes of the students we spoke to’.

In addition, future changes to the Access to Higher Education Diploma qualification could actually improve pathways to higher education:

If, as part of proposed changes, GCSEs in maths and English were to [be] made entry requirements for the AHE Diploma and the Diploma consisted only of level 3 credits, this might increase HEIs’ confidence in the qualification to the benefit of mature students. It would also mean that more mature students met the increasing entry requirements of HEI courses. This is especially an issue for healthcare courses such as Nursing, extremely popular amongst AHE learners, but which are now, increasingly, requiring GCSEs for entry.

(Director of lifelong learning, University of Leeds, UUK member)

Higher education institutions and ‘other’ organisations definitely highlight the importance of short courses in providing a taster of higher education. Several of them believe the funding and loan system should be amended to incorporate funding for these, for example, paying fees for modules at a time rather than a whole year’s course in one go. There is also a call to reinstate subsidies for short courses, as they are an important pathway, particularly for widening participation groups. One student believes these should be run and funded by the institutions themselves. She points to the University of Leeds as being a good role model in offering free unaccredited ‘taster’ courses to everyone, ‘regardless of their educational background and financial situation’. There is very little comment on foundation degrees by the universities other than acknowledging them.
NIACE suggests the ‘Government might consider what further support it can give to encourage greater flexibility through credit accumulation and transfer initiatives’. This view is shared by at least one students’ union that responded. One further education college response discussed continuing support for the development of Credit Accumulation and Transfer Schemes (CATS). The Open University in Scotland highlights how flexible the system is there, with easy transfer between OU modules and other providers and that all OU modules are mapped onto the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

A number of institutions mention the closure of lifelong learning or continuing education departments as a reason why access to higher education has become harder. The vice-chancellor of the University of Sheffield notes, ‘Several lifelong learning departments have closed, given the difficulty in ensuring such departments are financially sustainable in the new regime’.

**CASE STUDY**

To open up pathways to higher education, in particular to disadvantaged groups and WP targets, Sheffield Hallam University and The University of Sheffield have created a collaborative partnership. The Higher Educational Progression Partnership (HEPP) has developed an online interactive information source for mature learners which indicates higher level opportunities in the city region, the benefits, mature student concerns, etc.

HEPP is aiming to engage with potential part-time learners via:

- Key or past employers who have previously sponsored students
- Union Learn Local representatives
- Local authorities (to reach community assemblies and for more adult educational provision – some schools offer this)
- Workers’ Educational Association

(Pro-vice-chancellor (academic), Sheffield Hallam University, UUK member)

A few further education colleges also mention the slow take-up of higher apprenticeships; although others note that higher apprenticeships and the availability of short professional courses may be impacting on prescribed part-time higher education course take-up. A respondent argues that non-prescribed higher education in publically funded colleges attracting fees has been in ‘slow decline for several years’; but there is limited knowledge of the quantity – or indeed quality – of this provision in private learning companies or full-cost provision in the college sector. The Association of Colleges recommends ‘a better understanding of non-publically funded prescribed and non-prescribed part time higher education in alignment with the soon to be published BIS report into alternative higher education providers.'
There is also a case to explore QAA externally quality assuring non-prescribed HE provision, mainly part time, at levels four and above to address the present assurance gap.’

Various respondents also suggest pathways could be opened up in other part-time markets such as job centres, voluntary agencies, careers companies and SMEs. Employers are a particularly important pathway in the context of this survey and are considered in more detail in the following section.

3.6 Employers

Employers are an important pathway for many learners to enter tertiary education, and specifically part-time higher education. Employers can be a valuable resource in encouraging people into part-time higher education. Firstly, by demonstrating to students what roles they could play in the organisation if they gain qualifications and secondly by supporting their own staff to gain qualifications. Increased financial incentives to employers have already been discussed in section 3.3.5 and the importance of a national information campaign reaching them discussed in 3.4.3. This section considers in more detail the relationship between employers and institutions and then employers and employees.

3.6.1 Opening up pathways between employers and institutions

Higher education institutions are working with employers to demonstrate to potential students that support is available and ‘that engaging in higher education via part-time study is a means to achieve upward social mobility and career progression’ (higher education institution, UUK member). Higher education providers need to work with employers to design and deliver ladders of qualifications, so that individual learners can progress from further education in a way that employers will see as valuable and worth investment. This may mean adapting models of provision and exploring apprenticeships, as highlighted in the following two quotes:

We work with employers to review their CPD frameworks from level 1 to level 8. The ability to provide seamless support from FE to HE is important and the ability to provide for general through to highly specialised development. To provide specialist support the employers need to contribute to the training and education and the HEI should provide support for training the trainers. Working collaboratively with other HEIs and FECs can better facilitate providing a holistic offer. Employers and HEIs need to work together to identify the most appropriate modes of study and design the curricula to meet employer needs. More opportunities for internships and placements offered alongside part-time study would be attractive to students who are concerned about gaining employment after investing in part-time study. (University of Derby, UUK member)
The policy environment has changed, resulting in realignment in focus from conventional part-time HE provision towards apprenticeships – with apprenticeships becoming more appealing to company sponsors and the students themselves. This may not be a bad thing, but the sector has yet to realign itself to understand and fully embrace this new provision.

(Pro-vice-chancellor student recruitment, University of Wolverhampton, UUK member)

CASE STUDY

Collaboration and innovative partnerships between HEIs and employers are essential to raising skills through part-time higher education. Trainee accountants can boost their careers and skills by combining work and study as part of a collaboration between Birkbeck and The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW). Students reading the BSc Applied Accounting and Business degree complete their studies not only with internationally-recognised academic and professional qualifications, but with real work experience too – significant advantages in a competitive jobs market. They complement their work-based ICAEW Chartered Accountancy qualification with a prestigious academic qualification from Birkbeck.

(Pro-vice-master for student experience, Birkbeck, University of London, UUK member)

3.6.2 Enhancing dialogue

There is widespread agreement across the stakeholder groups that dialogue between employers and institutions needs to be opened up and enhanced. Views range from those thinking it will never happen, through to those saying it already happens well.

Students who responded emphasise that if higher education institutions and employers are talking, it improves part-time students’ situation, for example, by ensuring that working hours and course hours fit together. It is expected that employers actively involved in dialogue with higher education providers will be more flexible over working arrangements and higher education tutors may equally be more flexible over course deadlines.

The indication from responses is that higher education institutions should lead on bringing employers and agencies together. This comes with acknowledgement that it requires dedicated resource and funding that the higher education institutions do not have. Where a dedicated point of contact for employers at a higher education
provider does exist, it improves dialogue and the success of the initiative as the following example at The Open University in Scotland demonstrates:

The Open University in Scotland is currently engaged in developing a range of innovative models for facilitating learning in the workplace to demonstrate the essential contribution part-time provision can make to growing Scotland’s economy. An example of a highly successful work-based model developed by The Open University in Scotland in an area of skill shortages is a partnership with Rolls-Royce and the union Unite. Having identified a lack of opportunity for shop floor shift-workers and remote workers to up-skill, a flexible pathway was developed which enables engineering workers, who may have previously completed an apprenticeship, to progress towards a BEng. Currently there are nearly 40 shop floor workers on the programme and the model is being extended to other large engineering employers.

(Director of government and external affairs, The Open University in Scotland, UUK member)

A pro-vice-chancellor at Sheffield Hallam University suggests that ‘The Local Enterprise Partnerships may offer a mechanism through which strategy and/or funding could be levered on a local/regional basis’.

GuildHE institutions highlight the need for constructive dialogue between institutions and employers, as well as pathways across further education, higher education, employment and professional progression. There are good examples given of GuildHE institutions providing courses tailored to the needs of local employers.

3.6.3 Courses designed for employers needs
There is agreement amongst higher education institutions that courses must be tailored to fit in with employers’ needs rather than providers selling generic course provision. Employer groups certainly ask for more flexibility from providers. The head of learning partnerships at the University of Bath points out, ‘The co-construction of curricula, that meet the needs of industry and are attractive to students, is key’. Other contributors point out this can present problems; suppliers have different goals to employers and different employers have different requirements. Therefore problems with control over, and content of, courses can arise.

3.6.4 Assessment and accreditation
In addition, assessment measures and accreditation should be reviewed, as current higher education models do not necessarily fit with employers’ needs. Employers want assessment strategies that ‘can be directly applied to an individual’s work environment, so that the employer can more directly see the impact and benefits of undertaking the programme’ (The 157 Group) rather than a ‘lengthy QA process
which employers neither understand nor value' (Head of the Centre of Excellence for Learning and Teaching, University of South Wales).

The QAA recognises that ‘employers are interested in sharp, focused, skill-specific employer-led courses and courses that lead to professional accreditation. It may be that employers do not relate as well to some of the newer higher education course structures and that the language higher education providers use is not clear to the employer. Higher education providers need to ensure they realise employer requirements in order to get buy-in from employers to the value of part-time higher education.’ The QAA also points out that there should be a closer dialogue between employers and the government.

Further education colleges discuss structural issues associated with colleges’ powers to award higher education qualifications and more quickly respond to employers’ higher level training needs: ‘[the need] to develop new delivery and accreditation models’; ‘Imperative … to give … Further Education Colleges … powers to develop and accredit their own qualifications at HE level’; ‘Easier for colleges to obtain awarding powers … [and] respond to employer demand’; ‘Enabling … colleges to achieve TDAP … without a fully research led mission … [but with] relevant levels of scholarly activity’.

The Association of Colleges comments that, ‘[This] is of course a long-standing demand from the College sector; and one that is partly met by the authority to apply for Foundation Degree awarding powers. Nevertheless, the recent significant decline in part-time higher education might require a more radical response than previously considered and an accelerated process for College awarding powers might be one method to address the situation, especially as there is general political agreement that the development of higher level skills will be a prerequisite for future economic prosperity.’

3.6.5 Consortia

The QAA writes, ‘There are examples of good practice where employers and providers collaborate to meet the educational needs of the local market. There are also consortia models where universities, further education colleges and employers work successfully together to provide educational opportunities to support skills development and career progression. This allows complete packages of both vocational and academic courses across different levels, minimises the vocational/academic divide, improves communication between providers and employers, and provides students with improved progression opportunities.’

The Construction Industry Council suggests the use of consortia to allow smaller companies to join forces, or join in with a larger organisation, to benefit from economies of scale. In addition, it is suggested that higher education providers
should cooperate and act as a consortium themselves rather than compete for part-time places.

**CASE STUDY** of a successful consortium is in Sheffield:

We are interested in apprenticeship models, for example the engineering higher apprenticeship programme at AMRC in Sheffield is a local example. These are interesting because of the focus on school leavers, rather than on mature students who have traditionally made up the greatest number of part-time students. The AMRC Training Centre will provide tailored courses of practical and academic skills, from apprenticeship through to doctorate and MBA level, plus continuing professional development. About 250 people will enter each year for advanced apprentice training, with support from their employers. It will primarily serve businesses with operations in the region – including Rolls-Royce, which is building up to three new factories on the Park. The AMRC Training Centre will link with both the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University for higher-level education, and with the new Sheffield University Technical College (UTC), to provide a full progression in engineering training for the first time in the region.

(Pro-vice-chancellor, University of Sheffield, UUK member)

3.6.6 Reduced resources from employers for part-time higher education

A major issue seen across all stakeholder groups is reduced employer financial resources for part-time study, as previously discussed. A further issue is a reduction in employers’ backing in terms of time. As the TUC points out, ‘even in those workplaces where employers are generally conducive to supporting the development of their staff, it may be seen as a step too far for managers to provide extensive time off work and financial support to allow an employee to acquire a degree-level qualification.’

Employers may be reluctant to invest in higher education in case the employee moves on after completing the training. The current system of fees and loans can offer a solution to this retention issue, as employers can agree to pay some of the loan in the future if the student continues to work for the company. There is positive feedback from initiatives in Wales that are helping to raise awareness of the need to upskill the workforce and address the misconception that more skilled employees will almost always seek better jobs elsewhere. The QAA notes that from its ‘work with employers, it is evident that good employers want to ensure they manage the expectations of employees regarding internal progression opportunities following successful completion of their part-time study’. Clare Callender’s research into employee retention is also quoted by respondents giving evidence in this survey.
3.6.7 Value placed by employers

Away from the public sector, it is felt by some (principally current students and students’ unions) that employers place little value on part-time higher education and that this is exacerbated in the current economic climate.

As one student points out:

> With the current recession employers have the pick of the crop, the competitive employment market means that employers don't want to have to support higher education, they want someone who already has the qualifications and knowledge and also experience. This causes a catch 22 situation as people in higher education are often retraining in a different field and are unable to gain any practical experience without doing it voluntarily, which is almost impossible when balancing a job and studies.

(student)

A higher education institution suggests, ‘with the long-term shift from large organisations to SMEs, there has been a reduction in employer support. More part-time students are studying independently from their employer, in some cases to qualify so that they can find a new job and progress their career’. Several of the students who contributed to this review are self-funded, as indeed are many of the students who study at the higher education institutions that have taken part. They point out that, even if self-funded, learners still need buy-in and support from their employers to enable them to complete their degrees. This links back to the national campaign for improving perceptions discussed earlier.

The Association of Colleges reports that, ‘There was mixed bag of responses [among further education colleges] to employer support and value for part time higher education. Some argued that rising costs, including replacement costs were an important issue. Others, problems associated with poaching post-completion and those seeking higher earnings once trained at higher education level; and the time it takes to complete. A few indicated that support from employers both financially and in other ways was crucial, although none provided examples of why some employers are prepared to support and others not. A few indicated that certain sectors were more prepared to support; and one indicated that “need” was the crucial factor.

‘In terms of value, several [further education college] respondents indicated that employers value higher education qualifications; although several indicated that this value may have declined in recent years. The reasons for this decline were not clearly explained; although the growth in in-house training and “loss of confidence” and “too abstract” were mentioned. It is perhaps surprising that more respondents were unaware of the quantity of e-learning that now occurs in organisations in their local labour markets, a significant proportion of which is delivered by private learning
companies. In summary, [further education colleges report that] some employers in some sectors seem to value higher education qualifications, but this seems to be in decline – and the reasons for this decline are unclear.’

3.6.8 Flexible arrangements
Employees would like employers to be more flexible, for example, with working hours to support university attendance and during exams. Practical requests include for quiet places within the workplace to study at lunch or break times, or for computer or reading resources to be available at the workplace rather than the place of learning. This is particularly relevant in large organisations with many learners, such as the NHS.

3.6.9 Working with partners
Other organisations can be useful in educating employers and employees about part-time higher education. Mentioned in this review are Skillset and sector representatives such as the Engineering Employers Federation. The TUC highlights ‘unionlearn’ and the Higher Learning at Work website which offer ‘a range of resources to help learners find out about the different routes and pathways into higher learning.’

3.7 Providers of higher education and the student experience
In section 4, providers suggest that part-time courses have declined, particularly in England, because of lack of demand from certain students, such as (but not limited to) ‘leisure learners’, loss of funding to higher education providers and decreased employer support. Evidence from the rest of the survey sheds more light on the decline in demand from students and decline in supply from higher education providers. To some degree these two issues perpetuate each other. As student demand declines, economies of scale mean providers reduce part-time courses and, with less choice, demand falls further. The relationship between higher education institutions and students is discussed in more detail in this section.

Where there is little part-time provision, or provision is declining, some higher education institution contributors warn that this can result in part-time students feeling that their institution does not value part-time study to the same extent it values full-time. The head of the Centre of Excellence for Learning and Teaching at the University of South Wales warns that as part-time students are usually a minority on campus, ‘decisions which benefit full-time students, which may disadvantage part-time learners, will often hold sway.’ Respondents argue that higher education providers need to ensure that as much value is placed on part-time students as on full-time students.
There are differing opinions on whether part-time delivery should be focused on as a completely separate entity or whether it should be completely integrated with full-time. This may reflect the differing provision at different institutions. There is some call to remove the distinction between full- and part-time and use terms such as ‘flexible’ and ‘blended’. In other cases, respondents call for very specific measures just for part-time mature students. It is noted by higher education institutions that agencies such as the QAA need to ensure that they integrate part-time and full-time but also understand the differing needs of part-time students.

A few further education college respondents argue that part-time students need to be treated differently to full-time students: ‘they are a distinctive group … they desire a different student experience which reflects their maturity and life experience.’ The Association of Colleges points out that ‘interestingly, of course, younger students view part-time higher education as not as good as full-time, although this may be due to a perceived ‘reduced’ student experience.’

3.7.1 The student experience
As already noted, the part-time student body is particularly diverse and students are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, circumstances, needs and ambitions. Contributors are keen to point out that part-time students need a variety of transitional support into institutions and flexible study and resource options once there. Stakeholders were asked to consider ‘what else should be done to improve the experiences of part-time and mature students?’ Across all stakeholder groups, many practical solutions for offering flexible, blended delivery and an improved student experience are given. Around a third of respondents made a suggestion and these are summarised below. Students and students’ unions have the strongest feelings and a plethora of ideas, although the higher education providers themselves also had good examples of improvements that could be made. The vast majority of further education colleges provided examples of how their institution was attempting to meet the needs of part-time learners. Respondents quoted other research reports that can be drawn upon here, such as *Never Too Late to Learn: Mature students in higher education* (million+ and NUS), Claire Callender’s research and a BIS research paper considering part-time students (particularly young part-time students).

Short courses
As discussed previously, ‘taster’ or short courses are seen by respondents as an excellent way of attracting potential students to higher education and providing a smoother transition for those who have not studied for a while. Respondents felt that if higher education institutions and further education colleges do not provide them, employers and students will look outside the sector (as detailed in section 3.2.2 and 3.2.4). Short course or ‘bite-sized’ provision can be easier for part-time students to plan for. As detailed in section 3.5, there is general support across the stakeholder
groups for reversing the trend in reducing higher education short courses and for finding ways to finance them within the new fees and loans regime.

**Information and induction**

Respondents suggest that there could be better pre-course support, for example, by providing reading lists and timetables in advance and preparing potential students for what the course will entail. Induction should be tailored to part-time students and help in overcoming worries they may have about studying or exams. One student points out that the better prepared they are to begin with, the less likely they are to feel they have been ‘mis-sold’ to and therefore be less likely to drop out.

As with national marketing campaigns, many respondents thought that more use of role models could be made at a local and institutional level. Past and current part-time students could be used as advocates and to disseminate useful information to current and potential students (and employers) within the institution.

One student writes:

> Mature students do contribute much to the life of a higher education institution and are very helpful to younger undergraduates, who, nowadays, particularly, lack many of the skills vital to success at this level of education, so, they should be given much more encouragement and support!

(student)

One suggestion was for a mentor scheme specifically for mature part-time students. Previous mature part-time students could be actively involved in providing information to potential students but also as mentors to those currently at university.

**Flexible timings**

Several higher education institutions themselves highlight that providers need to stop thinking only in terms of the traditional full-time degree model and ‘policies and procedures need to be focused on a flexible model that accommodates the traditional paradigm within a more generic flexible model with multiple access and exit points’. So rather than having all students start in September, three terms or two semesters and a long summer holiday, institutions need to consider that there are 52 weeks in the year. They need to allow students ‘to “drop-in and drop-out” of learning as necessary, for example, with modular learning or block courses. A small number of respondents point out that they need government policy support to make admin systems more flexible to allow them to offer such provision.

> Many Universities have developed their infrastructures around FT students and the academic year commencing in September over two semesters. Greater encouragement is required to have Universities operating all year round and systems that can easily accommodate enrolment and progression
throughout the year. The internal constraints are partially impacted by statutory reporting requirements that dictate the level of data collected and how this is recorded and when it is reported. Reporting should be reviewed to better support flexible arrangements for part-time study.

(University of Derby, UUK member)

The head of Kaplan Open Learning points out that all online study is considered part-time and suggests that, ‘removing the constraints of study rate, would assist in satisfying those students that wish to study faster than 75% rate.’ Other institutions also suggest accelerated part-time degrees would be particularly attractive to some groups of learners.

It is stressed that providers need to adapt timetables to suit part-time students. This includes early release of timetables, trying to keep the day of part-time lectures the same throughout the course year and having lectures, tutorials and contact hours on the same day for part-time students rather than spread throughout the week.

A pro-vice-chancellor says, ‘Part-time courses need to be run to meet the needs of the students on the course, and not always to the needs of full-time students or the university. University campus’ [sic] still very much run on a 9–5 basis, Monday to Friday, and yet part-time study needs to run on weekends and evenings’. The pro-vice master at Birkbeck adds, ‘Birkbeck’s evening teaching model is a key attraction to PT HE students in London as it enables them to fit evening study alongside daytime work commitments.’ A further education college provides the example of, ‘Better structuring of timetables … [so they] can study two evenings a week and sessions on Saturday morning’.

**Flexible delivery**

As well as flexibility in the timings and timetable of part-time courses, there is a wide call and many suggestions for other modes of flexible delivery.

Further education colleges suggest solutions including the need for, ‘flexible and accelerated learning’, ‘weekend provision’, ‘greater flexibility … accommodate work/home balance’, ‘align to business need … distance learning’ and ‘flexible modes of delivery’. More efficient blended learning methods of delivery are suggested as a possible solution, in part, to the economic pressures on employers and students.

The analysis of responses from GuildHE respondents shows that the solution suggested most often to address declining part-time recruitment is to increase course flexibility. Responses encourage the consideration of flexible delivery in terms of course scheduling and modular study, and more options for study via online and blended learning. The importance of local provision to part-time students was also recognised.
Regional provision of higher education varies across the UK. Part-time learners are unlikely, or unable, to travel far to study, for example, because of family or work commitments. Therefore, if the course they want isn’t locally accessible they won’t take part. A small number of higher education institutions specifically mention introducing distance learning to overcome this distance barrier. One provider suggests other providers, particularly those near rural areas, need to make a greater use of distance learning modules. Based on their experience in Northern Ireland, The Open University points out that, ‘Political endorsement at the local level could increase rural constituents’ awareness of part-time learning, especially in terms of the benefits to careers.’ (The Open University in Ireland, UUK member).

A few responses mention ‘massive open online courses’ or MOOCs as a ‘great example of flexible learning for adults’. A couple of institutions hint that MOOCs may present a threat to higher education as employers and potential students switch to them instead. The TUC suggests that, ‘Universities need to take learning out of the campus and into the workplace and explore how to fully utilise and unleash technological developments such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS)’. In contrast, it is also suggested that, ‘Mini MOOCs which are locally facilitated and very low cost may be one answer’.

However, other respondents argue that a ‘sense of belonging and collaboration is important to design into flexible models of delivery’ and therefore part-time students shouldn’t be made to feel marginalised by an over reliance on online or distance learning. One student writes, ‘some online support can be helpful, but ultimately the best courses are the ones where you can meet a tutor and other students. Complete online courses misunderstand the element of learning that requires discussion and debate.’ Another student argues that ‘Virtual Classrooms’ may be more appropriate than traditional distance learning.

Other flexible learning options that respondents say should be utilised include recorded lectures, virtual lectures/seminars, webinars, text books on kindle, lectures on iPlayer, and online study groups. An employer suggests, ‘More text books on kindle, particularly engineering and mathematics texts. More sophisticated virtual seminar tools like GoToMeeting's webinar system’.

There are other aspects to flexible delivery that are specific to part-time students. Respondents point out that part-time mature students are much more likely to need flexibility and support for emergency family or work situations, such as competing work deadlines or childcare. They may also need flexible options around assessment and deadlines, as one student explains, ‘to reflect the “juggling” of commitments with which almost all part-time students have to wrestle.’
Infrastructure

Flexibility is not all about moving courses to online and distance learning. Respondents explain that many part-time students still want the face-to-face higher education experience and for them making campus resources more flexible is paramount. Respondents suggest facilities that make campuses more family-friendly such as crèche provision, playgrounds and family accommodation. They also suggest making campuses ‘24 hour’. This would mean that students could study in the library or meet in cafes at all hours of day or weekend and not just typical 9 to 5 hours. Other suggestions include physical places specifically for part-time students so that they can interact face-to-face and not just online; a part-time student common room for example. A further education college explains that they are ‘making sure these learners have access to all services available’.

Higher education providers in this review appear to be knowledgeable on many of the aspects of student experience part-time students ask for. A small number explain the limitations and difficulties in meeting these requests, principally around funding:

Campuses need to be open and accessible whenever students are present. However, this is very difficult for universities to follow, as to make a part-time course viable, and to cover the costs of opening campuses outside of normal business hours, there must be a critical mass of students. This need for a critical mass of students may lead to the development of generic part-time courses with no specialism, but with attraction to a large body of people.

(Pro-vice-chancellor student recruitment, University of Wolverhampton)

**CASE STUDY** of how the University of Bath has improved the student experience for part-time learners:

Mature students require personalised and customised progression advice prior to entering higher education (HE), and benefit from specific support in making the transition into the HE environment. Bath has developed this through the role of an Admissions Progression Officer. This post-holder has developed specific strategies for supporting mature learners through the university applications process, and works closely with the academic departments to which they apply. This facilitates strong communication about Access qualifications, experiential learning and any curriculum gaps, and plays a role in ensuring that those mature students admitted to Bath have a strong chance of success. For example, mature students from a non-graduate background need more induction support, e.g. with mathematics and study skills. At Bath we have further developed our support structures with the addition of Student Experience Officers in each of our Faculties, who are responsible for supporting undergraduate students. They are putting in place a series of mechanisms to support students during their transition to university and are also involved in the work of the First Year Student Experience (FYSE) project. One of the outputs of the FYSE
The project will be new pre-arrival and first year student landing web pages, which will combine static and interactive content relating to key phases of student transition. We also have a Maths and Statistics Helpdesk which helps students with mathematic skills.

The development of specific tools to support transition is also important for part-time learners. A focus on academic and independent learning skills, as well as pastoral support and infrastructure such as a crèche, is critical. Once at university, part-time and mature learners may feel ‘left out’ of the information cycle as they may not be present as frequently as other learners. A dedicated point of contact, who understands the specific issues associated with this group of learners would be a benefit. This is one part of the role that the new Student Experience Officers play at Bath.

Flexible learning is an option, but we feel this would need to be approached with care, as it can make learners feel even more remote when studying. Taking a ‘cohort’ approach, when thinking about flexible learning, is often a more positive experience, and, as mentioned previously, this has to be coupled with proper curriculum and course design.

(Head of learning partnerships, University of Bath, UUK member)

3.8 Joined up thinking in a diverse marketplace

The mature part-time market, and potential market, is a large and heterogeneous group. It is not only diverse in demographic make-up but importantly also in reasons for studying and previous experience of education. A very wide range of providers in the UK delivers part-time higher education. There are differing fee structures and models of delivery. There are large regional and local variations in type of provision and subjects available. There are a myriad of pathways into part-time higher education and reasons for undertaking it.

Yet despite this diverse marketplace there appears to be a strong theme running through the evidence of this review for more joined up thinking across the government, sector, employers and other organisations and agencies when considering part-time higher education. Positively, a wide variety of stakeholder groups contributing to this review are all generally in support of part-time higher education and working together.

There is a coherent desire amongst respondents for consistent and clear information across the sector. There are also calls for common treatment, even integration, of part-time and full-time provision, but this is balanced with reminders to respect the
distinctiveness of a diverse part-time student body. What works for one may not work for the other.

Respondents point out that providing a part-time offer that suits students, employers and providers alike is complex and potentially difficult and that many agencies need to work together with limited funds. Some suggest that policymakers could help to create an environment where this is easier to achieve. But the benefits are clear, whether to individuals, employers, institutions or wider society. The responses to this survey suggest that stakeholders across many groups are already working, and willing to strive in collaboration in future, towards this goal.

The QAA sums this up:

QAA strongly believes higher education provision must be of equal quality to all students regardless of mode of delivery and any policy changes at national level must reflect this. The common principles should be applied equally to full and part-time learning. Policies are needed that promote the long-term success of part-time higher education. A supportive governmental framework that encourages consortia or collaboration between higher education institutions, further education colleges, private providers and employers is needed.

(QAA, res138)
4 Higher education providers only section

A final confidential section of the report for higher education providers only asked about part-time higher education provision, strategy, recruitment and fees. The majority of respondents from UK higher education institutions completed this section (57 responses out of 74). This includes answers from UUK members, GuildHE members and ‘other’ providers (of which they are two private providers and two partnerships). In addition, half of further education colleges who responded to the call for evidence completed this section (7 out of 14). A breakdown of the respondent types answering this section is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent type</th>
<th>Number of survey responses</th>
<th>Number of responses to confidential section for HE providers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher education institution UUK (response on behalf of the institution)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education institution UUK (response from an individual member of staff within the institution)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13* (4 with unknown institution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education institution (GuildHE member)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7* (2 from same institution, plus 1 unknown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education institution (other)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education colleges</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Two respondents are members of both UUK and GuildHE and have been included in both counts above. For simplicity and to avoid double counting they have been included with GuildHE in the narrative analysis which follows.

At UUK higher education institutions, responses from a senior staff member at the institution (such as a pro-vice-chancellor, head of admissions, director of academic services, head of continuing education/centre for open study/lifelong learning), are classed as an ‘institution response’. Individual lecturers, course leaders, administrators and other staff at UUK universities are less likely to have commented on this section than responses provided at an ‘institutional’ level. Those that did comment generally gave less detailed answers. This summary, therefore, focuses largely on the ‘institutional’ responses.

‘Higher education institution UUK (response on behalf of the institution)’ includes responses from the four biggest providers of part-time higher education in the UK as well as a good mix of other providers, including some with very small amounts of current part-time provision. Amongst the UUK higher education institution responses there is a good spread across mission groups and across the UK, as shown below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent type (completing confidential section for HE providers)</th>
<th>England</th>
<th>Northern Ireland</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>Wales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher education institution UUK (response on behalf of the institution)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1&quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education institution UUK (response from an individual member of staff within the institution)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northern Ireland analysed with HEI UUK England responses, in order to preserve promised anonymity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education institution (GuildHE member)</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher education institution (other)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education college</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 Summary

The responses highlight the diversity of UK part-time undergraduate provision. It ranges from limited or non-existent to a significant number or all of the students at an institution. In a handful of institutions there are specific departments for lifelong learning or continuing education; in some there are specific part-time courses and flexible learning options; whereas in others part-time is simply an add-on or included in full-time provision. Whilst this is good in terms of a spread of opinions in this review, it means the provision and type of part-time provision varies greatly depending on where a student lives in the UK. This will have an impact as it is widely documented that part-time students are less likely to travel to study.

In England, higher education institution respondents report that their part-time undergraduate provision has, in general, declined in size in recent years. This is for many reasons, including: the loss of ‘leisure learners’, lack of university funding, lack of employer support and the closure of departments specialising in part-time study. Bucking the trend, one Russell Group English university states that their part-time provision has increased.
There does appear to be a general move towards offering more flexible study options, such as evening courses, short courses and distance learning. There have also been positive improvements with building relationships with employers and colleges.

In England part-time fees have definitely increased in recent years, particularly between 2011–12 and 2012–13. Although this is partly attributed in this survey to increases in inflation, it is more frequently related to changes to the funding regime (including the introduction of the equivalent or lower qualification ruling and, more recently, the changes to HEFCE funding in 2012–13). Over a quarter (nine) of English UUK institutions say fees have risen ‘significantly’ in recent years.

Although there have been some small increases in fees in Scotland and Wales these largely have not have been passed on to home students as they receive funding to cover them.

For the future, responses seem to suggest the big increases in part-time fees have now largely taken place. In many (but not all) higher education institutions, part-time fees will continue to be based pro-rata on full-time fees. Most universities and further education colleges are now keen not to see any more increases.
4.1.1 England and Northern Ireland

As background, the survey asked higher education providers to describe, in broad terms, part-time higher education provision at their institution (for example, subject, level, method of delivery). The analysis of answers to this question does not purport to offer a detailed and accurate description of part-time undergraduate provision in the UK, but it does tell us about the great variety of respondents to the survey and helps set the findings about fees in context.

As we know, provision of part-time undergraduate courses varies very widely across English and Northern Irish UUK higher education institutions, from ‘limited’ or ‘being phased out’ to a ‘significant’ number or ‘practically all’. Of the 25 institutional responses, six say they have very few or limited numbers of part-time students, whereas five report a significant proportion of their students (or all) are part-time. Indeed, 12 respondents are in the top 25 providers of part-time higher education in the UK. Most of this part-time provision is undergraduate degrees. About half of respondents listed the course types they offer alongside Bachelor degrees, and of these: four institutions specifically say they offer foundation degrees, and a further two have recently phased out foundation degrees; seven institutions specifically mention offering vocational or CPD qualifications; and four say they offer FHEQ level 4–6 qualifications (Certificates of Higher Education, Diplomas of Higher Education and Bachelor’s Degrees with/without honours).

Those universities with a large number of part-time undergraduates offer courses in most subjects. Amongst the other institutions, the subjects most likely to be available part-time are: arts, social sciences and humanities; law; health and social care (including nursing); education; business and management; and built environment, architecture and engineering.

Three English UUK institutions giving evidence to this section have a specific department within the organisation responsible for part-time leaning, for example, a Department of Continuing Education or Lifelong Learning. Two report that they validate degrees for further education colleges and four specifically mention that they engage collaboratively with other local organisations, such as further education colleges, partner institutions and employers. One respondent, for example, is keen to highlight historically good employer links, a strong employability emphasis in the programme and the use of live briefs wherever possible.

Amongst these universities that offer part-time undergraduate provision, it is relatively evenly split between those that just offer part-time courses as part of the full-time course and those that offer specific part-time courses. With the diversity across the number of institutions, it is hard to generalise, but there appears to be
somewhat of a leaning towards the health and childcare degrees being offered as specific part-time degrees whereas humanities and languages are offered as modules on, or part of, a full-time course.

Most institutions report that they offer a mixture of face-to-face and on-campus learning as well as distance and online learning. A couple of providers predominately offer one or the other, for example Birkbeck and the Open University. A few have special arrangements for part-time, such as evening-only courses or arranging all of the part-time study options on one day of the week.

Amongst the seven GuildHE respondents, there is also a range of part-time provision at level 4–6. This includes foundation degrees and HNCs at about half of these institutions. A couple of institutions offer a wide range of subjects whereas a couple more are focused on specific subjects, such as music or architecture/construction. Delivery at these institutions varies and includes two that specifically mention work-based learning. Most offer a blended approach, although one institution just says it offers distance learning and two mainly offer face-to-face on-campus part-time study.

Further education colleges describe a wide range of part-time higher education provision, at levels ranging from HNC/HND to Foundation Degree and degree, and in at least one case, including progression to Masters level. Very flexible delivery modes are described, for example: mixed between traditional evening class and blended learning; one day a week or an extended programme to meet employer needs; evenings, Saturdays, infill, discrete provision and blended learning; a range of delivery modes from traditional classroom teaching to blended learning through to online, flexible study; day release and evening provision. Most colleges do not provide information on subjects but those that do mention a wide range that includes technology, health, social care, business, engineering, construction, trades and education.

Amongst the four ‘other’ higher education institutions, two offer very specific courses whilst two offer a range of courses. Two offer Foundation Degrees alongside Bachelor degrees.

4.1.2 Wales
In Wales, there appears to be a greater emphasis on flexible delivery options with all four institutional responses vocally committed to this (eg evening courses, mobile, online, with employers). All four offer part-time undergraduate degrees in a range of subjects as well as other levels of learning.

4.1.3 Scotland
In Scotland, amongst the five institutional responses, one university offers a good range of part-time alongside full-time and specific part-time courses; one offers
distance learning in a range of subjects; two provide some part-time but usually as an offshoot of full-time and in a limited range of subjects (largely humanities); and the final institution, talking only about a specific department, says part-time is mainly classroom-based provision.

4.2 How part-time provision has changed in recent years (Q2)

4.2.1 England and Northern Ireland
In general, part-time undergraduate provision has declined in volume in the institutions responding. Considering the UUK ‘institutional’ responses from English and Northern Irish institutions, ten state part-time provision at their institution has declined, four say it has stayed the same, and one that it has increased in recent years.

Similarly, the most frequent response by further education colleges was that in recent years part-time enrolments and the range of provision has decreased, in two cases significantly. Only one reports an increase.

At GuildHE institutions it is more positive, with two respondents reporting an increase in part-time provision and two saying provision hasn’t changed in recent years. Two of the ‘other’ higher education institutions have made deliberate attempts to increase part-time provision in recent years.

Where it has decreased, it is suggested that this is because of the loss of the ‘leisure learner’, because universities can no longer fund certain courses and because of decreases in employer backing in terms of time and funds. Respondents describe how subjects that have particularly suffered include humanities, built environment, archaeology and business. In one case, a respondent describes how a lifelong learning/continuing education department has been shut, causing a massive decline in part-time options. Another respondent reports the loss of short courses, both credit bearing and non-credit bearing, due to loss of funding (for example from the European Social Fund, Economic Challenge Investment Fund and Lifelong Learning Networks).

Bucking the trend, one Russell Group university reports that it has increased its part-time undergraduate-level award-bearing provision (FHEQ level 4–6 certificates, diplomas and advanced diplomas, as opposed to undergraduate degrees). Fees have increased there to account for the withdrawal of funding for equivalent or higher qualifications but, crucially, have not been linked to the university’s tuition fees for the full-time undergraduate degree. The university describes how it has taken other steps to provide a flexible learning experience for its part-time students, such as increasing use of online support and teaching.
Other respondents describe some of the more positive changes that have taken place at English UUK higher education institutions over recent years, including:
better working relationships with colleges and employers; an increase in flexible learning approaches such as distance learning and/or blended learning; integration of foundation degrees; adapting the credit system to be more flexible; adapting portfolio to offer short courses; adapting provision to keep abreast of national strategies (eg changes to the children’s workforce); and accelerated three-year part-time degrees.

One further education college reports that it has increased the flexibility of its course delivery in recent years, another that its subject range is reviewed on a regular basis to link to employer feedback and skills demand in the region.

GuildHE institutions report improvements such as more flexible delivery in the form of different length courses and online delivery.

‘Other’ higher education institutions report a positive movement towards more flexible delivery of courses and adapting courses and qualifications to meet the needs of students and employers and the local or wider society.

4.2.2 Wales
In Wales the UUK institutions do not mention whether part-time higher education has increased or not but two universities mention there is more emphasis on qualifications that meet employer demand and another says that more emphasis is being placed on qualifications rather than modules. One of these universities points out that funding from Europe has enabled employers to take advantage of university training free or at low cost.

4.2.3 Scotland
In Scotland the picture was mixed: part-time undergraduate-level provision has decreased at two institutions, increased at one and there is no change at another. A significant factor in the decrease at one institution was the closure of a particular department within the Business School that offered a lot of part-time degrees.

4.3 Changes to part-time fees (Q3i and Q3ii)
Respondents were asked whether their fees for part-time courses increased or decreased significantly in recent years and specifically whether fees for part-time courses increased or decreased significantly between 2011–12 and 2012–13.
4.3.1 England and Northern Ireland

All the English and Northern Irish UUK higher education institutions responding to the survey, except two, reported an increase in part-time fees at some point (includes institutional and non-institutional responses although three respondents declined to comment on this section). In the vast majority of cases increases happened prior to 2012–2013 as well as in that year. Increases range from ‘increased somewhat’ through ‘increases in inflation’ and ‘increases in line with full-time’ to ‘significant’ increases. This part of the report is necessarily quite broad-brush, because there is a very wide range of provision in the sector, including differences in level and intensity, as well as the unit against which fees are paid (e.g., credit, full qualification). However, we can put together a picture of a system in which fees, as a whole, have increased.

Two main reasons are given for the significant or large increases in English institutions. Firstly the changes to Equivalent or Lower Qualification (ELQ) funding and secondly the 2012–13 removal of HEFCE grant for some subjects and the reduction of the HEFCE grant for other subjects.

Nine ‘institutional’ responses specifically say fees have risen ‘significantly’. Twelve of the 25 largest providers of part-time in the UK answered this question and half of these (six) say fees have risen significantly. This increase is sometimes further qualified by saying the increases are due to funding changes such as ELQ or HEFCE or to bring part-time fees in line with full-time fees. One institution gives this example: ‘Home/EU Fees have increased significantly as a result of firstly the ELQ policy and subsequently the 2012 changes to undergraduate funding and associated withdrawal of HEFCE T-grant and SIVS (Strategically Important and Vulnerable Subjects) support. The average increase from 2010–11 to 2013–14 is 46%. Home/EU Fees increased by an average of 14% from 2011–12 to 2012–13’.

A further three institutions report increases in part-time fees are pro-rata with full-time fees and a further two universities say that the increases are in line with funding changes.

Three institutions state that they have seen inflationary increases up until 2012 and then larger increases that year. Two institutions mention that although there have been some increases (in one case due to ELQ funding) these weren’t significant increases as part-time has not increased to the same extent as full-time. The remaining two institutions with increases in previous years and 2012–13 just report that there have been increases without any further detail.

Turning to the four UUK institutions that do not report increases at both Q3i and Q3ii, one has kept part-time fees low and at the same rate through cross-subsidisation up
until 2012–13, when a significant increase occurred to bring them in line with full-time fees.

Three UUK institutions report that they had not increased their fees 2011–12 to 2012–13 but had increased them prior to that. One specifically states it increased them in line with full-time fees but before 2012–13.

Two UUK institutions have not seen any increases to part-time fees. At one of these they noted they have also benefitted by not seeing the drastic reduction in part-time admissions seen across the sector. At this institution around half of part-time students are doing courses other than undergraduate degrees and a large minority are international students. This institution intends, however, to bring part-time fees in line with full-time in 2013–14. The other institution that has not increased its part-time fees (and gives no further details as to why) only offers one evening undergraduate course in a very specific subject.

All seven GuildHE institutions report rises to fees and specifically rises between 2011–12 and 2012–13. Those that give further detail say that this was to bring fees in line with full-time or because of the new fee regime. One institution notes that the largest increases were seen in tuition fees for their ‘top-up’ programmes (of £4,200), and for those studying on four-year routes (of £3,050). Another institution gives further detail that fees have not only increased for new entrants but also that ‘continuers’ have seen a 5% increase in fees. One explains how they try to keep part-time fees as affordable as possible as, ‘a WP alternative to full-time study for debt averse students and mature students’.

All further education college respondents, bar one, state that their fees have increased in recent years and specifically between 2011–12 and 2012–13. In one case fees have gone up from £500 to £2,000. Two institutions are at pains to point out that the increase in recent years was, in percentage terms, not as great as the percentage increase in full-time fees. Between 2011–12 and 2012–13 one college had increased part-time fees by inflation only, whilst two had increased ‘significantly’.

All four of the ‘other’ higher education institutions have seen increases in part-time fees in recent years in line with full-time fees. Two of the institutions did not increase fees between 2011–12 and 2012–13 and a further one intends to hold 2014 fees at 2013 rates (subject to OFFA agreement).

One respondent noted that separate charges applied for bespoke work-based learning programmes individually negotiated with employers. Another respondent helpfully notes that for part-time students studying subjects such as midwifery, nursing and physiotherapy, fees are part of the NHS contract.
4.3.2 Wales
In Wales, half of the four ‘institutional’ responses say fees have stayed the same in recent years, one reports an increase in line with full-time and the fourth 2.5% to 4.5% inflationary increases most years except 2012–13 when there was an increase of 7.5%.

4.3.3 Scotland
In Scotland part-time fees have generally increased in line with full-time fees over recent years. One university did this in 2011–12 for new entrants, but kept those in the system on the same fees. Two of the five institutions point out that Scottish ‘home’ students are eligible for tuition fee support from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland, whereas the students from England at their university did face increases in 2012–13. A fourth institution notes that although its fees have increased pro-rata with full-time fees it is only similar to inflation.

4.4 Part-time fees in the future (Q3iii)
4.4.1 England and Northern Ireland
Across all types of respondents, it is clear that the increase in part-time fees is not planned to continue with most aiming to keep any future increases small although in line with full-time increases.

Nineteen English and Northern Irish UUK ‘institutional’ responses give details of fee changes planned for the future (2013–14 onwards). Nearly half (nine) intend to maintain part-time fees in line with full-time fees; one intends to slow down the rate of fee increase (‘We have still not fully recovered the income lost from the successive cuts in funding, but there are warning signs of a possible weakening of recruitment’); one intends to simplify fee bands; one is reviewing this year’s student recruitment before making further changes; and three have no changes to fees planned. One respondent notes that planned fees, where they are above a certain amount in England, are subject to OFFA approval.

Of the seven GuildHE institutions, two are keen to try to keep part-time fees as affordable as possible as a widening participation alternative to full-time; three will increase part-time fees in line with full-time fees; one will increase fees by 10% annually and the final institution has not yet made a decision.

Further education college respondents are not planning further fee increases in 2013, in order to allow stabilisation of the market after the 2012 increase. In some cases they are actively investigating how to mitigate the increases they have made previously, for example through bursaries or more targeted costing rather than a
blanket price. Two even went so far as to suggest planned fee reductions: one for online, flexible learning, and another more generally (but depending on enrolment figures and the cooperation of validating institutions).

‘Other’ institutions report either no planned changes or inflation-only increases.

4.4.2 Wales and Scotland
In the devolved nations, where fee structures are obviously very different, the responses state that no revisions to part-time fees are imminent and the universities, when considering future part-time fee revisions, will be led by the government funding and fees system in that nation at the time. Respondents also describe the importance of market research, for example what courses and qualifications are in demand, what motivates people to study, and price sensitivity.
5 Appendix – Questionnaire

UUK Review of part-time and mature higher education

Call for evidence

Universities UK is carrying out a review of undergraduate part-time and mature higher education in the UK. We are interested in hearing from as many universities and colleges as possible, whatever the size or type of their part-time offer. We would also like to hear from students, employers and other interested bodies.

Please let us know what you think about why enrolments in part-time higher education are changing at a national level, and what should be done about it.

As part-time higher education is changing across the UK, we are interested in the views from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Please return your responses to PTMatureReview@universitiesuk.ac.uk by 20 May 2013. If preferred, this survey is available in an alternative format (Survey Monkey) at http://bit.ly/16uu7mg

Further information about the review is available at: http://bit.ly/16uu7mg or from fiona.hoban@universitiesuk.ac.uk.

Thank you in advance for your contribution.

6 Section 1: about you

1. Name of individual responding and organisation (if applicable):

   Click here to enter text.

2. To which group of respondents do you belong?
   ☐ Higher education institution (UUK member)
   ☐ Higher education institution (GuildHE member)
   ☐ Higher education institution (Other)
   ☐ Further education college
   ☐ Students’ union/ student representative body
   ☐ Individual student
   ☐ Employer/ employer representative body
   ☐ Other (please specify)
7 Section 2: part-time and mature higher education

We welcome all responses; please skip any questions where you have no response to give.

Please note that the review and this questionnaire are focused on part-time undergraduate provision, not postgraduate provision.

1. What do you think are the main factors contributing to the fall in recruitment to part-time undergraduate higher education provision, at a national level, in recent years?

2. What more might be done to communicate with potential learners about the value of part-time higher education, with a view to encouraging more people to take part?

3. What is your understanding of the value employers place on part-time higher education provision? What role does employer funding/support play?

4. Has there been a change in employer funding/support in recent years and if so, why?

5. How could higher education providers and employers work better together to help raise skills through part-time higher education provision?
6. What else should be done to improve the experiences of part-time and mature students? For example, through improvements to information and administration as learners come into the system or innovative practices in flexible learning?

7. What policy changes at a national level might make a difference?

8. What else do you think the review should know or consider?

9. Would you be willing in be contacted to (please tick as appropriate):
   - ☐ discuss the issues in this review further?
   - ☐ explore possible case studies for the final report? For example, we are interested in good practice about engaging with employers, communicating with potential learners and delivering flexible learning.

   If you ticked either of the above, please provide contact details below:

10. Confidentiality (please tick one only):
    - ☐ I am happy for my response to this questionnaire to be quoted in the final report (excluding responses to Section 3 which will be confidential for all)
☐ I wish my response to the whole of this questionnaire to be treated as confidential – please aggregate my views with those of other respondents and do not quote my response in the final report.

7 Section 3: higher education providers only

We would now like to ask providers of higher education some questions about part-time undergraduate higher education at their institution. As before, please note that the review and this questionnaire are focused on part-time undergraduate provision, not postgraduate provision.

Answers to Section 3 will be dealt with in complete confidence. The final report will aggregate responses by institutional type and nation; no individual institution will be identifiable. All questions are optional.

Responses from English and Northern Irish UUK members will not be shared outside UUK. Responses from GuildHE members and Association of Colleges members will be provided to those organisations only for analysis. Responses from Scottish and Welsh UUK members will be shared with Universities Scotland and Higher Education Wales respectively.

1. Broadly, how would you describe part-time higher education provision at your institution? (for example, subject, level, method of delivery)

   Click here to enter text.

2. How has part-time provision changed in recent years at your institution? For example, changes in subjects, levels and types of offer (e.g. stand-alone modules or qualifications)

   Click here to enter text.

3. Fees:
   1. Have your fees for part-time courses increased or decreased significantly in recent years?

      Click here to enter text.
II. Did your fees for part-time courses increase or decrease significantly between 2011–12 and 2012–13?

Click here to enter text.

III. What fee changes are planned for the future? Can you give details about the strategy behind this?

Click here to enter text.

4. Are there other issues about part-time provision at your institution that the review should take note of?

Click here to enter text.

Please return your response to PTMatureReview@universitiesuk.ac.uk by 20 May 2013.

If you have any questions about this questionnaire please contact PTMatureReview@universitiesuk.ac.uk

If you have any questions about the review please contact fiona.hoban@universitiesuk.ac.uk

Thank you very much for your valuable contribution. The review will report in autumn 2013.