Retention Grants Programme

Briefing No. 1
December 2008

Welcome

Welcome to the first briefing relating to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) and Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) Retention Grants Programme. These six monthly briefings are prepared by the support and co-ordination team to disseminate information about the Retention Grants Programme to the HE sector and to encourage others in the sector to share their effective practice. The support and co-ordination team is a partnership between Action on Access and the Higher Education Academy; it is directed by Professor Liz Thomas, and both Liz and Dr Helen May are lead advisers working on the Programme.

In this edition of the briefing we provide you with details of the seven projects which have been funded and provide an introduction to the Support and Co-ordination Team. To receive future briefings you need to become a member of the Retention Network. Please send your name and email address to info@actiononaccess.org with 'Retention Network' in the subject-line to register.

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Overview of the Retention Grants Programme

A total of £1 million has been made available by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and HEFCE over a three year period to support projects that identify, evaluate and disseminate institutional good practice relating to student retention.

The primary purpose of the programme is to generate robust, evidence-based analysis and evaluation, and sector-wide dissemination, of learning about the most effective strategies to ensure high continuation and completion rates within higher education.

Following the initial call for submissions in the summer, 63 proposals were received for the programme, from a wide range of institutions. Of these, seven projects were selected, involving over 20 institutions.

In deciding which of the applications to recommend for funding, the selection panel recognised the importance of looking strategically across the applications received in order to ensure that the funded work would create a comprehensive and complementary programme of evaluation of greatest benefit to the sector. The selected projects, listed below, also reflect specific recommendations and priorities identified in the recent reports from the National Audit Office[1] and the Public Accounts Committee[2].

Through their support for the programme, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and HEFCE aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- The identification, evaluation and sharing of institutional good practice in student retention and its dissemination across the sector, with an emphasis on collaborative approaches where appropriate
- To build the evidence base for successful student retention practice
- To improve the quality of student retention practice in institutions
- To provide additional recognition for improvements in student retention work

Summaries of the Funded Projects

The seven funded projects are clustered in two key areas: providing academic support to students and promoting academic and social integration into the institution to promote a sense of belonging. All the projects have a strong focus on research and evaluation and aim to provide data about effective approaches to improving student retention and success in higher education.

Project 1 - Dispositions to Stay: the Support and Evaluation of Retention Strategies Using the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI)

Lead institution: Northumbria University
Partner institutions: University of Bedfordshire, University of Manchester

[1] National Audit Office (2007), 'Staying the course: the retention of students in higher education'
[2] House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (2008), 'Staying the course: the retention of students on higher education courses - tenth report of session 2007-08'

Themes/Issues to be addressed

The Universities of Northumbria, Bedfordshire and Manchester have recently been involved in a 13 institution collaboration examining the use of the language of learning dispositions and the ELLI tool within higher education. This work suggests that there may be significant value in developing a student's sense of learning, and their understanding of their personal learning journey and development as an independent, self-regulating learner.

The *Dispositions to Stay* collaborative project will build on this work through engaging with students at various stages of their university experience and through analysing their learning profiles, alongside their academic performance and relevant retention data with a view to developing a picture of the type of profile that supports staying power as well as learning power. From the initial work the project will then build appropriate interventions to support the development of the key learning dispositions that seem to relate to successful learning and retention and implement the interventions with students and evaluate those interventions using the ELLI tool and the student data available to the project team.

A key factor in addressing retention is students' understanding of higher education; what it is to be a learner at HE level (independence, self-regulation, etc), the nature of the partnership between the student and the university and, crucially, students' belief that higher education is for them, that they can succeed and that their learning and development while at university is relevant and will result in long term benefits.

The ELLI Approach:

ELLI explores students' approaches to learning across seven dimensions: changing and learning, learning relationships, strategic awareness, resilience, creativity, meaning making and critical curiosity. The initial findings of the pilot are positive and suggest that ELLI can have a significant impact in addressing student retention and progression. Specifically in providing:

- A framework enabling students to better understand the nature of learning (and to regulate themselves accordingly) as well as a language for structured dialogue between tutor and student about learning and engagement in HE
- A tool for measuring the impact of interventions on students' personal development as learners
- The potential for identifying the profiles of students who are at risk of leaving and indicating areas for targeted cohort or individual intervention

The project framework:

The project aims to:

- Support the three universities in sharing experiences of dealing with retention issues
- Use ELLI as a strategic tool to engage with students about their approaches to learning and evaluate its impact
- Identify strategies to support improving students' development in each of the ELLI dimensions
- Explore the use of ELLI as a tool to identify the learning profiles of 'at risk' students through mapping ELLI profiles against retention and attainment data

The project will evaluate and analyse:

- Data on student retention and progression
- Data on the impact of interventions on retention
- ELLI profile data
- Independently conducted focus groups with staff and students

Over the course of the project the evaluation and analysis will form the basis of developmental workshops through which findings will inform ongoing practice.

Outputs

The project will deliver quantitative and qualitative data analysed and evaluated in two interim and one final report around three key themes:

a. The impact of engagement with ELLI based interventions on student retention and progression
b. The impact of a range of retention interventions on learning development as measured by ELLI
c. The analysis of retention data in relation to ELLI profiling scores

Secondary outputs will be the development of evaluated interventions in relation to each of the seven ELLI dimensions, integrated strategies in the light of the data and the experience of the project and the application of ELLI profiles as a predictive tool to inform specific retention strategies.

Outcomes

Retention will be improved across these areas as strategy is improved reflexively and practice sharpened and developed in response to the use of ELLI and to insight developed from the data. In particular, retention will be improved around the development of integrated strategies that frame the HE experience for the 'whole student' with learning for achievement and learning for development and personal growth. It is this reframing and shift of emphasis, from the more traditional individually targeted and problem based intervention to a more integrated and broader engagement with students' learning and development that will influence future developments in our own institutions and others addressing the same issues.

Project 2 - Pathways to Success through Peer Mentoring

Lead institution: Aston University
Partner institutions: Bangor University; Liverpool Hope University; London Metropolitan University; Oxford Brookes University; University of Sheffield and York University Canada

Themes/Issues to be addressed

This project focuses on the role of peer mentoring programmes in improving student retention and success. Such programmes serve both the pastoral and academic needs of individual students. There are many forms of peer mentoring including; pastoral peer mentoring; peer tutoring and peer-assisted learning. The Pathways to Success through Peer Mentoring research project seeks to establish the efficacy and effectiveness of different models of peer mentoring in increasing student retention, through a sense of belonging and enabling success. The diverse nature of partner programmes will enable an in-depth critical analysis of the role of students supporting their peers throughout the full student lifecycle; thereby promoting student retention and success. The project will include approaches that target specific students who may be at a higher risk of dropping out, (for example, mature students, students living with a disability, first generation learners).

Aston's Centre for Learning Innovation & Professional Practice (CLIPP) has developed a dynamic research strategy which will capture the essence of each institutional mentoring programme and provide empirical evidence analysing the 'added value' of peer mentoring

Aston University (lead partner) runs a well-received and fully embedded University-wide peer mentoring programme that incorporates pastoral mentoring and peer-assisted learning.

Bangor University has Peer Guides in every academic school working with new students. The main aim of the Mentoring Programme at Bangor is to help new students settle into University life.

Liverpool Hope University has an established mentoring programme tool that is used extensively across local schools to address potential barriers to progression. The Writing Centre at Liverpool Hope provides peer-tutor support in the area of academic writing.

London Metropolitan University has been running the *Write Now* CETL-supported Writing Mentor Scheme since October 2006. It is based on the premise that engaging students in constructive conversation about their academic writing will lead to clearer thinking and better writing.

Oxford Brookes University has a peer guide programme operating in the School of Social Sciences and Law providing peer support in the early stage of the first year.

The University of Sheffield has been running 'Sheffield Mentors' since the 2000/01. The scheme focuses on the transition of undergraduate students into University and their continuing experience of the first year.

York University, Canada, has a successful university-wide mentoring programme that targets 'at risk' students providing them with peer support and guidance.

Project 3 - Comparing and Evaluating the Impacts on Student Retention of Different Approaches to Supporting Students through Study Advice and Personal Development

Lead institution: University of Reading
Partner institution: Oxford Brookes University

Themes/Issues to be addressed

Evidence shows that students drop-out from university for a variety of reasons[3]. Therefore as students often have multiple needs and require a range of support, a range of practices need to be evaluated. Although some approaches adopted across the two institutions differ, the practices we wish to evaluate can be grouped into two broad areas namely those of study support and advice and personal tutorial support. These two areas are both underpinned and enhanced by Personal Development Planning (PDP), which will also be examined. However, as PDP is a process rather than any one identified activity per se, PDP will be referred to, as appropriate, across the two broad areas.

The approaches, which the two institutions have adopted, and which we propose to evaluate differ. Reading offers a centrally provided and promoted joined-up package of study advice and support, personal tutorial and PDP that is available to all students. Study support and advice at the University of Reading is embedded across a range of central services such as Study Advisers (offering support on language, writing skills, time management, exam preparation, testing and support for specific learning difficulties), counselling, careers, maths support, and resources such as the SOAR (Skills Opportunities at Reading) website, freshers' website and other induction activities. Study support and advice is signposted clearly from the PDP tool *iLearn*. Reading's student support services are now co-located in a one stop shop. The University also provides all undergraduate students with personal tutorial support.

At Oxford Brookes on the other hand, a co-ordinated support approach (the Personal & Academic Support System) has been developed at local level and has been running in the School of Life Sciences since 2006. The scheme was significantly modified for academic year 2007/08 by incorporating many of the activities into one of the School's first year skills modules. This improved both staff and student engagement and participation in PASS is now greater than 90%. Recently, Brookes commissioned a report from an external consultant, '*Towards a supportive learning community',* that drew heavily upon the experience that was gained from running PASS in the School of Life Sciences. Consequently, the University is about to embark on an institution wide review of personal tutoring and student support and has established a working party of senior managers to project manage the review and implementation of improved student support systems.

It is readily apparent therefore, that both institutions have adopted a co-ordinated approach to the promotion and provision of student study advice and support with Reading adopting a centrally provided approach and Oxford Brookes a School-level provision. The approaches we propose to evaluate at both Reading and Brookes are well established and offer ample opportunity for detailed evaluation of their current and potential effectiveness and impact on student retention.

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[3] See for example: 2007 National Audit Office Report 'Staying the course' p.10; 2007 Crosling, Thomas and Heagney (Eds) 'Improving student retention in higher education' P.18.

Project 4 - HERE! (Higher Education Retention & Engagement)

Lead institution: Nottingham Trent University
Partner institutions: Bournemouth University; University of Bradford

Themes/Issues to be addressed

This research is important to the sector because it concentrates on enhancements that teaching staff can implement within the domain of everyday learning & teaching. We have identified two strands in which we believe it is possible to analyse what makes students *stay* rather than what makes them *leave*. We will evaluate two complementary strands of the student learning experience:

Strand A - First year students who have considered withdrawing, but subsequently remained

All students over the course of their studies will face disappointments and challenges. In some students, this leads to early withdrawal, in most it does not. Different studies have shown that between 21% (Rickinson & Rutherford, 1995) and 46% (Ozga & Sukhnandan, 1998) of students have considered leaving their programme. In 2004-05, 8.4% of UK students did not progress into the second year (NAO, 2007). Clearly the decision to withdraw, and process of doing so, is more complex than a simple binary "yes/no"; and we believe that there are many lessons that can be learnt from analysing these doubters. For example, Mackie (2001) found that the only significant difference between leavers and doubters was that doubters had the drive and self-confidence to overcome adversity. However, Roberts et al (2003) also found that doubters stayed when they could perceive the benefits, particularly employment benefits, of remaining on the course. These studies were both conducted with business studies students and we aim to test these and other hypotheses on a wider student population.

We will use this opportunity to undertake a deeper analysis to look at doubters amongst different groups of students, for example BME and mature students. If factors such as self-efficacy, traits such as optimism or confidence are identified as having an impact, we will trial these in first year induction programmes.

Strand B: Different rates of retention between individual first year programmes

Some subject areas have lower rates of retention than others, for example STEM subjects, business studies and modern languages have all been cited as having greater problems with retaining students (NAO, 2002, 2007). But there is still variation amongst the actual rates of withdrawal across broadly similar programmes. NTU made a preliminary analysis of student withdrawals across all first year programmes (2005-06) and the differences between ostensibly similar programmes were, at times, significant. For example, amongst programmes with an entry requirement of 240 UCAS points the rate of withdrawals varied between 0% and 21%. As might be expected many of the programmes with high retention were from the School of Art & Design, but programmes with low withdrawals rates included BSc (hons) Financial Mathematics and BSc (hons) Biology.

We propose therefore to analyse those programmes that are performing excellently at retaining students. We will analyse three years of withdrawals data and identify those programmes performing well at retention, in absolute terms, but also in strategically important areas, for example STEM subjects or those recruiting a high number of widening participation or clearing students. Programme teams and students will then be audited to identify practices, relationships and processes that appear to be making a difference to retention. Where possible, audits will be undertaken with comparable programmes across all three HEIs.

Project 5 - Good Practice in Student Retention: an Examination of the Effects of Student Integration on Non-Completion

Lead institution: University of Sunderland
Partner institutions: Newcastle University; University of Hull

Themes/Issues to be addressed

The theme of this evaluation activity is integration, as the institutions are seeking to evaluate the extent to which integration or lack of integration impacts upon retention. Each institution has a specific full-time UK on-campus undergraduate group to work with for this evaluation, identified both from retention performance and local knowledge of student groups which typically encounter difficulties.

Therefore, Hull is focusing on mature students, Newcastle will work with engineering students, and Sunderland will concentrate on local students. All three institutions will work together using a consistent evaluation methodology in the context of the following hypothesis:

Does a student's sense of integration support their retention?

The diversity of students to be focussed on in the three institutions will allow the overall project to uncover the impact of different aspects and levels of integration upon student retention.

Project Overview & Timescale

The project will operate over three years from September 2008 as illustrated below:

Year 1 will focus primarily on audits of current good practice and research into the student base for proposed additional retention activities. Rolling out of identified good practice will begin towards the end of year 1, and the evaluation methodology will be further determined. To gather base data from students in the relevant groups, a single survey will be conducted using a jointly developed questionnaire to explore e.g. support required, any difficulties/barriers experienced or perceived etc. The survey will be administered online towards the end of 2008/9 and will inform evaluation, particularly as students will be identified whose progress can be tracked both via quantitative and qualitative means. 20 students will be identified per institution, and these students will be involved in the retention initiatives identified below for each university as appropriate.

Year 2 will focus primarily on student-related activities with the identified student base, on-going evaluation of these, sharing of good practice and dissemination of findings from each Year 1 audit. Evaluation will explore the impact of initiatives on the tracked students' sense of integration with their institution, course or both.

Year 3 will see this student-centred activity continue, outcomes will be measured, evaluation will be ongoing, and findings will be disseminated in this final year.

A major benefit of this collaboration will be the sharing of knowledge between partner institutions, and quarterly meetings to identify what has been learned, and how the work can develop, will take place in the form of Action Learning Sets.

Activity	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
Identification of areas of low retention among target groups			
Audit of good practice			
Research with target student groups to tailor good practice prior to roll-out			
Development of tailored interventions for target groups			
Implementation of good practice activities among target groups			

Tracking of students in target groups			
Ongoing evaluation			
Dissemination of good practice			
Independent evaluation (if required)			
Collaborative meetings (action learning)			

Project 6 – 'Belonging' and 'Intimacy' Factors in the Retention of Students: an Investigation into Student Perceptions of Effective Practice and how that Practice can be Replicated

Lead institution: University of Leicester

Themes/Issues to be addressed

The University of Leicester has a high retention rate and extremely high scores in the National Student Survey for satisfaction. Initial investigation of these phenomena, derived from feedback, points to the students "feeling a belonging to the Institution/department" and the importance of "the intimacy of the Institution and its staff". To date it has not proved possible to explore and evaluate fully the practice that fosters these traits; nor has it been possible to examine the differential impact of such practice on different groups of students (i.e. in terms of those students who never consider withdrawal, changing course, etc, those who consider it and those who actually withdraw). A mass of data exists within the Institution and continues to be collected, from which top level analysis and potential causes have been identified. However there remains a task to follow up the themes quantitatively and qualitatively in order to examine fully what students have acknowledged as actually making a difference.

Therefore the University of Leicester is therefore taking forward a two-year project that will use the extensive data it already has through the Registry, Student Support and Development Services, NSS, UoL 1st Year Experience Surveys, a 1st Year 'Student Feedback Project 2006/2008', a 'Student Experience Project 2007/2008' and associated work connected to the national 'FutureTrack' project referred to above, in order to:

- Further draw out the themes identified by students as "making a difference"
- Quantitatively analyse the impact of associated practice with key groups of students (e.g. potential withdrawers, disabled students, low participation groups, ethic minority groups etc)
- Qualitatively test out the themes with students and determine what students actually mean by "a feeling of belonging", "intimacy" and other emerging themes from the analysis
- Replicate and develop the good practice across the Institution and disseminate the learning to other Universities

The University of Leicester has a long established reputation for student support and development, as evidenced by the highest average score in the National Student Survey over the lifetime of the survey, individual discipline scores in satisfaction tables, and good retention in an Institution that exceeds its widening participation targets. A wide variety of good practice is clearly established across the Institution. However, that practice consists of a complex mix of university-wide centrally planned and delivered practice, and devolved departmental practice that together provide for a rich student experience. The project aims to crystallise the elements that "make the difference" but also to identify the most effective blend of university-wide and more localised mechanisms of academic and pastoral support.

Project 7 - A Comparative Evaluation of the Roles of Student Adviser and Personal Tutor in Relation to Undergraduate Student Retention

Lead institution: Anglia Ruskin University
Partner institutions: Peterborough Regional College, College of West Anglia

Themes/Issues to be addressed

This project aims to evaluate the relative contribution to undergraduate student retention made by non-academic student advisers (SAs), and personal tutors (PTs). We will use an online survey methodology to identify the student's perspective on these two roles, concentrating on four key areas of activity:

- induction and early days experience
- early identification of students at risk
- support for students who seek help
- dealing with academic failure

Both SAs and PTs at Anglia Ruskin University and at our joint venture (JV) partners are involved in delivering a range of student support interactions, including support designed to improve retention. Of the two roles (SA and PT), the PT role is widespread, if variable in operation, across a range of HEIs[4] (Wheeler and Birtle, 1993) and can have a positive impact on student retention[5] (Davies and Elias, 2003). The provision of non-academic SAs, however, is a recent development which has been thoroughly and positively evaluated at Anglia Ruskin[6] (Wilson, 2006) and has been disseminated externally via conference papers, but has not yet been widely taken up across the sector.

This project will involve Anglia Ruskin University and two of its main joint venture partners, University Centre Peterborough (a JV with Peterborough Regional College) and University Centre Kings Lynn (a JV with the College of West Anglia). The JV partners' insight will be particularly interesting, as it reflects a learning milieu often perceived as more supportive than university culture, and we anticipate much shared learning by exploring retention from both contexts.

Introduction to the Support and Co-ordination Team

The Support and Co-ordination Team has been appointed by the funding partners as a central element of the Retention Grants Programme. Our role is to support project teams, co-ordinate learning between them, undertake additional and comparative evaluation of the different approaches, and to promote dissemination and learning across the HE sector. We have developed a set of activities in the following areas:

- Inter-project working and collaboration to promote cross sector learning and development of the retention projects
- Working with individual projects to support and enhance their development, evaluation and dissemination
- Meta evaluation and analysis to draw out understandings from across the projects and extend learning across the sector about effective strategies to improve student retention
- A programme of communication and dissemination to engage institutions and relevant organisations from across the sector in learning about and improving student retention interventions

Each of the projects funded as part of this programme will undertake substantial research and evaluation. The role of the Support and Co-ordination team is to extend and deepen learning from the individual projects to enable the retention grants programme as a whole to move from the particular to the general, and to convert project knowledge to learning which can be applied across the sector. This will be achieved through the ongoing collection and analysis of project information and research to identify emerging themes and strategies for effective practice.

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[4] Wheeler, S. and Birtle, J. (1993). *A Handbook for Personal Tutors*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

[5] Davies, R and Elias, P (2003). *Dropping out – a study of early leavers from Higher Education*. DfES Research Report 386

[6] Wilson, S. (2006). *Report on Student Advisers Scheme*, Cambridge: Anglia Ruskin University.

In order to maximise the impact of the programme we are committed to on-going and wide communication and dissemination throughout the programme. In particular we want to develop a community of interest in student retention and success from across the sector. We see this as a two-way process, in which learning from other institutions can inform the Retention Grants Programme, and outputs from this programme can be shared as widely as possible. For example, there will be opportunities for institutions that have not received funding as part of this programme to share their evidence and learning about effective practice with the funded projects and the sector. Planned activities include:

- A network for staff with a retention remit/interest
- Briefings throughout the programme (2 per year) providing up dates from the projects and the meta-analysis
- A retention workshop at the Action on Access Conference 2008
- A retention strand at the Higher Education Academy's annual conference
- A 2-day Retention Convention in 2010 to enable institutional teams to share and engage with literature, theory and research evidence to improve student retention and success in their institutions
- An on-going retention research seminar series
- Final dissemination conference in 2012

A Sector-wide Community of Interest

We hope that you will want to work with us to improve student retention and success. We would like you to:

- Become a member of the Retention Network to enable you to keep in touch with the Support and Co-ordination Team, to share your knowledge across the sector and to support the work you are doing in this area. Please send your name and email address to info@actiononaccess.org with 'Retention Network' in the subject line to register.
- Tell us about work you are doing on improve student retention and success especially when you are, or will be able to, demonstrate its effectiveness. We would like to feature examples of good practice in future Briefings and to support dissemination across the sector. Please email details to lthomas@phf.org.uk

Calendar of Events

2nd and 3rd February 2009: The Higher Education Summit, QEII Conference Centre, Westminster, http://www.neilstewartassociates.com/jb245/

6th to 10th February 2009: 28th Annual Conference on the First-year Experience, Orlando, Florida http://www.sc.edu/fye/

25th February 2009: Student Retention & Progression 4th Annual Conference: Getting below the 20 percent non-completion rate, Central London

21st & 22nd April 2009: 3rd International Personal Tutoring and Academic Advising Conference: Supporting Student Success, hosted by Edge Hill University at the Holiday Inn, Liverpool, http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/IntrntlConf/PersTutAvsg/2009UK/index.htm

13th to 19thMay 2009: 4th European First Year Experience Conference, University of Groningen, Netherlands, http://www.efye.eu/efye09.html

1st and 2nd June 2009: Widening Participation Research Centre Conference, Liverpool and Edge Hill University, email angela.daly@edgehill.ac.uk

22nd to 24th June 2009: European Access Network Annual Conference: Changing the Culture of the Campus towards an Inclusive Higher Education, York St John University, York, http://www.ean-edu.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=40&Itemid=76

30th June to 2nd July 2009: Higher Education Academy Annual Conference, The Future of the Student Learning Experience, University Place, The University of Manchester, http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/events/conference

2nd to 5th September 2009: The British Educational Research Association (BERA) Annual Conference, University of Manchester, Manchester, http://www.beraconference.co.uk/

December 2009: Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) Annual Conference, http://www.srhe.ac.uk/index.asp

Organisational Biographies

Action on Access

Action on Access is the national co-ordination team for widening participation in higher education. We support the development, promotion and enhancement of social inclusion for the broadest possible access to higher education by:

- working with institutions and key stakeholders across the higher education sector
- working with partnerships including Aimhigher
- working to promote inclusive approaches to disability within higher education

We are funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland to whom we provide advice and feedback regarding widening participation.

Action on Access provides advice, information and support to colleagues working to widen participation. Our advisers work to support, disseminate and share best practice in widening participation. They provide direct advice and support to institutions, partnerships and other stakeholders. The central team supports the promotion and dissemination of good practice through conferences, publications, electronic distribution lists, events, and e-Bulletins and through the website. For further information visit: www.actiononaccess.org

Higher Education Academy

The Higher Education Academy consists of 24 subject centres and a central office in York. Its mission is to support the HE sector in providing the best possible learning experience for all students. The Academy has extensive knowledge of the HE policy context, institutional strategies and practices relevant to the student experience, disciplinary issues and individual practice. Its work focuses on the achievement of five strategic aims:

- To identify, develop and disseminate evidence-informed approaches
- To broker and encourage the sharing of effective practice
- To support universities and colleges in bringing about strategic change
- To inform, influence and interpret policy
- To raise the status of teaching.

For further details see www.heacademy.ac.uk

The Academy has broad experience to draw on in support of the Retention Grants Programme. It runs a number of its own funded initiatives, including small research or development projects and literature reviews, and conducts evaluations and meta-reviews of comparative approaches. It also co-ordinates and supports a number of externally-funded project initiatives including the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning; JISC-funded initiatives; the National Teaching

Fellowship Scheme and Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. It seeks to work with individual projects and engage them with the sector, to maximise the impact and embedding of outcomes.

To support the encouragement of evidence-informed approaches to practice and policy, the Academy is developing a Research Observatory – providing a facility for the systematic collection of, and access to, evidence, synthesis, analysis and application to practice. The Academy-run Widening Participation Research Service is now linked into the Research Observatory, and will play an important part in the communications and dissemination of this retention grants programme (see http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/institutions/wp/wprs).

Higher Education Funding Council for England

The Higher Education Funding Council for England is responsible for distributing £7.5 billion in public funding in 2008-09 to support learning and teaching, research and related activities in English universities and colleges. This figure includes £4.6 billion for learning and teaching.

Of this total figure, the Council is providing institutions with £243.7 million in 2008-09 towards improving retention, through the widening participation allocation which forms part of their core grant. For further information, visit www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/fund/

As well as co-funding the Higher Education Student Retention Grants Programme, the Funding Council has taken forward other areas of work relating to student retention and success, following the Public Accounts Committee report published earlier this year. These include:

- A series of workshops with the National Audit Office and higher education representatives in spring 2008 on how we can improve performance and retention.
- Proposed changes to the teaching funding method to improve HEFCE's support for teaching enhancement and widening participation, with the aim of creating a more strategic approach to rewarding student retention.
- An intensified programme of work with institutions, agreeing specific improvement plans with institutions significantly below benchmark.
- Support for specific groups of students, including: research into the variation of support across institutions for disabled students; an analysis of part-time students focusing on entry to, progress through, and completion of first degree programmes of study; and additional support for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects, where the first-year continuation rate is well below the average for all subjects.
- Work with HESA and higher education institutions on how we can collect reliable data on why students withdraw from their courses.

Paul Hamlyn Foundation

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation is an independent grant-making foundation set up in 1987 by Paul Hamlyn, the publisher and philanthropist. It aims to maximise opportunities for individuals and communities to realise their potential and experience and enjoy a better quality of life. The Foundation supports charitable activity in the areas of arts, education and learning and social justice across the UK. It also supports local charities in India that help the poorest communities get access to basic services.

The Foundation’s Education and Learning Programme has a strong focus on supporting innovation and aims to achieve significant impact across a range of education themes or issues, and foster the development and sharing of new practice, experiences and learning between and within schools, colleges, universities, local authorities and voluntary organisations.

The Foundation aims to allocate around £20 million per year through its grants programmes and special initiatives. Special initiatives, such as the Higher Education Student Retention Grants Programme, are targeted at issues the Foundation particularly wants to address, and enable the Foundation to more proactively drive forward the development and sharing of new practices. The

Foundation likes to pay attention to long-term issues and is not afraid to take on challenging or unpopular areas of work.

For further information please see the Foundation's website: www.phf.org.uk

Contact Details

Organisation or Project	Name	Phone	Email
Support and Co-ordination Team	Liz Thomas Helen May	07779600231 07917348236	lthomas@phf.org.uk hmay@phf.org.uk
Dispositions to stay: the support and evaluation of retention strategies using the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory	Jamie Thompson	0191 437256	jamie.thompson@northumbria.ac.uk
Pathways to success through peer mentoring	Jane Andrews	01212043363	j.e.andrews@aston.ac.uk
Comparing and evaluating the impacts on student retention of different approaches to supporting students through study advice and personal development	Elena Bedisti	01183788409	e.bedisti@reading.ac.uk
HERE! Higher education retention & engagement	Ed Foster	01158488203	ed.foster@ntu.ac.uk
Good practice in student retention: an examination of the effects of student integration on non-completion	Anne Boyle	01915153667	anne.boyle@sunderland.ac.uk
Belonging' & 'intimacy' factors in the retention of students - an investigation into student perceptions of effective practice and how that practice can be replicated	Paul Jackson	0116 252 2315	pmj7@le.ac.uk
A comparative evaluation of the roles of student adviser and personal tutor in relation to undergraduate student retention	Jacqui McCary	01223363271 Ext. 2330	jacqui.mccary@anglia.ac.uk
Higher Education Funding Council for England	Chris Scrase Alan Palmer	01179317153 01179317340	c.scrase@hefce.ac.uk a.palmer@hefce.ac.uk
Paul Hamlyn Foundation	Denise Barrows Faye Williams	02072273527 02072273500	dbarrows@phf.org.uk fwilliams@phf.org.uk