

Learnings from the UK Further Education Sector

Report of Overseas Study Tour – 21 November to 1 December 2011

Background

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) and the TAFE Development Centre offered a scholarship to a VET professional to join a study tour hosted by Victoria University. As a result of the scholarship I was able to join the study tour, which encompassed visits to the Association of Colleges, the Institute for Learning and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, as well as attendance at three separate conferences/seminars.

Following the Victoria University study tour, I also took the opportunity to visit four further education (FE) colleges in England and Wales to learn more about their approaches to student success and retention.

Throughout the trip people very generously shared their thoughts, ideas, policy and practice and, at a personal level, I came away with a better (though nowhere near comprehensive) understanding of the tertiary education system in England and Wales. I am writing this report with the notion that leaders in Australian VET institutions and organisations may be interested in how policy and practice in the UK may be applied in their own contexts, so I have taken a descriptive and fairly detailed approach in the following pages.

Themes covered during the study tour and FE college visits included:

- Higher education delivery by FE colleges
- Professional identity, development and registration
- Colleges in their communities
- Student success and retention strategies

Itinerary

Date	Activity	Location
21 November	Meeting	Association of Colleges, London
22 November	Meeting	Institute for Learning, London
22 November	Meeting	Learning and Skills Improvement Service, Coventry
23 November	Universities Association for Lifelong Learning Conference	Friends Meeting House, London
24 November	LSRN Conference	EdExcel Offices, London
25 November	SRHE Seminar	EdExcel Offices, London
28 November	Gower College	Swansea, Wales

29 November	Wiltshire College	Chippenham, England
30 November	City and North Islington College	London
1 December	Westminster Kingsway College	London

Outcomes/Findings

Meeting with Association of Colleges (AoC)

Apart from the Australian participants, representatives attended the meeting from AoC, Wirral College, Guild Higher Education (which is an awarding body and represents specialist higher education providers), Universities UK, and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (which, amongst other things, has policy responsibility for further education and skills, and higher education).

The focus for the meeting was to provide an overview of higher education in further education in the UK. Julian Gravatt, Assistant Chief Executive of AoC, commenced by providing a broad overview of the Association, its role as a representative and lobbying body and as the employer representative within the industrial relations framework for further education colleges.

In relation to higher education, the colleges deliver 10% of undergraduate programs, although the main focus of their activities is education and training programs targeted at 16 to 18 year olds.

The Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance (the Browne Review) was commissioned by the then Labour government in 2009 and published in October 2010¹, after the election. The need to address the budget deficit informed the review and its findings. The review and a subsequent white paper have served as a catalyst for the following changes to HE funding and policy in 2012:

- A reduction in teaching grants, offset by an increase in income contingent student loans. The government's intention is that student fees should fully cover teaching costs in all but the STEM (science, technology, engineering, maths, and medicine) courses, which will still receive teaching grants.
- A rise in student fees to between £7,500 and £9,000 per annum. Fees are expected to be regulated by the Office of Fair Access. Effectively the government is imposing a graduate tax. The loan is not repayable until the student graduates and is earning at least £21,000 annually, and any residual debt is written off after 30 years.
- A more competitive, student-led market where new providers, including FE colleges, private providers and overseas universities, will have greater opportunities to deliver higher education in the UK.

¹ A full copy of the Browne Review can be found at www.independent.gov.uk/browne-report

One of the ways in which the government is seeking to keep student fee levels low, while also maintaining quality, is through a redistribution of student quotas. Current quotas in higher education institutions, including some FE colleges, have been reduced by 20,000 places, or 10%. Providers, existing and new, have been invited to bid for those places (worth noting here is that the current bidding is for 35,000 places), provided their fees are below £7,500.

The policy changes have led to some unease amongst the universities and FE colleges. Collaborative partnerships between universities and colleges have been a central feature of the UK tertiary sector and there is some concern that these arrangements will come under pressure in a more competitive environment. Already, as a direct consequence of the quota reductions, some universities are terminating franchising arrangements with colleges. Other speakers at the meeting noted that competition would be operating on two levels: amongst providers for quota places and also for high performing school leavers, given the links between funding and student achievement.

What is not clear is how all of this is going to lead to growth in the population of degree holders. The UK participants were very interested in the Australian Government's policy to lift caps on university places and the shift to funding based on student demand.

In this new environment the provision of HE by colleges is expected to be more challenging. Speakers noted that a threshold level of expertise is now required to deliver HE programs, along with a newly mandated 'key information set' which will be very demanding of colleges.

Notwithstanding the current uncertainties, it was interesting to hear about the historical context for higher education delivery by FE colleges. The Dearing Review into the future of higher education recommended that colleges deliver higher education qualifications at sub-bachelor level. Foundation degrees were introduced to stimulate demand, widen participation and grow higher education from below, and colleges were given a central role in this initiative.

Foundation degrees were seen as filling a gap in education and training at the upper technical skill level and as being directly linked to employment outcomes. The preferred model was for semi-compulsory partnerships, which involved a university brand associated with college delivery. Complex and multiple relationships were established.

As the meeting concluded, there was general agreement about the growing interest in higher education provision in further education and that it is opening up as an area of research in the UK. Interest was expressed in a wider gathering of participants in one to two years to explore the policy and practice frameworks in the UK and Australia.

Meeting with Institute for Learning (IfL)

The Institute for Learning is a professional body for teachers and trainers in further education. At its peak, when government was meeting membership costs, the Institute had over 200,000 members. However, numbers have declined significantly since government funding was removed and members are now required to pay their own fees.

FE teachers are required to achieve minimum qualification levels as follows:

- i. Preparing to teach learning and skills (PTLS) – the initial teacher training
- ii. Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) – required for full teacher status'
- iii. Associate Teacher Learning and Skills (ATLS)

Within the teaching qualifications regulations IfL is recognised as the awarding body for QTLS and ATLS (although it was not clear to me whether IfL membership was compulsory).

A model of 'dual professionalism' (a term valued by their membership) has been developed by IfL, recognising the fact that practitioners are required to have subject area/industry and pedagogical expertise.

Professional standards have been developed and, to maintain professional status, members must do a minimum of 30 hours of continuing professional development annually. To support the capture and reflection of the PD undertaken by their members IfL has established 'Reflect', an e-Portfolio using PebblePad. Usage of 'Reflect' is compulsory with members having the option to access it through mobile devices. Part of the strategy behind mandating the e-Portfolio is to increase practitioners' comfort and familiarity with technology as a teaching tool.

Recognition and understanding of the sector is a major area of focus for the Institute, which is working towards achieving recognition of QTLS as equivalent to Qualified Teacher Status (required for teaching in schools).

Meeting with Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS)

The meeting with LSIS was brief so, during the short time available, we were provided a relatively broad overview of their work. LSIS is an independent, government funded body, often working in partnership with organisations such as the Association of Colleges and the Institute for Learning, amongst others, to support the implementation of government policy and improve the quality of teaching and learning in the UK.

Services offered by LSIS include:

- Research, including the provision of small research grants to practitioners.
- Development of tools and frameworks to support further education colleges (and other providers) meet the needs of their constituents. For example, LSIS is currently developing a strategic framework that can be used by colleges to meet their community development obligations, with a particular focus on how higher education in further education can contribute to this agenda. Included within the framework will be the capacity to evaluate the impact and social return on investment.
- Funding to Peer Review and Development groups as a means of supporting collaborative, sector-level projects. Generally the groups comprise 4 to 6 providers within an area or region and they are focussed on a collaborative approach to quality improvement. Past projects have focussed in areas such as:

- Organisational efficiency and curriculum development, where the organisational development plan, along with the self assessment and performance improvement plan, are reviewed by the partners within the group.
- Improving the quality of higher education provision in FE colleges, focussing on improving the student experience and considering the most appropriate pedagogy for teaching HE in a FE context.
- Getting people into work and apprenticeships.
- Quality improvement initiatives/services to colleges in areas such as teaching and learning, curriculum design and development, improving operational effectiveness and efficiency, and management, leadership and governance. By way of example, Anne Ruthven, Head of Learning and Learner Support, talked about a project related to career development where they have taken the Australian *'Blueprint for Careers'* and contextualised it to the local environment. They have worked closely with schools, colleges and universities and have strong interest and support from teachers because the language is not about 'employability' or 'careers'. LSIS is currently producing an implementation guide and is also considering the development of some tools that will assist in measuring where students are and their subsequent progress.
- Policy seminars for the sector.

Conference hosted by Universities Association for Lifelong Learning: *'Social Mobility or Social Justice. Educational Perspectives'*

Speakers and participants were largely from the higher education sector, which flavoured the presentations. Issues of class, social mobility, equity and justice were explored within the context of a perceived failure within UK society to address poor social mobility.

Variously, speakers examined a range of policy agendas across time and governments of different political persuasions, or argued for the value of lifelong learning as a means of:

- Including the most marginalised in society;
- Reducing dependency; and/or
- Improving educational and civic participation and life chances.

Within the universities there was recognition that higher education can make a significant contribution to improving social mobility and that there has been some progress in increasing participation from disadvantaged groups, although such progress is small and variable. While social mobility remains a policy priority, speakers and participants were concerned about the potential impacts of recent policy changes, including the 'marketisation' of university places and changes to funding arrangements, on the widening participation agenda.

Most of the discussion was polemical in nature and, while there was considerable food for thought, from my perspective it seemed to be mostly relevant to the UK context.

Learning and Skills Research Network Conference

The conference provided an opportunity for academic and practitioner researchers in further education to gather and explore a range of issues confronting the sector. Four themes were explored via presentations from key note speakers and round table discussions, with the intention of identifying new areas of research. Themes included:

- Colleges in their communities
- The role of the practitioner in performance measurement
- Higher education in further education
- Professionalism and identity.

The participative nature of the conference made for an inspiring and informative day, which encouraged a sharing of research findings, ideas and challenges.

COLLEGES IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

Localism is a strong focus for education in the UK and further education colleges have a recognised role within their local communities (which may have arisen from historic connections with local authorities). Throughout 2011 an independent inquiry was conducted to investigate “the role that further education colleges can and do play within their communities, and the added public value that they can bring to those communities in their role as leaders of learning”².

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) was part of the inquiry and presented to the conference. Fundamentally the inquiry, made a number of recommendations related to concepts of:

- establishing local learning ecologies,
- recognising and establishing communities of local employers,
- enabling greater freedom for colleges to respond and contribute more effectively to their communities – the need to reduce ‘red tape’ was highlighted as one means of achieving this,
- the development of a new curriculum, and
- the creation of an innovation code that would release up to 25% of college funding to support work in local communities – effectively NIACE are arguing that only 75% of college budgets need to be spent on the delivery of qualifications.

Full and summary copies of the final report are available on the NIACE website, www.niace.org.uk.

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

The City and Guilds Centre for Skills Development, a not for profit research and development body, recently completed a research project examining the role of the practitioner in performance measurement. The project included an examination of practice in other countries and sectors.

² “A dynamic nucleus -Colleges at the heart of local communities. The Final Report of the Independent Commission on Colleges in their Communities – Summary” Baroness Sharp of Guildford, November 2011

Research findings indicate significant benefits arising from the engagement of practitioners (lecturers, tutors, mentors, academic leaders) in the development of performance measures. Generally a top down approach is taken to the development and/or imposition of performance measures that, as a consequence, are not always fit for purpose. Neither do such measures add value to practice, because the measures do not inform what the practitioner does in the classroom. Further, such an approach does not signal trust in the autonomy and professional judgement of practitioners.

Practitioners can make a positive contribution to the development of measures that will serve the interests of stakeholders because they are closest to those groups, working with them on the ground. Best practice was identified as occurring when there was:

- a shared vision and common understanding about what was being measured and why;
- consultation with all stakeholders to determine their expectations of VET professionals;
- collaboration rather than coercion, including valuing the expertise of practitioners;
- a focus on evidence based continual improvement; and
- a consistent and stable policy environment.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN FURTHER EDUCATION (HE in FE)

Gareth Parry is a researcher at the University of Sheffield, who has worked in both the further education and higher education sectors. He brings an interesting perspective to the debate and identified a number of challenges facing colleges delivering higher education, as outlined below.

- The need to build college share and within this context to consider whether delivery should be distributed or concentrated at the system and/or organisational levels. Gareth also asked us to think about the impact of HE delivery on college organisational culture and whether it matters to learning across the college, noting that there has been little or no research in this latter area.
- Whether collaboration between universities and colleges is consistent with and necessary to a public/private market, noting that markets are managed. Despite the fact that they are not as well resourced, colleges open a wider market for higher education because students who would not otherwise go to university will pursue a HE pathway through a college.

In the subsequent roundtable discussion the discourse that particularly caught my attention related to the nature of students undertaking HE in FE. Preliminary research completed by a practitioner, showed that HE students in colleges tend to be older and studying part-time. They were keen to distance themselves from the traditional university experience but, nevertheless, saw their qualification as being of equal value. They perceived colleges as being more of an adult environment, while universities were more for young people. While the research was localised and small-scale in nature, it would indicate that there may be widespread assumptions about the HE in FE student cohort and there may be a case for further and larger scale research related to the connection between the function and purpose of colleges and the aspirations and motivations of students.

- The features and strengths of a mass college, including the organisational forms they take and whether those forms are functional.
- An approach to scholarship that captures a range of professional contexts and noting that it is possible to be scholarly in any activity. The question of whether the scholarship of learning, teaching and innovation is different for higher education and further education should be considered.
- The adoption of a truly open tertiary system of colleges and universities, and a shift away from the notion of further education.

IDENTITY AND PROFESSIONALISM

The notion of what it means to be a professional was explored and defined in its broadest context. Professionals across a range of industries and sectors are seen as having:

- specialist knowledge and expertise,
- a commitment to a set of values and principles beyond their employment/contractual relationships,
- the capacity to exercise professional thought and judgement, and
- are often, but not always, members of a professional body.

Within the VET / further education sector the concept of dual-professionalism must be recognised - practitioners are generally professionals in their subject area, and as teachers. The argument was also made that a commitment to professional development is the hallmark of a professional in this sector. Whether the teaching identity should take precedence over the technical/occupational identity of a VET/FE professional remains a challenge.

Society for Research into Higher Education Seminar: *'International Perspectives of HE in FE, The Australian Story'*

On the final day of the study tour representatives from Victoria University and the TAFE Development Centre presented on the Australian context.

A fundamental difference between the UK and Australian systems lies in the funding and policy arrangements. In Australia HE is funded by the Australian government, while state governments fund VET. This dichotomy presents challenges to the establishment of pathways across the sectors. Noting the COAG targets for increasing bachelor level qualifications against the fact that 46% of Australians lack the functional literacy and numeracy to study at that level, there is a need for a new approach. Pathways become critical, as does the need to align curriculum between VET and HE. Further, the curriculum needs to be expanded from the current focus on building skills for work to a broader set of literacies.

At Victoria University, where there are more students engaged in VET than HE, the division between the two sectors has all but disappeared. They talk in terms of faculties and work to support all learners.

Transition pedagogy, a concept developed by Sally Kift at Queensland University of Technology, will be applied at various, identified transition points in the student journey, through strategies such as support within the curricula, team teaching approaches, and the introduction of pre-tertiary and tertiary qualifications and curriculum.

In the Australian context the delivery of HE in VET raises issues related to:

- The skills and attributes of teaching staff and the need for qualified staff at the appropriate academic level.
- The shift from competency based to knowledge based curriculum.
- Differences in the teaching and learning environments and what that means for the teacher.
- Defining research in a VET context – it can take a different form and should be more applied and useful to students.
- Supporting students in the transition from VET to HE, particularly within the same institute - experience shows that divisions also exist between VET and HE students, and even those students who transition from VET to HE within the same institution expect a university experience.

Gareth Parry concluded the seminar by reflecting on the similarities and differences between the UK and Australian systems. He noted that Australia is trying to create a tertiary sector with minimal overlap between the two systems. On the other hand the UK has higher permeability. Further education colleges have academic, vocational and general/liberal education purposes – they supply 40% of all HE entrants via delivery of ‘A’ levels and vocational qualifications, while also delivering higher education.

Visits to Further Education Colleges: Gower College, Wiltshire College, City and North Islington College, and Westminster Kingsway College

As an extension of the study tour, hosted by Victoria University, I stayed on for a few extra days to visit FE colleges and learn more about their approaches to student success and retention, an area of priority within my own institute.

Student success and retention is at the heart of the quality system within the UK, and while there may be slight variations at the institutional level, there are standard practices and approaches that seem driven by the quality and inspection system as well as by the funding arrangements. Rather than describing each college visit separately, I propose to focus on practice at the system level, commenting on institutional variations where appropriate.

SYSTEM DIFFERENCES

Before proceeding too much further, it is worth noting some fundamental differences between the Australian and UK systems. The school leaving age is currently 16, and

colleges are funded by separate agencies for delivery to students aged 16 to 18 years old (the Young Persons Learning Agency) and for other students (the Skills Funding Agency). For higher education delivery colleges receive funding from universities, where a franchising arrangement is in place, from the Higher Education Funding Council, or in some instances funding may come through both pathways.

Colleges are funded for delivery of qualifications and 'courses', where courses are defined components of a qualification rather like our own skill sets. As I understand it, completion of a series of courses will lead to a qualification. All courses seem to be recognised and defined, so that part-time students are enrolled into a course – there does not seem to be the degree of flexibility that exists in Australia.

Compared to the Western Australian public provider network, FE colleges seem to have a more comprehensive range of offerings, which include:

- BTEC national diplomas;
- National vocational qualifications;
- A levels – for university entry;
- Foundation degrees and degrees;
- General/liberal education programs; and
- In some colleges, sixth form, which is a school leaver academic pathway to university.

ADMISSIONS AND INDUCTION

Student success and retention strategies start prior to admissions, which are managed at the college level. There is no centralised admissions system, which ensures colleges have the capacity to ensure that students are placed into the appropriate course or qualification. All prospective students are subject to a 30 minute interview three to six months before the academic year starts, where teaching staff discuss the student's interest in the course/qualification and spend time describing what the program will entail, including the degree of difficulty and study commitment required. The colleges are interviewing many more people than actually enrol – at one college approximately 6,000 interviews are conducted for an eventual 4,500 new student intake.

On enrolment, students go through an initial assessment (and for some students further diagnostic testing) to identify any additional support needs and to ensure that the student is in a program at the right level. Additional learning support may take the form literacy, numeracy or dyslexia support – all of which is subject to additional funding. Every college noted that the pre course assessment and guidance is where much of their effort goes and has considerable impact on success rates.

Colleges used different approaches and assessment tools in the interviewing and initial assessment stages. For example, some colleges³ adopted the BKSB (basic key and functional skills) assessment, while others use OECD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). One college also mentioned a close working relationship with the schools in its catchment area that enabled the sharing of information about students (still at

³ 80% according to the BKSB website

school) who may be at risk. The college starts working with those identified students prior to enrolment, to ease their transition from school to college.

LEARNING SUPPORT

Structured tutorial support of 30 hours per year⁴ is built into college timetables. Students are assigned a tutor and attend tutorials for one hour a week. During this time tutors work with students in a group or one-on-one basis to set learning and attendance targets, or cover a range of more general topics such as healthy eating, civics and democracy, and employability skills. The topics are variously defined by the study areas in which the students are enrolled, or by the needs of individual students. I believe that the tutorial support is funded for students aged 16 to 18, but in some colleges it is also available to other students. Generally, tutors are called upon to deal with any disciplinary issues for their assigned students and there are also senior tutors to whom more serious issues can be elevated.

Additional learning support (ALS), as noted earlier, is provided for students with recognised learning difficulties, which have been identified through the initial and diagnostic testing processes. ALS is also available for students with disabilities. Colleges use the ALS funding differently – some use ‘basic skills lecturers’ who go into those classes with students identified as needing additional support and work alongside the mainstream lecturer. At one college this was supplemented by a study support centre, however, some doubt was expressed as to its effectiveness for the targeted student cohort.

Elsewhere it was reported that some of the basic skills lecturers had gone on to get a technical qualification, e.g. an automotive certificate, to strengthen their capacity to provide contextualised support to students. At another college they had steered away from using basic skills lecturers in a team teaching approach, questioning its efficacy. Instead they tailor the support to the student, where the student meets with a basic skills lecturer on an individual basis. Specialists with expertise in dealing with dyslexia and autism are also assigned to particular students. At this college ALS funding is also used to support salaries of specialist staff in areas such as managing mental health or relationships.

The level of ALS funding may be quite significant – one medium sized college noted that it received approximately £1.6m annually. (Note: this same college also reported a large contingent of staff devoted to meeting funding agency reporting requirements.) While there seems to be quite a degree of flexibility in the application of ALS funding, it must be acquitted at the individual student level.

QUALITY DRIVERS OF STUDENT SUCCESS

College quality inspection grades are based upon successful completions and funding penalties are applied to student attrition. Consequently the quality systems within colleges are built around the analysis of data related to student attendance, attainment and success.

⁴ Until 2011 colleges were funded for 114 hours of annual tutorial support. The reduction to 30 hours has been driven by budget cuts.

Using publicly available benchmarks, which get down to provider, industry sector, qualification and course level, quality officers examine college and study area performance. In their self-assessment processes each college took varied but quite structured approaches to considering performance and outcomes at the local level – approaches that generally included program area managers meeting individually with executive representatives. Student attendance and retention is closely monitored through automated weekly reporting and is a regular agenda item at college meetings. In some colleges the discussions occur at the study area level, while at others it occurs at senior management level. All noted that the debate was generally robust and regular. One college provides a report of retention, attendance and unmarked registers to all desktops across the organisation.

The quality system also includes some kind of ‘value-add’ measurement, the details of which are a bit sketchy. The measure only seems to be applied or be applicable to school leavers, and looks at the grade improvement on the GCSE or A level results achieved at school. This feature of the quality systems needed more detailed examination than I was able to achieve, but it caught my attention and I thought it worth noting in this report, as is the fact that some colleges were applying an interesting approach to student grading that may be associated with the need to measure added value. Essentially, at the subject level points are assigned to effort; meeting deadlines; involvement; quality of work; and attendance to derive a percentage score.

The college visits were very productive and the discussions wide-ranging, I learned so much more from these brief personal visits than I would have from any amount of reading, webinars or phone calls....and still there is so much more to learn. For the sake of brevity, I have covered only some of the topics we explored at a broad summary level.

Conclusion

The conclusions I have drawn from my UK experience are that while many of the system features and contexts are quite different, to a greater extent we share a common set of issues and challenges and we have much to learn from the different approaches adopted across countries and jurisdictions. Returning to the themes that were highlighted in the background section of this report, the following conclusions may be drawn.

Higher education in further education

In both the UK and Australia, interest is growing in the establishment of a more seamless tertiary education sector. The UK government is introducing significant changes to the funding and policy environment surrounding higher education, which brings opportunities and threats for further education colleges. Notwithstanding, these changes, the government continues to recognise that colleges have a role to play in higher education, particularly in widening and increasing levels of participation.

While a different policy environment exists in Australia, the challenges facing colleges delivering higher education are similar to those that exist in the UK. In this context Gareth Parry articulated a series of questions that have relevance to both Australia and the UK.

Professional identity, development and registration

The issues they are grappling with in the UK are very familiar in Australia and relate to concepts of dual professionalism, valuing of VET/FE, professional practice and teaching qualifications. Interestingly, in the UK a teaching qualification framework is prescribed in regulations, where the Institute for Learning has been identified as the awarding body for such qualifications. As government funding has been withdrawn for college teachers' professional membership, there has been a significant decline in membership levels. The need to show clear benefits attached to membership of professional bodies is recognised, as is a need to achieve equivalent status between FE and school teachers, through their qualifications and ongoing professional development.

Colleges in their communities

The UK government seems to have a commitment to social mobility and empowering local communities. FE colleges seem to have an identified role at the centre of this agenda, though with limited additional funding. A recent review made a number of recommendations that included enabling a localised curriculum and freeing up a proportion of college funding to support innovative, collaborative local initiatives. It will be interesting to watch how this unfolds and to see whether the recommendations that are adopted would have any application to the Australian context.

Student success and retention strategies

Of most interest to me was the fact that student success and retention is informed and driven by the quality system in the UK. Outcomes data lies at the centre of quality and a systemic approach is taken to ensuring students are appropriately placed and supported. Colleges valued the national benchmarks because they were at a sufficiently granular level to have meaning and to inform practice at the local level.

Finally, within my own institution I hope that what I have learned from the UK study tour and visits will directly inform:

- The continuing development of our own tertiary strategy;
- Approaches to professional development and recognition of a VET professional; and
- Improvements to the student experience, leading to better success and retention rates.

This report reflects my own interpretation of the information that was shared over the two weeks that I was in the UK – it is a personal account and the opinions expressed are my own. I hope it is reasonably accurate and informative. Please direct any questions or comments to me via email gail.mitchell@central.wa.edu.au.

Acknowledgements

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