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Higher Education Funding Council for England

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Higher education in the regions

2 June 2009

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Overview of talk

- HEFCE's approach to the regions
- How HEFCE's national policies articulate to regions – examples:
  - Employer Engagement Fund
  - Economic Challenge Investment Fund
- Challenges

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How we work regionally

- HEFCE's approach:
  - Recognises the diversity of HEIs/FECs and regions
  - Support the relationships that are already being developed between regional bodies and HEIs
  - Seeks to avoid being constrained to looking only at Government Office regions

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Providing regional support

- To HE regional associations
- Direct support to institutions through our three HEFCE institutional teams
- HEFCE publications – such as Regional profiles for HE in England

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Skills policy - delivering change for the long term – our goals for 2008-11

- Transformational development of the HE sector aiming for a third or more of English HE providers involved in shared investment workforce development with employers
- 35,000 additional entrants to HE, backed by employer investment alongside public funding
- Increase Foundation Degree enrolments to at least 100,000 by 2010

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Employer Engagement Fund - progress

- £148 million across 60 lead universities and FE Colleges from 2008-09
- 10,700 new co-funded places in 08/09; 18,700 in 09/10
- 30% average rate of employer co-funding – rising to 50% by 2010/11
- Supporting long term strategic relations with employers

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Example 1 – Staffordshire University

- £3 million to support infrastructure developments
- Partnership with Stoke on Trent College
- Skills development at all levels for employers within Stoke on Trent and North Staffordshire
- Growth in workforce development – over 3,000 additional employee learners
- Linked to regeneration – the ‘University Quarter’
- Main focus is private sector and SME employers

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Example 2 – Thames Valley University

- £6.5 million funding
- Collaborative approach – implementing through members of the West London LLN
- To recruit over 3,000 learners supported by their employers
- Establishing three learning Centres at the heart of the target business zones – Slough Trading Estate, Heathrow Airport, and Park Royal

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Changing economic circumstances

- Increased unemployment
- Large employers (e.g. car companies)
  - Shrinking or halting production
  - Desire to hold onto a skilled workforce
- Graduate employment more challenging
- Fight for survival (SMEs)

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HEFCE's Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF)

- Short-term, flexible funding to respond to local individual and business needs in the downturn
- 78 proposals, £28 million funding:
  - 21 collaborative
  - 57 single institution
- Leveraging £32 million matched funding
- Over 51,000 people and 11,000 businesses being supported April 2009 to Sept 2010

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Examples of ECIF funded activities

- Increased unemployment
  - Cranfield University – Retraining unemployed STEM-qualified professionals to work in other sectors
- Large employers
  - University of Hull - Short courses and workshops in key manufacturing skills
- Graduate employment
  - University of Cumbria – IAG service to 500 unemployed and ‘at risk’ graduates
- SMEs
  - University of Exeter – A student and graduate task force employed by the university to support SME innovation

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Summary

- Considerable investment in key areas in HE to address the needs of employers/businesses
- Diversity of responses across HE that reflects:
  - Regional context
  - Types of employers
  - Sectors of the economy
  - Diverse HEI expertise and missions
- Dynamic period of development and significant opportunities
- To be successful requires increased engagement from businesses

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Challenges remain

- Pace of change
- Scale of change
- Funding
- Perception
- Awareness

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