

On the same wavelength but tuned to different frequencies? Perceptions of academic and admissions staff in England and Wales on the articulation between 14–19 education and training and higher education

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This paper examines the views of staff at higher education institutions on how well 14–19 education and training prepares young people for higher education (HE) study. It draws upon research involving focus groups with approximately 250 academic and admissions staff at 21 higher education institutions in England and Wales. The data collection was conducted between February and June 2005. The paper presents their perceptions of the articulation between 14–19 education and training and higher education. It examines their perceptions of the preparedness of young people to enter HE, and their preparedness to engage with HE. The evidence presented suggests an urgent need for more effective communication between the respective actors and institutions in 14–19 education and training and HE, particularly with regard to approaches to learning.

Introduction

How well, according to academic and admissions staff at different higher education institutions (HEIs) in England and Wales, does 14–19 education and training prepare young people for entering and engaging with higher education study? The research reported in this paper addresses this question, using focus group data collected with over 250 members of staff from a range of 21 higher education institutions. It focuses on their

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perspectives on 14–19 education and training. Much research on articulation between 14–19 education and training and higher education in this area focuses on particular subject areas, and uses very small sample sizes (Booth, 1997, 2001; Bryson, 1997; Cox, 2001; Hoyles *et al.*, 2001; Macaro & Wingate, 2004; Smith, 2004; Smith & Hopkins, 2005). This study cuts across types of institution and subject areas, and sets out to access the perceptions of both academic and admissions staff. It is exploratory in nature, and makes no claim for generalisability.

The focus group discussions reported in this article took place against the backdrop of major changes in 14–19 education and training and HE in recent decades. Regarding curriculum and qualifications, the Curriculum 2000 reforms changed the structure of the A level qualification (a two-year course in subjects of the students' choice, regarded as the main route to higher education in England and Wales), increasing the frequency of assessment and enabling students to resit examinations in the first year of A level study (referred to as AS) (see discussion in Hodgson & Spours, 2003; Hodgson *et al.*, 2005). At the same time, rising attainment levels at A level have led to the controversial introduction by the Government of an extra grade at A level, the A*, a grade already awarded at GCSE level (GCSEs, General Certificates in Secondary Education, are the two-year courses normally followed by pupils aged 14–16 in England and Wales; five such GCSEs, including English and mathematics, are regarded as the 'benchmark' for pupil attainment). Every August, the UK press is dominated by debate surrounding grade inflation and questions as to whether 'A level is getting easier'.

These reforms have all had an influence on the nature and process of teaching, learning and assessment at A level in England and Wales, and therefore on student approaches to learning and their level of preparedness for higher education study. Recent research (for example Hayward *et al.*, 2006) has argued that assessment procedures have become too invasive in the learning process.

In HE there has been a rapid expansion of student numbers in recent decades (see Hayward *et al.*, 2006), which is expected to continue (Bekhradnia, 2006). HE institutions have expanded in number and in size. The sector has, arguably, become more stratified and diverse, and the purposes of HE have become increasingly complex and difficult to define (Barnett, 2004). A divide has been noted between 'selecting' and 'recruiting' higher education institutions. 'Selecting' HEIs (typically the so-called pre-1992, long-established universities) need to differentiate between applicants with very high levels of achievement (although whether A level grades actually predict how well a student will cope with a degree course is contested). 'Recruiting' institutions (typically post-1992 institutions who were granted university status in 1992, having previously been polytechnics; further education colleges which offer higher education programmes; and university colleges) face different challenges, however, as they work to fill their courses on offer.

The level of current interest in issues of articulation between the two sectors is revealed by the extensive media attention given to the preliminary results of this study (see, for example, Boone, 2006; Education, 2006; Lightfoot, 2006; MacLeod, 2006; Mansell, 2006; Shepherd, 2006). Are HE and 14–19 education and training on different wavelengths, or perhaps on the same wavelength, but tuned to different frequencies?

Methodology

The breadth and openness of the overarching research question, outlined above, led to the decision to employ the focus group method, as it offers the opportunity to ‘... elicit perceptions, feelings, attitudes, and ideas of participants about a selected topic’ (Vaughn *et al.*, 1996, p. 4).

The strength of the focus group method for this particular study is that it allowed in-depth exploration of the issues, and access to participants’ subjective understandings, while at the same time offering the dimension of the group dynamic and interaction between participants within the group (Kitzinger, 1995; Vaughn *et al.*, 1996; Gibbs, 1997). Potential dangers of the focus group method include: the difficulty of clarifying individual messages or voices of dissent within institutional contexts; and the presence of powerful participants or pre-existing conflicts within the group which may undermine the group dynamic (Kitzinger, 1995; Gibbs, 1997). A further potential problem is that of more forceful personalities dominating the discussion. These potential limitations of focus groups as a research method were counteracted—as far as possible—by careful preparation (of the interview questions, and of the interview venues, with the support of the staff at the HEIs). Also, the questions and the procedures of the focus groups were piloted, and adapted after the pilot phase of the study. Two facilitators were present at each focus group, which proved helpful at certain points, for example in politely inviting another participant to speak, if one person was dominating the discussion and others were clearly eager to comment.

The 21 HEIs selected for this research reflect the diversity of the institutional landscape of HE in England and Wales (see Table 1). Quotations from the focus group participants indicate the type of institution they are working at, as well as their role or subject area.

The participants included: admissions officers and admissions tutors from a variety of disciplines, lecturers responsible for curriculum planning and delivery (particularly the first year of HE study), senior managers, liaison officers and widening participation officers. The total number of participants was approximately 250.

The fieldwork took place between February and June 2005. An initial schedule of questions was developed in the light of pilot focus groups at three HEIs, and the same revised schedule was then used at all remaining institutions (see Appendix). Discussions lasted approximately 90 minutes, and there were between 8 and 10 participants in the majority of focus groups. Organisers at individual HEIs decided on the location of the focus groups and invited participants, but requirements for the setting and staff to be interviewed were

Table 1. Participating HEIs

Type of institution	Number of institutions involved
Further education colleges offering higher education courses	4
University college	1
Pre-1992 institutions	12
Post-1992 institutions	4
Total	21

made clear by the researchers involved in the project. Organisers were asked to provide a room in a neutral setting with seating around a large table and refreshments for participants either before or after the group, and to invite subject specialists, admissions staff and staff in other relevant roles such as widening participation, learner support and school liaison work.

Two facilitators were present at the focus groups. With the focus of attention being on the views of participants, they were not directive in their questions but rather aimed to facilitate discussion. Probes were used to clarify statements and extend arguments. The anonymity of participants and institutions was guaranteed, and the focus group sessions were recorded in full and transcribed in part.

Major themes were identified throughout the fieldwork stage, detailed notes recorded and partial transcriptions completed. These data were coded and the emerging categories were negotiated and re-negotiated. The analysis involved both discrete analysis of individual focus groups and cross-group analysis.

Findings

The findings are presented in two main sections: firstly, the preparedness of students to enter HE (in terms of 14–19 *outcomes*), and secondly, the preparedness of students to engage with HE (this section focuses on *processes* in 14–19 and HE), according to the views of the focus group participants. This division emerged during the analysis of the data. For purposes of clarity in organising and analysing the data, it proved useful to separate the issues regarding requirements and processes for entering HE from those regarding the processes of engaging with HE.

These two sections are then sub-divided into themes, including: teaching and learning; study skills; evidence for entry to HE; the articulation between 14–19 education and training and HE; and information, advice and guidance (IAG) and support. Teaching and learning and the articulation between 14–19 education and training and HE were strong themes in the interview schedule (see Appendix), so it is perhaps unsurprising that they emerged as important categories. IAG, on the other hand, did not form an explicit question, but was raised as an issue in response to many of the questions.

The final section discusses issues of articulation between 14–19 education and HE, exploring key questions and problems raised by participants.

Preparedness of students to enter HE

Teaching and learning

The discussions with approximately 250 participants in 21 HEIs revealed their perceptions of the mismatches between the forms of teaching and learning in 14–19 that support young people in their aim to enter HE, and the requirements of teaching and learning at HE. The majority of participants ascribed this to what was variously described as ‘over-assessment’, ‘examination fatigue’, ‘teaching to the test’, ‘learning exhaustion’ and students being ‘examined out of existence’. Students, it was felt, had become accustomed to

working towards examinations and collecting marks towards their final grade, rather than engaging with their subjects. A typical comment is:

There is concern that students coming out of school and college have been driven by the needs of assessment, but learning for learning's sake is lacking. (Post-1992, computing/technology)

However, admissions staff acknowledged the importance of A levels for young people, and argued that this partly explained the risk-averse approach to taking these examinations:

There is more fear at A level [now], and so pupils do not want to take risks and want to do everything correctly. (Pre-1992, admissions officer)

Participants also raised the issue of the level of knowledge held by students entering HE, as well as their ability to apply that knowledge. The point was raised in all 21 HEIs that students found it difficult to apply knowledge in differing circumstances, partly because of what was often described as the 'overloaded curriculum'. For example, with specific regard to mathematics:

In mathematics, there is a need for the opportunity to practise, rather than just meet new topics. There is the need to practise certain skills, otherwise they lack self-confidence. (Pre-1992, chemistry)

The move to modularity within A level courses was also the source of some complaint, although the academic staff in the focus groups acknowledged a parallel move to modularity within HE:

There has been a change because of modular development in A levels. The focus is on gap-filling rather than a coherent approach. Physics, though, is a linear subject, so this is a real problem. I would like to see a backtrack from modular examinations, although our hands are not clean at universities either. There is a need for longevity in the learning process. (Pre-1992, physics)

Study skills

In terms of study skills, the issue of plagiarism, sometimes termed 'undue reliance on secondary sources', was discussed in nearly every focus group. Participants at all 21 HEIs indicated that students are not fully aware of the implications and problems of academic plagiarism, partly because retrieval of information from the Internet was encouraged during 14–19 education and training. A desire for continuity in the development of study skills within education and training, raised in all focus groups, is indicated in the following quotation:

All of the skills are incremental in nature, and should start at primary level, including PSE [Personal and Social Education] and so on. (Further/higher education, director of learner services)

Students' levels of competence with information technology (IT) and their time management in the context of having to hold down part-time jobs while studying were mentioned as positive indications of students' study skills (see also Hodgson & Spours, 2001; Little, 2002; Metcalf, 2003).

Evidence for entry

Participants were, without exception, ambivalent about the usefulness of A levels as evidence for entry to HE. The notion that A level grades predict performance at HE was called into question by participants at all 21 HEIs, as was the usefulness of adding further grades at A level. For example:

A* and A** are getting ludicrous. You can't tie A level performance to degree performance irrevocably. (Post-1992, biology)

However, other participants noted the difficulties involved in differentiating between applicants with the highest grades at A level, for example:

We need to be able to allow the very best to show they are the very best—this is a problem at the moment as it is hard to distinguish. (Pre-1992, life sciences)

This is linked with the recent proliferation of admissions tests within HEIs and particular subject areas, particularly medicine. The views of the participants in the focus groups regarding admissions tests ranged widely. This controversial topic was vehemently debated by academic and admissions staff at the focus groups. The following comment exemplifies some of the issues:

Perhaps we should find other ways of assessing applicants than A levels, but an admissions test would give a high advantage to applicants from independent schools as they would be coached. (Pre-1992, management studies)

Articulation issues

In terms of articulation between 14–19 education and training and HE, issues were raised about how well A level study equipped students for HE study, even when they had achieved good grades. For example:

Students are badly equipped for HE even with good A level results. There is a low level of English skills. (FE/HE, humanities)

Academic and admissions staff also suggested that the debate about differentiation at the highest level of achievement at A level has detracted from the problems with progression to HE from vocational routes.

[There is a] difference between 'sending' and 'receiving' institutions—some admissions tutors will not accept anything other than A levels. What can change if the institutional cultural capital is only in A levels? (FE/HE, director of HE)

The problems associated with progression from the vocational route were partly associated with difficulties at the admissions stage:

There is difficulty in understanding vocational qualifications, and a lack of clarity about what is included. (Pre-1992, widening participation officer)

This is linked with the pressures on admissions departments and staff generally. Academic staff at selecting institutions acknowledged that this was unfair on the students:

Universities struggle with qualifications they do not understand—there is not time for dealing with this, but this is not the students' fault. (Pre-1992, physiotherapy)

Information, advice and guidance for those entering HE

Focus group participants at all 21 HEIs stated that the advice and guidance on progression to HE, and levels of support available to students, were highly variable. Research evidence has consistently highlighted the need for early advice and support regarding progression to HE (see Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, 2002), as early decisions can affect opportunities for progression.

Guidance on appropriate subject choice and combinations at 14 (for GCSEs) and 16 (for A levels) was felt to be particularly important. Some students could potentially be at a disadvantage if they apply to courses or institutions where views similar to that expressed in the comment below are held:

We are very pro-mathematics and science subjects, and not in favour of the colouring-in type A levels. We like to see some logic behind the choices, and justification for odd mixes. (Pre-1992, business studies)

Participants felt that young people could be disadvantaged or even misled in their attempts to enter HE by inadequate, and sometimes inaccurate, advice and guidance:

Schools are telling children with 10 GCSEs at grade F that they can apply for nursing, even though we want five grade Cs. Some can only sit papers where D is the highest grade you can get. Careers advisers still tell people with 10 GCSEs at grade F to apply for nursing. (Post-1992, nursing) (This comment relates to the 'tiers' of GCSE examinations in certain subjects, which determine the maximum possible grade.)

Preparedness of students to engage with HE

Teaching and learning

Participants in the focus groups were more forthcoming on problematic issues experienced with new entrants to HE than on positive issues, although these were mentioned too. The latter included the levels of motivation of students, their commitment to studying, their ability to juggle the various demands of learning and earning, their presentation skills and their IT skills. However, certain comments were repeated again and again, and focused on approaches to learning. For example, the perceived low levels of independence of the students were raised in all the focus groups:

There is no problem-solving mindset. Instead, if there is a problem, the response is to 'ask the teacher'. (Pre-1992, physics)

Instrumental approaches to learning on the part of the students were also mentioned in all 21 focus groups. The following is a typical quotation:

Students show an instrumentalist approach, and it is difficult to combat that. There is a commodification of knowledge, and a sense that they want to 'move on, get the badge'. (Pre-1992, sports sciences and health sciences)

There were also repeated references to a recent tendency to 'bite-size' knowledge and reluctance on the part of students to engage in wider learning, or in essay and report writing. One participant commented that, in their view, there is '... snap-shot cramming and learning to pass, rather than learning on its own merits' (pre-1992, undergraduate admissions).

Participants also perceived a lack of interest on the part of students in topics outside their own subject area:

General interest is not part of the culture nowadays. They just want to pass exams. Students don't listen to the news. (Post-1992, marketing)

One of the issues raised at all 21 HEIs was that of students becoming more demanding of academic staff, possibly because of the introduction of fees and the increasing financial commitment involved in completing HE study. For example:

Students are more demanding of feedback. Their approach is different now they are holding down jobs, getting into substantial debt ... (Pre-1992, life sciences)

The unit-based system of assessment experienced by students taking A levels and AS levels was perceived to have a number of drawbacks. One of these was the lack of traditional examinations, meaning that examinations at HE level can be rather intimidating for students when they have been accustomed to being able to retake AS examinations:

Students are not used to end-of-year unseen exams when they encounter them at university, with only one chance to repeat and only a chance to repeat if they fail—they are surprised they cannot retake to improve their grades, and are conditioned to the modular system. (Pre-1992, life sciences)

Study skills

In their descriptions of the skills required of students in HE, broader study skills, as well as specific subject knowledge, were very high on the agenda of both academic and admissions staff. For example, one participant commented:

They need to be mentally resourceful with good research skills, responsiveness to unusual situations. I'm convinced that there is a market decline in students' ability to express themselves. Some business students navigate around numeracy. (FE/HE, business studies)

The following list of study skills summarises those mentioned in the focus group discussions at all 21 HEIs: communication skills, written and verbal, IT skills, the ability to synthesise information, transferability of skills and knowledge, and time management skills.

IAG for engaging with HE

There was also a perception that students were inadequately prepared for *engaging* with HE study. Participants perceived a focus on the part of 14–19 institutions on getting students into university, potentially neglecting important aspects of preparation for the experience of HE study. It was argued that students did not know what, in broad terms, HE study involved:

Students don't come in prepared. They have no real confidence in what they have to do at university. They have no idea what happens at university. (Pre-1992, management studies)

A lack of independence, noted in relation to approaches to learning, was also identified as an issue. Changes in behaviour at Open Days were noted, such as the presence of parents:

At Open Days, it used to be unknown for parents to come, but now there are special programmes for parents to attend. They ask the questions. Students aren't allowed to be independent. (Pre-1992, business and economics)

In addition, focus group participants felt that inadequate information and guidance was potentially a barrier to attainment and retention once students were in higher education. The pressure on young people to progress to HE, with little consideration of alternatives, was noted at a number of institutions. For example:

Students are going because they think they have to—it isn't actually a positive choice. (Post-1992, business studies)

One participant linked this lack of positive choice with problems of motivation and, potentially, non-completion:

I'm concerned that we are driving people from the age of 14 through into higher education. No one is saying it is okay to access HE later. Especially with fees—I'm concerned students will start but not be able to cope because they've come too early. [...] I'm concerned students are forced to come into HE but don't have the necessary drive. They could be put off HE for the rest of their life. (University college, leisure and tourism)

These views echo Ozga and Sukhanandan's (1998) argument that non-retention may be associated with students drifting into HE rather than making a positive and informed choice.

Participants from the whole range of recruiting and selecting institutions noted that their HEIs offered study skills teaching in order to support students in engaging in HE learning. Courses mentioned included: referencing, web searches, critical reasoning, analysis and communication. Some HEIs provided extra teaching in mathematics, as well as additional staff to support students in 'how to learn'. Participants from the 12 pre-1992 institutions were concerned that such support took up valuable time and resources in already tightly packed degree courses. It was also felt that study skills needed to be developed, at least in part, *before* students arrived at HE:

There is a need for study skills training, but it seems like a 'closing the stable door after the horse has bolted' situation. (Pre-1992, modern languages)

Articulation between 14–19 education and training and HE

Diversity

There is diversity within and between 14–19 institutions, HEIs and between individual actors. Academic and admissions staff described challenges in responding to this diversity of 14–19 institutions and the differing needs of students, for example:

... Sixth Form prepares better, as it is a more focused group, whereas FE colleges have to cater for a huge group with greater diversity. Also, there are more similarities between HE

study and Sixth Form colleges than between HE study and FE colleges. (Pre-1992, outreach manager)

The following exchange at an FE college offering HE exemplifies the wide-ranging backgrounds of students, particularly in FE colleges:

Students progressing from FE to HE are often from non-conventional backgrounds and are disengaged at younger ages. (FE/HE, director of learner services)

Also, there are high numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in the area. (FE/HE, education)

There is a diversity of needs amongst the student body. (FE/HE, director of learner services)

Mature students and asylum seekers are not so affected by 14–19 in England. (FE/HE, education)

The increasing number of institutions offering both HE and FE provides an internal progression route. The director of HE at one FE/HE institution explained that there was a preparatory skills module designed to support those moving between further and higher education courses.

A further point raised by this director of HE was that 14–19 education and training should ‘... enable the potential to benefit from HE to be identified, as opposed to deselection of people’. In addition, the programme manager of the law course at an FE/HE institution made the following comment regarding internal progression in that subject:

Our best students are our own Access students. This could be because of their age, or because of our course! (FE/HE, law)

So-called ‘non-traditional’ students were felt to have particular requirements which had to be catered for. However, their particular strengths were also noted:

Non-traditional students can be successful as returners, even if they were not successful at 14–19. (FE/HE, marketing)

The current changes in HE may require a re-thinking of the age segments for progression to HE. Excessive focus on progression from secondary schooling may fail to address the needs of older learners and learners who progress from non-traditional routes:

Concentrating on 14–19 does not necessarily capture the full range of issues. There are significant numbers returning to HE at age 21/22 and there is a need to map the routes taken by these applicants. (Post-1992, art, media and design)

The changing purposes of HE

The rapid expansion of HE has meant that the purposes of HE have become more complex and harder to define. There was lively debate regarding the changing purposes of HE. For example:

We are asking for a greater number of students, and therefore they are coming from lower down the barrel. It is a business—students mean money. (Pre-1992, civil engineering)

This is linked with the implications of the current Government’s aspiration for 50% of 18–30 year olds to access HE by 2010, which raises particular questions for HEIs and their staff:

If 50% are to go to HE, HE should have a fairly big say, but HE's role should not be all-encompassing. (Pre-1992, social and historical sciences)

If this aspiration is to be met, there will need to be changes in what HEIs offer, as participants recognised. For example:

The market place determines that applicants want higher education. We need different ways to respond to these students. We need to equip them with the mindset and skills needed for HE. We have a moral responsibility to provide learning opportunities for these students. We need to re-adjust what we offer. (Post-1992, business studies)

In this context, it is essential for government to encourage and support joined-up institutional thinking. One participant described the current challenges of cross-institutional and cross-sector communication in the following way, implying a compartmentalisation of the issues relevant to the different sectors:

Schools and colleges are responding to LSC [Learning and Skills Council] skills agendas. HE progression is regarded as the 'frills around the edges'. (Post-1992, director of student recruitment partnerships)

Concluding remarks

Many participants acknowledged that the characteristics of 14–19 education and training they criticise—such as instrumental approaches to learning, excessive focus on assessment and modular courses—are also problems within HE. In the context of the expansion of HE, most academic and admissions staff perceive the need to adapt to the students at their institutions, rather than hark back to a previous 'golden age'.

Ozga and Sukhanandan (1998, p. 322) use the concept of compatibility of choice to refer to:

... the degree of match between students and their choice of institution and course, in terms of the extent to which students' choices fulfil their expectations and also the extent to which students fill the institution's expectations.

This points to the mutual contract between institutions and individuals in terms of their compatibility with each other and the potential for retention and good levels of attainment (see also Tinto, 1993; Yorke, 1999; Thomas, 2002; Waters, 2003). The surprising finding in this focus group research was perhaps that the perception of compatibility was not substantially different in selecting institutions, as staff perceived significant shortcomings in the levels of knowledge and, more importantly, in the approaches to learning, displayed by their current students. In contrast, staff at recruiting institutions seemed more attuned to catering for the needs of their students in order to maximise their chances of completion. The issues of compatibility of choice also raise questions about, and challenges for, the provision of information, advice and guidance for applicants and entrants to HE.

Staff in all HEIs visited perceived difficulties in articulation processes between 14–19 education and training and HE, and this undermines certain common assumptions. Firstly, it calls into question the notion that the 'gold standard' of A level is working well. Secondly, it suggests that current policy initiatives which focus on differentiation between the highest-achieving A level students (such as adding extra grades at the highest level of

attainment) do not address what the focus group participants perceived as the more important issues—those of approaches to teaching and learning. The focus group participants emphasised the need for effective and independent approaches to learning, rather than instrumental approaches to passing examinations. Thirdly, participation as a dominant policy aim is a blunt instrument unless the parallel twin measures of retention and attainment are also given appropriate attention. All three of these conclusions point to the urgent need for greater emphasis on teaching and learning processes in 14–19 education and training and higher education study. The evidence from these focus groups therefore suggests that more effective communication between actors and institutions in 14–19 education and training and higher education is necessary, in terms of approaches to teaching and learning, curriculum design, curriculum development and assessment procedures.

The focus group discussions revealed some of the frustrations and dissatisfactions that academic and admissions staff in HE felt about 14–19 education and training. There is a need for further future empirical research into the perceptions of staff in 14–19 institutions of these issues, as well as a need for similar research with students. It is important to bear in mind that, to some extent, there is a high level of policy intervention in HE in England and Wales as well as in 14–19, although HE has the autonomy to interpret policy more independently than 14–19 institutions (see Hayward *et al.*, 2006). Part of the explanation for the dissatisfaction may be the differences in how various pressures act upon the institutions within these two sectors (such as rankings and league tables, quality assurance measures, rates of attrition, attainment levels, progression routes, responses to policy initiatives, and funding mechanisms). These differences may mean that, although HE and 14–19 institutional actors are arguably on the same wavelength, they may be tuned to different frequencies.

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Appendix I. Interview schedule

1. Which characteristics are you looking for in successful applicants/learners?
2. To what extent does 14–19 education and training currently develop these characteristics?
3. How satisfied are you with how 14–19 education and training institutions prepare young people for study at HE level? What more could be done?
4. To what extent is developing these characteristics the responsibility of 14–19 education and training, and to what extent should these characteristics be developed at HE?
5. What changes to 14–19 education and training would you wish to see? To what extent do you think the reforms set out in the White Paper could provide these?
6. What is the role of HE in influencing the 14–19 curriculum?
7. To what extent is evidence of breadth in the 16–19 curriculum studied desirable? How do you view applicants or learners with qualifications in contrasting subjects, such as two sciences and a language?
8. To what extent is evidence of specialised content knowledge important?
9. Are some qualifications/forms of evidence more reliable than others for assessing potential? Why? Which other current outcomes of 14–19 education and training do you use to assess a young person's potential to make progress within HE?
10. What additional information about young people's characteristics would you ideally wish to see to assist the admissions process?