

**LONDON HIGHER**

**STUDY OF PART-TIME HIGHER EDUCATION IN  
LONDON: STRAND 2  
AN INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON PART-TIME  
HIGHER EDUCATION**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report covers the second stage of a study of part-time higher education in London Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (for the definition of ‘part-time’ see London Higher (2006)). It has been undertaken in parallel with a study undertaken for Universities UK (UUK) of part-time higher education across the UK. This report draws on both the analysis of the data derived from a data set commissioned from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) as reported in the Strand 1 Report<sup>1</sup> (London Higher 2006) which itself drew heavily on the Universities UK Strand 1 Report<sup>2</sup> (Universities UK 2006a and Universities UK 2005) and on a series of in-depth interviews with eight institutions in London. These institutions were:

- Birkbeck, University of London
- City University
- King’s College London
- London Metropolitan University
- The Open University in London<sup>3</sup>
- Roehampton University
- Thames Valley University
- University of Westminster.

Four of these institutions together with the Open University nationally form part of the sample for the UK-wide study.

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<sup>1</sup> *London Higher: Part-time Students in London HEIs Research Project: Strand 1 Report*: Nigel Brown Associates, (London Higher 2006) available at [www.londonhigher.ac.uk](http://www.londonhigher.ac.uk).

<sup>2</sup> *UUK Part-time Research Project Strand 1 Report* Brian Ramsden, Nigel Brown Associates (Universities UK 2006a). Not yet published but a summary of the main findings was made available in a paper prepared for the Conference on Part-time Higher Education held in October 2005 *Initial findings of the Universities UK study of part-time students and part-time study* (Universities UK 2005).

<sup>3</sup> In practice we undertook interviews with the Open University at national level since many of its policies are determined at national level and implemented in the light of local conditions. We did however receive a separate submission from the London Regional Director.

## 2. APPROACH

There were three elements to the study:

- An analysis of the part-time numbers for each of the sample institutions by market segment and subject, and a comparison with full-time numbers. The data underlying these analyses were shared with the sample institutions;
- Face-to-face interviews with each of the sample institutions which were aimed at obtaining as full as possible understanding of:
  - The part-time segments that each institution was engaged with and how that related to the institution's full-time provision
  - The institution's part-time fee policies and how these were likely to change under the impact of the introduction of variable fees for full-time undergraduates
  - Employer support for part-time fees
  - Fee waivers, fee remission, fee collection and student debt for part-time students
  - The costs of part-time provision relative to full-time provision
  - The provision for, and use by, part-time students of the institution's central services
  - Progression and retention of part-time students
  - Demand for part-time study.
- The use of some of the results from the Strand 3 survey of part-time students undertaken by Professor Claire Callender and GfK NOP Ltd<sup>4</sup> (Universities UK 2006b) relating to:
  - The sensitivity of student demand to changes in fee levels
  - Employer contributions to part-time student fees
  - The use of institutions' central services by students.

The interviews typically involved a senior academic manager or Dean of a School with large numbers of part-time students, the Director of Finance or another individual from the Finance department and someone from the planning Department or Registry. The list of topics that we sought to address through the interviews is in Annex A.

The part-time student survey undertaken by Professor Callender did not separately seek information from part-time students in London HEIs although there were four in the UK sample. Furthermore, the survey only covers part-time **undergraduates** and the responses received are very heavily weighted to part-time first degree students. Nevertheless, we have with necessary caveats used data from the Universities UK Strand 3 survey in this report where it appeared appropriate to do so.

We have also sought to put the findings from the London sample in the context of the emerging findings of the Strand 2 study for Universities UK (Universities UK

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<sup>4</sup> *Part-time Study in Higher Education in the UK. A Survey of Students' Attitudes and Experiences of Part-time Study and its Costs 2005/06.* A report for Universities UK by Professor Claire Callender, London South Bank University (Universities UK 2006b). Unpublished.

2006c)<sup>5</sup> which we have also been undertaking in parallel – indeed five of the institutions were included in both studies.

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<sup>5</sup> *Study of Part-time Higher Education: Strand 2 Report: A survey of the Issues Facing Institutions*  
Nigel Brown Associates (Universities UK 2006c). Unpublished.

### 3. THE PATTERN OF PART-TIME HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE SAMPLE INSTITUTIONS

#### 3.1 By Level and Qualification Aim

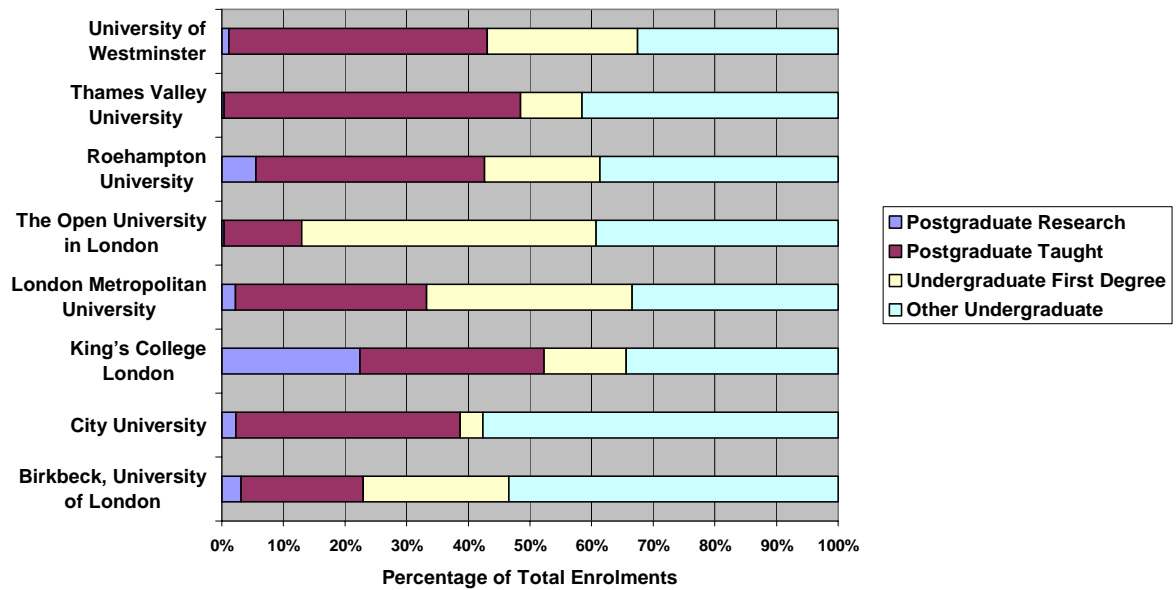
The broadest level of segmentation of part-time study identified in the Strand 1 report was in terms of level and qualification aim – postgraduate research, taught postgraduate, first degree and other undergraduate. Table 1 and Figure 1 below show the distribution of part-time enrolments for the sample institutions.

**Table 1 Part-time Student Enrolments by Level and Qualification Aim 2003-04**

Institution	Postgraduate Research		Taught Postgraduate		First Degree		Other Undergraduate		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Birkbeck, University of London	485	3.1	3110	19.9	3695	23.6	8370	53.4	15660
City University	255	2.3	4010	36.4	400	3.6	6350	57.6	11015
King's College London	1280	22.5	1700	29.8	760	13.3	1960	34.4	5700
London Metropolitan University	245	2.2	3455	31.0	3720	33.4	3720	33.4	11140
The Open University, London Region	75	0.4	2665	12.6	10100	47.8	8305	39.3	21145
Roehampton University	90	5.5	605	37.1	305	18.7	630	38.7	1630
Thames Valley University	35	0.4	4225	48.1	875	10.0	3655	41.2	8790
University of Westminster	130	1.1	4805	41.9	2795	24.3	3730	32.6	11460
Total	2595	3.0	24575	28.4	22650	26.2	36720	42.4	86540

*Source: HESA database supplied for the Universities UK Study and Additional Information on the Open University in London supplied by HESA to London Higher.*

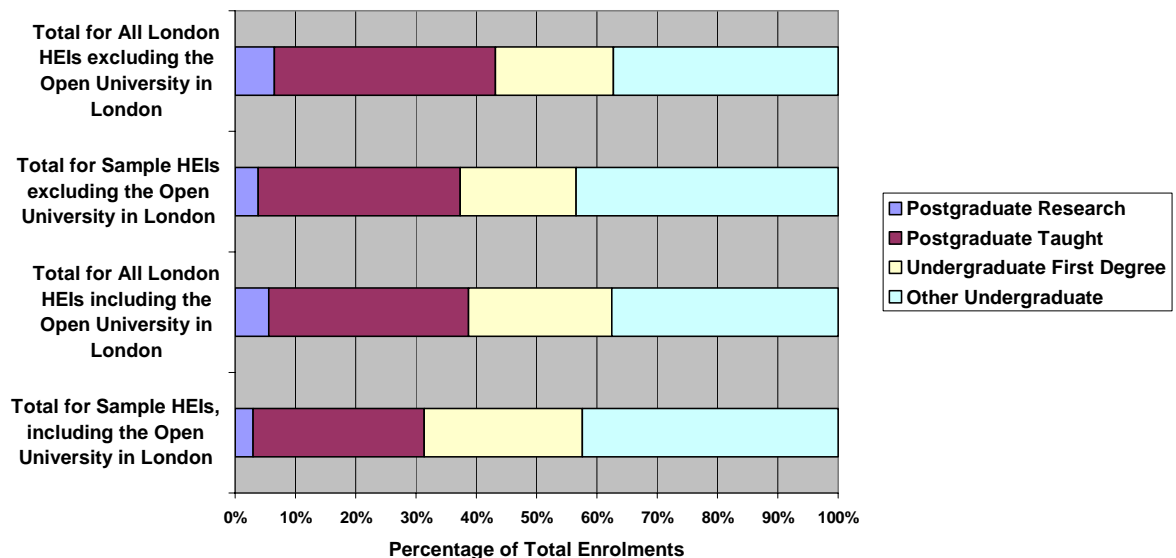
**Figure 1: Distribution of Part-time Enrolments in Sample HEIs by Level and Qualification Aim 2003/04**



Source: HESA database supplied for the Universities UK Study and Additional Information on the Open University in London supplied by HESA to London Higher.

Figure 2 below shows a comparison of the distribution of part-time enrolments by level and qualification aim for the sample HEIs and all London HEIs, both including and excluding the Open University.

**Figure 2: Comparison of Part-time Enrolments by Level and Qualification Aim for the Sample HEIs and All London HEIs with and without the Open University in London 2003/04**



Source: HESA database supplied for the Universities UK Study and Additional Information on the Open University in London supplied by HESA to London Higher.

This figure shows that the sample HEIs, both including the Open University and excluding it, were similar in the distribution of part-time enrolments by level and qualification aim in 2003-04 across all London HEIs. The sample institutions had a slightly lower proportion of postgraduate part-time students, especially postgraduate

research students than London HEIs as a whole and a correspondingly larger proportion of other undergraduate part-time students. The inclusion of the Open University substantially increases the proportion of part-time first degree students, both in the sample and for all London HEIs since it had close to 30% of all part-time (PT) first degree enrolments in London in 2003-04.

As Table 2 below demonstrates these eight HEIs enrolled around 60% of the part-time students in London HEIs in 2003-04. The only group where the sample does not represent 50% of part-time enrolments was postgraduate research students which themselves are a small proportion of the overall total.

**Table 2: Part-time Enrolments by Level and Qualification Aim for the Sample HEIs and all London HEIs**

	<b>Postgraduate Research</b>	<b>Taught Postgraduate</b>	<b>First Degree</b>	<b>Other Undergraduate</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Sample HEIs</b>	2595	24575	22650	36720	86540
<b>All London HEIs</b>	8045	47700	34145	54055	143945
<b>Sample as Percentage of all London HEIs</b>	32.3	51.5	66.3	67.9	60.1

*Source: HESA database supplied for the Universities UK Study and Additional Information on the Open University in London supplied by HESA to London Higher.*

This finding that 20% of the HEIs in London represent over 60% of total part-time enrolments reflects the historical development in London of a small number of specialist part-time providers providing evening study opportunities for those working in London and access opportunities for older people in the local communities. Thus Birkbeck was essentially the part-time provider for the University of London, both for first degrees and liberal adult education (the University of London Extra-Mural Department which joined with Birkbeck College in 1988). London Metropolitan University (as The Polytechnic of North London and City Polytechnic) and the University of Westminster (The Polytechnic of Central London) were part of the network of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) polytechnics which, inter alia, specialised in part-time professional provision for those working in the City of London and central London more generally. As in the rest of the UK, the Open University as the national specialist distance learning provider enrolls a high proportion of the total part-time students in London HEIs, especially part-time undergraduates for whom it provided over 20% of the places in London HEIs in 2003-04.

### **3.2 By Specific Qualification Type**

However, this breakdown by level and qualification aim hides a more complex picture at the level of individual institutions. In reality each of the named qualification aims consists of a variety of provision and each institution has its own particular combination of some of these types of provision determined very often, as noted above, by history and the particular needs of its catchment area:

- PT Postgraduate research includes not only traditional PhDs and Research Masters, but also doctorate provision, involving a significant taught element for those continuing to work full-time as practitioners, for example in education.

- PT Taught postgraduate consists not only of taught masters (where those studying part-time study the same modules but spread over a longer period), but a range of post registration professional programmes merging into Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Some institutions are now establishing modular postgraduate programmes that offer opportunities for individuals entering postgraduate study for the first time to undertake ‘taster’ programmes.
- First degree here there are several distinctions between provision that is essentially similar to that provided for full-time first degree students but most of which in London is delivered either by the two specialist part-time institutions or provided by institutions that offer both full-time and part-time first degree programmes at a different time and in some cases at a different place as well. It is noteworthy that four of the HEIs in the sample provide 59% of all part-time first degree places in London HEIs. In some institutions there is a small amount of infill (study alongside full-time students) onto full-time first degree programmes, often individuals who already have a first degree and are ineligible for the financial support available to full-time students. In one or two institutions there were significant numbers of full-time first degree students who moved in and out of part-time and full-time study. Such flexibility can be very important especially for older students whose family and or work responsibilities may render full-time study impossible for a period of time. Some part-time first degree provision is offered as a wholly separate stream from the standard first degree provision leading to degrees in a limited range of subjects aimed at a specific client group, usually mature adults. In Nursing there is significant part-time first degree provision for those that are already professionally qualified but do not already have a degree.
- Vocational sub-degree including Higher National Diplomas/Certificates (HNDs/HNCs), Foundation degrees, professional qualifications (especially in business and finance subjects) and CPD. It is worth noting in this context that the majority of Diploma of Higher Education (Dip HE) Nursing students study full-time, but there may be part-time students taking modules alongside full-time students, either as post registration CPD or to retake modules they have failed previously in order to progress to the next level of study.
- Non-vocational sub-degree including courses of study towards diplomas and certificates of Higher Education, other undergraduate diplomas and certificates, and institutional credits. There is a continuum between this last type of study aim which may lead to the award of very small numbers of credit points and true open learning where there is no assessment. Very often non-vocational sub-degree provision builds on the liberal adult education provision in what were the traditional extra mural departments of many pre-1992 universities, but now encompasses lifelong learning, learning for the third age, community education and widening participation provision.

Table 3a below shows the enrolments and full-time equivalent (FTE) for a range of postgraduate qualification aims for each of the HEIs in the sample compared with the total for London HEIs.

**Table 3a: Part-time Taught Postgraduate Enrolments for Particular Qualification Aims in the Sample Institutions 2003-04**

	Taught Masters		Postgraduate Diploma and Certificate		Postgraduate Professional	
	Number	FTE	Number	FTE	Number	FTE
<b>Birkbeck , University of London</b>	2725	1075	370	189	0	0
<b>City University</b>	3405	925	560	185	0	0
<b>King’s College London</b>	1095	521	470	181	0	0
<b>London Metropolitan University</b>	2060	813	575	274	800	367
<b>The Open University in London</b>	1525	453	810	262	0	0
<b>Roehampton University</b>	380	191	280	237	0	0
<b>Thames Valley University</b>	480	204	635	311	180	101
<b>University of Westminster</b>	3340	1016	840	246	590	96
<b>Total Sample</b>	<b>15010</b>	<b>5198</b>	<b>4540</b>	<b>1885</b>	<b>1570</b>	<b>564</b>
<b>Total in London</b>	<b>29590</b>	<b>11020</b>	<b>11510</b>	<b>4110</b>	<b>2705</b>	<b>770</b>
<b>Sample as % of Total</b>	<b>50.7</b>	<b>47.2</b>	<b>39.4</b>	<b>45.9</b>	<b>58.0</b>	<b>73.2</b>

*Source: HESA database supplied for the Universities UK Study and Additional Information on the Open University in London supplied by HESA to London Higher.*

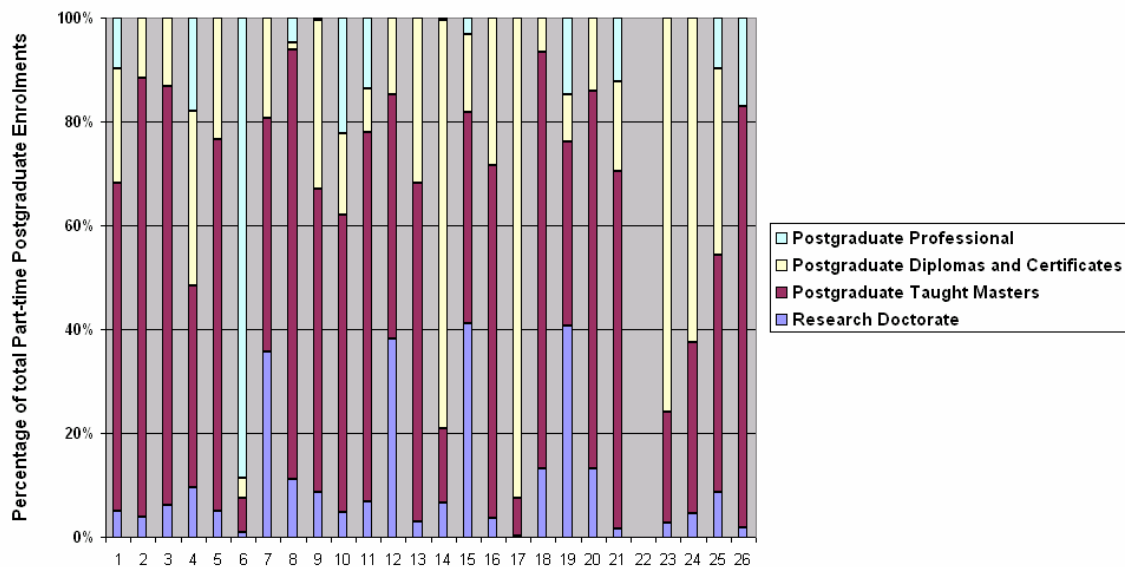
These figures demonstrate that for the sample institutions taught masters is the predominant qualification aim for those studying a taught programme part-time as for all London HEIs. All the institutions confirmed that those studying taught masters programmes could choose either to study full-time or part-time. The curriculum was the same. The full-time route involved a full year, including the preparation of a dissertation. The view from institutions was that part-time students tended to take two years to complete the same programme, but the recorded FTE figure of around one third suggests that on average they take longer than two years.

The postgraduate diploma qualification is usually the qualification awarded to those following a taught masters programme who choose not to undertake the dissertation. In some of the institutions individuals can register for the diploma from the start or leave open whether they will complete the full masters programme.

Only three of the institutions in the sample are significant providers of part-time postgraduate professional courses and overall the numbers of part-time students on such courses are a relatively small proportion of all taught postgraduate students. This may reflect the popularity of the MBA as a means of personal and professional development for those in a wide range of employment and the fact that some CPD for professions such as nursing and teaching is at undergraduate level.

Figure 3 below shows the distribution of part-time postgraduate enrolments by qualification aim for each of the 26 UK-wide sample of institutions in the parallel Universities UK study. This shows a similar predominance of taught masters programmes for most of the institutions in the sample. Three of the four institutions with a low proportion of their part-time postgraduate students on taught masters programmes are major providers of part-time postgraduate courses in education subjects. Institution 22 had no postgraduate enrolments to these qualification aims in 2003/04.

**Figure 3: Distribution of Part-time Postgraduate Enrolments by Qualification Aim for the Sample HEIs in the Universities UK Strand 2 Study: 2003/04**



Source: HESA database supplied for the Universities UK Study.

Table 3b shows the enrolments and FTE for a range of undergraduate qualification aims.

**Table 3b:Part-time Undergraduate Enrolments for Particular Qualification Aims in the Sample Institutions 2003-04**

	First Degree		Post Registration Nursing		Undergraduate Professional		Other Undergraduate Diploma/ Certificate		HNC	
	No.	FTE	No.	FTE	No.	FTE	No.	FTE	No.	FTE
<b>Birkbeck, University of London</b>	3695	2631	0	0	0	0	7900	2132	0	0
<b>City University</b>	390	156	0	0	0	0	6275	871	0	0
<b>King's College</b>	760	380	1744	441	0	0	15	6	0	0
<b>London Metropolitan University</b>	3715	1655	0	0	1805	758	235	117	285	165
<b>The Open University in London</b>	10100	4785	0	0	0	0	3245	1616	0	0
<b>Roehampton University</b>	300	189	0	0	0	0	495	227	0	0
<b>Thames Valley University</b>	515	374	2930	837	825	528	2040	392	25	17
<b>University of Westminster</b>	2795	1233	0	0	435	108	2200	474	120	67
<b>Total Sample</b>	<b>22270<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>11403</b>	<b>4674</b>	<b>1278</b>	<b>3065</b>	<b>1394</b>	<b>22405</b>	<b>5835</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>Total in London</b>	<b>32745</b>	<b>16965</b>	<b>8960</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>3505</b>	<b>1580</b>	<b>25345</b>	<b>7105</b>	<b>1265</b>	<b>705</b>
<b>Sample as % of Total</b>	<b>68.0</b>	<b>67.2</b>	<b>52.2</b>	<b>64.0</b>	<b>87.4</b>	<b>88.2</b>	<b>88.4</b>	<b>82.1</b>	<b>33.9</b>	<b>35.3</b>

*Source: HESA database supplied for the Universities UK Study and Additional Information on the Open University in London supplied by HESA to London Higher.*

This table demonstrates the dominance in part-time undergraduate provision of the first degree and other undergraduate diplomas and certificates both within the sample institutions and across London. However, the table reinforces the view that individual institutions specialise in particular kinds of part-time provision. Four of the sample institutions account for over 90% of the part-time first degree provision and five of the sample institutions account for over 95% of the part-time other undergraduate certificate and diploma provision. Part-time, post registration Nursing is only offered in two of the sample institutions and undergraduate professional courses are only offered in three of the sample institutions, yet between them they represent a significant proportion of the total provision of these kinds in London. The qualification aim 'Other Undergraduate Diploma and Certificate' includes both CPD

<sup>6</sup> This figure and the total for all London HEIs differ slightly from the figures in Table 2 because the figures in this table exclude certain professional degree programmes.

for serving teachers, nurses and social workers which is clearly vocational and an increasing amount of certificated non-vocational provision.

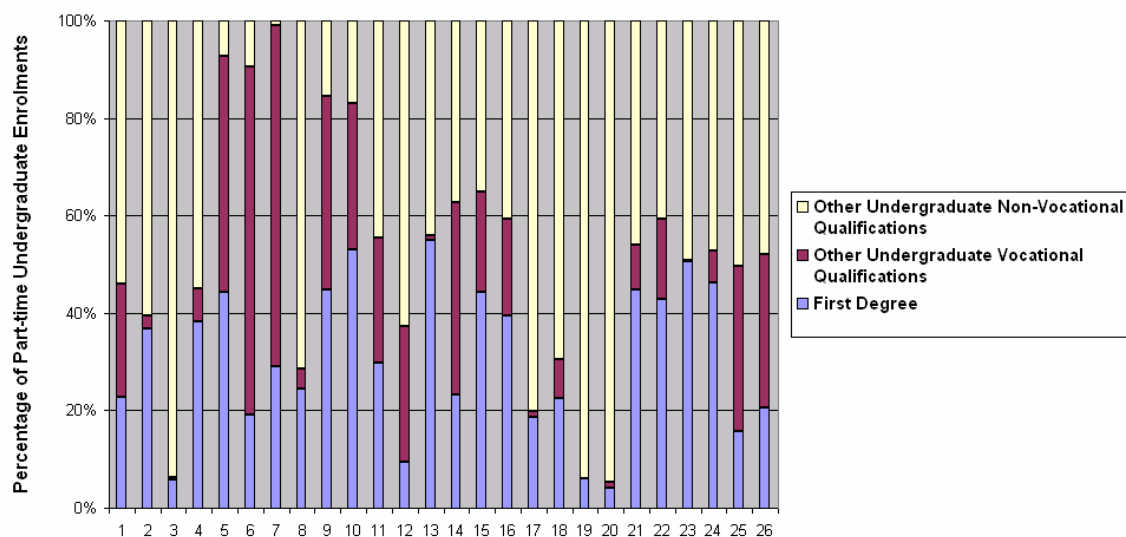
Part-time Foundation degree enrolments have not been included in this Table because there were only 940 in total across the whole of London in 2003-04. In fact nearly two-thirds of these places were in institutions not in the sample.

As noted earlier much of the non-vocational other undergraduate provision is based on the continuing education provision in the extra-mural departments of pre-1992 universities. For example Birkbeck's provision was formerly the Extra-Mural department of the University of London. The non-vocational other undergraduate provision in the new universities is often more concerned with widening participation by providing opportunities for mature students with no previous experience of HE to undertake some HE study usually based on a limited number of credits.

Birkbeck, University of London, itself is seeking to develop a common framework for all its undergraduate programmes, including the continuing education courses so that more progression is possible. It is the lead institution for the 'Linking London: Lifelong Learning Network' for London which is seeking to widen access to HE from people living in Greater London. Birkbeck is also planning to develop a campus for part-time courses based in East London, complementing the work being done by the University of East London.

Figure 4 below shows the distribution of enrolments for the UK-wide sample HEIs included in the Universities UK Strand 2 study.

**Figure 4: Distribution of Part-time Undergraduate Enrolments by Principal Qualification Type for Sample HEIs in the Universities UK Strand 2 Study: 2003/04**



Source: HESA database supplied for the Universities UK Study.

The figure shows up three main patterns of undergraduate enrolments in the Universities UK sample HEIs:

- A group of 13 institutions with 20% or more of their part-time undergraduate enrolments on vocational sub-degree programmes (including in this case Foundation degree enrolments). These institutions are of two main types –

three pre-1992 universities with nursing schools and ten post-1992 universities and colleges.

- A group of five institutions with over 75% of their part-time undergraduate enrolments on non-vocational Other Undergraduate programmes. These are predominantly pre-1992 universities and a high proportion of these enrolments are on adult and continuing education programmes.
- The remaining eight institutions that have a limited proportion of vocational sub-degree programmes but with at least 40% of their part-time undergraduate enrolments on first degree programmes – either specialist part-time institutions or post-1992 universities.

While this pattern of qualification aims within the UK wide sample is broadly similar to that found with the London sample, there was a higher proportion of the UK wide sample institutions in the Universities UK study offering vocational other undergraduate programmes than of the sample which formed the basis of this study for London Higher.

### **3.3 Subjects of Study**

The most popular subjects of study in the sample institutions broadly followed the pattern observed for all HEIs in London and reported in our Strand 1 report:

- For taught postgraduate courses the six most popular subjects were Business Studies, Law, Computer Studies, Academic Studies in Education, Other Subjects Allied to Medicine and Psychology.
- For first degrees, the six most popular subjects, apart from ‘Combined’ were Computer Studies, Law, Languages, Psychology, Business Studies and Nursing.
- For ‘Other Undergraduate’ study the six most popular subjects of study, apart from Combined, were Nursing, Languages, History, Computer Studies, Business Studies and Academic Studies in Education.

The high numbers of students recorded in the ‘Combined’ category for part-time undergraduate programmes reflects in part the large numbers of Open University students not yet committed to a particular discipline and the impact of the large scale adult and continuing education programme at one institution where individuals can build up credit across a range of disciplines. Apart from these ‘Combined’ numbers, there is a clear emphasis on broadly vocational programmes. History and possibly languages provision are the main exceptions. CPD for public sector workers including serving teachers, others in education and nurses is prominent in the provision on offer in the sample of institutions. Social Work courses are less well-represented in the sample than in all London HEIs or nationally.

There are only very modest numbers of part-time places in subjects related to the creative industries. This may reflect the absence from the sample of any of the specialist arts and music institutions, but is somewhat surprising given the importance of the creative industries in London and the demand for relevant, up-to-date skills. However, this relative lack of part-time provision in creative subjects, except music and in adult and continuing education reflects the wider national picture.

Across the UK-wide sample of HEIs in the Universities UK study there were broad similarities in the most popular areas of study with those observed for the sample of London HEIs. At first degree level, excluding the Open University, the main

difference was the absence of Law and Languages from the most popular subjects in the UK-wide sample and the inclusion of Social Studies, especially Social Work. As in London the inclusion of the Open University brought Combined Studies and Psychology into the top six most popular subjects of study at part-time first degree level. The most popular subjects of study at Other Undergraduate level were very similar to that found in the London sample of HEIs except for the exclusion of History and Academic Studies in Education.

On the other hand for taught postgraduate courses within the UK-wide sample of HEIs, Academic Studies in Education and Business were by some margin the most popular subjects of study. The former includes much of the in-service training for serving teachers funded by the Training and Development Agency for Schools in England and MBAs.

### **3.4 Markets for Part-time Study and modes of Delivery**

These different types of part-time provision are aimed at a range of different student markets:

- Those in full-time employment seeking to enhance their existing career
- Those in full-time employment seeking to change their career
- Those in part-time employment seeking to enhance their careers and secure full-time employment
- As a subset of the above, those training for, or already working in, nursing, other professions allied to medicine, teaching or social work
- Those on state benefits seeking to enhance their employability
- Those seeking to maintain their professional registration
- Those required by their employers to undertake CPD
- Those entering postgraduate study for the first time seeking to explore the possibilities available
- Those older people entering higher education for the first time wishing to try out possible fields of study
- Students from non-traditional groups (widening participation students)
- Lifelong learners
- 'third age' learners – those in retirement.

Although, as we have noted, most of the institutions in the sample offer a limited range of the different types of provision it is clear that they are prepared to go to considerable lengths in the way courses are designed and offered to meet the particular needs of the target group in terms of when and where teaching takes place.

As a result the way individual programmes are offered varies considerably dependent on the needs of the client group and the existence or not of cognate full-time provision. These ways include:

- Study alongside full-time students (infill)
- Free-standing provision (different time, different place, different client group but with similar curriculum to cognate full-time provision)
- Separate provision – no congruent full-time provision or different curriculum with particular pathways

- Distance learning
- Blended learning, mixing traditional and distance or e-learning
- At different levels of intensity, including short intensive modules or longer periods of low intensity, including weekend and summer school provision
- Remote delivery (franchising/outreach).

As noted earlier much of the taught masters provision in the institutions in the sample is available on either a full-time or part-time basis, but the timing of the teaching of particular modules for individuals in employment is clearly critical. Some of the institutions in the sample were looking to move increasingly to a blended learning approach to the delivery of taught masters programmes with online learning coupled with intensive weekend sessions with tutors to overcome some of these difficulties with timing. One institution had established a part-time Business programme, aimed at young mothers, which was delivered entirely on Saturdays when the client group might be able to get childcare from their partners.

Leaving aside the specialist part-time institutions, in most of the other institutions in the sample there is cognate full-time undergraduate provision in most of the popular subject areas like Business Studies, Computer Science and Law but in most cases there needs to be separate provision because part-time students can only attend in the evenings. There are some examples of part-time infill onto particular modules of full-time programmes. This includes for example serving nurses signing up for individual modules within the full-time pre-registration programme for CPD purposes or full-time students on Nursing programmes who are registered as part-time while they re-take modules they have failed in order to progress.

As we noted earlier some of the institutions in the sample provide flexibility for students to move between the full-time undergraduate programmes and cognate part-time provision. However, as the Universities UK study has demonstrated more clearly, this flexibility often reflects the reality that some students need to re-take one or more modules in order to progress to the next level of study. These students are automatically registered as studying part-time and are usually charged fees for each module re-taken.

However, most institutions allow flexibility within part-time study itself to allow people longer time to complete individual credits and the overall qualification if they need to take time out from study because of domestic responsibilities or work pressures. These elements of flexibility are a major feature of part-time provision in the institutions in the sample and observed more widely across the UK.

Each institution in practice has its own unique combination or portfolio of part-time provision consisting of a range of qualification aims and subjects and offered in ways designed to suit the needs of particular client groups. Some programmes while aimed at particular client groups, often attract several different kinds of student. Part-time study is much more tailored to the needs of students than full-time study. However, each element of the institutional portfolios of part-time study has its own combination of intensity of study, timing and mode of delivery, fees and funding and the demands imposed on the institution's infrastructure. These differences all impact upon its relative cost when compared to full-time provision.

Nevertheless, it is clear from this research that all of the institutions in the sample and not just the specialist part-time providers are recognising the importance of giving proper strategic consideration to the place of part-time provision within the overall academic footprint of the institution. In part this is being fuelled by consideration of

the implications of the move to variable fees for full-time undergraduates and the uncertain impact on demand for part-time study. This was also true of the HEIs in the UK-wide sample used for the Universities UK Strand 2 Study, many of which pointed out to us the difficulties in developing such a strategic approach because of the inherent unpredictability and indeed variability in demand for part-time higher education study from year to year.

### **3.5 Franchising and Other Academic Partnerships**

As we noted in the Strand 1 report (London Higher 2006) the franchising out of part-time provision by London institutions is on a more modest scale than nationally. Only four of the institutions in the sample had any franchise provision in FE colleges in 2003-04. The numbers of students involved was just over 1,000 or around 1.5 % of the total part-time numbers in the sample.

Franchising can raise difficult management and financial issues for HEIs in terms of meeting funding contracts, quality assurance and in terms of the different student experience. HEIs have therefore tended to withdraw from such arrangements over time. However, we heard about some new partnership arrangements with FE colleges and employers which were being developed particularly for the delivery of Foundation degrees through FE colleges.

This was also reflected in the UK-wide study for Universities UK as several institutions told us about the increasing importance of the development of new areas of part-time study of partnerships other than franchises, with employers as well as colleges. Such partnerships are a particular feature of Foundation degrees and are likely to be important if institutions are to pursue effectively the Government's agenda for an increasing emphasis on work-based learning in higher education.

#### 4. STUDENT DEMAND

Most of the HEIs in the sample reported to us that demand for part-time undergraduate programmes has been falling in recent years and one institution provided detailed figures to support this. However, in that institution demand had actually increased in 2005/06. This potential fall in demand for part-time undergraduate programmes is of especial concern to the two specialist part-time providers in the sample for the London study.

We met similar concerns about part-time undergraduate demand in the Universities UK study and we have examined the available data for the UK as a whole and the sample institutions both for this study and for the Universities UK study. Because of the change in which student enrolments were presented in 2000/01 it is only possible to make direct comparisons of enrolments for the most recent years with 2000/01. (We did not examine the two intermediate years of 2001/02 and 2002/03). In addition because the Open University returned all its undergraduate students as ‘Other Undergraduate’ until 2003/04 it is necessary to exclude the Open University from the comparisons.

Tables 4a and 4b below compare part-time undergraduate enrolments for the London Higher sample HEIs, the Universities UK sample HEIs and for the UK as a whole and its constituent countries.

**Table 4a: Changes in the Number of Part-time First Degree Enrolments (Excluding the Open University) for the Sample HEIs Compared with UK HEIs and the Constituent Countries 2000/01 to 2004/05<sup>7</sup>**

	2000/01	2003/04	% change 2000/01 to 2003/04	2004/05	% change 2003/04 to 2004/05
<b>London Higher Sample HEIs</b>	12,545	13,020	+3.8	13,075	+0.4
<b>Universities UK Sample HEIs</b>	33,500	37,480	+11.9	36,335	-3.1
<b>England</b>	84,530	92,200	+9.1	92,650	+0.5
<b>Wales</b>	4,665	5,290	+13.4	5,210	-1.5
<b>Scotland</b>	8,940	12,725	+42.3	11,695	-8.1
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	3,920	4,230	+7.9	3,960	-6.4
<b>Total UK</b>	102,060	114,445	+12.1	113,515	-0.8

Source: *Students in Higher Education Institutions 2000/01* (HESA 2002), *Students in Higher Education Institutions 2003/04* (HESA 2005), and *Students in Higher Education Institutions 2004/05* (HESA 2006).

This Table indicates that between 2003/04 and 2004/05 the earlier growth has been halted and that overall across the UK there has been a small fall in part-time first

<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to make comparisons with years before 2000/01 because of the introduction of changes in the way student numbers were reported in that year. These changes had a significant impact on the reported part-time enrolment figures. (See the introduction to and Table 1 in *Students in Higher Education Institutions 2000/01* (HESA 2002).) This makes unadjusted comparisons with earlier years misleading.

degree enrolments. Both of the two specialist part-time providers had experienced declines in first degree enrolments in 2004/05 and 2005/06 and this is a source of serious concern to them.

For the London Higher sample institutions (excluding the Open University) growth in part-time first degree numbers between 2000/01 and 2003/04 was less than in England as a whole and significantly below the rate of growth in the UK-wide sample in the Universities UK study. The London sample institutions also showed a small increase in part-time first degree numbers between 2003/04 and 2004/05 similar to that observed for England as a whole but in contrast to the overall fall observed across the UK. This latest observed decline in part-time first degree enrolments may have underpinned some of the pessimism on the part of the sample HEIs about part-time undergraduate demand.

**Table 4b: Changes in the Number of Part-time Other Undergraduate Enrolments (Excluding the Open University) for the Sample HEIs Compared with UK HEIs and the Constituent Countries 2000/01 to 2004/05**

	<b>2000/01</b>	<b>2003/04</b>	<b>% change 2000/01 to 2003/04</b>	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>% change 2003/04 to 2004/05</b>
<b>London Higher Sample HEIs</b>	30,180	32,625	+8.1	34,165	+4.7
<b>Universities UK Sample HEIs</b>	80,235	95,205	+18.7	100,700	+5.7
<b>England</b>	227,875	260,410	+14.3	255,955	-1.7
<b>Wales</b>	24,865	30,430	+22.3	33,495	+10.1
<b>Scotland</b>	16,350	19,170	+17.2	23,795	+24.1
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	6,085	6,475	+6.4	7,600	+17.3
<b>Total UK</b>	275,175	316,485	+15.0	321,295	+1.5

*Source: Students in Higher Education Institutions 2000/01 (HESA 2002), Students in Higher Education Institutions 2003/04 (HESA 2005), and Students in Higher Education Institutions 2004/05 (HESA 2006).*

It is of particular note that part-time Other Undergraduate numbers fell between 2003/04 and 2004/05 in English HEIs whereas numbers of such students continued to rise overall in the sample of London HEIs, but fell in three of the sample HEIs. There was also a continued rise in Other Undergraduate enrolments in Welsh and especially Scottish HEIs.

The observed levelling-off in demand for part-time undergraduate programmes is probably in part a demographic effect in that there are now more people over thirty years of age with a higher education qualification than was the case even ten years ago. However, it may also reflect increased pressure at work on individuals or increased unwillingness of employers to give employees time off for study.

Increased competition from private sector training providers may also be serving to reduce demand, especially for part-time professional courses. These private providers have lower overheads and are seen as more attractive than the public sector by some employers.

Some of the institutions in the sample had undertaken detailed market research on the potential impact on demand of increasing part-time undergraduate fees pro-rata with the increase in the full-time undergraduate fee. This research suggests that such a pro-rata increase in part-time undergraduate fees in line with the full-time undergraduate fees would substantially reduce demand. This issue is clearly of major importance to the two specialist part-time providers and to other HEIs with substantial part-time undergraduate provision and is considered further in the section on part-time fees.

Demand for part-time postgraduate study might also be expected to reflect work and financial pressures on individuals. Table 5 below sets out the part-time postgraduate enrolments for 2000/01, 2003/04 and 2004/05 for the sample institutions, for the UK and the separate UK constituent countries.

**Table 5: Changes in Number of Part-time Postgraduate Enrolments for the Sample HEIs, Including the Open University, compared with UK HEIs and the Constituent Countries 2000/01 to 2004/05**

	2000/01	2003/04	% change 2000/01 to 2003/04	2004/05	% change 2003/04 to 2004/05
<b>London Higher Sample HEIs</b>	19,505	24,060	+23.3	24,575	+2.1
<b>Universities UK Sample HEIs</b>	76,855	91,425	+18.9	90,875	-0.6
<b>England</b>	233,330	253,440	+8.6	256,700	+1.3
<b>Wales</b>	11,925	13,725	+15.1	13,830	+0.8
<b>Scotland</b>	24,735	28,655	+15.8	28,465	-0.7
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	6,415	7,620	+18.7	7,495	-1.6
<b>UK</b>	276,410	303,435	+9.8	306,570	+1.0

*Source: Students in Higher Education Institutions 2000/01 (HESA 2002), Students in Higher Education Institutions 2003/04 (HESA 2005), and Students in Higher Education Institutions 2004/05 (HESA 2006).*

This table shows a significantly higher rate of growth in part-time postgraduate enrolments between 2000/01 and 2003/04 in the London sample HEIs than in England as a whole and in the Universities UK sample HEIs. The modest level of continued growth in the London sample HEIs was still above that of the UK as a whole. The principal driver for growth in demand for part-time postgraduate programmes was identified as the need for individuals to gain specialist, job-related skills beyond a first degree. However, factors tending to keep demand down were the increasing requirements of the workplace, the level of fees and the lack of support from employers. Clearly programmes that minimised the disruption during working hours, and were able to attract sponsorship from several employers, were most likely to sustain demand.

HEIs in the sample also had concerns about the willingness of individuals, emerging from full-time undergraduate higher education with significantly higher levels of debt under the new fee regime to engage in postgraduate study unless sponsored by their employers. Longer term if this prognosis is borne out graduates may be increasingly unwilling to undertake skills training or retraining later in life to meet the challenges

of re-skilling an ageing workforce identified in the interim report<sup>8</sup> of the Leitch review of the demands for higher level and intermediate skills. This too is likely to impact on the demand for part-time postgraduate study from those aged over 30 who are the majority of current part-time postgraduate enrolments. Nevertheless over the last five years demand for part-time postgraduate study in London appears to have been buoyant.

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<sup>8</sup> *Leitch Review of Skills: Interim Report. Skills in the UK: The long-term challenge* (HM Treasury December 2005).

## **5. PROGRESSION AND COMPLETION**

Institutions in the sample said that it was inherently more difficult to measure progression and completion for part-time students than full-time students. In part this reflected the flexibility usually available in many part-time programmes to extend the period of study. For some students, particularly those who were lifelong learners progression was not the main objective but rather pursuing a range of different interests. Similarly some of those seeking to improve their career prospects were often interested in modules that provided particular skills as opposed to obtaining the full qualification.

One institution had undertaken a detailed study of the progression of one cohort of part-time first degree students. This study found that at the end of year five 45% had a qualification, although less than half of these had a degree, 9% were still continuing their studies, 3% had failed and 42% had withdrawn without failing any stage.

These results, if they are in any way typical of part-time students as a whole, well illustrate why applying to part-time students the kind of performance measures applied to the progression and retention of full-time students, are likely to be misleading and unhelpful.

These findings were borne out by the evidence we collected from the sample HEIs in the Strand 2 survey for Universities UK. We concluded from the evidence that there is a fundamental difference in the shared expectations of institutions and students about progression and completion for full-time and part-time study. For full-time study the expectation is that students will usually complete the programme in the normal time period for the qualification - two, three or four years – and emerge with the qualification aim. Performance indicators for progression and completion of full-time students essentially measure, each academic year, how far that expectation is met. For part-time students on the other hand while there may be some understanding of the minimum period of study and prescribed maximum periods of study, there will usually be some flexibility to allow students to vary their intensity of study and the appropriate period of measurement may span more than one academic year. There may also be no formal qualification aim other than the gaining of credit which could in principle lead to a qualification in subsequent years. In the Universities UK report (Universities UK 2006c) we recommend that the Funding Councils and the sector should work together to develop performance indicators for different types of part-time study based around the data that will become available when the new HESA student record comes into force later in the decade and which specifically recognise that the objectives of part-time study may be different from those of full-time study.

## 6. PART-TIME FEE POLICIES

### 6.1 Current and Prospective Part-time Fees

Our discussions with the institutions in the sample revealed a complex pattern of part-time fees. Although the setting of part-time undergraduate fees, especially for first degrees, has broadly recognised the pro-rata principle of relating part-time fees to full-time fees, it has largely been left in some institutions to the Deans of Schools in consultation with the Director of Finance and Head of Marketing to determine annual changes to the fees, and as necessary to assess the impact of competitor institutions. In some of the institutions this combination of history and the relative freedom of individual schools or faculties to adjust fees to reflect market conditions have led to a loss of any tie up with the full-time fee.

Part-time adult education has tended to have its own fee structure related to the number of modules and their credit rating without any necessary reference to the full-time undergraduate fee. Where such low credit rated provision is aimed at non-traditional learners as part of the institution's widening participation policy, fees are often not charged.

With the impending introduction of variable fees for full-time undergraduates and the decision by most to set the fee at the maximum of £3000, all the institutions in the sample have been reviewing their part-time fee levels. Most have started from the principle that part-time undergraduate fees should be linked pro-rata to full-time fees. One institution has decided in principle to set part-time fees as the appropriate proportion of the full-time fee plus a premium of 15% to recognise the additional costs of part-time students relative to full-time students.

However, as noted earlier, some institutions have undertaken market research for at least some of their part-time undergraduate programmes. This research indicates that most part-time students are price sensitive and that an equivalent increase in part-time undergraduate fees pro-rata to the increased full-time undergraduate fee could have a significant impact on demand. Most of the institutions have currently drawn back from such a substantial hike in fees at least in the short term, and some are considering whether they should establish a system of part-time bursaries/scholarships for part-time students with low incomes. The apparent market resistance to increasing the level of the part-time tuition fee reported by institutions that had tested their own student market was also reported in the Strand 3 student survey conducted by Professor Callender. This found that for current part-time students (mainly on first degree programmes) the optimum price for an annual tuition fee was £600 (approximately equivalent to a 0.5 FTE part-time first degree at current prices) even taking into account the possible availability of loan support for students.

One or two institutions have started from the premise that the part-time market is much more about social justice and that pricing policies should reflect this principle rather than starting essentially from costs, which is what the pro-rata principle does. This approach, however, implies a willingness and ability to subsidise the part-time provision from other income.

These issues are especially acute for the two wholly part-time institutions. They have decided, on the basis of the market research evidence, that there is a limit, in the short to medium term at least, to the fee increase they can introduce significantly below that required to bring their fees into line with a full-time undergraduate fee of £3000. Their fee systems already incorporate a degree of sophistication that makes allowance for high value courses for which premium fees are charged. Because their fees will in the

short term at least be below the maximum full-time undergraduate fee, their unit of resource will fall relative to those institutions with a predominance of full-time undergraduate students for whom those institutions will receive a fee of £3000 plus the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) grant. The Government has recognised the need to address this issue for all institutions that have a high proportion of part-time undergraduate students.

The general principle for part-time postgraduate fees is to charge pro-rata to the full-time postgraduate fee supported by Research Councils. However, one or two institutions have moved to a largely market-based system charging premium fees for certain part-time programmes, most obviously where they enjoy a niche market or a reputational advantage. At the other extreme other institutions do not believe they can charge the level of fee assumed in HEFCE's funding methodology for part-time postgraduate study, which includes no part-time premium. In their view this is leading for example to the pricing of part-time postgraduate diplomas and certificates beyond what the market will bear.

From discussions with the wider sample of HEIs in the Universities UK study, and bearing in mind the different full-time undergraduate fee regimes that will apply in Scotland and Wales, we identified a wide range of policy decisions by HEIs about determining future part-time undergraduate fee levels in the light of the new arrangements for full-time undergraduate fees from September 2006.

In summary, the range included the following:

- Part-time fees to be set pro-rata to full-time fees with a premium to reflect additional costs.
- Part-time fees to be set pro-rata to full-time fees without a premium, but phased in over a long period to test the market.
- Part-time fees to be set pro-rata to full-time fees but with pro-rata means-tested institutional bursaries available to offset the increased fee for the poorest students.
- Differential market based fees with some pro-rata to full-time fees and others at least in the short-term kept near their current levels until more market intelligence becomes available.
- Market based fees but with fee maxima set by reference to the maximum level of Government fee support or fee waiver (in Wales) available for the poorest students.
- Part-time fees held at 2005/06 either on a temporary basis or more permanently as a matter of policy to encourage widening participation through part-time study. This policy has been given particular emphasis in Scotland where the Scottish Assembly has made clear that it would not wish to see increases in part-time undergraduate fees following its decision to increase full-time undergraduate fees.

It is important to remember that, outside the two wholly part-time institutions, one of the largest groups of part-time students is nursing students who are either repeating modules they have failed, or are undertaking individual modules as part of their CPD. To the extent that their places are funded from within an institution's contract with an NHS Strategic Health Authority they will not be charged a fee. Students who are outside the contract will on the other hand be charged a fee.

## 6.2 Employer Support

Most of the institutions in the sample confirmed that very few of their part-time students had their fees paid for by their employer apart from those studying education or social work courses. Their invoicing records showed that 5% or less of part-time students had their fees paid directly by their employer. One institution estimated that 3% of its part-time students had their fees paid for by their employers. There were 660 sponsors paying a total of £1.5 million. These figures are apparently well below the 9% figure reported in the earlier Strand 1 Report prepared for London Higher (London Higher 2006) from HESA data, and very much below the figure of close to 50% of part-time students completing particular qualifications in the same report.

Such limited evidence as is available suggested that employers were more likely to pay fees for part-time taught postgraduate and sub-degree vocational courses than for part-time first degrees or non vocational other undergraduate courses. This is largely consistent with the findings in the Strand 1 Report (Universities UK 2006a).

Moreover, the evidence from the Universities UK Strand 2 survey is that those part-time students in public sector employment are more likely to have their fees paid for them by their employer.

These findings are consistent with the findings on employer support from the UK-wide Strand 2 survey (Universities UK 2006c). While this showed a wider range of employer support for tuition fees than we found in London, ranging from around 3% to 35% of students supported, this was markedly below figures obtained from surveys of students. The Strand 3 survey for Universities UK included questions about who actually paid undergraduate tuition fees and whether or not they paid all or part of the fee. It also asked about the support students received towards other costs of studying.

Professor Callender's report of the Strand 3 survey (page 30 -31) (Universities UK 2006b) showed that:

- some 35% of the sample respondents reported having their fees paid by their employer;
- of those in employment 31.1% had their fees paid in full by their employer and 39.7% had some or all of their tuition fees paid by their employer;
- those working full-time were two and a half times more likely to receive support for fees from their employer than those working part-time (45% of full-time employees compared with 17%).

Although these figures are higher than the proportions of students having their fees paid by their employer reported to us by institutions, they are themselves below the figures reported by Woodley (DfES 2004)<sup>9</sup>. He found that 41% of all of the part-time students in the sample he used had their fees paid by their employer and 58% of those students in full-time employment in the sample had their fees paid by their employer.

We concluded that a large part of the observed discrepancy between the level of employer support for tuition fees reported by institutions and by students themselves must stem from institutions' reliance on the employers they invoice for the fee and students in employment who pay their fees and are then reimbursed by their employer, either immediately or on completion of the course.

The nature of the sample selected is also important. The data supplied by institutions cover all part-time students whatever their intensity of study or qualification aim,

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<sup>9</sup> *Earning, Learning and Paying: The Results from a National Survey of the Costs and Financing of Part-time Students in Higher Education*: Alan Woodley (DfES Research Report December 2004).

whereas the HESA destinations data is based on a sample of individuals with a limited range of qualifications. Professor Callender's Strand 3 survey did seek to capture data on a wide range of part-time undergraduate students, but in practice only 17% of the sample students had an intensity of study of less than 50% (Callender Table 1.3 page 16 (Universities UK 2006b)) and 72% were studying for a first degree. A high proportion of part-time students studying for undergraduate qualifications other than first degrees have an intensity of study well below 50% and, excluding the Open University, only around 30% of part-time undergraduate enrolments in 2003/04 were to first degree programmes, or just over 40% including the Open University. In the case of Woodley's study the sample of students was limited to those studying at an intensity of 50% or more of an FTE.

A further dimension to this issue is the willingness of employers to release staff to attend part-time courses. This applies to both public sector and private sector employers. Roehampton University for example indicated that obtaining the agreement of a group of schools to release teachers to enable them to attend was an essential part of designing and running the course in question. Small companies also face difficulties in releasing staff to attend courses during working hours, both because of the need to provide cover and the need to manage the other staff who have to meet the cover.

Overall, it appears that the majority of part-time students across a wide range of part-time programmes in London pay their own fees up-front, as is also the case across the UK on the basis of Professor Callender's analysis (Universities UK 2006b), and may also have significant transport, childcare and other costs.

In the context of employer support for fee payment, it is important to remember a proportion of the total part-time market is in nursing. These students are largely funded under contracts with NHS Strategic Health Authorities and are not charged a fee. The employer contribution comes from the payments to the HEI under those contracts. Three of the eight institutions in the sample had NHS funded part-time nursing provision.

### **6.3 Part-time Fee Waiver**

We found no general policies on fee waivers amongst the institutions in the sample.

The Government's proposals to make available increased fee support for part-time undergraduates undertaking at least 0.5 FTE study, and to increase access to learning funds for part-time students to enable institutions to provide more financial help for them were welcomed by institutions. However most were looking at ways they might provide additional help from their own funds through bursaries and scholarships, especially to those who would be eligible for little or no support under the Government scheme for low income groups. A few institutions also discounted fees for those on Job Seekers Allowance.

Some institutions waived fees for full-time staff members registered with them for PT postgraduate research or more frequently, as part of an agreed programme of staff development endorsed by their line manager, for PT taught postgraduate or undergraduate programmes. With the agreement of the relevant Head of Department or Cost Centre, staff were usually given paid time-off work to attend classes. Those following a part-time study programme outside the institution's own staff development programme were usually expected to meet their own tuition fees.

#### **6.4 Instalments and Part-time Student Debt**

All the institutions in the sample had arrangements in place to allow fees to be paid in usually two or three instalments, provided the fee was above a minimum level, usually £400 or £500.

Fee debt was not identified by most institutions in the sample as a significant problem, but some reported that assiduous chasing up of students added substantially to the administrative costs. A more difficult problem was that it was not always easy to find out whether a part-time student had quit the course or was taking time out, especially when the amount of direct teaching contact was limited. The advent of on-line tutor support systems could be a valuable tool in following-up students.

## **7. COSTS OF PART-TIME PROVISION**

### **7.1 The Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) and the Costs of Part-time Teaching**

Most institutions, both within the London sample and more widely across the UK are only now beginning to grapple with applying full economic costing (FEC) within the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) developed by JM Consulting Ltd for the higher education sector to their teaching and learning provision, let alone using it to distinguish between the differential costs of full-time and part-time teaching provision. Until now most of the work on TRAC within HEIs has centred on costing individual research projects to be supported by the Research Councils or Government Departments. A few institutions had done some theoretical work confirming that the lower the FTE, the higher the unit cost because of the impact of fixed costs. One or two institutions had also begun to research how particular cost drivers varied between full-time and part-time teaching.

The two specialist part-time institutions both had a detailed understanding of their cost structures and how they compared with HEIs having a mixture of full-time and part-time provision. However, this type of information, while essential to the institutions themselves, does not address directly the relativity between the costs of full-time and part-time provision in institutions that have both.

We sought to use TRAC and FEC as a starting point for considering the costs drivers for institutions of offering part-time programmes compared with full-time programmes. In particular we drew on the TRAC-based costing methodology for part-time study which JM Consulting Ltd developed as part of a wider investigation which they undertook for HEFCE on the costs of alternative modes of delivery<sup>10</sup> (HEFCE August 2003). We shared this report with the sample institutions as a basis for the discussion of relative costs since its analysis of cost drivers for part-time provision was germane, most particularly in its identification of cost drivers associated with headcount rather than student FTE. Most of the institutions in the sample already recognised in their existing resource and cost allocation methods the need to use headcount rather than FTE for many central costs, particularly administration costs.

There were also some indications from the evidence we collected from the HEIs in the London sample that direct teaching costs may in some instances be higher than implied by the student FTE for part-time provision than for full-time provision. This is because in general part-time students expect more face-to-face contact with their tutors outside formal teaching sessions, possibly using their tutors for information about other services/facilities that full-time students may find out about from their student peer groups and which may only be open in normal office hours. Most of the staff who teach outside core hours do so without additional payment within their existing contract hours. They are able to take time off during the normal working week. However, some part-time teaching is delivered by part-time visiting lecturers rather than core academic staff and their costs need to be factored in to the costs of part-time teaching.

### **7.2 Other Factors Affecting the Relative Costs of Full-time and Part-time Provision**

Both the London Higher sample HEIs and those in the Universities UK study drew our attention to a number of other factors that could affect the cost relativity of part-time and full-time teaching provision. Apart from the obvious additional costs of

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<sup>10</sup>*The costs of alternative modes of delivery*, Research & Development Report 14/03. (HEFCE August 2003).

keeping buildings open in the evenings and providing security, institutions drew attention to two specific factors tending to increase the costs of part-time provision relative to cognate full-time provision:

- First, an increasing amount of part-time provision is being developed and offered in partnership with an employer or other institution. While there will be very significant benefits to students from partnership working there are also additional costs when compared to directly offered full-time provision.
- Second, especially in post-1992 universities and in Wales, part-time study is seen as an integral part of the institution's widening participation strategy. If a high proportion of part-time students on any programme are from non-traditional higher education backgrounds and/or have little recent experience of learning they will require substantial additional learning support. This is now being recognised in England through a substantial increase in the widening participation fund for part-time students. It is, of course, difficult in practice to distinguish between additional costs arising from the part-time nature of the provision and those arising from the additional needs of widening participation students.

### **7.3 Differential Costs of (and Differential Access to) Providing Central Facilities and Student Services for Part-time Students**

We were only able to obtain limited evidence from the sample institutions of the differential use of central facilities and student services by part-time students. Some of the institutions had reviewed the availability of student services and had moved to certain services (especially library & IT support) being available for longer hours for all students, not just those studying part-time. In most institutions central services such as finance and registry services, except at enrolment times, are not open during the evening or at weekends. Some institutions are making information/services available on the web (including registration/fee payment, advice about student services and hardship funds, library/information materials and services), as a service for all students but one of especial help to part-time students.

These findings from the London sample mirrored very closely what we were able to discover from the wider sample of HEIs in the Universities UK study. However, what evidence was available suggested that part-time students made proportionately less use of services than full-time students. In one institution, for example, that had a high proportion of part-time students, only around 4% of the usage of the University Counselling Service was from part-time students.

This lower use of services may reflect a lack of awareness on the part of the part-time students who often lack the peer group network which most full-time students enjoy. It may also reflect a continuing mismatch between the times services are available and the times part-time students are on campus. For example, in most institutions central services such as finance and registry services, except at enrolment times are not open during the evening or at weekends, and some institutions for financial reasons were able to offer less comprehensive catering services outside of core hours. The data from the Strand 3 survey of part-time students (Universities UK 2006b) shows that only the library and on-line services were used frequently by a majority of the respondents to the survey. A majority of the respondents said that they never used the Finance Office or the Registry. This may reflect an increasing tendency to enrol on line.

We concluded in the Universities UK Strand 2 study that the availability of central facilities and student services is an important element in determining the quality of the

higher education experience of all students, whether they are studying full-time or part-time, and there is little doubt that institutions share this philosophy. However, the limited evidence that institutions in the sample were able to provide of the use of services by part-time students and the findings of the Strand 3 survey that this use of services is in practice limited, points to the need for further research in this area about the needs of part-time students, whether those needs are being met, and how best to meet them, and what the additional costs of an equitable provision of central facilities and student services might be. In particular we recommended that:

*“this further research should seek to establish whether the needs of different types of part-time students differ from those of full-time students, whether or not those needs are met by the way services are currently offered, the barriers to different types of part-time students using the services and how they might be better offered to meet the needs more effectively.”* (Taken from ‘Summary and Conclusions’ Strand 2 report (Universities UK 2006c). Unpublished.

#### **7.4 Part-time Students and the Funding Method for Teaching**

The current HEFCE teaching funding method uses FTE as its principal volume measure. However this assumes that FTE captures the relative funding needs of full-time and part-time students. In reality HEFCE already recognises through the application of a part-time premium to its funding calculation for part-time undergraduate numbers that there are certain costs that relate to headcount rather than FTE. Furthermore, under the current review of its teaching funding method, HEFCE has now decided to move over time to using a TRAC based approach to underpin the weightings and premia for different types of provision within the funding formula and has established a Steering Group to oversee the work required to establish the baseline information that will be required.

Over the next few years as institutions apply TRAC to the costs of teaching, those that have a significant amount of part-time provision are likely to seek to use the information on cost relativities between full-time and part-time provision as a major factor alongside market research in their decisions on setting part-time fees and determining the long-term sustainability of part-time provision within their overall teaching portfolios.

## 8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This in-depth study of the part-time provision in a sample of eight HEIs in London has demonstrated the existence of a range of different types of part-time HE provision, aimed at different types of student and with different qualification aims. The sample was selected by and large to include some of the main part-time providers and, although the sample institutions are only 20% of the institutions in London, they had in 2003-04 over 60% of the part-time enrolments. To an extent this concentration of provision reflects an historic degree of specialisation in London of part-time provision in a few institutions, most notably Birkbeck which was historically the principal part-time provider for the University of London and remains a specialist part-time institution and in the three former ILEA polytechnics located close to central London.

Part-time provision is not simply an adjunct to full-time provision. Even where it is available alongside cognate full-time provision it is more tailored to the needs of particular types of student than full-time provision, in terms of when and where it is delivered and the degree of flexibility for students to vary their intensity of study.

Part-time provision is sharply differentiated between taught postgraduate courses (mainly taught masters), first degrees, vocational sub-degrees and non-vocational sub-degrees. The last of these is largely, but not entirely, associated with continuing education for adults, although in some institutions it is part of the widening participation activity.

Nursing courses are a clearly separately identifiable and major element of part-time provision for some institutions in London. They are mostly funded under contracts with Strategic Health Authorities. Within Nursing provision there is a close degree of integration of part-time and full-time study unlike much of part-time provision. However, those registered as studying part-time Nursing programmes will usually be undertaking CPD or re-taking modules they have failed at the first attempt.

The most popular subjects of study are broadly vocational in the main with Computer Science, Business Studies and Academic Studies in Education featuring strongly in the sample institutions. Languages also feature strongly which probably reflects both personal development and some element of vocational need, given London's international importance.

Until now part-time fees have in most institutions in the sample been determined by reference to the corresponding full-time fee on a credit equivalence basis, with some adjustments to reflect the competitive nature of particular markets. One or two institutions, especially at postgraduate level have been able to use their market position to charge premium fees.

With the introduction from 2006/07 of variable fees for full-time undergraduates with most institutions charging £3000, the institutions have been reviewing the basis of their part-time undergraduate fees. The starting point for most has been the principle that the part-time fee should be pro-rata to the full-time undergraduate fee. However, market research, especially by the specialist part-time providers, suggests that an increase in part-time fees pro-rata to the increase in full-time fees could severely reduce demand. In the light of this most institutions are moving cautiously to increase part-time undergraduate fees. This implies a lower level of funding and fee support for part-time students than for full-time students.

The prospect of part-time students attracting a lower level of resource than full-time students poses a threat to the future of part-time provision, especially if the work on applying the TRAC to teaching and learning confirms the higher costs of part-time

teaching. Taken together with evidence that demand for part-time study, especially at undergraduate level, may now be falling, some institutions may begin to question the sustainability of their part-time provision.

The evidence from the institutions in the sample used for this study is that only a very low proportion of part-time students have their fees paid by their employers, even on highly vocational courses. This evidence is not easily reconcilable with evidence from other sources of higher levels of employer support for fees, including the Strand 3 of the Universities UK study of part-time students undertaken by Professor Callender (Universities UK 2006b). This suggests that, leaving aside questions of the sample of students, a significant proportion of students in employment pay their own fees and then obtain reimbursement from their employers.

Institutions are only now beginning to apply the TRAC to their teaching and learning activities in the light of HEFCE's decision to use TRAC to underpin some of the key elements of its funding method. In the first instance the focus is likely to be on obtaining good data to assign overall teaching costs rather than on more specific issues such as the differential costs of full-time and part-time study. Nevertheless, institutions are clearly aware of the importance of using headcount rather than FTE as the cost driver for certain central costs, especially administration, and already do so within existing resource allocation models.

There is currently a lack of good evidence on the need for part-time students to access student services and central facilities. The evidence that is available both from the Strand 2 and Strand 3 studies for Universities UK (Universities UK 2006b and 2006c) is that by and large, they make less use than full-time students of such services. We recommend that further research be undertaken on the needs of part-time students to access student services and central facilities and how best those needs can be met.

Part-time provision by institutions in London is currently meeting a wide range of individual needs, including those who wish to enhance their careers or change careers, those not in work who wish to increase their chances of employment, those accessing higher education for the first time, those wishing or required to undertake CPD and those wishing to engage in lifelong learning. Much of this provision is also relevant to the needs of employers for employees with up-to-date skills. In the current environment all types of part-time students face the prospect of having to pay higher up front tuition fees while very often also incurring substantial transport, childcare and other costs. Institutions will undoubtedly try to sustain demand by keeping fee increases as far as possible within what the market will bear and increasing the range and amount of financial support they provide for part-time students on low incomes. Nevertheless, there appears to be a significant risk that some kinds of part-time provision will disappear as they are seen to be no longer sustainable at a price the market will bear. The alternative for the majority of individuals who wish to study part-time is not full-time study, but not studying at all.

## REFERENCES

*London Higher: Part-time Students in London HEIs Research Project: Strand 1 Report:* Brian Ramsden and Nigel Brown, Nigel Brown Associates (**London Higher 2006** available at [www.londonhigher.ac.uk](http://www.londonhigher.ac.uk).)

*UUK Part-time Research Project Strand 1 Report* Brian Ramsden, Nigel Brown Associates (**Universities UK 2006a**). Not yet published but a summary of the main findings was made available in a paper prepared for the Conference on Part-time Higher Education held in October 2005 *Initial findings of the Universities UK study of part-time students and part-time study* (**Universities UK 2005**).

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*Part-time Study in Higher Education in the UK. A Survey of Students' Attitudes and Experiences of Part-time Study and its Costs 2005/06.* A report for Universities UK by Professor Claire Callender, London South Bank University. (**Universities UK 2006b**) (Not yet published).

*Study of Part-time Higher Education: Strand 2 Report A survey of the Issues Facing Institutions* Nigel Brown Associates (**Universities UK 2006c**). (Not yet published).

*Earning, Learning and Paying: The Results from a National Survey of the Costs and Financing of Part-time Students in Higher Education:* Alan Woodley DfES Research Report (**DfES December 2004**).

## ANNEX A

### List of Questions used in the Interviews with Institutional Representatives

#### STRAND 2 SURVEY: QUESTIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS

*(If you have undertaken any work relevant to the following areas and are willing to share this with the research team on a confidential basis, we would be extremely grateful. We will ensure that the confidentiality of such information is protected in our final report).*

##### 1 Student data

Looking at HESA data:

- Does the FT/PT comparison make it possible to identify PT provision without underpinning equivalent FT provision?
- Are there particular features of the institution's overall provision which emerge from these figures – for example is the part-time other undergraduate provision sharply differentiated from the remainder of the institution's provision?
- Are there any features of the part-time provision or particular elements of it that are not immediately apparent from the data?

##### 2 Profile of subject areas (especially UGT)

How are programmes delivered to PT students, for example:

- Are PT and FT students taught together?
- Are PT and FT students taught at different times but using same modules & materials (ie double sessions offered in same semester), perhaps involving different locations?
- Are different delivery mechanisms required for PT provision (perhaps to reduce frequency of face-to-face teaching) than for cognate FT provision?
- Are different locations required to ensure accessibility for part-time students?

What is the impact on staffing and other resources where both FT and PT provision exist but where PT provision has no cognate FT provision underpinning it (especially where this is true at subject level)?

Does the institution operate on more than one site? What impact does this have on delivery of PT provision?

Who teaches PT students taught outside core hours (9-5 M-F)? FT or PT staff? Do FT staff receive additional payment for teaching outside core hours (eg weekends, remote location, summer schools)?

Are there any particular elements in the snapshot summary of PT student numbers that lead to additional costs for mainstream PT provision that are not required for parallel FT provision (eg franchised provision, support for disability, distance learning, blended learning and use of e-learning)?

### **3 Franchise/partnerships**

- What PT HE provision is franchised to Further Education College (FEC) partners? Do other partnerships with institutions (HE or FE) or other organisations (eg employers) exist for the delivery of PT HE?
- Do your franchise agreement(s) specify how the income from the funding council and tuition fees is split between yourself and the partner institution(s)? Please supply details.
- Who collects fees for franchise students?
- Have you done any analysis of the costs of your franchise/partnership provision? What are the cost drivers for this provision?

### **4 Tuition fees**

- How does the institution set its PT fee schedule each year?
- Does the institution take account of any evidence (for example from TRAC) about relative costs across different subjects/departments in setting its PT fee schedules?
- Does the fee setting include the fees charged to students for provision that is franchised out?
- Please provide a copy of the fee setting policy and method for calculation of actual fees.
- Please provide a copy of the institution's schedule for PT fees for 2003/04.
- What work have you undertaken to review the impact of the introduction in England of variable tuition fees for full-time undergraduates from 2006-07 on the level of part-time undergraduate fees? Are you able to share any of your thinking on this with us?
- Has your institution done any analysis of which organisations/agencies provide financial support towards part-time students' tuition fees? If so, what were the conclusions of your analysis? Please indicate the year(s) to which the analysis refers. Is it possible to have a copy of that analysis?
- How significant are employers as a source of payment of tuition fees for PT students? Is this estimate based simply on those employers you bill for payment of PT tuition fees?
- How many employers do you bill for tuition fee payments for PT students? Are the students supported by employers in this way concentrated in any particular subjects/qualification aims?
- Does the institution have arrangements in place to enable PT students to pay tuition fees by instalment? What are these arrangements?
- Does the institution have significant numbers of PT student debtors? Does this relate to difficulties in tracking the continued attendance of part-time students or problems relating to the ability to pay? Are there any particular courses or types of PT students who consistently find it hard to pay their fees? How does the institution deal with PT student debtors?

## **5 Fee waiver policy**

- Did the institution have any fee waiver policy in place in 2003-04 for PT students?
- Are there any particular categories of students for whom fees are waived/reduced (eg the institution's own employees)?
- What is the predicted impact of withdrawal of PT fee waiver scheme (in England) on demand and the ability of students to pay tuition fees?

## **6 Student retention and progression**

- Do you collect data to assess the progression of part-time students and have you undertaken any analysis of such data? How does progression of part-time students compare with the progression of full-time students?
- Is movement backwards and forwards between full-time and part-time study a feature of your student body?

## **7 Cost drivers**

- Has the institution done any work on its own PT teaching cost base? Which areas? May we see papers? In particular have you examined the extent to which headcount may be a more appropriate cost driver for certain costs than FTE (as per JM Consulting Ltd methodology)?
- Under the institution's Resource Allocation Model (RAM), how are departmental budgets allocated each year? What is the basis for budget setting (earned income through funding council, tuition fees and other external sources) using subject weightings/FTEs/other factors?
- How are central overheads apportioned to budgets? Is the institution proposing to apply the TRAC principals in resource allocation?
- Does the institution have a system of space charging? What is the basis of the system?
- Any policy documents we could see on budgeting/resource allocation?
- Are you able to distinguish between the additional costs of Widening Participation (WP) students and the additional costs of PT students?

## **8 Support services**

- What pastoral support is available for PT students and what is their take-up of those services?
- What central support services are open to/used by PT students?
- Are there any services/facilities that the institution offers just to PT students? (Are there services/facilities offered to FT students that are not used by PT students (eg only open 9-5 M-F when PT classes at other times)?)
- Have you done any work on the use of services and facilities by PT students?
- Marketing costs: Is it possible to identify specific costs of marketing to and recruiting PT students? How far are these costs met for FT students through UCAS? For WP institutions what use is made in the recruitment of PT students of local/regional promotional material as well as specific subject/programme marketing?

## **9 Evidence/impressions of cost base**

- What extra costs do some/all PT students generate as compared to FT students taking account of full-time equivalence as appropriate?
- What cost savings are there for PT provision linked with cognate FT provision (eg if PT and FT students taught together on same programme or savings on premises costs through distance or e-learning)?

## **10 Demand**

- What evidence do you have about the nature of demand for PT study for different types of provision and how this varies over time?
- Have you sought evidence of potential demand from particular employers – for example local authorities, central government departments or local businesses?