

Emerging models of work-based learning in Scottish higher education

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1 New models of work-based learning?

Introduction

1.1 The focus of this report is work-based learning programmes at bachelor's level (*Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 9*). However, in order to illustrate how work-based models are permeating higher education (HE), examples are drawn from programmes at different levels, for example, at SCQF level 11. It is also important to note that in some areas of HE, work-based learning, or at least practice-based learning, is widespread. For example nursing and, arguably, professional education, law and medicine have always had practice elements.

1.2 The report attempts to identify models of work-based learning that build on Schön's¹ position. Essentially, Schön argued that effective professional practice is not merely an application of theory, but a complex mixture of theory and practice and tacit knowledge achieved through reflection, as opposed to the traditional universities assumption that 'general principles' had to be learned and applied.

1.3 Consequently, the report is not focused on professional practice but it is acknowledged that it is an area that merits consideration given the changes to traditional practice and pedagogy in this area, for example the widespread use of problem-based learning.

Emerging models of work-based learning

1.4 Arguably there has always been an interest in 'flexible delivery' in HE. Extra mural departments, correspondence courses, part-time degrees and the Open University have all sought to cater for groups of learners who could not access HE through mainstream provision.

1.5 Work-based learning in HE was, and is, seen as part of the 'access' tradition. For people at work, accessing HE through traditional routes can either mean sacrificing an existing job or trying to fit in part-time education with increasingly demanding patterns of work.

1.6 Work-based learning then has been seen by some as principally a new form of access aimed at employees facing considerable barriers to accessing full-time education and consequently excluded from important learning opportunities. Barriers include not only the physical distances involved in travelling to the main cities, for those who do not live there, but also the personal costs of being away from home, with the impact this might have on family life and possible loss of earnings².

1.7 Others have seen access itself and work-based learning's contribution to increased recruitment, as part of the 'massification' of HE introduced by the Conservative Government and continued by New Labour³. In this analysis, work-based learning was

¹ Schön, D (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, New York: Basic Books

² Sullivan, P (2006) *Report of the Mapping of Previous and Current Provision of Work-Based and Part-Time Training*, Scottish Community Learning and Development Work-Based and Part-Time Training Consortium, University of Dundee

³ Shaw, J, Brain, K, Bridger, K, Foreman, J and Reid, I (2007) *Embedding widening participation and promoting student diversity: What can be learned from a business case approach?* The Higher Education Academy

not driven by a desire to reduce barriers as such, in other words it was not about social inclusion, but rather another way to increase numbers in HE, whether or not it recruited groups who might otherwise be excluded.

1.8 In both of these approaches, the emphasis has been on new forms of increased participation: the first as an attempt to use higher education to help equalise society by addressing excluded groups, and the second, a related but less egalitarian drive to increase numbers in HE. This increase was deemed necessary because the competitiveness agenda demanded a higher number of workers with education to university level. The underpinning idea here is that the Scottish and wider United Kingdom (UK) economies would either have to 'upskill' or compete globally on the basis of low skills, which would tend to mean low paid, low skill jobs, often in the service sector and often in the face of very poorly paid opposition⁴.

1.9 If these were the drivers of work-based learning then two consequences would follow. The first is that we could expect general tensions around quality - to what extent HE should remain accessible only to a comparatively limited number of people, in traditional modes, in order to ensure high standards. Winter⁵, for example, argues that the problem is two-fold in relation to quality and work-based learning. Not only should work-based learning curricula be subject to the same level of quality assurance as 'traditional' courses, HE courses should also be evaluated on the basis for their 'fitness for purpose' for publicly specified requirements.

1.10 Secondly, we could expect interest in work-based learning routes into HE to be dependent on success in achieving increased numbers.

1.11 Reeve and Gallacher⁶ identify partnership at the core of work-based learning as sometimes acting as a brake on recruitment. They argue that the reason for the limited success of many work-based programmes is employer reluctance. The authors discuss a number of barriers against wider employer engagement:

- recruiting employers is time consuming
- establishing clear objectives of partnership can be a drawn-out process, particularly when the organisation's own goals are not clear
- employers do not always have a vision of systematic support for learning
- it is mainly individual employees who seem to apply for programmes on their own initiative and gain support from their employers, and not cohorts of employees from organisations
- there exists a high degree of 'employer resistance', especially among small and medium-sized companies

⁴ Mills, V and Whittaker, S (2001) Work based learning in Scottish Higher Education: policy and practice, *The Learning Organization*, vol 8 no 2, pp 64-69

⁵ Winter, R (2001) A challenge to assessment and quality assurance in Higher Education', in Boud, D and Solomon, N (2001) *Work-based Learning: A New Higher Education?* Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press, pp 141-154

⁶ Reeve, F and Gallacher, J (2003) *Are employer-university 'partnerships' problematic within work-based learning programmes*, paper presented at Experiential, Community, Workbased: Researching Learning Outside the Academy, Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of Stirling

- employers question the relevance of abstract concepts, reflection and critical analysis and emphasise the need for 'quick fix' solutions to real-life problems.

1.12 Drawing on Keep and Rainbird's⁷ analysis of the development of the learning organisation, Reeve and Gallacher quote a number of cultural and structural factors which inhibit high levels of learning within organisations. These include short-termism and pressure to minimise costs, under-utilisation of existing skills and qualifications, a tradition of low-trust employee relations (a command, control and surveillance approach) and low levels of autonomy for employees in non-managerial roles.

1.13 In Scotland, numbers have not been greatly increased by work-based routes using the 'early' models of work-based learning although, as we shall see, this may be beginning to change and, while quality remains an issue, there is clear evidence that many institutions have resolved how they will deal with work-based programmes.

1.14 It may be that, in relation to quality, the university sector has become more convinced of the epistemological and pedagogical basis of work-based learning. Policy considerations were not the only influences on the changing shape of provision, as the introduction to this section suggests. The privileged role of universities in knowledge generation came under attack from academic theorists who challenged the role of academic knowledge in the world of work.

1.15 Schön⁸, for example, argues that while academic or technical knowledge is necessary for professionals to do their job, it is certainly not sufficient, and his advocacy for reflection on experience as a technique for identifying and putting tacit, work-based knowledge to use has gained wide currency. As part of an essentially constructivist tradition, it emphasises the importance of individualised knowledge.

1.16 From a social situated perspective, Lave and Wenger⁹ argue that the world of work contained within a community of practice provides a learning curriculum in which the teacher is less important than the learner. They challenge the privileged position of 'abstract' knowledge. In a community of practice, they argue, there is only what is needed to sustain that practice: there is no hierarchy of conceptualisation.

1.17 So it might be argued that in order to understand the development of work-based learning and how HE has responded to it, it is necessary to bear in mind not only pressures generated by policy responses to reduce inequality, while simultaneously increasing competitiveness, but also a favourable theoretical context where valuable knowledge had escaped the confines of HE and was now to be found being generated in the workplace.

⁷ Keep, E and Rainbird, H (2002) *Towards the Learning Organization?* in Reeve, F, Cartwright, M and Edwards, R (eds) *Supporting Lifelong Learning: Organizing Learning*, London: Routledge Falmer

⁸ Schön, D, (1983) *op. cit*

⁹ Lave, J and Wenger, E (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Early Scottish models

1.18 The early models of work-based learning in Scotland reflect this context. While describing what follows as early models, it is important to note that variants are still current. The term 'early' is being used to distinguish them from what might be described as emerging models, discussed on page 7.

1.19 Glasgow Caledonian University developed models of work-based learning in the mid to late 1990s. Describing these early models of learning as applied to workplace engineering courses, Burns et al note¹⁰:

It is now recognised that the university is no longer the only environment in which new knowledge is generated or that undergraduate and graduate education can be delivered. In the UK, political and commercial policy developments actively support the implementation of off-campus learning as a methodology that meets the new needs of the economy and as such clearly needs to be recognised and developed by educational institutions.

1.20 Further, the need to try new forms of provision was encouraged by declining numbers of part-time engineering students who, according to the authors, were not being recruited in the same numbers because: '...prospective students could not physically absent themselves from the workplace for long periods of time'.

1.21 The solution was to deliver in a fairly traditional way, but in the workplace and to link learning activities directly to actual work activities, partly in order to enhance both learning and work, but also to address the tensions which work-based learning introduced in relation to quality procedures.

As well as all the normal quality assurance requirements, it is necessary to assure that the notional hours effort that can be delivered by the employed student is equivalent to the full-time student and is a practical possibility. Assessment of the support provided by learning from activities in the workplace in delivering the learning outcomes of the programme modules has shown that workplace learning supports this notional hours effort. Programmes of study can therefore be delivered without loss of academic rigour or quality.

1.22 Beginning in late 1993, with a module titled 'Volunteering in the Community', Napier University¹¹ began to develop an approach to work-based learning radically different from Glasgow Caledonian University. While the Caledonian model was heavily subject-based, Napier pioneered a module that did not necessarily have any relationship to the subject or course being undertaken by the student: its focus was very much generic, interpersonal skills. Napier acknowledged that while some students can access subject related placements as part of their course, for most students work experience is gained through their term time and summer jobs or through volunteering.

¹⁰ Burns, G R, Chisholm, C U and McKee, W A (2000) Economic and Strategic Issues Relating to Work Based Learning, *Global Journal of Engineering Education*, vol 4, no 3, Australia

¹¹ Highton, M (2001) *Reflection in Work Based Learning For Undergraduates*, Napier University

1.23 The module 'Working and Learning' sought to describe and accredit personal development and work-related learning outcomes. Students were required to capture their learning and reflection at their paid or voluntary job in a personal log book, which included tasks like recording successes and achievements, problems they had encountered, areas for improvement and skills or personal qualities deployed. Students were supported by workshops at the beginning, middle and end of the semester where they were encouraged to integrate theory and self-evaluation.

1.24 Other solutions that integrated work and learning in a more direct way also emerged. In 1999, the Department of Architecture at the University of Edinburgh began to restructure its degree programmes¹². The learning that is now accredited is based not only on a report of work experience, but also on artefacts created by the students. The effect was to replace the practical training 'year out' with two periods of placement experience and combine them with a third period of work-based experience taken over the long vacation between the third and fourth years of study.

1.25 In this way, they created a work-based learning model that formed an integral part of the master's degree. The student is assigned to a tutor who maintains contact by e-mail throughout the period of the placement. The student is also required to submit a detailed academic report of their work experience which counts towards the final master's degree. This is the main output from the work-based element. Work-based learning then accounts for about 15 per cent of the master's degree in architectural design and also counts towards the final class of degree the student achieves. The placement aspect of the programme has been transformed mainly by using a reflective report which captures the learning.

How work-based learning models are developing

1.26 It is this use of critical reflection, heavily influenced by the work of Schön, which is probably common to most forms of work-based and work-related learning. It is a particularly useful way for a higher education institution (HEI) to enhance and also integrate knowledge used in the workplace. However, as we have seen with the Department of Architecture at the University of Edinburgh, this can add even more value to the HEI and the individual student, as well as giving more meaning to the work experience if it is converted into academic credit.

1.27 More radical examples of how widely this can be adapted across higher education institutions are now emerging. The University of Paisley¹³, for example, as reported in its enhancement-led institutional review carried out by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)¹⁴, has been considering for some time how to enhance employability and during the 2004-05 session it set up a work-based learning working group. This group developed a definition of work-based learning and a set of guidelines to support its implementation.

¹² Russell, T (2004) Professional Studies in Architecture: Architectural Education and Work-based Learning, *CEBE Transactions*, vol 1, issue 1, pp 56-88

¹³ Now the University of the West of Scotland

¹⁴ QAA (2006) University of Paisley Enhancement-led institutional review

1.28 One issue the group has sought to address is that, despite the fact that work-based learning opportunities are popular with students and employers, there has actually been a decrease in the take-up of optional placements in recent years. The group believes that students may avoid taking optional placements because they extend the length of time taken to achieve an award. Consequently, the group is exploring ways of incorporating work-based learning opportunities into the academic credit structure of all programmes. It would be the first university in Scotland to have all programmes containing credit bearing work-based learning elements.

1.29 Reflection then may be the key element that any HEI can contribute to the learning process in the workplace. There are, however, other models where the HEI's involvement is a good deal more extensive. These require a more complex relationship with the learners, and sometimes the employers.

1.30 The HEI may, for example, seek to provide the learner with a conceptual framework to frame problems and other work-based activities and then to analyse these and find solutions, or improve practice by providing content and provide tutorial support for groups who may or may not share a workplace.

1.31 This model is evident in the Learn@Work programme developed by Glasgow Caledonian University, where work-based learning is directly complemented by a more traditional open learning format. While it does not out of necessity exclude either situated learning or reflective practice, indeed both are encouraged, it does move away from practice exclusively based on these.

1.32 While some postgraduate programmes in Scotland, for example the chartered teaching programme¹⁵, use work-based projects that lean heavily on what might be described as Schön's approach as opposed to a straightforward application of theory, these are less common at undergraduate level, although they are more common at undergraduate level in England¹⁶. However, both Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of the West of Scotland use them as part of wider programmes of work-based learning.

The new context

1.33 Given that there is now a new administration in the Scottish Parliament perhaps it is a good point to review the provision of work-based learning in the Scottish HE sector. There are an increasing number of HEIs engaged in work-based learning provision. This is not always apparent because many elements of work-based learning are not necessarily made explicit at programme level. Despite this, the widespread use of work-based learning is clear and indeed is a significant element of provision in some of the post-1993 universities.

1.34 This project has identified forms of work-based learning that broadly conform to the emerging models under discussion in this report in Glasgow Caledonian University; Napier University; Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh; The Robert Gordon University; the University of the West of Scotland; University of Aberdeen; University of Abertay, Dundee; University of Dundee; University of Edinburgh; University of Glasgow;

¹⁵ www.gla.ac.uk/departments/educationalstudies/postgraduateprogrammes

¹⁶ www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk/documents/SLN-WBL-Study.doc

Open University and University of Strathclyde. It was not appropriate or possible to draw examples from all of these, but some description of practice is available in the case studies provided in section 2.

1.35 While it is acknowledged that a detailed survey of how much work-based learning is actually being undertaken would require considerable time and effort, it may be the appropriate moment to consider whether the necessary resources can be found to undertake it.

1.36 The new Scottish Government has published a skills strategy¹⁷ that sets out its attitude to skills development, calling for a distinctively Scottish approach. There is, of course, common ground here with the previous administration since the role of 'upskilling' in economic development is being emphasised. However, there are also suggestions in the report that there may be changes in how those in learning in the workplace are to be supported, which would make a significant difference:

Working and learning are often seen as two distinct and separate entities, with the learning to be completed before the working can start. In practice, we never stop learning and we learn a vast amount in the workplace, often informally. It is important then to be able to recognise and value the skills acquired at work, whether it is informal 'on the job' learning or more formal. The SCQF can help to achieve this. This needs to become increasingly widely used as a tool to recognise employer learning.

1.37 The previous administration saw the individual as responsible for their own employability¹⁸ and this tended to mean that resources were directed at mechanisms for supporting this, like Individual Learning Accounts. Without employer support these mechanisms did provide sufficient incentive for adults to fund work-based courses largely constructed on the basis of the SCQF as outlined in the following sections. The paragraph above suggests that the new government may be considering how to change that. There is an even clearer statement in the report's chapter on driving improvement where we learn that the Scottish Government aims to:

...improve support for people in the workforce to participate in part-time learning and will use this improved funding for individuals to encourage more providers to offer a wider range of flexible learning opportunities, including increased workplace learning.

We will review the provision of financial support for individuals through better learner-centred support for people in the workforce to participate in part-time and work-based learning. This will include individual support arrangements for taught postgraduate study, to ensure funding in this area is more responsive to the needs of individuals, business and the wider economy. We will consider the impact of the different additional support arrangements in place for individuals who are learning with different types of provider.

¹⁷ Scottish Government (2007) *Skills for Scotland - A Lifelong Skills Strategy*, Edinburgh

¹⁸ Mills, V (2002) Employability, globalization and lifelong learning - a Scottish perspective, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, vol 22, no 4, pp 347-356

New features of work-based learning

1.38 According to Boud's and Solomon's¹⁹ definition, work-based learning in the HE context typically involves:

- partnerships between higher education and the world of work
- the learners involved being employees of the external organisation (or have a contractual relationship)
- the work-based learners negotiating learning plans that are individualised
- the programme of learning deriving from the needs of the workplace rather than being framed by higher education
- the starting point of the programme being set only after some cognisance is taken of the learner's current competences and the learning they wish to engage in
- learning projects that are undertaken in the workplace
- the educational institution assessing the learning outcomes against a transdisciplinary framework.

1.39 It is clear that the models described in the case studies do not conform to this definition, although some key aspects like partnership remain important. This is an area that is identified as problematic in the work-based learning literature²⁰, largely because of the role of the employer.

1.40 The work-based models in police studies, social work and community learning and development all require direct employer involvement. It is reasonable to assume that although there may be some private employers in the case of social work the three areas are almost entirely in the public sector. While there will be a greater presence of private sector employers in the lead practitioner/manager in childhood practice in Scotland qualification provision, the majority of employers are likely to be from the public sector. This suggests that work-based partnerships led by public sector organisations are leading the way for more public sector organisations, but it may also offer a model that consortia of private sector companies could follow.

1.41 It is also worth noting that the social work course and the lead practitioner/manager in childhood practice in Scotland qualification emerged as part of government concerns to raise the quality of staff in these areas, hence, the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) has been a key player in both initiatives.

1.42 The Institution of Railway Operators (IRO) course is somewhat different. IRO itself has individual and corporate, largely private, members. The desire to build a programme which offers a bachelor's level qualification was largely as a result of IRO's intention to keep a level of integration of cross-network knowledge in the wake of the privatisation of rail provision and raise the status of rail managers.

¹⁹ Boud, D and Solomon, N (2001) *Work-based Learning: A New Higher Education?* Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press

²⁰ Reeve, F and Gallacher, J (2003) *Are employer-university 'partnerships' problematic within work-based learning programmes*, paper presented at Experiential, Community, Workbased: Researching Learning Outside the Academy, Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of Stirling

1.43 While the employers themselves do not sponsor it directly, they do so through their affiliation to IRO. However, individual students may or may not be sponsored by their employer in relation to fees. Nevertheless, the IRO experience might provide a model that other private sector companies could use.

1.44 It is interesting to note that in all the cases considered above, knowledge and qualifications are being used to enhance the status of a particular vocational group. Ultimately this should help the emergence of a body of knowledge and a set of skills that are universally recognised for that particular vocational group.

1.45 However, this is being achieved in a flexible way. All of the exit qualifications will allow credit to be incorporated from other units of learning gained elsewhere as well as the recognition of prior learning. The amounts, levels and purposes to which credit from elsewhere can be deployed vary, but without reference to the SCQF it would not be possible to construct these awards.

1.46 Finally, a flexible approach to delivery has developed which is also common to most of the models. It neither privileges the learning in the workplace, nor the university: instead it tries to integrate both.

1.47 Reflection is built into all the programmes considered, either as part of a separate module, as in the IRO programme, or embedded, as in lead practitioner/manager in childhood practice in Scotland qualifications.

1.48 The role of the HEI is to provide course content and tutorial support with a view to offering the learners a conceptual framework to identify the contours of problems, making it easier to analyse these problems and find solutions. This means that a variety of modes of delivery and assessment can be used: traditional classroom-based learning and assessment; work-based projects; on-line 'delivery' and discussion; peer group analyses; and solutions including group assessments.

1.49 This approach allows employers and individuals to highlight the skills valued and required by both. It has to be conceded that in the negotiation the learner as an individual is weak in terms of negotiating the curriculum, although arguably this was always the case. However, the mode of delivery does allow negotiation of critical aspects of how elements of learning will be gained - previous qualifications, recognition of prior learning, for example.

1.50 HEIs will be able to demonstrate very clearly how, in partnership with employers and perhaps professional bodies, they can make a major contribution to the skills agenda through flexible work-based approaches.

1.51 As in any partnership agreement, responsibilities have to be clearly spelt out for the partnership to work. It is perhaps worth commenting that in this model it is not just the responsibility of the learner that is set out. If anything, the role of the provider is very much at the centre of the frame. However, the work-based nature of the provision and its basis in partnership means that employers and professional bodies have an important stake and say in what and how learning is promoted. The further education sector is already engaged with several of the models detailed above. HEIs, because of their degree awarding powers, have much to offer these new pathways should they choose, as some already have, to get involved.

2 Case studies

Qualification in police leadership and management in Scotland

2.1 There is currently extensive work being undertaken by the police forces across Scotland to address the totality of their learning provision. The Promotion Examinations, which have been the primary method of progression in the profession for over 40 years, are being replaced by a Diploma, which in turn will form part of a larger academic framework (see the table below). The Scottish Police College developed the initial award for delivery in 2007, with the rollout of an 18 month programme being phased in over 2007/2008. It is planned that, ultimately, staff will have the opportunity to undertake a range of programmes designed to develop core competencies for the various roles in the organisation.

SCQF 7	SCQF 8	SCQF 9
Certificate of Higher Education in Policing (probationer training)	Diploma in Police Service Leadership & Management	Degree in Policing or Police Management
Higher National Certificate in Management (for support staff)	Diploma in Management	
Certificate of Higher Education in Training & Development (college & training staff)	Diploma of Higher Education in Training & Development (college & training staff)	Degree in Training Management
Police Training & Operational Experience	Institute of Leadership & Management	Advanced Diploma in Police Service Leadership & Management

Table 3: The diploma within the SCQF

2.2 The introduction of the Diploma is significant because it is the only qualification that will make Constables eligible for promotion when the old style examinations are presented for the last time in March 2009. A postgraduate level of study is also being developed.

2.3 This is part of a seismic shift in the relationship to learning by the leadership of the Scottish police forces. In 1990, in an organisation of over 10,000 people, less than 200 members of Strathclyde police held undergraduate or degree level qualifications. Since then, there has been a steady increase through recruitment with around 30 per cent entering with degree level qualifications. While there has not been universal acclaim for the need for increased level of accreditation, in April 2007 the eight Scottish Chief Constables supported the proposal to develop and deliver a qualifications framework across the Scottish Police Service.

Work-based learning aspect of the qualification

2.4 The approach is close to that being developed by the early years team in that the provision will be accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Agency as well as HE providers. Not all qualifications at level 9 will necessarily be offered as degrees. The extent to which work-based learning will be used throughout the programme has still to be established with the various providers, but it will certainly be a significant part of the delivery strategy. This is because the rationale behind the development is creating a workforce led by professionals qualified at SCQF level 9. Programmes of learning such as Higher National Qualifications (HNQs), Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) and Professional Development Awards (PDAs), which provide practitioner qualifications and continuing professional development for workers, are seen as making a major contribution to the professional progress of workers towards the degree or other award.

2.5 This approach has developed partly because the Scottish Police College has for some time been working closely with the Scottish Qualifications Agency around core developmental areas for police and support staff. Indeed, a member of staff from the Scottish Qualifications Agency was seconded to the College in 2005 working full-time, three days a week.

2.6 PDAs in call handling and road policing have been developed, along with a similar award in the field of community safety. Each PDA is accredited and successful completion leads to either a number of Higher National Units or Scottish Vocational Units being awarded, which can contribute to further qualifications should the individual choose to go down this path.

2.7 The development has also been informed by partnerships with HE, for example the Certificate of Higher Education in Policing validated by the University of Stirling and awarded on successful completion of probationer training, and the BA by Learning Contract offered by Glasgow Caledonian University. The programme offered by Glasgow Caledonian University has been designed in collaboration with representatives from Strathclyde Police's Force Training and Recruitment Centre. It is designed to support the continuing professional development (CPD) requirements of those with a training remit within the Force Training and Recruitment Centre. The programme comprises six work-based learning modules.

Recruitment to programmes

2.8 A demand survey was carried out to test the likely application rate and potential uptake by candidates of the first phase of the award framework, the Diploma. Around 3,500 unqualified constables were surveyed. In addition to those with no qualifications it is hoped that two other groups will benefit from the framework.

2.9 Potential recruits to programmes leading to an SCQF level 9 lead practitioner/manager qualification through the integrated qualifications and professional development framework will include:

- officers already in post as leaders/managers without a qualification at SCQF level 9
- officers moving on from level 7 or level 8 HNQs, SVQs and PDAs seeking promotion partly on the basis of their qualifications.

2.10 As indicated above, there is as yet no detail on methods and approaches that will be deployed with all learning providers. In this there is a considerable difference with the early years' project where some of this will be made a necessary condition before accreditation will be awarded. It is possible that as the police forces become aware of other developments they may influence the approach they take to differences in, for example, mode of delivery and assessment.

Qualification of BA (Hons) Social Work (Scotland)

2.11 To become a social worker in Scotland, new candidates must have an honours or postgraduate degree in social work. While a number of providers offer an element of work-based learning in their degrees, the Open University offers a particularly flexible learning route to the new BA (Hons) Social Work (Scotland) degree, including work-based learning. The programme is available to staff who are working in social care agencies in Scotland and are supported by their employer.

2.12 The programme requires a minimum of four years to complete. The Open University's role is to provide study materials and tutorial support. It also organises workshops and manages the assessment procedures. Accreditation opportunities are available throughout the programme. Students achieve a Certificate of Higher Education after completing two initial Open University courses, one of which offers a broad introduction to health and social care, and has been designed in the light of N/SVQ levels 3 and 4 in Care, and a second designed to develop the foundation knowledge and skills of social work with particular emphasis on the key roles.

2.13 Students achieve a Diploma on completion of a further course at SCQF level 8 designed to help understand the application of social work practice, addressing key roles and standards for social workers and the relevant knowledge, values and skills for the social work process. In addition to these courses, students must acquire a further 60 credits at the appropriate levels to achieve the Diploma.

2.14 This year the Open University agreed to award 120 credits at SCQF level 7 to students who had achieved the combined HNC in Social Care and SVQ3 in Health and Social Care.

Work-based learning aspect of the qualification

2.15 There are two 100-day practice learning opportunities on the programme, which are subject to university approval. These are substantially managed by the employer and students remain in employment while they study. Employers have agreed to provide the equivalent of a half to one day a week study leave during the academic year. The actual time required to study will depend on the number of courses being studied in a given year.

2.16 The full programme is restricted to students working in Scotland who are being supported in their practice by their employing agency; it is only possible to access the programme through an employing agency. This means it is not possible to access the programme directly through the provider - the Open University.

2.17 Not only is it now necessary to obtain an honours degree in social work to be recognised as a social worker, the qualification is also necessary to register with the SSSC as a social worker. The SSSC also has conduct and competence requirements.

Recruitment to programmes

2.18 In order to qualify for the BA (Hons) Social Work (Scotland), 480 points have to be acquired. It is possible to use credit from non-Open University courses up to a maximum of 180 points, provided certain conditions are met, to contribute to the degree.

2.19 In terms of standard entrance requirements for entry, all candidates for the degree must:

- have a qualification at the level of Standard Grade Two in English and maths
- show that they can communicate clearly in spoken and written English
- demonstrate that they have the appropriate personal and intellectual qualities to be social workers and take part in an interview.

2.20 Social work is regulated and all students must register with the SSSC. The SSSC was established to:

- set up registers of key groups of social service workers
- publish codes of practice for all social service workers and their employers
- regulate the training and education of the workforce
- promote education and training
- undertake the functions of the Sector Skills Council.

Qualification in railway operations

2.21 The Scottish Centre for Work Based Learning at Glasgow Caledonian University accredits and delivers a degree level CPD programme for the IRO.

2.22 The objectives of IRO are to advance, for the benefit of the general public, the safe and reliable operation of the railways by improving technical and general skills, knowledge and competence, and promoting the training of persons engaged in the operation of the railways in the UK, including:

- provide or arrange to be provided, conferences, training courses, exhibitions, meetings, seminars, lectures and classes either alone or with others
- promoting education in the safe and reliable operation of the rail systems by developing, with the then Centre for Rail Skills and others, a range of nationally recognised qualifications

- improving the safety standards of operators of the railway network in the UK through conducting research, instituting tests and examinations and promoting a high standard of conduct or good working practices among railway operators.

2.23 Current corporate membership of IRO is as follows:

Network Rail	Virgin Trains	South Eastern Railway
First Great Western	RWA Rail	First Transpennine Express
Southern	First Capital Connect	Arriva Trains Wales
Transport for London	Docklands Light Railway	London Underground Ltd
South West Trains	ATOC	Stagecoach Supertram
Northern Ireland Railways	EWS Railway	Mott MacDonald
First ScotRail	Stagecoach Metrolink	c2c
Iarnród Éireann (Irish Rail)	Eurostar UK Ltd	National Express East Anglia
East Midlands Trains	Parsons Brinckerhoff	Railnews
Gatwick Express	Chiltern Railways	

2.24 Glasgow Caledonian University and IRO work together to bring what was a traditional course objective driven programme into conformance with a learning outcome approach. This has meant that IRO staff have had to adopt learning outcomes, assessment criteria, formative and summative assessments, alignment of outcomes and assessment as well as become familiar with online learning environments.

2.25 It has been agreed that the programme is delivered principally through Glasgow Caledonian University's online learning environment Blackboard, however materials are also available on CD-ROM. This is complemented by other forms of support, including email and telephone. Face-to-face meetings are sometimes possible, but given the geographically diverse group of learners on the programme this form of delivery is limited.

Work-based learning aspect of the qualification

2.26 The content and assessments are negotiated in considerable detail to match the work-based learning needs of middle managers in the rail industry. An essential element of all levels of the programme is a work-based learning module where students have to use the knowledge gained from the course to solve a real work-based problem.

Recruitment to the programme

2.27 One of the unique features of the programme has been Glasgow Caledonian University's attempt to increase participation by recognising non-standard entrance qualifications and recognition of prior learning. In relation to the latter, programme specific proformas have been designed to facilitate the process of capturing work-based learning.

Qualification as lead practitioner/manager in childhood practice in Scotland

2.28 The Scottish Executive's response to the *National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce: Analysis of Consultation and Workshop Responses*²¹ included developing a qualification which would take one of three forms:

²¹ Scottish Executive (2006) *Annex A: Scottish Executive Response to the Report of the Education Committee on the Early Years Enquiry*, available at: www.scotland.gov.uk, under 'publications'

- a work-based bachelor's degree (360 credits with a minimum of 60 at level 9); typically the 360 credits will be gained during a programme of learning where learners will have been assessed at levels 7, 8 and 9
- a Graduate Diploma which requires a degree or equivalent as an entry qualification followed by at least 120 credits of learning assessed at the minimum of level 9
- another award approved by the SSSC.

2.29 The rationale behind the development of this qualification is to create a workforce that is led by professionals qualified at SCQF level 9. Programmes of learning such as HNQs, SVQs and PDAs, which provide practitioner qualifications and continuing professional development for workers, can contribute to the professional progress of workers towards the degree or other award.

2.30 It is envisaged that programmes offering the new qualifications and professional development for leaders are expected to be in place by September 2008.

Work-based learning aspect of the qualification

2.31 The *Guidance and Standard*²² designed for the qualification are still in draft format. Any references to it here are therefore conditional. At the moment the draft *Guidance and Standard* define work-based learning as:

Learning closely bound to the work role and often, but not always, located in the workplace itself. An important aspect of work-based learning is that through the experience of performing the work role, complemented by other activities such as directed reading, researching and group work, it is possible for learners to achieve planned learning outcomes that can be evidenced and assessed.

All programmes of learning that enable participants to demonstrate that they have achieved the professional knowledge, skills and values required of lead practitioners/managers in the early years and childcare service will include learning that takes place in and through the workplace.

2.32 In the draft *Guidance and Standard* all approved programmes must be subject to normal institutional validation and review processes and be acceptable to the SSSC as leading to registration with the council as a lead practitioner/manager in the early years and childcare service.

2.33 Programmes for lead practitioners/managers must:

- allow learners to meet the Standard for lead practitioners/managers in early years and childcare and assess their achievement of that Standard
- have an appropriate volume of learning credit
- be grounded in work-based learning, both current and planned
- have an appropriate balance of learning related to professional knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities, and values and personal commitment
- contain clear arrangements for updating in accordance with national developments

²² Scottish Social Services Council - as yet unpublished

- have effective partnership arrangements with employers or workplace managers and, where appropriate, with other programme providers
- accept the need for flexibility in provision for learning and aim to take learning to the learners
- have effective procedures for the recognition and accreditation of prior learning
- have appropriate arrangements for quality assurance.

2.34 The draft Standard is defined in terms of the descriptors of level 9 in the SCQF, but also takes account of:

- the National Occupational Standards in Children's Care, Learning and Development
- the National Occupational Standards in Playwork
- the Roles and Responsibilities Framework developed as part of the national review of the early years and childcare workforce in Scotland
- the early years professional national standards of the Children's Workforce Development Council
- the national care standards: early education and childcare up to the age of 16 of the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care
- the National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership.

Recruitment to programmes

2.35 Potential recruits to programmes leading to an SCQF level 9 lead practitioner/manager qualification through the integrated qualifications and professional development framework will include:

- **workers already in post as leaders/managers** without a qualification at SCQF level 9 that will meet the SSSC's new requirement for lead practitioners/managers
- **workers moving** on from level 7 practitioner qualifications such as SVQ3 and HNCs through additional CPD qualifications like HNDs, SVQ4s, PDAs, Diplomas of Higher Education, and then on to level 9
- **'direct entry' candidates** with existing awards at level 9 or above, for example graduates with vocational degrees, for example in teaching, community learning and development, social work, health, or with non-vocational degrees, for example in history, chemistry, media, international relations, psychology, or with other equivalent awards
- **workers from other workforces** with relevant level 7, 8 or 9 qualifications, for example in residential childcare.

2.36 The *Guidance and Standard* indicate that delivery of programmes for lead practitioners/managers will be through partnership arrangements with employers and workplace providers. It will be a requirement for approval that all programmes leading to the qualification at level 9 will include a minimum of 50 per cent of learning time being

spent in workplace settings. The providing organisation's procedures for the recognition of prior learning can contribute to this requirement.

2.37 All assessment should be related to learning outcomes defined by the Standard with a substantial proportion directly connected to learning in the workplace. Appropriate arrangements should be put in place for the assessment of practice skills. Assessment procedures suggested in the *Guidance and Standard* are observation, reflective accounts, critical incident analyses, self- and peer-assessment, portfolios, learning contracts, case studies, projects and simulations. They might also include critical analyses based on reading or on lectures and tutorials. Use might be made of virtual learning environments.

Community learning and development qualification

2.38 The Scottish Executive's document *Empowered to Practice: The future of community learning and development training in Scotland*²³ recommended that in order to meet the increasing demand for qualified community learning and development practitioners, there should be an expansion in provision of, and access to, work-based and part-time routes for degree level programmes.

Current university provision of work-based training

2.39 Universities forming the Scottish Community Learning and Development Work-Based and Part-Time Training Consortium developed work-based and part-time training modes which are professionally endorsed. The range of current, qualifying courses available in a work-based or part-time mode are:

- University of Dundee BA/BA Hons Community Education
- University of Dundee Postgraduate Diploma in Community Education
- University of Edinburgh BA/BA Hons Community Education
- University of Glasgow BA Community Learning and Development
- University of Strathclyde BA/BA Hons Community Education
- University of Strathclyde Postgraduate Certificate in Community Education.

2.40 The *Report of the Mapping of Previous and Current Provision of Work-Based and Part-Time Training*²⁴ summarises some common features of university-based qualifying courses across Scotland:

- the training is provided directly by universities, and not via a separate organisational structure (for example a Trust or other independent body)

²³ Scottish Executive (2003) *Empowered to Practice: The future of community learning and development training in Scotland*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive, available at: www.scotland.gov.uk, under 'publications'

²⁴ Sullivan, P (2006) *Report of the Mapping of Previous and Current Provision of Work-Based and Part-Time Training*, Scottish Community Learning and Development Work-Based and Part-Time Training Consortium, University of Dundee

- participants studying via work-based or part-time modes are required to pay the appropriate university fee. This may be met fully by the participant or by the participant's employer. In some instances the cost of fees are shared between the participant and the employer
- employers may also allow participants time off for attendance at college and study time
- the universities do not tend to have formal, contractual relationships or involvement with the participants' employers, although contact with employers may be carried out in relation to work-based practice, arrangements for work placements and provision for study support
- course teaching tends to be carried out within the universities (although work-based training modes at the University of Dundee is an exception to this)
- the universities' work-based and part-time courses are largely curriculum led, in that participants follow a pre-set course curriculum in discipline-based subjects such as social policy, sociology, research methods and management with links to the Community Education Validation and Endorsement competencies
- course assignments may, however, be designed specifically to draw on the work-based nature of the participants' experiences
- the work-based route is felt to afford flexibility to employers who, otherwise, might find it difficult financially to release staff on secondment to the full-time BA and postgraduate courses
- staff wishing to undertake a professional qualification do not have to re-locate or study full-time, but have an opportunity to access professional training while remaining in their place of work.

Work-based learning aspect of the qualification

2.41 The *Report of the Mapping of Previous and Current Provision of Work-Based and Part-Time Training* defines work-based learning as:

...work-based community education training is taken to mean training which does not require full-time attendance at a Higher Education Institution, where there is some degree of linking between the learner, the training provider and the employer and where learning in the workplace constitutes a significant, assessed element of the total learning experience.

Recruitment to programmes

2.42 Participants must meet pre-entry requirements, similar to those in place for full-time students, by way of acceptable entrance qualifications, including recognised access courses and recognition of prior learning with portfolio of experiences in relevant areas of practice.

2.43 Participants are generally required to be working either part-time, full-time or in a voluntary capacity (approximately 17.5 hours per week or more), within the community education field and be able to demonstrate significant, relevant previous work experience.

3 A guide to work-based learning

Introduction

3.1 This guide offers comment and advice on the kind of issues that emerge when HEIs embark on offering programmes of work-based learning. Work-based learning has been a significant feature of post-school Scottish education since the widespread introduction of competence-based programmes of learning, largely in further education colleges and private training providers in the 1990s. Although competence-based approaches have been adopted in some HEIs in Scotland, the emphasis on learning outcome-based programmes has meant that work-based programmes have been comparatively rare.

3.2 This is now changing. A number of universities are looking to outcome-based work-based programmes to deliver increasingly significant numbers of learning programmes, while some large public sector employers and private employers are supporting the development of vocational programmes of learning through work-based routes.

The purpose of the guide

3.3 This guide does not assume that work-based learning can be isolated from other forms of flexible delivery and certainly does not argue that it constitutes a homogenous mode of provision; it is in contrast highly diverse. Nevertheless, the range of provision and the literature supporting it provides a sufficient body of practice and theory to set out some guidance for the consideration of current and future providers in the HE sector.

3.4 Such provision requires distinctive approaches to programme design, delivery, student support and student assessment. The purpose of this guide is to provide a checklist of issues in these areas for institutions offering or considering offering provision through this mode.

Definitions of work-based learning

3.5 There is no settled view as to how work-based learning is defined. Boud and Solomon²⁵ set out some aspects of programmes which they regard to be typical: partnership between higher education and the world of work; work-based learners negotiate learning plans that are individualised; the programme of learning derives from the needs of the workplace rather than being framed by the HEI; the starting point of the programme is set only after some cognisance is taken of the learner's current competences and the learning they wish to engage in; learning projects are undertaken in the workplace; and the educational institution assesses the learning outcomes against a transdisciplinary framework.

3.6 This is useful, but it assumes that all work-based provision is individualised whereas there are a number of examples in Scottish HEIs where this is not the case and group provision is offered. The level of transdisciplinarity may also depend on the nature of the provision. For example, a programme offered through work-based learning on

²⁵ Boud, D. and Solomon, N (2001) *Work-based Learning: A New Higher Education? Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press*

social work would have no more or less transdisciplinarity than a social work programme would usually have. The nature of negotiation has also changed.

3.7 Whereas in some programmes the employer is closely involved in designing the programme of learning, in others, especially where learners may come from a range of workplaces, the HEI takes responsibility for design without direct employer input. Direct relevance of the programme to the workplace can be assured through negotiated assessment.

3.8 Further, there are other forms of provision in HE, closely related to work-based learning, which do not quite fit the criteria set out by Boud and Solomon and yet are quite distinct from traditional provision, especially in the relationship to the world of work, and in particular what is usually termed work related.

Work-related learning

3.9 While generally work-related learning might well be taken to mean any learning that has some relation to the world of work, it has actually taken on a more specific, slightly different, meaning in the context of HE.

3.10 The Department for Education and Skills (now the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills) defines work-related learning as any learning during term-time, in voluntary and paid employment, as well as sandwich courses and other academically recognised learning, which relates to reflection or which is subject to the process of reflection²⁶. The precise relationship of work to the learning is not stipulated and indeed the suggestion is that if 'learning during term time' is acceptable then it need not be in the workplace at all.

3.11 In this regard it is worth considering the work that has been facilitated by QAA around 'enhancement' themes²⁷. One of these themes covers employability and the definition which is used to describe work-related learning is:

...learning from study or experiences in, or related to, the world or work.
Students are usually encouraged to reflect and report on the work-relevant skills they have developed (for example in work experience placements).

3.12 A number of HEIs make extensive use of placements in their programmes although some of these do not offer accreditation as part of the experience, others, such as the University of the West of Scotland, are working towards significant amounts of credit.

Work-based and workplace learning

3.13 The distinction between these two terms relates to the extent to which work is the curriculum. In its 'purist' form work-based learning means, not just that learning takes place in the workplace, as in for example a traditionally offered piece of training delivered by in-house or external trainers, but that the workplace and its activities are intrinsic to the learning. Workplace learning is learning of any sort that takes place in the working environment. In contradistinction to workplace learning, work-based learning is learning that takes place at work, through work and for work.

²⁶ Department for Education and Skills (2002) *The Work Related Learning Report*

²⁷ QAA (2006) *Employability: Engaging Employers, Higher education institutions engaging with employers: A guide to international best practice in engaging employers in the curriculum 2005*, available at: www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/publications

3.14 As Eraut et al²⁸ suggest, one of the most important dimensions of learning at work is informal learning from other people and from the challenges of the work itself. They provide a framework for facilitation of learning at work and discuss three broad sources of learning in an organisational setting: organised learning support; consultation and collaboration within the working group; and learning from people outside the working group.

3.15 The literature supports the claim that informal learning is particularly significant in the workplace and that it is effective when it is situated in the work itself and its social and organisational context (see, for example, Ashton²⁹).

3.16 While it is impossible to find agreement on definitions it would seem reasonable to state that work-related learning will mean the use of reflection, an acceptance of informal learning and an intimate link between learning and work activities.

Programme design

3.17 There are essentially two types of work-based programme that may be generated. An individual programme of learning and a programme designed for a group of people who may or may not share a workplace.

3.18 For both types of programme, the underpinning principle is that of negotiation, although it should be noted that the area for negotiation in some programmes only includes the assessments. The 'curriculum' in work-based programmes must relate intimately to the needs of the workplace and this will require close negotiation between the organisation concerned, which may be the employer or an intermediary such as a professional institute.

3.19 In the case of individuals, a number of institutions have developed pro formae designed to capture the essential elements of the negotiation. These have various names such as learning agreement, learning contract and so on. They are designed to break the necessary learning into units, goals or modules that allow transparency in relation to outcomes and assessment criteria and the mode of assessment.

3.20 For groups, the agreement may well be similar to that for an individual, but described in ways appropriate to supporting a number of learners. So, for example, using a virtual learning environment to support learning may be included in order to allow dialogue through a discussion board as well as providing learning materials. This will have implications for tutor numbers, learner support and perhaps assessment methods, and these will have to be detailed and negotiated at the programme design stage.

3.21 There also has to be a clear definition of roles and responsibilities at the design stage. Whereas 'delivery' of the academic content may be clearly delineated as a matter for the HEI, learner support may be a more complex issue, especially if the workplace provides mentors.

²⁸ Eraut, M, Alderton, J, Cole, G and Senker, P (2002) Learning from other people at work, in Harrison, R, Reeve, F, Hanson, A and Clarke, J (eds) *Supporting lifelong learning, Vol 1 Perspectives on Learning*, pp 127-145, London: Open University with Routledge

²⁹ Ashton, D (2002) Skill Formation: Redirecting the Research Agenda, in Reeve, F, Cartwright, M and Edwards, R (eds), *Supporting Lifelong Learning, Vol. 2*, London: Routledge Falmer

Programme delivery

3.22 Offering guidance on programme delivery is complex due to the difficulty of embracing the various ways that learning in the workplace engages with HE, evident from the variety of definitions on offer. As indicated earlier, this can vary from the workplace providing the curriculum to a post-experience exercise undertaken entirely in the HEI.

3.23 One element that is probably common to all forms of work-based and work-related learning is critical reflection.

3.24 Critical reflection requires the learner to systematically consider their role as a worker in the organisation. Typically the HEI will offer systems or cycles of reflection to help the learner organise their experience, and this may well be embedded throughout the learning programme rather than treated as an isolated element.

3.25 Beyond reflection differing approaches to delivery are practised, although there are probably three common models. In the first the HEI provides course content and tutorial support for groups that may or may not share a workplace, either in a traditional face-to-face model, which requires some level of attendance at an HEI or by way of a virtual learning environment. The role of the HEI is to provide the learner with a conceptual framework to frame problems and other work-based activities and then to analyse these and find solutions, or improve practice. Collaborative activity and peer commentary among learners is encouraged.

3.26 The second model is project-based and is used on an individual or group basis where a learner or learners identify a 'live' project in the workplace, which may well be transdisciplinary. HE provides support in meeting the project aims. Typically this will mean helping learners to meet generic assessment criteria, some of which may be skills-based. Consequently, generic support materials may well be supplied again either by face-to-face or online methodologies. The role of the HEI then is to support by monitoring and advising, and ultimately assessing for accreditation.

3.27 The third model is the most integrated and most likely to be offered at postgraduate level. The learning flows immediately from the dictates of the workplace and is consequently fluid and dynamic, for example a highly complex project in information and communication technology or engineering. The HEI provides a role comparable to that of a consultant offering advice on current literature and perhaps helping the project to publication stage, if that is a desired outcome, as well as offering accreditation.

Assessment

3.28 No matter what form of delivery is adopted assessments are typically negotiated between learners and tutors depending on the nature of the learning outcome agreed - generic or subject-specific - and crucially, against the correct SCQF descriptor.

3.29 Some institutions accept group as well as individual assessment given the nature of the learning projects. In model one, described above, assessments are negotiated in such a way as to allow students to integrate the academic knowledge gained on the programme with practical problems they encounter in the workplace.

3.30 Given the range of delivery models and the nature of work-based learning, a wide variety of modes of assessment will be acceptable including reports, case studies, presentations, briefings, newsletters, webcasts, wikis, podcasts and other electronic media outputs.

Student support

3.31 Work-based learning depends much less on the face-to-face contact characteristic of 'standard' provision, hence the issue of supporting learners, especially through effective feedback, is critical.

3.32 Where face-to-face tutorials are not possible (they are for some individuals and groups), support for learners through peer discussion and tutor dialogue can be facilitated online, by telephone or email.

3.33 While some forms of work-based learning are supported by tutors visiting the workplace, and perhaps delivering inputs there, it is more common for learners to visit the institution, especially if the groups are not based in the same workplace.

3.34 Many of the standard support services are less relevant to work-based learners, as attendance is difficult or impossible, and consequently online services provided by the library, learning support or counselling can be very important and induction on these services is essential. However, learners may be prepared to access standard institutional services if necessary, despite time and travel issues, so it is important that they know about these services. It may also help learners identify with the institution if they know how to access all the services and facilities available to 'standard' students.

4 A bachelor's degree by work-based learning - the defining features

General features

4.1 It may be useful to try to encapsulate the features of work-based learning in a succinct way that could be used to develop a descriptor. Such a descriptor might provide an account of the essential elements that need to be considered if work-based learning is being considered, as opposed to the more traditional forms of delivery.

4.2 The case studies and other models considered in this report suggest that there are two possible routes that work-based degrees might follow. The Scottish bachelor's degree by work-based learning is typically achieved, like the taught bachelor's, after the equivalent of three years of full-time HE. However, a number of the awards considered are constructed on the basis of different modes of study in different institutions. For example, students may be 'topping up' from a higher national diploma or using significant elements of recognition of prior learning to gain the 360 credits required. They are by definition 'general' in that there may be no one element of the qualification that is dominant in terms of credit gained.

4.3 Another example that was considered was to develop a more highly focused vocational content, negotiated with the relevant employer or professional or statutory body. This suggests that while general degrees would continue to be termed BA or BSc, it would be important to consider the use of the terminology of the appropriate profession - for example Bachelor of Social Work, Bachelor of Childhood Practice, Bachelor of Nursing - for the purposes of both describing the nature of the award, but also increasing its attractiveness to those working in the vocational areas concerned, especially where alternatives may be available.

Distinctive outcomes of the degree

4.4 Whether we are considering general or more vocationally-focused qualifications, many of the outcomes of work-based degrees would be broadly similar to those of traditionally delivered programmes. There are, however, some key distinctions that would be worth highlighting. In particular the role of theory in relation to practice would have to be outlined in any descriptor so that it would be clear that critical understanding of the essential theories, principles and concepts would be important only in so far as these help frame, analyse and solve problems in the workplace.

4.5 It would also be important, as has been highlighted in various places throughout the report, that reflective practice is embedded in the outcomes. Reflective practice would refer not only to improving practice and hence performance, but would include critical reflection on the policies, practices and culture of the organisation concerned so that it would help organisational development as well as individual practice.

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