

Work Based Learning Evaluation Report (Lydia Arnold / Charles Cowap)

1. Aims, objectives and intended outcomes within the *Aspire* theme.

Four key objectives were identified as follows.

- 1.1. Part time, work-based learners' satisfaction levels will have improved:
 - i. On their overall experience.
 - ii. On their needs being met.

- 1.2. The numbers (FTE's) of part-time, work-based learners will have increased, for the following groups:
 - i. Accredited long courses (at least 60 credits)
 - ii. Accredited short courses (less than 60 credits)
 - iii. Non-accredited courses
 - iv. Total part-time work based learners

- 1.3. Co-ordination of WBL support to maximise WBL opportunities for part and fulltime students, including CPD learners.

- 1.4. To ensure staff and employers are well supported to facilitate learning.

2.0. Evaluation of the extent to which these have been met.

Data and evidence is hereafter summarised for each objective.

2.1. Part time, work-based learners' satisfaction levels will have improved.

2.1.1. Satisfaction levels: An overview

Table 1 shows that student satisfaction levels have increased year on year based on 'acceptable, good and excellent' ratings as well as on 'good and excellent' ratings. Satisfaction has increased against the backdrop of rapidly expanding provision (see Table 2).

Table 1: Part-time work based learners satisfaction levels

Objective	Actual 05/06	Actual 06/07	Actual 07/08	Actual 08/09
Part-time, work-based learners' satisfaction levels on their overall experience	94% ¹	99% ¹ (85% ²)	99% ¹ (90% ²)	99% ¹ (91% ²)
Part-time, work-based learners' satisfaction levels with the extent to which their needs have been met.	98% ¹	97% ¹ (84% ²)	97% ¹ (80% ²)	98% ¹ (84% ²)

Source: Course monitoring reports.

2.1.2. Sources of satisfaction

Additional data was gathered to better understand which particular elements of the learner experience acted to provide learners with a satisfactory experience. 179 students who have undertaken an AMTRA qualifications with Harper Adams responded to a survey about their learning experience. They rated different aspects of their learning experience as excellent, good, satisfactory, poor or very poor (see Table 2). An additional question in the survey asked how important each element was to their experience (see Table 3). The data implies that satisfaction is highest in those aspects of the learner experience that are most valued by learners themselves, notably flexible study methods and work relevant provision.

Table 2 Satisfaction of learners on the AMTRA modules with different aspects of their experience.

Aspect of the learner experience	% Excellent, good or satisfactory	% Excellent or good
Relevance of the learning to your work role	94.7	76.7
Registration with Harper Adams	97.3	71.3
Flexibility to study when it suited me	91.9	67.8
The speed/pace of learning	90.6	62.3
Resources to support my learning	90.1	59.2
Online support	83.2	43.4
Frequency of contact with other students	70.3	33.3
Access to learner support (e.g. dyslexia support)	90.2	32.4
Frequency of contact with tutors	77.0	30.9

¹ Based on acceptable, good and excellent ratings.

² Based on good and excellent ratings.

Table 3 The importance of different aspects of the learning experience for learners undertaking AMTRA qualifications.

Aspect of the learner experience (AMTRA)	Yes, it matters a lot (%)	It matters a little (%)	No, this is not important to me (%)
Relevance of the learning to your work role	75.0	22.1	2.9
Flexibility to study when it suited me	73.3	22.2	4.4
Resources to support my learning	71.0	21.0	8.1
The speed/pace of learning	66.7	25.4	7.9
Opportunities for feedback on my progress	46.8	34.9	18.3
Online support	44.6	38.5	16.9
Registration with Harper Adams	42.3	40.1	17.5
Frequency of contact with tutors	41.1	36.4	22.5
Access to learner support (e.g. dyslexia support)	21.8	16.4	61.8
Frequency of contact with other students	21.7	38	40.3

The importance of flexible delivery coupled with a sense of satisfaction that Harper is delivering this, shone through in further qualitative evidence drawn from a range of sources:

“My biggest requirements were flexibility to learn and study from home and to have options of examination centres close to home as well as choice of exam dates as I am running a business and looking after 2 small children. I feel that [the course team] did support me extremely well allowing me to gain qualifications which would not have been possible otherwise”. (Source AMTRA survey, 2010).

“The delivery mode, i.e. on campus away from the workplace, enables an immersion in to the learning situation and was deemed as appropriate. The use of experts from a wide range of backgrounds (academic and industrial experience) is perceived as being valuable and informative adding richness to the learning experience”. (Source: National Grid Learner Interviews Summary, 2009).

A further source of satisfaction across the evidence base came from the opportunity to develop practical skills whether this is applying theory to practice on field surveying trips or gaining on the job experience of a range of roles (Sources: MDS Critical review, National Grid Interviews, AMTRA Interviews).

In summary, satisfaction levels have improved and have become better understood. Data suggests that satisfaction is high in relation to Harper’s ability to provide a flexible and work relevant learning experience. Evidence from across different sources suggests that work remains to address other issues including:

- ensuring consistently high quality resources.
- providing appropriate support for learners undertaking assessment.
- creating opportunities for peer and tutor support for all learners.

- Consistently ensuring off-site learners have all necessary information.

2.2. The numbers (FTE's) of part-time, work-based learners will have increased, for the following groups:

- Accredited long courses (at least 60 credits)
- Accredited short courses (less than 60 credits)
- Non-accredited courses
- Total part-time work based learners

Table 4 Summary of student numbers by category 2005-9

Group category	Actual 05/06	Actual 06/07	Actual 07/08
Accredited long courses (at least 60 credits)	48 (24 FTE)	48 (23 FTE)	55 (29 FTE)
Accredited short courses (less than 60 credits)	270 (50 FTE)	1024 (126 FTE)	2346 (272 FTE)
Non-accredited courses ³	594 (1492 delegate days)	486 (2653 delegate days)	433 (1239 delegate days)
Total part-time work-based learners	912	1594	2834

Source: Short course monitoring reports.

2.2.1. Additional data demonstrating growth in student numbers

Expansion of work-based learning provision has come from two processes. First Expansion of student numbers within individual programmes and modules (see Table 5 for examples). And second through the expansion of the number of programmes on offer (See Figure 1 for examples).

Table 5: The growth in student numbers across two individual modules.

Module	BASIS Crop Protection Award	FACTS Fertiliser Award
2006/7	22 (5.5 FTE)	53 (6.9 FTE)
2007/8	36 (9 FTE)	35 (4.5 FTE)
2008/9	175 (43.75 FTE)	233 (30.3FTE)

(Source: SITS)

Figure 1. Examples of part-time work based programmes and modules validated 2005-10:

- ✓ National Grid Lands Officer University College Diploma
- ✓ PgC/PgD/MSc Veterinary Physiotherapy
- ✓ PgD/MSc Veterinary Pharmacy
- ✓ Commercial Harness Horse Drivers Foundation Certificate
- ✓ University College Foundation Certificate in Dairy Technology
- ✓ Basis Nutrient Management Planning
- ✓ Certificate of Higher Education in Professional Development
- ✓ Post Graduate Certificate in Food and Fresh Produce Management

An additional point to highlight the expansion of numbers comes by way of the achievement of additional 367 FTE's (HEFCE target 369) through employer engagement provision in 2008/9 through REEDNet supported by *Aspire*.

2.3. Co-ordination of WBL support to maximise WBL opportunities for part and full time students, including CPD learners and ensure staff and employers are well supported to facilitate learning.

A range of *Aspire* led events and products have been used to support staff and employers in work-based learning and/or to assist in the coordination of employer engagement.

2.3.1. The development of documentation and resources to support staff and employer development.

Sections 3 & 4 of the Quality Assurance Manual have been reviewed and adapted to support the development of modules and programmes for employer engagement. There has also been the development of a specification template to facilitate good practice in the design of employer engagement programmes.

The creation of 'Guidance for the Creation of Employer Engagement Modules and Descriptors' booklet was undertaken to support staff in utilising good practice in designing or developing employer engagement modules. The booklet has been distributed internally to all staff and externally to *Landex* colleges. Dissemination of an online version of the resource has also begun through the *Aspire* website. Informal feedback (word of mouth and email) from internal staff and from partner college staff has indicated that this booklet was useful in helping to develop module documentation and module designs.

In 2010 revisions to the contract documentation for employer engagement sought to ease the process of forming partnership arrangements. The production of a contract template means that the contract data requirement is both clear and proportionate.

The *Aspire* staff survey (2010) asked staff 'How important have internal resources and publications been in supporting and encouraging your involvement in employer engagement initiatives?'

Table 6 Aspire staff survey results

Importance of the internal documents/resources to staff in supporting and encouraging your involvement in employer engagement initiatives	Response (%)
Very important or important	32.2
Not important	41.9
Not sure	25.8

To explain the distribution of answers, staff interviews and informal discussions with reveal that the documentation is important to those who are involved in work based learning, but that it is not seen as relevant by staff who are focussed upon other activity.

2.3.2. Learning & Teaching Forums

Learning & Teaching Forum sessions with work-based learning themes have included sessions entitled:

- Creating work based learning
- Patchwork assessment (creative assessment for work-based learning).
- Technology choices for work-based learning.

Staff interviews revealed that the Forums with a work-based learning theme were very valuable to some, specifically because they:

- Encourage the exploration solutions for potential or current challenges.
- Facilitate the coming together of Harper staff with employer engagement partners and in so doing helped relationship building.
- Assist new staff to quickly get to grips with different practices in operation within the College.
- Open up new and novel approaches to practice in relation to work-based learning (acting as a shop window for new practice).

The *Aspire* staff survey (2010) asked staff ‘How important have the learning and teaching forums been in supporting and encouraging your involvement in employer engagement initiatives?’

Table 7 Aspire staff survey results

Importance of learning and teaching forums to staff in supporting and encouraging your involvement in employer engagement initiatives	Response (%)
Very important or quite important	30.5
Not important	44.4
Not sure	25

A mixed picture emerges from this data with some staff finding the events important to advancing their practice in work-based learning, and others not. Staff interviews highlighted that forum attendees are often limited to a number of regular individuals. Five out of the ten staff interviewed highlighted this as a limitation of the teaching and learning forum. This may go some way to explain the high proportion of 'Not Sure' responses.

On balance, the forums offer benefit, with respect to engagement in employer engagement work, for some people. Limited attendance may be seen as restricting the impact of the sessions.

The interviews revealed some reasons why individuals did not attend including lack of time to attend (workload), a perceived lack of relevance and lack of time to implement changes in practice.

2.3.3. Work-based learning team

According to the *Aspire* staff survey, 55.5% of respondents find engagement with the REEDNet team/*Aspire* staff important to for supporting their involvement with work-based learning, only 13% of respondents felt that this was not important for them, whilst the remainder were unsure.

Staff interviews qualified why engagement with this *Aspire* led resource has been important, in response to the question *How, if at all, have Aspire staff helped in the development of your practice re. Work based learning?* Answers included:

- For problem solving when faced with new initiatives and developments.
- Driving forwards innovative initiatives.
- Provision of specific work-based learning expertise, which is currently not always available within all departments.
- Developing new curriculum approaches.
- Coordinating work-based learning.
- Providing consistency in work-based learning across the institution.
- Providing support for departments where staff do not have time to allocate to getting new initiatives off the ground.
- Bringing ideas from other institutions into the University College.

The interviews revealed that some staff did not feel that the team was relevant to their main areas of practice. Also, others felt that much of the necessary expertise for progressing work-based learning exists within departments thus rendering contact with the team largely, though not always, unnecessary. A consensus appeared over the value of the innovation possibilities of having a dedicated staff resource.

2.3.4. The development of an employer engagement infrastructure

The *Aspire* work-based learning staff and the accumulation of work undertaken has been central to the creation of key structures to facilitate work-based learning in the institution. These structures include:

- Employer Engagement Accreditation & Validation Committee (EEAVC)
- Employer Engagement Course Committee.
- Employer Engagement Assessment Board.
- Funding model for employer engagement.
- Funding model for strategic funding of new work-based learning developments.

In the *Aspire* staff survey only 6 respondents (16%) felt that the EEAVC acted to support their engagement with work-based learning. However this data must be seen in the light of the short time that has passed since the committee formed and became operational and the small number of staff who have used the facility thus far.

The committee structure has been overwhelmingly endorsed by those who have used it, staff interviews and informal feedback revealed some of the realised benefits of this committee:

- Rapid progression of work-based learning initiatives.
- Efficient structure for use with external partners – efficiency creates a good image.
- The committee is also acting as a forum in which learning about work-based learning is occurring '[h]uge amounts of learning go on with the discussions at EEAVC – it allows us to see what is acceptable, practicable and possible'.

Whilst not everyone interviewed had first hand experience of utilising this committee, in all but one case there was a perception that the development of specialist structures such as EEAVC was positive for work-based learning in the college.

2.3.5. Supporting employers

In a series of employer interviews the ways in which employers received support from Harper Adams were explored. A summary list is offered here:

- Support in designing programmes
- Technical support for learners
- Provision and facilitation of online resources
- 'Harper staff are act as a rich information source'
- Provide teaching and assessment through other colleges to minimize travel
- Offer bespoke iterations of provision to meet particular delivery needs (e.g. fully online) – the institution offers flexibility.
- Dyslexia screening

Employer feedback examples:

- “The staff ... are always able to answer queries, clarify information and provide support and advise to [us] both with respect to Harper courses and more widely in relation to issues around training”
- “Staff provide a good level of technical support to the online facility, this is useful”.
- “Through the provision of Dyslexia screening and support; this has benefitted a number of [our] employees and has enabled them to complete. This service is not widely available elsewhere. Individuals were dealt with positively”.
- “The provision of online quizzes is important. These are used to support [our] learners, and are available to all online”.(Source: *Aspire* employer interviews)

Informal employer feedback suggests that there is still work to be done in refining the process of full validation, to ensure they are efficient and not imposing events for employers to involve in.

3.0. Unintended outcomes

The main unintended outcomes are considered in turn.

3.1. Development work

Aspire resource has made possible work-based learning initiatives which involved intensive early development work e.g. MDS PG Certificate in Food and Fresh Produce using innovative approaches to teaching and learning and SBC’s Certificate of Higher Education in Professional Development using a new concept module (known as ‘the wrapper’).

Experience gained within the *Aspire* the programme as well as *Aspire*'s resource commitment has enabled the development of a shell framework for work-based learning.

Staff interviews indicated that a proportion of staff recognise and value *Aspire*'s work based learning development work in this area.

3.2. Work-based learning - feeding forwards

The success of Harper Adams in achieving an early and significant HEFCE employer engagement project (**REEDNet**) was enabled by the development of expertise and understanding of work-based learning issues, challenges and opportunities which occurred within and through the *Aspire* CETL. The experiences accrued by and through *Aspire*'s work-based learning element were cited within the 2008 HEFCE bid.

Whilst difficult to quantify, a sense of growing institutional confidence fed from the *Aspire* work-based learning impetus to inform and buoy the development of the future of work-based learning in the University College.

Through the REEDNet project, *Aspire* has contributed to, and benefited from :

- Cross institutional working (through a range of means including virtual collaboration [Huddle] and shared development events with partners at the Royal Agricultural College).
- New partnership configurations for employer engagement initiatives.
- Internal dissemination events (specifically focused on awareness of work based learning).

The ongoing institutional commitment to employer engagement is recognised by the UK Cross Government Food & Research Innovation Strategy Report (January 2010) which cites REEDNet's importance for building skills the sector.

3.3. Links with professional bodies

Through the development of work-based learning provision there has been association between Harper Adams University College and a range of professional bodies, including AMTRA, RICS and BASIS.

3.4. E-learning and work-based provision

With growing confidence and understanding of learner needs, and supported by the *Aspire* e-learning resource, fully online work-based provision is now being piloted. First through AMTRA modules; employer interview feedback suggests that so far this is being well received. And, second, through an online module created through an *Aspire* Fellowship, supported by *Aspire*'s work-based learning staff. Initial student feedback suggests that the learning experience is a useful addition to Harper's provision for students who are in work.

“Overall I think an online module is better ... Being busy and having lots of work, meetings, experiments etc. we can do the work for the module in our own time and around our schedules. Otherwise I think it would very difficult to get everyone together once or twice a week for a classroom session” (Source: student forum post on an online module).

The co-operation and collaboration of different elements of the institution, supported by *Aspire* resources has enabled progression in to this new area of practice.

3.4. New working partnerships

The development of relationships with Landex Colleges and notably with the Royal Agricultural College emerged from the formation of the REEDNet bid. The strengthening of relationships has promoted a collaborative spirit and has spurred joint working and the sharing of good practice. The evidence base for this claim may be accessed in the paper *Arnold, L. & Warr L. (2010) The Rural Employer Engagement Network. UVAC Conference paper presented 4/11/09.*

3.5. New working practices

The development of relationships with Landex Colleges has led to the emergence of some remote working practices; this represents an area of new practice for the institution.

4.0 Contribution of theme work to the overall *Aspire* aims

Aspire aims	Contribution of work-based learning	Evidence
Create a physical centre in the heart of the campus that, within the context of a curriculum related to the changing needs of the rural economy and food chain.	<p>Three key work-based learning staff are located in the <i>Aspire</i> centre. Being centrally located gives a sense that work-based learning is an integral part of the curriculum portfolio of the institution.</p> <p>This arrangement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. provides a business facing professional image for the work based learning element of the curriculum. b. provides the opportunity for the connection of staff from different but related areas to promote informal cross-fertilisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Staff interviews emphasised the importance of a professional looking venue for meeting external clients. b. Informal feedback suggests that the <i>Aspire</i> building allows work-based learning staff to readily meet and explore opportunities. <p>Staff survey 45% of respondents felt that the <i>Aspire</i> building was either important or very important in enabling people from different departments to come together to work more closely (24% were not sure).</p>
Fellowship and Staff Development Programme to encourage and reward staff who engage and disseminate outcomes of planned CETL developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A Partner Fellowship Award has been made to promote the development of work-based learning provision in partner colleges. b. An elearning fellowship has informed confidence in the possibilities of the VLE, lessons from this fellowship are currently feeding in to a new online programme for workbased learners. c. Work-based learning focused Learning and Teaching Forums have had impact upon some staff by opening up new approaches to practice, providing themed forums for networking and by offering insight into activities from around the institution. By definition the forums provided an opportunity for dissemination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 2009 Partner Fellowship Award made. b. The development of the Leadership and Professional Development has resulted in a greater understanding about utilising the Harper VLE for remote work located students. c. Feedback on the Learning & Teaching Forums that focused upon work-based learning was gained through the staff survey and through staff interviews. The benefits were evident for some staff but were not universally felt. Benefits included new insights and networking opportunity.
Provide the specialist support, staff development, time and rewards to encourage and facilitate staff and students to develop and evaluate learning and teaching innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Aspire</i> resource has enabled evaluative work to be undertaken in terms of data gathering, creating case studies of work-based learning developments and creating internal reflective reports. b. <i>Aspire</i> staff have been able to support the development of some significant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Evidence for evaluation lies within work completed and ongoing (case studies, surveys and internal reports). b. Evidence comes from staff interviews (see section 2.3.3) - essentially the resource allows injections of innovations, creative

	<p>work-based learning initiatives, notably MDS and SBC. Staff feedback suggests that the support of <i>Aspire</i> colleagues is valuable to this end.</p> <p>c. <i>Aspire</i> resource in work-based learning and e-learning has been combined to support staff in developing and maintaining online provision.</p>	<p>thinking and support for departmental staff who are often time limited.</p> <p>c. Evidence comes from Leadership and Professional development module as a product and informal positive feedback about the role of the <i>Aspire</i> in enabling this module to develop.</p>
<p>Harness the imagination and creativity of all academic staff to develop and reflect on innovative approaches to learning and learner support, through <i>Aspire</i> fellowships</p>	<p>a. Overlap between work-based and e-learning fellowships. E-learning fellowships have potentially opened up the possibility of using online learning for externally located students. Notably the Leadership and Professional Development has given confidence to the notion of fully online learning.</p>	<p>a. Creative online modules in action and a fully online programme pending validation.</p>
<p>Support staff to disseminate their evaluation findings, internally, and externally through speaking at learning & teaching events, contributing to research-based publications and by providing opportunities for inward secondments.</p>	<p>a. Learning & Teaching Forums encourage dissemination.</p> <p>b. External dissemination is enabled directly via <i>Aspire</i> staff and is supported through them (e.g. A sounding board for others).</p> <p>c. <i>Aspire</i> resourcing has enabled a dissemination of experience through external professional role which are held.</p> <p>d. <i>Aspire</i> resourcing has enabled engagement and participation in communities of practice including EBTA, FDF, HEA Employer Engagement Exchange Group.</p> <p>e. <i>Aspire</i> resourcing is supporting staff in the evaluation of new approaches to practice via Fellowship arrangements.</p>	<p>a. Staff from across departments and from <i>Aspire</i> have shared best practice in relation to different aspects of their practice.</p> <p>b. UVAC (peer reviewed) conference paper and event presentation relating to Harper's provision and via a published paper: Chapman, E. 2009. 'A Higher Education Response to Legislative Changes Within the Animal Health Industry' Volume 4: Scholarship of Work-based Learning issue of LATHE (Learning and Teaching in Higher Education).</p> <p>c. Through for example contributions to external publications via positions on relevant editorial boards e.g. Higher Education, Skills and Work-based Learning.</p> <p>d. Attendance at a series of events, meetings, seminars and workshops evidences participation. As does institutional membership of EBTA.</p>
<p>Improve our IT platform so that learning</p>	<p>a. Pioneering modules of different kinds have been created.</p>	<p>a. Evidence is in a number of operational online modules (LPD</p>

technologies can be fully exploited in improving both the learning environment and support for campus-based and distant students.	b. A self assessment tool has been developed for integration with Moodle. This learning object may be utilised by other modules.	and AMTRA modules). b. Beta version of self assessment wheel is now in operation.
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5.0 The extent of collaborative working/ developing and sharing of good practice between colleagues (internally and externally) that probably wouldn't have otherwise happened.

5.1. Champions

The *Aspire* programme enabled the resourcing of 'work-based learning champions' who act to motivate and inform developments and staff engagement with work based learning. Half of individuals answering the staff survey place significance upon working with key staff attached to their engagement with work-based learning, coupled with the testimony of individuals in the staff interviews, provide some endorsement to the notion that resourcing dedicated work-based learning staff has assisted the promotion of engagement with this activity. Extending the reach of this impact to encompass engagement with a wider staff body remains as a key challenge.

5.2. New forms of provision

Without the dedicated *Aspire* resource it seems unlikely that a number of initiatives would have come to fruition. The innovative developmental role played by the *Aspire* resource appears to be valued and recognised.

5.3. The adoption of technology for work-based learning

The feed of a plethora of technology based Fellowships into the institutional consciousness has undoubtedly moved on the confidence and skill of staff use of technology for work-based learning.

5.4. Securing the future of work-based learning

The REEDNet project was born of the *Aspire* CETL. The REEDNet project provides funding for the growth of student numbers in a way which will fundamentally transform the Colleges portfolio. The knowledge development, institutional confidence and the external engagement seeded through the *Aspire* years has unquestionably steered the institution's ongoing relationship with employer engagement.

6.0. Key achievements of work

Key achievements of work (materials, systems, community, understandings) in relation to benefits for:

Students

- Understanding the different needs of work-based learners.
- Understanding of the range and depth of challenges face by students.
- Understanding best practice for student documentation/information for work-based learners (e.g. student handbooks).
- Flexible approaches to provision have been developed across a range of programmes.
- Evidenced impact (personal and professional impact) on individuals of engaging in work-based learning.

- Impact's evidenced within the data collected included improvements in personal confidence, professional competence development, identifying and opening up career paths, financial reward, the development of a sense of increased professional respect from colleagues).
- Online provision is beginning to form – early initiatives have been made operational.
- Access to a network of providers built up initially through relationships built up over the *Aspire* years - making access to provision more convenient.

Staff

- A committee infrastructure to ensure a proportionate route to validation for employer engagement provision.
- An internal network of staff working collaboratively to develop, and to support others in developing, innovative provision.
- Guidance (written and personnel) and work-based learning specific documentation to support the construction of employer engagements.
- Access to national communities of practice to support and inform developments.
- A growing culture of collective confidence in the area of work-based learning.
- A deeper understanding of possible curriculum solutions, and a culture which has a preparedness to experiment appropriately.
- Greater understanding of assessment practices for work-based learners.
- Interaction with staff from other institutions during joint development events.

Staff and students in other universities and college

- Benefit from Harper Adams' engagement in external communities of practice (critical friendship and shared experiences).
- The dissemination of lessons learnt and good practice distributed through conferences and journals.
- Exemplary practice developed at Harper Adams has been recognised at relevant events (e.g. First Milk initiative cited by HEFCE at UVAC 2009).
- Working relationships with staff in other institutions have been built through the development of networked provision.
- External staff attendance at Learning and Teaching Forums as well as the *Aspire* conference.
- A Partner Fellowship Award brought a Landex College in to the *Aspire* programme; the course development which formed the focus of the partnership benefited from access to Harper Adams' staff resource.

Employers of our students or graduates

- Tangible benefits to the work of employees impacts on business (efficiency, excellence, learning culture).
- Businesses benefit from meeting legal requirements where provision is legislation driven.
- Employers have received training (or have been partners in building training) which pioneers new approaches to learning. (They have benefited from *Aspire's* investment in innovation).

7.0. Extent to which this work, and its impact, will continue after HEFCE funding of *Aspire*, including any supporting structures/organisation, so ensuring the ‘legacy’ of the *Aspire* programme will continue.

7.1. REEDNet

The legacy of *Aspire* with respect to work-based learning will continue through the HEFCE funded REEDNET project. The transfer of staff to REEDNet funded posts acts to ensure knowledge and experience is not lost from the institution.

The existence of strategic development funding through the REEDNet project should, in the near future, specifically uphold the innovative dimension to the staffing complement that was quite widely valued and which was actively reflected within the execution of innovative employer engagement developments during the life of the *Aspire* CETL.

7.2. A climate of uncertainty

Whilst the life of the REEDNet project (2011) secure it is also finite; projections beyond this period are more uncertain. Whilst there is strategic leadership in-place within Harper Adams to continue a trajectory of growth in employer engagement, much may depend on national policy directions and funding decisions.

8.0. Any messages about your work to relay to Harper Adams’ managers or HEFCE – successes, disappointments, difficulties of work, impact, future work needs in this area of activity.

- Legislative drivers have been and will continue to be significant in generating business for our work-based learning activity.
- Students across a range of programmes value flexible delivery and we must endeavour to innovate and act creatively to provide a variety of appropriate learning opportunities and experiences.
- Some evidence of the impact of work-based learning has been gathered and the small amount of evidence gathered thus far presents a compelling case regarding the benefits of work-based learning. We must use this data and extol the benefits.
- Disappointment perhaps remains that work-based learning still appears to be perceived as a marginal activity, whilst some staff remain very engaged many remain not engaged.
- Future work needs to focus firmly upon extending the numbers of staff engaging with the concept of work-based learning.

Based on acceptable, good and excellent ratings.

[\[2\]](#) Based on good and excellent ratings.