



Evaluation of Flexible Delivery – Unit Funding Trials

Interim Report

March 2011

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1 Introduction

1.1. The second phase of the Flexible Delivery - Unit Funding Trials is taking place during the 2010/11 academic year. The Skills Funding Agency (the Agency) has commissioned ekosgen, in partnership with Education Relations, to conduct a formative evaluation of the trials. The evaluation began in December 2010 and is scheduled to conclude at the end of April 2011. It consists of:

- Scoping calls in December 2010 and January 2011 with the lead for the trials at each of the 19 providers involved. The purpose of the scoping calls was to verify that the information and plans submitted by providers in their Expressions of Interest still applied and to identify any changes or early challenges;
- Case study visits to all 19 providers involved in the trials¹. The detail of each visit will differ, but most cases it is likely to include consultations with the provider's lead for the trials, tutors, staff involved in administration (including registration), employers (where applicable) and learners undertaking unitised learning;
- Consultation with Awarding Organisations (AOs) who have units that have been included in the trials;
- Attendance at events and seminars relating to the trials.

1.2. The evaluation is exploring the different flexible approaches to delivery that make best use of Credit Accumulation and Transfer being piloted by providers involved in the trials. This includes examining the benefits and challenges experienced by learners, providers and AOs, highlighting good or innovative practice, and identifying considerations and recommendations for the future.

1.3. This interim report presents emerging findings across a range of topics including affordability and costs, credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) and benefits, challenges and impacts. It is based upon evidence from the following:

- Consultation with representatives from eight AOs;
- Case study visits to five providers undertaken in January and February 2011;
- Telephone and/or email correspondence with a further five providers where issues or challenges have arisen but the case study visit has yet to be undertaken.

1.4. To date only limited evidence has emerged from the evaluation regarding co-financing. Although one provider reported delivering specific units developed to meet the needs of a local employer, this was as part of a general movement towards flexible delivery rather than as part of trials. At two of the five providers there has not been any employer involvement in the trials (due to the nature and characteristics of the learner cohort), whilst a further two were still to begin delivering to learners through the trials at the time of the visit. The fifth provider works with trade unions rather than employers. Findings on co-financing will therefore be included in the final report.

¹ At the time of writing, delays to the implementation of the trials within five providers may result in case study visits not being possible by the end of April 2011.

1.5. An anonymised summary of the individuals consulted during each case study visit, and the job titles of the AO consultees, is provided at Appendix 1. Appendix 2 shows the case study timetable.

2 Implementation Progress

2.1 The case study visits strongly suggest that providers retain the enthusiasm for the concept of flexible delivery that was evident at the outset of the trials. This is despite some delays in delivery and confusion over the inclusion and exclusion of certain units from the approved list.

2.2 At the time of writing, the implementation and delivery status varies across the case study providers. In summary:

- **Provider 1:** Approximately 200 units were funded in the autumn term, involving 100 learners. A similar number of units are anticipated for the spring and summer terms, with 600 QCF units likely to be funded by the end of the trials, potentially involving over 500 learners;
- **Providers 2 and 3:** The providers' Expressions of Interest included units that were not on the list approved for inclusion in the trials by the Agency. Delivery had therefore not started at the time of the visits. However, both providers were in the process of producing new delivery plans;
- **Provider 4:** The provider is delivering unit funded provision to 15 learners, all of whom are working towards a Level 3 Certificate in Management and Leadership;
- **Provider 5:** Approximately 200 units (known as 'short courses') had been delivered at the time of the visit and the provider estimated that around 200 learners would complete a total of 1,000 units by July 2011.

2.3 Telephone and email correspondence with other providers suggests there are at least five other instances where the trials have been delayed. In each case a case study visit before the end of April appears unlikely:

- Following the publication of the approved list of units, one provider worked with their arms length sites to identify those that they would deliver. This was completed by the end of February and the provider and its subsidiaries are now putting in place the mechanisms required to ensure that delivery can begin at the start of the summer term;
- The second provider has reported a delay due to a change in delivery plans and has not yet recruited learners (19+ unemployed). Delivery is now likely to start in the summer term;
- Uncertainties around affordability and difficulties encountered with the relevant AO when trying to register learners on individuals units have delayed the implementation at the third provider. As a result they are now reviewing the feasibility of remaining involved with the trials;
- Due to uncertainties regarding the whether the units selected for the trial have been approved for inclusion and are on the Learning Aims Database (LAD), the fourth provider has not taken forward any trial activity;

- The fifth provider has been affected by staff changes and is now planning to begin unit funded delivery at the beginning of April 2011, when an existing project to deliver to the target group (unemployed learners) comes to an end.

2.4 In addition to the above, one provider has withdrawn from the trials due to internal issues.

3 Affordability, Cost Structures and Assessment

3.1 A range of findings relating to affordability, cost structures and assessment have emerged from the work undertaken to date. In some cases, these have implications for the systems used by AOs to register learners, verify achievement and progress, and record (and where required by providers or learners, certificate unit achievement²). The extent to which each provider and AO is affected varies considerably, although in the case of providers, it seems that those who have made the most progress with the trials, and who therefore have most to report, are the least affected.

3.2 There are cases where the issues are fundamental to the delivery of unitised provision and will need to be resolved before providers are able to take forward their participation in the trials. At the time of the consultations, the process of resolution appeared to be in the early stages.

Affordability

3.3 There is a clear distinction amongst the five providers visited to date on the issue of affordability:

- Three providers report that the costs involved in delivering units through the trials were comparable to those that they are used to incurring. However, all three of these providers have a history of delivering learning in small chunks (two are residential colleges) and therefore the trials do not represent a significant departure from their normal way of working. For example, one had already been paying an AO on a per unit basis before the trials, whilst another had negotiated with the same AO to agree a pricing structure which ensured that it was no more expensive to register learners for units than for a full qualification;
- The fourth and fifth providers (both of which are general FE colleges) are at an earlier stage in the implementation of the trials and neither had learners enrolled at the time of the visits. In both cases, their awareness of the cost implications of a flexible delivery / unit funding approach was more limited, although one expected the costs of registering, processing and accrediting individual units (where required) to be higher than for full qualifications.

3.4 In addition, telephone conversations with another FE college suggest that uncertainty over affordability is delaying the implementation of the trials. The provider explained that the limited income (£53 in the example provided) and relatively small margins associated with the delivery of individual units, coupled with uncertainty over the cost of registration and certification, has caused the provider to delay delivery and to review whether they still wish to be involved.

Cost Structures

3.5 The consultations undertaken to date suggest that supporting the flexible delivery of qualifications has different implications for different AOs, ranging from business as usual to

² For some of the providers involved, particularly those delivering to learners with low levels of prior attainment, the potential to have individual units accredited and the learner's achievement recognised through provision of a certificate was seen as an important motivating factor, although it may result in additional costs.

the need for considerable internal change, ranging from changes relating to technology and IT systems, to more fundamental re-appraisals of the AO business model.

3.6 Three AOs reported that flexible delivery and funding of qualifications would have no impact on their cost structures. However, one of these – an AO that already operates a unitised cost structure – did state that a larger roll-out of flexible delivery / unit funding (assuming it corresponded with an increase in demand for units) could significantly alter the market and would require them to review their charging arrangements. Even so, they do not anticipate that any significant changes would be required as they already operate on a unitised model for registration, assessment and charging.

3.7 The same AO has negotiated with one of the providers in the trials to ensure that delivering through units does not cause the provider to incur additional costs. However, another provider reported difficulties in identifying an appropriate contact within the regional arm of the AO who could assist them with registration and costs.

3.8 In another AO the trials have coincided with an internal review which resulted in the AO's systems being updated to accommodate flexible delivery of qualifications and unit funding. Whilst there had been no direct impact from the trials to date (only one provider has identified the AO's units for inclusion in the trials), the AO reported that the unit fees had been agreed and that *"it's all about getting the ball rolling now"*.

3.9 The five other AOs consulted to date all felt that flexible delivery / unit funding would have more significant implications for their processes and structures:

- In one, learners can be registered either on full qualifications or on individual units, but the pricing structure is very much slanted towards full qualifications. For example, the cost of registering for one unit is £12.50, whilst the cost of registering on a Certificate made up of five or six units is £24.50. A provider registering learners on units from a number of different qualifications would therefore face a much higher cost than one registering learners on a full Certificate, even if the number of units undertaken was the same. However, the AO noted that this would be a barrier to them maintaining market share if the flexible delivery / unit funding approach became more commonplace, and stated that *"if the market was going to get much bigger, we might want to review our pricing structure"*;
- The above also applies to another AO, although the cost difference between units and qualifications is less significant;
- In the third AO, if a learner was to accumulate units over time which amounted to a qualification, the provider would currently be required to pay for both the units and the full qualification. The consultee was not aware of any instances where this had happened (unit registrations currently account for only a very small proportion of the AO's business) but acknowledged that it would be necessary to review and most likely change these arrangements if flexible delivery / unit funding was to expand;
- In the case of the final AO, their systems are such that learners can currently only be registered on full qualifications and not individual units (see Systems Issues, below). Whilst there is a pricing structure in place for individual units, providers

would have to pay the registration fee for the full qualification up front (and this might be more than one qualification depending on the units selected), and a credit note would then be issued for the units that were not undertaken.

Assessment

3.10 To date flexible delivery / unit funding has not required AOs to make changes to their assessment processes and the majority (five AOs) do not anticipate any changes being needed in the future. One stated that their assessment process was already based on a unitised model whilst the others felt that their processes would remain fit for purpose under a unit funded approach. One AO noted that providers who had learners registered on individual units are likely to also have other learners on full qualifications, and the assessment of the two groups could therefore be undertaken in parallel.

3.11 However, three AOs highlighted the potential cost and resource implications of changes to assessing on a unit by unit basis and the potential need to assign a verifier/moderator to each unit. For one, this is already reflected in their pricing structure, where registration for individual units is considerably more expensive than registration for the full qualification(s) to which they contribute.

Systems Issues

Unit Registration

3.12 In a small number of cases (two AOs), their ICT systems do not allow learners to be registered for an individual unit. In one instance this does not cause significant problems for the flexible delivery / unit funding approach, as the AO has a 'unit payment route' which enables learners to be registered on the full qualification but to complete units on a pay-as-you-go basis. This does impose slightly higher costs than the full qualification route but the difference is not very large (although it would become more significant if a learner had to be registered on a number of different full qualifications in order to access all the units they wished to undertake, or if they wanted to complete units from more than one AO).

3.13 However, for the other AO, this has proved to be a significant barrier to progress in the trials. Four different providers have identified units offered by the AO, but their internal systems cannot currently accommodate individual unit registrations. Whilst they can take the credit note approach outlined above, this would have to be done manually, imposing a significant administrative burden on both the AO and the providers. However, over the longer term, the AO "*wouldn't think twice*" about changing its approach if flexible delivery / unit funding became more established, but are unwilling to do so for the purposes of a relatively short-term pilot.

Certification

3.14 Only in a minority of cases have issues with AO ICT systems caused problems regarding the certification of units and these appear to now be resolved. One provider encountered a number of minor problems early in the trials as a result of the systems used by the AO to generate certificates. These were being automatically generated when learners had accumulated the required credits to achieve an Award, even though the learner was working towards a QCF Certificate (through a unitised approach). Some learners were supplied with two certificates because the units they had achieved met the rules of combination for two different qualifications. These difficulties caused some confusion for

learners but have been quickly overcome by the AO agreeing only to generate a certificate when requested by the provider.

4 Learner Views

4.1 Only three of the five providers had learners on unit funded provision at the time of the case study visits. In each of these a focus group with learners was undertaken although it is important to note that the results should not be considered representative of the larger cohort of learners and providers involved in the trials.

Reasons for Participating

4.2 Whilst learners reported a range of different reasons for taking part in learning, these did not relate specifically to the benefits of a unitised approach. Most frequently learners said they were taking part to develop their knowledge and skills, because of increased responsibility at work, to progress to higher level qualifications or because it was a mandatory requirement of their job. All learners were satisfied with the provision and considered it to be fit for purpose. At one residential provider, learners had undertaken previous short courses (during a taster weekend held prior to the trials) and had enjoyed this form of delivery.

Understanding Units and Credits

4.3 Learners' knowledge and understanding of units and credits varies considerably. At two providers, all of the learners were aware that the units they were studying would allow them to accumulate credits that would lead to a qualification. At the third provider, the nature of the client group is such that provision tends to focus on small chunks of learning and the majority of learners were unaware of the links between units and qualifications.

4.4 At only one of the three providers did learners understand the credits associated with the units they were undertaking and the concept of credit accumulation. These learners valued the opportunity to gain an Award or a Certificate whilst working towards the Diploma and welcomed the flexibility that the unitised approach offered. One learner reported that they could not attend the remainder of the course due to personal circumstances but that credit accumulation would enable them to gain an Award now and to return at a later date to complete the Certificate:

"I think that the idea is brilliant; it gives you a choice. If I don't want to go straight to the Diploma I can have a break and come back next year with my Certificate units in the bag."

Personal Learning Record and Credit Transfer

4.5 None of the learners consulted to date had a good understanding of the PLR or the benefits it could bring them. However, one provider has developed an internal system that allows learners to view their learning goals and the units they have completed – a move that has been well received by learners. Similarly, learners are not aware of credit transfer or rules of combination, to a large extent reflecting the major role that providers have played so far in determining the units that are included in the trials.

Information, Advice and Guidance

4.6 Only one provider visited to date has reported giving IAG in relation to unit choices and credit accumulation. This has been well received by learners, who welcomed the advice on what other units they might do (although these were referred to as courses). Three providers reported that the staff involved in the trials had a clear understanding of the implications of CAT and rules of combination and would be able to advise learners

accordingly (although this had not happened in practice). In one case the provider reported that substantial staff training would be required for effective IAG to be given on units and flexible delivery.

5 CAT and RPL

Credit Accumulation and Transfer

5.1 There is very limited evidence of Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) occurring through the trials to date. None of the eight AOs consulted had experienced any increase in CAT as a result of the trials, although one reported an increase in the number of learners on their unit funding route prior to the trials beginning. This was mainly on qualifications at Levels 2 and 3 which feed via CAT into Level 5 management qualifications, the suggestion being that learners are topping up existing credits into full qualifications.

5.2 The provider that is offering this AO's units through the trials reported that the units can be used within the AO's rules of combination towards the achievement of the Level 3 Award, Certificate and Diploma in Leadership and Management. Through the trials, learners are able to accumulate credit which will enable them to achieve the Award and Certificate before progressing to the Diploma if they wish. However, the provider offers very few shared units with other AOs, and there are therefore limited opportunities for CAT between this and other AOs.

5.3 The level of understanding of CAT amongst staff and learners varies considerably. One provider explained that their model of unitised delivery pre-dated the flexible delivery / unit funding trials, and already made use of CAT. The level of staff understanding of CAT within this provider (as in two others) was said to be very good, and learners also understood credit accumulation within individual qualifications, although had less understanding of the concept of transferring credit between qualifications or between AOs. In another provider which had traditionally delivered learning on a unitised basis, the level of understanding of CAT amongst learners was much more limited, with most regarding the unit they had just completed as "a course" in itself, with only one demonstrating an understanding of "grouping courses together" to gain a bigger qualification.

5.4 There is also evidence of a misunderstanding on the part of one provider, which believed that CAT needs to be demonstrated within the trials by the end of July. The provider had identified the Level 3 QCF unit *Understand how to set up a home based childcare service* for inclusion in the trials. Having completed this unit, new childminders need six months work experience before they are able to register on the Level 3 Diploma for the Children and Young People's Workforce. They would therefore be unable to begin the Level 3 Diploma before Autumn 2011. As such, the provider felt it would be inappropriate to deliver the unit within the trials as CAT would not be demonstrated until after the July 2011 'deadline'.

5.5 AOs highlighted a number of issues in relation to CAT:

- Changes to their systems and operating procedures, resulting from the move to the QCF, facilitate CAT although as noted above the degree to which it is occurring is limited to date;
- Rules of combination influence the degree to which CAT will be possible. AOs noted that including shared units (which account for the majority of units in the QCF) in the rules of combination and identifying mandatory and optional units rather than grouped units or pathway would be a way of increasing opportunities for CAT;

- However, CAT can be constrained by a lack of shared units. Two specialist AOs reported that there are limited opportunities for credit transfer between themselves and other AOs, and one suggested that they would be reluctant to risk losing registration fees through increasing the number of shared units.

Recognition of Prior Learning

5.6 The significance of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) within the trials has been limited to date, although one provider expects it to increase during the next academic year when some learners will come to the provider having already completed QCF units and achieved QCF credit. However, none of the AOs reported any increased focus on RPL as a result of the trials per se, although four stated that mechanisms for RPL were already in place, sometimes as a result of the introduction of the QCF.

5.7 Two AOs expect the level of interest in RPL to increase in future as unitised delivery becomes more widespread. One, which is a professional membership body, is already experiencing an increase in enquiries from employers about what RPL means for them, and expects this to continue over the coming months.

6 Benefits, Challenges and Impacts

Benefits

6.1 Although the trials are at an early stage, there is some evidence of emerging benefits.

6.2 **Learners:** The key benefits of unitised provision reported by learners are as follows:

- i) They find it easier to arrange time off with their employer for short courses (a large employer in the particular case highlighted through the trials);
- ii) Unitised learning is less daunting for those returning to education than full qualifications;
- iii) Learners welcome the flexibility that unitised delivery offers, both in terms of building up from individual units into qualifications and the ability to bank units with the option of returning to learning at a later date.

6.3 The above are supported by the findings from the AO consultations, who praised the increased relevance of the learning, the flexibility it offers and the potential (if not yet occurring in practice) of CAT.

“Allowing learners to register on individual units would create every opportunity for success and progress”.

6.4 **Providers:** Providers believe they will benefit from unitised delivery in a number of ways. First, there is a general consensus that it should make learner recruitment easier and will motivate some learners to progress onto full qualifications.

6.5 Second, the trials have enabled one provider to make additional qualifications available to learners. Through the trials, learners are completing QCF units which enable them to work towards the ILM Level 3 Certificate in Leadership and Management. Ordinarily, the Level 3 Certificate would not be a fundable qualification – only the Diploma would qualify for Agency funding. However, given the characteristics of the provider’s learner group, there is a sense that they may be “*daunted*” by the size of the Diploma, and reluctant to start working towards it given the time commitment required. Unit funding is enabling these learners to achieve individual units and therefore accumulate the credit required to achieve the Award and the Certificate, with the option to continue towards the Diploma.

6.6 Three of the providers serve a client group, including hard to reach learners, for whom a unitised approach to delivery is particularly appropriate. These providers have been delivering learning in small chunks for some time, although this has not been reflected in funding mechanisms. One of these providers also explained that a move towards recording unit level or credit achievement will provide a more appropriate measure of their success than the current measure of achievement of full qualifications.

6.7 Finally, providers agree that a unitised approach will help them to engage and work with employers, by making it easier to respond to their business needs. Providers will be able to deliver individual units that will allow them to tailor provision to meet the specific needs of businesses and, in theory, stimulate them to contribute a greater share of the cost, potentially in occupations with relatively high staff turnover, where employers have traditionally been

unwilling to fund full qualifications which are thought to make their staff more attractive to competitors.

6.8 There is already evidence of this occurring. One provider is delivering specific units based on the needs identified by an employer. The employer currently pays for these units and they are not on the Agency list. The provider is in discussion with the employer to make additional employability and supervisory units available (from the Agency list) to complement the employer funded units. However at present this combination would not fall within an existing rule of combination to form a qualification. The college is working with an AO to develop appropriate rules of combination.

6.9 **Employers:** As previously explained, the evaluation is yet to involve consultation with employers and the findings in this regard are therefore limited. In the case of the provider that is delivering unit funded provision to new trades union representatives, the approach is said to fit well with shift patterns, make it easier for learners to request time off to learn, allow learners to gain a recognised qualification and increase the relevance of the training to the learners' jobs. One provider reported that it has developed a number of non-Agency funded units specifically to meet the needs of a local employer, which is fully funding their delivery. These units have been submitted to the QCF databank.

6.10 AOs were positive about the potential of flexible delivery / unit funding to increase employer access, via co-funding, to accredited, publically funded training, stating that SMEs in particular would benefit from the learning taking place in smaller blocks. The removal of operational and financial barriers which prevent small companies committing staff to full qualifications was also highlighted, whilst one AO felt that by having staff undertaking only those units that are most relevant, the value of accredited training to employers would increase and they would become more willing to co-finance.

“Delivering individual units will allow employers to keep employees up to date on changing industry regulation and CPD”

6.11 **AOs:** In addition to the above, the key benefit identified by AOs is that a move to unitised delivery will help them to provide a better service to learners by improving the relevance of and access to the learning they offer. One AO stated that a unitised approach would create *“every opportunity for learner success – in line with our charitable purpose”*. Another stated that whilst there would be some inconvenience to the organisation in terms of changes required to systems, a unit funded approach fits with their philosophy – taking *“small steps to achieve, which is what we specialise in”*.

Challenges

6.12 Several challenges have emerged from the consultations to date, which could have significant implications should unitised delivery be rolled-out on a larger scale. These can be summarised as follows:

- **Systems and processes:** AO feedback suggests that the move to support more flexible delivery of qualifications is a challenge for some providers and AOs. Although four of the AOs consulted to date stated that their systems were able to cope with registration of learners on individual units, there is an equal number where this is not the case. The impact of this has been limited to date, but AOs are conscious of the potential cost of system re-design, including online registration and

assessment (one AO estimated that this could cost around £250,000). Whilst all AOs stated that they would follow the market and make the necessary changes, they are unlikely to do so until it becomes much more evident that unitised delivery will be regularly occurring on a much larger scale;

- **Charging arrangements:** The consultations highlighted three cases where AO unit registration was more costly for providers than registering for the equivalent units under the full qualification. All of the AOs recognised that this would not be sustainable in an environment where unit funding was the norm, although as with the systems re-design issue, a greater degree of confidence in a wider future roll-out would be needed than currently exists;
- **Use of the Personalised Learner Record:** The usefulness of the PLR as a means of recording unit achievement is limited if learners are not able to view their units/credits promptly once completed. Learners within the trial have not yet been able to view their achievements within the PLR systems. Whilst this has not been a significant issue to date, as unitised delivery is rolled out the importance of having an up-to-date record of achievement on the PLR will increase;
- **New unit delivery plans:** Two providers had made plans to deliver units that were not included on the approved list. In both cases this has delayed the start of the trial while the providers consider a new approach.

Impacts

6.13 At this stage in the trials it is too early for significant impacts to have arisen. The degree of progress made by the providers visited has been varied, with some still to enrol learners. The number of learners involved to date is small and the AOs have yet to experience any significant increase in the level of unit registrations.

6.14 Although not measurable impacts, the following effects have been observed as a result of the trials. Firstly, one provider reported an increase in progression from units to full qualifications, with funding for individual units allowing the delivery of units that were not previously eligible for funding from the Agency. This is enabling learners to progress towards the achievement of Level 3 Awards and Certificates (and hopefully Diplomas at a later stage).

6.15 Secondly, one provider reported that the trials had led to increased interest and buy-in to the unit funded approach from senior management and faculty heads in departments that have not traditionally delivered units in this way, paving the way for future roll-out of this approach in other parts of the college.

7 Next Steps for UFT Delivery and the Evaluation

7.1 Forthcoming activity on the trials understandably varies by provider. For example (and noting that the points below cover the five providers visited to date and the five that we have had contact with by telephone and/or email):

- Three of the providers will continue with delivery into the spring and summer terms, whilst two are reconsidering the units that which they will offer;
- For another three, delivery through the trials has been delayed but is due to start in the summer term;
- For two providers, there are significant concerns over participation in the trials. In one case this relates to the affordability of delivering on a unitised basis, and in the other to the presence or otherwise of the units identified for delivery on the LAD.

7.2 AOs are not proposing to make any significant changes to the ways in which they work as a result of the inclusion of their units in the trials. This reflects the fact that for many, the scale of activity taking place through the trials is very small in relation to their overall business and it therefore not appropriate to change internal systems etc until it is clear that unitised delivery will be of a sufficient scale to justify the investment required.

7.3 In relation to the evaluation, the next steps are to:

- Confirm case study dates with providers where necessary;
- Complete the consultations with AOs;
- Follow up with those providers who are no longer participating or will not deliver within the original timescale for the evaluation to identify the issues and barriers to progress, and re-arrange case study visits where possible (note that this is subject to approval by the Agency).

8 Final Remarks

8.1 The second phase of the Flexible Delivery - Unit Funding Trials is still in the relatively early stages, with some providers still to begin delivery. Despite this, the research undertaken to date has revealed a range of findings, many of which are supportive of the principles underpinning the trials, alongside those that point to emerging, and in some cases quite sizeable challenges.

8.2 At this interim stage, we would recommend that providers that have pulled out of the trials, or those where delivery has been delayed, should be consulted by the evaluators to explore in more detail the barriers they have faced. Doing so may help to identify challenges (and resolutions) relevant to other providers should a unitised approach be rolled out more widely.

8.3 Following the current phase of activity, the Agency should consider establishing a flexible delivery / unit funding working group to:

- Examine the implications of a move to more widespread flexible delivery of qualifications, including the implications for providers' and AOs' processes and systems;
- Alert and consult the wider sector on the potential impact of a move to unitised delivery.

8.4 Finally, the Agency might also consider establishing a Flexible Delivery - Unit Funding Trials online forum, including all providers and AOs involved in the trials, to discuss activity and benefits and to help resolve issues.

Appendix 1 – List of Consultees

Table 1: Provider and AO Consultations	
Provider 1	Strategic lead, Administrator (2), Learners (2)
Provider 2	Strategic lead, Department lead (2)
Provider 3	Strategic lead, Department lead (2), Administrator
Provider 4	Strategic lead, Administrator, Learners (2)
Provider 5	Strategic lead, Department lead (3), Administrator (2), Learners (18)
AO 1	Interim Managing Director
AO 2	Research and Product Development Manager
AO 3	Director of Accreditation
AO 4	Policy Manager
AO 5	Stakeholder Relations Manager
AO 6	Development Manager
AO 7	Centre Support Manager
AO 8	Head of Qualification Development

Appendix 2 – Schedule of Provider Case Study Visits

Table 1: Case Study Visit Schedule	
Provider	Visit Date
Provider 1	21 st January 2011
Provider 2	18 th February 2011
Provider 3	27 th January 2011
Provider 4	15 th February 2011
Provider 5	2 nd February 2011
City Of Bristol College	7 th March 2011
Preston College	7 th March 2011
Eastleigh College	10 th March 2011
Gloucestershire College	15 th March 2011
Swarthmore Education Centre	15 th March 2011
Leicester College	April 2011 (date to be confirmed)
Ruskin College	To be arranged
Walsall Adult and Community College	To be arranged
Stockton Riverside College	To be arranged
Swindon College	Delayed
Workers Educational Association	Delayed
Leek College of FE & School of Art	Delayed
Learning Plus	Delayed
Cirencester College Business School	Withdrawn from the trials