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# Bridging Programme Planner

# Introduction

**This Bridging Programme Planner is a series of checklists suggested by healthcare employers and others, to help partners:**

- Make a quick self-assessment of readiness to form or get involved in a Bridging Programme partnership
- And – once you know in principle that you have a partnership and you can commit – begin to identify detailed work to be done and plan implementation.

You can use the Planner checklists to talk through your high-level plans inside your own organisation - and with potential Bridging Programme partners and your HEE area contact.

The Skills for Health Bridging Programme develops the study skills that learners need to progress and succeed in all health-related vocational programmes in Higher Education in England. The Bridging Programme combined with relevant vocational qualifications at level 3 (and any recognition of prior learning) and Maths/English qualifications, offers another route into Higher Education for motivated and capable healthcare workers.



# A Bridging Programme Partnership



The Bridging Programme needs healthcare employers and FE/HE providers to work in partnership.

Partners say there is a better chance of success when:

- The Bridging Programme fulfils objectives in the employer's workforce development plan
- The employer already works with at least one HE provider offering health related vocational programmes in Higher Education – perhaps providing placements for HE students and or accessing HE provision for professional training and or Continuing Professional Development
- The employer works with an FE provider to deliver Apprenticeships or does so itself
- The employer is proactive in getting the Bridging Programme partnership started

And:

- The HEI partner commits to considering Bridging Programme applicants with the [Bridging Programme combination](#).
- A local FE provider partner is available and capable of offering the Bridging Programme qualification – perhaps one which already teaches academic study skills and has similar progression arrangements with the HEI provider.

# Healthcare Employers - who are your potential Bridging Programme recruits?

Which of your employees are potential recruits for the Bridging Programme?

- Level 3 qualified HCAs
- Level 3 Apprentices
- Return to practice qualified professionals
- HCAs with specialist skills and experience
- HCA staff targeted for the level 5 Assistant Practitioner qualification/apprenticeship
- Workforce recruits for Nursing Associate training
- Recruits for Degree Apprenticeships - including Nursing
- Other 'bands 1 – 4' staff





## Workforce planning and the selection of potential candidates

- How do potential candidates identified for the Bridging Programme feature in the workforce development plan?
- What criteria will be used for selection?
- Will the HE provider be involved in the selection process?
- Could you use the Bridging Programme to promote career progression routes to potential school/college/mature entrant HCAs and other support staff?

## How will you fund the costs of running the Bridging Programme?

Funding may be available to cover costs, subject to eligibility rules. The Bridging Programme will take between 12-20 weeks to complete. Older learners (aged 24+) may be eligible for loans only. Some HEE areas have funded running costs to help kick start the Bridging Programme partnerships. Based on current ESFA funding for 2017-18 costs for delivering the Bridging Programme qualification are around £700 per learner.

- Are the staff being selected likely to be eligible for ESFA funding?
- Can you estimate running costs for the Bridging Programme?
- Are there “backfill” and other costs to meet?
- Would your HEE area be willing to cover some or all the costs of an initial run of the Bridging Programme?
- What other sources of funding could you consider?

# Healthcare Employers - supporting staff to work and qualify



## How will you support your staff through to professional qualification?

The costs of running the Bridging Programme itself are relatively low. However, employers planning to use the Bridging Programme will need to plan how they will 'grow their own' professional staff after they have successfully enrolled on Nursing and other health related vocational programmes in Higher Education.

- What learning and personal support will you offer staff while on the HE programme?
- How does the HE provider intend to accommodate and support your staff's personal needs and learning requirements?
- Does your HEE area plan to offer/fund sponsorship to HCAs pursuing health related vocational programmes in Higher Education or are you considering other schemes to support staff?

## How will you to accommodate and benefit from using the Bridging Programme?

- Analyse and produce a cost benefit analysis of supporting your staff through to professional qualification.
- Integrate the use of the Bridging Programme into your workforce development plans
- Consider ways to support and keep staff after completion of their professional qualification.
- Maintain HCAs on full or part-time contracts throughout their professional training. Discuss the implications of sponsorship and any changes to staff terms and conditions with relevant Trade Unions and the staff themselves.
- Think about tracking progress of your staff through the Bridging Programme and HE health related vocational qualifications and into their new roles.

# Healthcare Employers and HEIs



## What should an employer expect from a Higher Education provider?

As an employer, you are asking a Higher Education provider to recognise the validity of healthcare learning at work for meeting their entry requirements to specified health related HE vocational programmes, alongside the Bridging Programme qualification and English and Maths qualifications specified by the Higher Education Provider.

The Bridging Programme provides the additional study skills that vocational learners need to enter and succeed at Higher Education Institutions. No short cuts or lowering of standards is involved; the Bridging Programme qualification is nationally approved and recognised.

Many HE providers are supportive of the Bridging Programme and [a growing number are already committed to considering applicants](#). You will also know which HE provider is more likely to be supportive in your area. You could talk to your [HEE area contact](#) about this if you need to.

# Who delivers the Bridging Programme qualification?



A Further Education College or other FE Provider (or employer or HE provider able and willing to offer the qualification) registers with either [OCN London](#) or [FutureQuals](#) to offer the qualification.

Skills for Health has worked with Awarding Organisations (AOs) to agree terms for approval of Bridging Programme centres.

These include:

- Contextualising the teaching of Bridging Programme skills in healthcare work
- Ensuring centres use AO and Skills for Health approved benchmark assessments for the qualification. These are provided by each AO and contextualise study skills assessment in healthcare work.



# Awarding Organisations - what should providers look for?



## What should Employer/FE Providers consider in selecting an awarding organisation?

There are currently two awarding organisations approved to offer the Bridging Programme qualification: [OCN London](#) and [FutureQuals](#). The following suggestions were made by FE and employer providers.

- What is the Awarding Organisation process for gaining centre approval?
- What are the costs?
- What personal support and training are on offer?
- What track record does the Awarding Organisation have in offering study skills, and or health qualifications?
- What other qualifications could the Awarding Organisation offer alongside the Bridging Programme qualification?
- Could the Awarding Organisation help you identify an appropriate FE Provider?
- Does the Awarding Organisation have experience of working with HE Providers?
- Can you see an example of a benchmark assessment?
- What promotional materials are available?
- How does the Awarding Organisation guide the Centre through internal moderation and conduct external moderation?

# Bridging Programme Partners - questions for joint discussion

- Where and how will the Bridging Programme be offered? In the workplace? At times that suit work patterns?
- How will the onward HEI health related vocational programme be delivered to accommodate HCAs at work?
- Could the HEI be involved in curriculum design, assessment and standardisation activities or direct delivery of the Bridging Programme?
- Will the HEI will play a role in the selection of candidates for the Bridging Programme? This might also include discussion of selection criteria - and reporting arrangements for initial assessment and ongoing review of progress.

