

Evaluation of Flexible Delivery – Unit Funding Trials

Tim Allan and Richard Sharples

Contents

- Introduction to ekosgen and Education Relations
- Evaluation objectives and methodology
- Interim findings
- Provider involvement
- Evaluation next steps
- Providers new to the trial
- Further information and contact details

The evaluation team

- **ekosgen:**
 - Skills and education related research and evaluation
 - Experience includes evaluations of Foundation Learning, Learner Involvement Strategies, EMA Policy Changes, nextstep Funding Model, Skills Pledge, Full Level 2 Design Principles, various training and workforce development programmes
- **Education Relations:**
 - Post-16/19 education and training specialists
 - Experience includes nationwide provider support, publications on E2E and Foundation Learning funding and good practice, research into barriers to Apprenticeships, developing research methodologies for national and local assignments

Evaluation objectives

- Understand how providers are using QCF flexibilities in a live operational environment
- Within that:
 - Costs and affordability
 - Learner participation and motivation
 - Credit Accumulation and Transfer
 - Co-financing

Progress to date

- Baselining and early progress review
- Case study visits with ten providers
- Awarding Organisation consultations
- Interim report
- Planning evaluation activity for May-August 2011

Interim Report – Emerging Findings

Emerging findings

- Continued and widespread enthusiasm and support for flexible delivery and unit funding
- Some providers have made significant progress with the trials; others have been slower to start
- Modelling of affordability at provider level is in the early stages, although examples are emerging of AO-provider negotiations

Emerging findings

- Knowledge of CAT amongst staff and learners varies considerably – where understood, it is welcomed
- The trials are identifying areas for staff development and CPD, especially around IAG
- Varied implications for AO systems and cost structures – most will require revision and some do not yet support unit funding

Emerging findings

- Learners report clear benefits of their unitised course although have variable understanding of units and credits
- Providers report that flexible delivery will support engagement of hard to reach learners and work with employers
- Limited employer involvement in the trials to date but anecdotal evidence suggests enthusiasm

In summary

- Support for flexible delivery remains strong, including amongst providers where delays in trial activity have occurred
- The benefits of the trials described by learners and providers are focused on the system of CAT
- Early examples of impact are now emerging and will be explored further through the remainder of the evaluation

Evaluation Next Steps

Evaluation next steps

- Complete case study and consultation programme
- Follow-up with providers who have been delayed
- Headline findings (March) and interim reporting (April)
- Baselining sites new to the trials
- Progress calls
- Case study visits
- Final evaluation reporting (August)

Use of findings

- Evaluation evidence in formal reports will be anonymised
- Names, dates of birth etc. will not be requested from learners
- Market Research Society and Social Research Association codes of conduct will apply

Considerations for new providers

- Ensuring your enrolment systems can accommodate learners undertaking QCF units rather than whole qualifications
- Identifying the preferred unit registration and verification arrangements from your AO(s)
- How will you market a QCF unit offer to learners?
- What is your delivery model for QCF units?

Considerations for new providers

- How will you:
 - involve employers in the trial?
 - provide advice and guidance to learners undertaking QCF units?
 - ensure that units can be used within the rules of combination for QCF qualifications?
 - build learner/staff understanding of the PLR?
- How might unit funding present new opportunities to work with employers?

Case study visits

- Expectations:
 - Learners aged 19+ will be undertaking QCF units
- Available for interview:
 - Learners (sample)
 - Tutors or trainers
 - Curriculum managers
 - A senior manager
 - Colleagues dealing with AO registrations, funding claims/MI, enrolment
 - Employers (may be followed up by phone later)

Further information and contacts

Tim Allan (ekosgen)

07912 780202

unitfundingtrials@ekosgen.co.uk

Richard Sharples (Education Relations)

07711 118407

richard@educationrelations.co.uk