



Resource Guide in:

THE DEVELOPMENT OF KEY SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction – Why Key Skills?

Personal autonomy in student learning is high on the lengthy agenda of current initiatives in higher education. The concepts of 'graduateness' and 'employability' have also been the subject of much recent debate. What these initiatives – along with many other developments in secondary and higher education – have in common is the emphasis that they give to the importance of 'key', 'core' or 'generic' skills, which it is said are required by students entering employment direct from school, or as graduates from university in order to enable them to function more effectively in the world of work and in life generally. The claim is also made that developing these skills will enable students to become more effective learners, and in that sense they are seen to be crucial to enhanced study skills, the personal development planning processes, and consequently to higher levels of attainment.

It was the Dearing Report review into higher education in 1997 however, that brought the importance of these skills into prominence for the HE sector. Dearing stressed the importance of four skills as being "key to the future success of graduates whatever they intend to do in later life", namely;

- communication skills
- numeracy
- the use of information technology
- learning how to learn.

Indeed, it was one of the central recommendations of the Dearing Report that these four key skills should form part of the programme specifications as one of the intended outcomes for all degree level courses. The latter skill was regarded by Dearing as being particularly essential to HE students, "because of the importance we place on creating a learning society at a time when much specific knowledge will quickly become obsolete. Those leaving higher education will need to understand how to learn and how to manage their own learning and recognise that the process continues throughout life". Events post-Dearing - for instance, changes to the UCAS tariff system and the work of the QAA on Benchmark Statements - have also brought

key skills into sharp focus. More recently, the introduction of the Graduate Apprenticeship Programme and Foundation Degrees, within which key skills are prescribed as part of the mandatory framework, has raised their profile to a higher level of prominence in HE.

What Key Skills?

There are many definitions and classifications of key skills to be found in higher education, but increasing emphasis is being given to the set of skills defined by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

The QCA skills (www.qca.org.uk) have been defined as:

- Communication
- Information Technology
- Application of Number
- Working with Others
- Improving Own Learning and Performance
- Problem Solving

and detailed specifications have been drawn up, covering five levels of achievement.

More and more students will be entering university having followed a course involving the QCA key skills, and possessing formal Key Skills Qualifications, with an expectation that there will be opportunities for them to improve their skills within their degree courses. It is expected, for example, that a student entering higher education from an A level background will be able to demonstrate Level 3 competence (as defined within the National Qualifications Framework) although research by the CDELL team at the University of Nottingham suggests that this is currently the exception rather than the rule (*The Key Skills of Students Entering Higher Education* – CDELL, 1997). What this means is that HEIs will need to carry out some form of initial diagnosis of students' skill levels in order to plan for progression.

Although there has, in the past, been some resistance among universities to adopting the QCA framework, a close mapping of the majority of HEI's own skills descriptions against the nationally accredited QCA skills would reveal only minor differences of terminology. Dearing's "learning how to learn" for example is clearly part and parcel of "improving own learning and performance", and it would be difficult to envisage any degree programme, irrespective of subject, that did not involve problem solving and team working. There are strong arguments therefore for HEIs to adopt the QCA key skills as the basis for their own skills development programmes, without the need to sacrifice academic rigour or compromise the integrity of the different subject disciplines.

Implementing Key Skills

At a recent seminar for HE Careers Advisers, representatives from the world's leading companies in the IT sector stressed the need for new graduate recruits to have better communication, presentation, literacy and numeracy skills, more experience of team working, and an ability to reflect on their work in order to see how they might improve their future performance. These 'key skills' were said to be more important than the subject discipline they had studied, and even of the class of the degree, and there was a consensus that many graduates do not possess them to the required levels. This provoked a debate about the development of these skills within a degree course and it was astonishing to hear tutors and recent graduates stating quite firmly that the proper place to develop them was in extra-curricular activities and in their part-time and vacation work. There appeared to be little recognition of the fact that a History student, for example, might be required to give a presentation of a research report, or have to handle data, make calculations, and perhaps even work with other students on a collaborative activity! And the same would be true of any other HE discipline.

The point here is that opportunities for key skill development, and evidence of progress and achievement, exist naturally within just about every learning situation. Even traditional didactic teaching can help to develop a student's listening skills. Many would therefore argue that this proves that the key skills are "naturally embedded" within the degree course, so their students must be acquiring them. The difficulty with this view, even if it were true, is that the skills are so deeply embedded that students are unaware that they are developing them and fail to give them the regard they merit. It is true that the QAA requirement for programme specifications and the prominent position that key skills occupy in the benchmark statements will make their presence more transparent and will go some way to overcoming this problem, but it will not resolve the question of how best they can be implemented within a degree programme. The answer to that question lies in effective planning to ensure that more participative teaching and learning styles are employed that encourage skill development and at the same time enable students to recognise their relevance, both to their immediate subject interests and to their longer term career prospects.

There is then the question of assessment. Should key skills be assessed, and if so, how and by whom? These questions are clearly matters for policy decisions that will need to be considered and taken at institutional or departmental level. The reality however is that in the UK context we tend to give more credence to learning that is assessed and accredited, and if key skills are as important as they appear to be in terms of enhancing student achievement and making them more employable, then perhaps non-assessment is no longer an option.

As with all assessment, judgements about student performance can only be made on the basis of evidence, and in the case of key skills, the broader the range of evidence the more reliable the judgements are likely to be. Given the generic nature and supposed transferability of key skills, evidence that is drawn from different contexts, on different occasions, and from different sorts of activities, is likely to provide a more dependable basis for assessment and demonstrate development of skills over time, than evidence arising from a single or repetitively similar activity. Critical too, is the involvement of the students in the assessment process, if they are to develop their skills as reflective learners, and the complementary processes that underpin personal development planning. These approaches emphasise the formative potential of skill development, which in turn will reinforce the relevance of the skills within the degree course. In contrast, using timed pencil and paper tests, multiple choice tests, and tick box assessments, will do little to reveal appropriate evidence of achievement and can marginalise the role of the key skills.

The ideal solution to questions of implementation and assessment is for tutors to employ a range of teaching and learning activities that are relevant to their subject disciplines and from which evidence of key skills achievement will emerge naturally. Examples of such approaches can be found in the CDELL publication *Introducing and supporting key skills in higher education* (see below for details).

Introducing and Supporting Key Skills in Higher Education – Agendas, Ideas and Issues for University Departments

Contact: CDELL, School of Education, University of Nottingham

Email: cdell@nottingham.ac.uk

CDELL has been working in the area of key skills for many years, and this set of source materials provides a comprehensive review of the main issues that need to be addressed by any department in any curriculum area considering whether or how to introduce a key skills component into the course programme. It covers twelve areas:

- A rationale for key skills
- Which key skills?
- Programme audit
- How to specify key skills
- Managing key skills
- Motivating and supporting staff
- Teaching and learning key skills
- Motivating students
- Support for students
- Graduateness
- Assessment and accreditation
- Graduate employability.

The purpose of the materials is to provide HEIs with a quick route into a discussion of key skills. Each of the twelve areas is supported by a series of *Departmental Agenda Items* designed so as to focus discussion on the key questions that will need to be addressed if you are planning to introduce key skills. The materials are generic, in that they have been written in such a way as to be applicable to all subject disciplines. By way of example, the section on “**Programme Audit**” is set out under a number of sub-headings, each of which has a set of questions which encourage departmental review of:

- institutional strategies for key skills developments
- institutional management
- current programme provision
- student participation and action planning
- how learners can value key skills
- current learning opportunities for key skills
- the learning environment
- student involvement in the assessment process
- recording systems.

It also contains an extensive reference section, listing key skills sources in many HEIs and addressing various subject areas. The publication is available from the CDELL Office, or can be downloaded from the website

(www.nottingham.ac.uk/education/cdell). A follow-up set of materials addressing personal development planning will be available to all LTSN subject centres in September 2002, together with a CD which will contain details of key skills developments in all curriculum areas.

Key Skills and Personal Development Planning (PDP)

Mention has already been made to the mutual support that key skills and PDP can offer, particularly with regard to the concept of Improving Own Learning and Performance (IOLP), which cannot be accomplished successfully without target setting, progress reviews, reflection, updating targets, and recording, all of which are fundamental to PDP. Within the HE context, the Subject Benchmark statements also lay stress on the place of reflection as an important learning tool.

Whilst this linkage is readily apparent, what is less well understood is that the evidence that students produce to demonstrate key skills performance, within their main degree studies, can also be used as the basis for PDP and IOLP. Review and reflection are most successfully undertaken when they have an “evidence-based” focus. Whilst I might reflect in general terms about where I am now, how have I got here, where I want to go next, and what I have to do to get there, the decisions I make in answering these questions are best informed by reviewing the work I have done up to now. Similarly, in trying to judge whether I have reached where I wanted to be, or am making progress towards it, it will be by reviewing that same evidence of learning that will provide me with the best feedback. Development planning requires a review of progress over time, rather than a snapshot at a particular point in time, and so too do judgements about key skills performance. By adopting a coherent approach to the implementation and assessment of key skills alongside PDP, time and energy for students and tutors alike can be saved.

The University of Nottingham is also involved in two projects of direct relevance to PDP.

The PADSHE Project (Personal and Academic Development for Students in Higher Education) involves more than 8000 students. Its main purpose has been to develop personal tutoring skills in the wake of curriculum modularisation, and in response to the Dearing objectives for student support and guidance. It has endeavoured to build on existing good practice in the broad areas of recording achievement, transcripts, key skills, employability and reflective learning.

Contact: Dr. Angela Smallwood (Project Director)

Web address: www.nottingham.ac.uk/padshe

Email: aileen.bishop@nottingham.ac.uk

The Internet-PARs Project

Contact: Dr. Angela Smallwood (Project Co-Director)

Web address: www.internet-pars.ac.uk

Email: angela.smallwood@nottingham.ac.uk

This project is concerned with the development of Internet Personal and Academic Records (PARs), which are essentially web-based record systems that are maintained collaboratively by institutions, tutors and students. Academic and personal development records and student support processes are maintained on the web, with the expectation that students will reflect on them and so develop the management skills of self-directed study and planning. The structure is designed to provide a PDP structure to accord with national policy.

The LTSN Generic Centre and the Centre for Recording Achievement have produced a number of papers and resources for PDP implementation and the way it relates to other skills initiatives, and these should be regarded as essential reading. (<http://www.recordingachievement.org/>)

Another useful contact for PDP experience is **the Liverpool Universal Student Interactive Database (LUSID) – University of Liverpool**

Contact: LUSID Project Co-ordinator

Web address: www.lusid.liv.ac.uk/

Email: lusid-info@liv.ac.uk

This is a web-based personal development planning tool, designed to respond to the Dearing recommendation for a Progress File, by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development. It consists of a series of web pages, that together address:

- Recording and reflection
- Auditing skills
- Action planning
- Reporting.

The LUSID system is available to all other HEIs. The skills auditing methodology is particularly helpful for anyone seeking guidance on the integration of skills into the curriculum.

SOURCES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The following information is divided into two sections. **Section A** relates to current key skills activities (few in number) that are drawn directly from the Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Sector; **Section B** refers to initiatives from other sectors that will be of interest to subject tutors, given the generic nature of the key skills. Contexts may be different, but principles and practice are transferable across subject boundaries.

Section A

Key Skills in the Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Sector

There are currently very few initiatives in key skills directly related to this sector. The following are however among the most prominent.

Incorporating Key Skills as Learning Outcomes – Manchester Metropolitan University

Contact: Nuala Byrne (Project Leader)

Web address: <http://www.hlst.ltsn.ac.uk/projects/byrne.html>

Email: n.byrne@mmu.ac.uk

In 1997, the department's main degree course was being revised in order to increase its vocational relevance, and the opportunity was taken to incorporate a key skills component. An embedded approach was taken to the teaching and assessment of key skills, which has been shown to be an effective method of developing skills whilst being manageable in terms of staff workloads. A detailed account is contained in Issue 2 of LINK, published by LTSN Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism (<http://www.hlst.ltsn.ac.uk/resources/resources.html#publications>). This same issue of LINK also contains a number of other relevant and interesting articles on matters such as encouraging reflective learning during placements, and activities to enhance undergraduate personal and professional development.

Nuala Byrne is also currently undertaking a project funded by LTSN Hospitality Leisure Sport and Tourism to audit skills provision in sport and exercise science courses, and has recently distributed a questionnaire to all HEIs. It is expected that a report on the outcomes will be available in late 2002, and it is possible that this may reveal a greater level of interest and activity than is apparent at first sight.

Developing Progress Files for use in Sports Studies Workplace Learning

Contacts: John Dean and Philip Vickerman (Project Leaders)

Web address: www.hlst.ltsn.ac.uk/projects/project611.html

Email: j.deane@worc.ac.uk

p.vickerman@livjm.ac.uk

This project is funded by LTSN Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism, and is managed jointly by University College, Worcester and Liverpool John Moores University. The project objectives are to evaluate student and employer perceptions of the workplace skills requires of sports students, and to encourage better and wider

usage of progress files by the development of specific work placement elements. The intention is also to develop a CD-ROM and website that will assist students to assess their subject-specific and generic transferable skills, as well as having a number of other skills-related functions.

Embedding Intellectual and Transferable Skills into the Learning and Skills Development Scheme

Contact: Susanne Baker (Project Leader)
Web address: www.hlst.ltsn.ac.uk/projects/project8.html
Email: susanne.baker@tvu.ac.uk

This project is also funded by LTSN Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism. It entails a mapping exercise between SEEC descriptors, key skills and Unit 25 Benchmarks for intellectual and transferable skills in order to establish a coherent set of outcomes, together with information gathering from tutors, pathway leaders and students. The Learning and Skills Development Scheme will be then re-drafted in the light of the findings. It is expected too that it will lead to a better understanding by staff and students about the required skills outcomes and how best they can be delivered.

The HAVE Project

Website address:
http://www.hcima.org.uk/content/jobs_placements/documents/jobs_have.html
Email: pds@hcima.co.uk

This was a DfEE funded project, awarded to the Hotel and Catering International Management Association (HCIMA). Its aim is to help students from all subject disciplines to obtain greater benefit from their part-time and casual employment in the hospitality industry. Extension funding was then made available by the Savoy Educational Trust. With the assistance of a "HAVE Pack" of materials, a self managed workbook will support students in reflecting on what they have learnt, and in so doing, will help them to develop, articulate and demonstrate transferable employability skills such as Communication and Working with Others. At the same time, the project will develop the coaching and mentoring skills of workplace supervisors, so that casual and part-time employment can be more intellectually challenging to the students and rewarding to the employers.

Graduate Apprenticeship in Hospitality

Contact: Martin Christian Kent, Hospitality Training Foundation
Email: mckent@htf.org.uk
Website address: www.htf.org.uk

This is a joint initiative, funded by HEFCE, involving:

- the Hospitality Training Foundation (HtF)
- Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies
- Oxford Brookes University
- Thames Valley University
- University of Wolverhampton.

The GA programme, which will be introduced in autumn 2002, has been designed by HtF in consultation with employers in its role as the National Training Organisation for the sector. The programme offers an opportunity for graduates from any academic discipline to gain practical knowledge and skills in the hospitality industry. It integrates structured work-based learning and experience with additional academic development, within which key skills and NVQ Units are a mandatory component. In this programme, the required skills to be assessed formally are:

- Information Technology at level 2
- Application of Number at level 2
- Communication at level 3.

In addition, the following skills will be incorporated into the programme but will not be assessed formally:

- Improving Own Learning and Performance at level 3
- Problem Solving at level 4.

These five key skills have been selected as a result of the findings on the sector skill needs identified through the HtF's Labour Market Intelligence (*Skills and Employment Foresight 2001*, HtF, 2001).

Graduate Apprenticeship in Sport, Recreation & Allied Occupations

Contact: Jayne Skeith, SPRITO

Email: the.nts@sprito.org.uk

Website address: <http://www.sprito-els.org.uk/>

This GA programme was developed by SPRITO in co-operation with the following HEIs:

- University of Luton
- Leeds Metropolitan University
- Wolverhampton College
- Oxford Brookes University
- University of Bristol
- De Montfort University
- University of Manchester
- Sheffield College
- College of Ripon and York St John
- Middlesex University
- Buckinghamshire Chilterns University
- King Alfred College, Winchester
- St Martins College, Lancaster

As with all GA programmes, this combines the HE academic qualification with NVQ occupational skills and key skills development. In this instance, the full list of key skills is required, namely:

- Application of Number at level 2
- Information Technology at level 2
- Communication at level 2
- Working with Others at level 3
- Improving Own Learning and Performance at level 3
- Problem Solving at level 3.

The GA programme has been designed to address the outcomes of research by SPRITO into graduate recruitment, which revealed:

- A mismatch of graduate aptitude, ability and expectation with employer vocational skill requirements
- The high volume of HE courses in Sport and Recreation producing graduates yet mismatching with a sector with no history of graduate recruitment and development programmes leaving little scope for structured progression.

Section B

Other key skills initiatives relevant to Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Although there appears to be limited key skills activity in this sector (subject to the findings of Nuala Byrne's survey which may show otherwise), this does not mean that initiatives within other curriculum areas are not relevant to tutors and students working in Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism. Indeed, the very principles that underpin key skills would suggest that they are generic and hence equally applicable to all subjects. It is not the demand or nature of the skills that change, merely the contexts in which they are being developed and assessed. To this end, the following sources may be helpful.

Key Skills Project – De Montfort University

Contact: Sue Bloy (sbloy@dmu.ac.uk)

Website address: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/dfee/heqe/ksproj.htm#demontfort>

This DfEE-funded project ran from 1998-2000. Its purpose was to establish an institutional approach to key skills, within which:

- An initial assessment of a student's key skills at entry would be carried out
- Generic key skills learning packages would be developed
- Guidance and support to enable students to improve and demonstrate their key skills profile in a record of achievement would be provided.

The Project Final Report is a useful reference for any HEI planning to introduce its own key skills programme, and the package of learning and teaching materials published in the "Focus On" series provides an impressive resource for students and staff, covering:

- Communication skills
 - report writing
 - note making
 - reading strategies
 - essay writing
 - verbal presentations
 - writing
 - listening
- Improving your learning
 - time management
 - curriculum vitae
 - careers
 - interviews

- Working with others
 - group work

with materials covering each of these sub-sections. More titles are currently in production.

Key Skills in Higher Education – The Central Lancashire Key Skills Contract

Contact: Melissa Shaw

Website address: www.uclan.ac.uk/keyskills

The University of Central Lancashire also conducted a DfEE-funded project from 1998-2000, with the aim of establishing an institutional key skills implementation strategy, with the full involvement of staff and students in all departments. The experience gained suggests that each academic discipline needs to find the most suitable way of taking ownership of key skills within its curriculum area, resulting in a diverse range of approaches. The project outcomes have now been incorporated within the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy which includes a commitment to providing support, guidance and resources to develop key skills in all courses and programmes, thereby embedding key skills within the curriculum. The University's experience offers a useful insight into the processes and procedures that need to be followed in order to arrive at an institutional policy for key skills.

Sheffield Hallam University – Learning and Teaching Institute

Contact: Sue Drew

Email: s.k.drew@shu.ac.uk

Website address: www.shu.ac.uk/keytokey/

Work on key skills at Sheffield Hallam goes back to the 1980s, and a wealth of experience now resides among staff in the LTI. Among current initiatives is "The Key to Key Skills", the aim of which is to adapt a web-based system developed by Leeds Metropolitan University ("*Skills for Learning*" – that provides guidance and support for students wishing to develop their key skills) so that it can be implemented within other HEIs. The university has also produced a number of Skill Packs, which cover topics such as:

- Identifying strengths and improving skills
- Organising yourself and your time
- Oral presentations
- Solving problems
- Group work
- Negotiating and assertiveness
- Coping with pressure.

Other helpful publications include “The Student Skills Guide” and “The Student Skills Tutor’s Handbook”.

Palatine (LTSN Centre for the Performing Arts) – University of Lancaster

Contact: Paul Kleiman

Email: palatine@lancaster.ac.uk

Website address: www.lancs.ac.uk/palatine/

The Palatine Centre has produced a number of papers and reports on generic key skills issues that will be of relevance to all curriculum areas. The following are particularly worthy of mention:

- *Embedding Key Skills into Teaching Programmes*
The paper considers some of the issues around the development of key skills and puts forward suggestions for embedding them into programmes of study.
- *Challenges to implementing peer assessment*
This report offers ways to overcome the barriers raised by institutional and collegial structures, staff and students that inhibit peer assessment.
- *Reflective Practice*
This is an on-line conference, containing short, easy to read papers on reflection as an aid to learning. It is highly relevant to discussions about IOLP.

Insight Plus™

Contact: Adam Nichols

Web address: www.insightplus.co.uk

Email: adam.nichols@crac.org.uk

InsightPlus™ is managed by CRAC on behalf of NUS, NEBS Management, NASES, Student Volunteering UK, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Mars, Consignia and activate.co.uk. It is a structured learning programme designed to match student casual work experience to employer requirements for key skills competencies, and will provide a framework for the accreditation of many types of work experience that students undertake. The programme will involve 50 universities and 3000 students during the 2002-2003 academic year.

The Hertfordshire Integrated Learning Project (HILP)

Website address:

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/users/music/research/ctimusicnews6/herts.html>

This FDTL project is concerned with the integration of skills development with academic content in higher education and is based at the University of Hertfordshire. It covers eleven disciplines ranging from environmental sciences to history and from engineering to music.

(A summary of the conference themes of the 3rd annual HILP conference Skills Development in Higher Education: Forging Links, held in July 2002 prepared by LTSN Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism also provides links to further resources <http://www.hlst.ltsn.ac.uk/events/keyskills100702.pdf>)

Skills Plus: Employability in Higher Education

Website address: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/resources/skillsplus/>

The 'Skills plus' project has now been running since 2000 and includes a large number of academic departments working towards achieving curriculum change and enhancement in the area of employability. The project has led to a number of project papers and publications which can be accessed through the website. The aims of the 'Skills plus' project are "to enhance employability by tuning existing curricula in a representative selection of subjects and to carry out empirical research into how employability is really understood in the workplace".

Each of the above sources address the broad spectrum of key skills. There are also a number of other sources that have a narrower skills focus. The following are worthy of special mention.

Sources for Working with Others

Assessing Group Practice and Guidelines for Developing Effective Group Behaviour – Central School of Speech and Drama

Contact: Cordelia Bryan

Email: c.bryan@cssd.ac.uk

Web address: <http://assessing-groupwork.ulst.ac.uk>

This is a consortium project, funded by HEFCE as an FDTL initiative, involving:

- Central School of Speech and Drama
- Goldsmiths College
- Dartington College of Arts
- Bretton Hall (part of the University of Leeds)
- University of Salford
- University of Ulster.

The project has researched into the meaning of collaborative skills, how they can be developed and assessed, including identifying individual contributions to group

achievement, and the involvement of the students in the assessment process. Guidelines to support the development and assessment of group practice have been developed.

Guidelines for Introducing Group Work in Undergraduate Mathematics

Contact: The Administrator, LTSN Maths, Stats & OR Network

Email: info@mathstore.ac.uk

Website address: <http://mathstore.ac.uk/projects/groupwork/>

Although these Guidelines have been produced specifically for staff teaching undergraduate mathematics, all of the suggestions it offers for operating and assessing group work in both formal and informal contexts apply equally to all other curriculum areas.

There is also a very useful website that provides a wealth of information about key skills, but also acts as a gateway to many other websites, including all those mentioned above. Details are as follows:

Good Practice in Key Skills Development (The Keynote Project FDTL3)

Website address: (www.keynote-project.co.uk)

This excellent website offers up-to-date information about current key skills developments in higher education. It offers arguably the easiest and quickest access route to a large number of HEI-specific key skills initiatives, and is well set out to facilitate navigation around the site. It is designed to disseminate and embed existing good practice in developing key skills in the curriculum and preparing students for future employment and lifelong learning skills. Although the focus of the project is on textiles, fashion and printing, the project outcomes are designed to be generic and applicable across the whole HE sector. The outcomes will include:

- Staff Resource Pack on Key Skills
- Tutor, Employer and Student Guide on “Preparing for a Work Placement”
- 5 Good Practice Guides
- Student Progress File.

In addition, the project will run national Conferences and Workshops, details of which will be publicised on the website.

Finally, the **Key Skills Support Programme** is managed by the Learning and Skills Development Agency, and offers a wide variety of support materials (paper-based and electronic). Although aimed mainly at the 16-19 phase, much of its work will also be of direct interest to HE. Information is available on www.keyskillssupport.net

About the Author

Peter Burke was formerly the Chief Executive of the Southern Examining Group and is now an independent consultant and a Special Lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Nottingham. As a member of the CDELL team at Nottingham, he has worked on a wide range of DfEE/QCA funded projects on key skills, including the various initiatives investigating the provision of key skills in higher education. He was the Project Manager for the QCA project under which CDELL developed the assessment instruments for the introduction of the Key Skills Qualification in September 2000. He is currently acting as an adviser to the Chinese government on its key skills development programme.