

# fdf – Foundation Degree Forward

## What is a Foundation degree?

Foundation degrees<sup>1</sup> integrate academic and work-based learning and are designed in partnership with employers to ensure that they deliver the knowledge and skills relevant to industry and businesses. They are university-level qualifications (at level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework) and are utilised by businesses for a number of different purposes:

- To enhance the knowledge and skills of existing employees
- To change the skill set of existing employees, e.g. when revision of technology is required
- To move employees on within the business, e.g. to management level
- To train new recruits
- Employers who recruit Foundation degree graduates do so because they can employees ‘hit the ground running’

Existing in-house training programmes can be accredited and incorporated into a Foundation degree

## What are the benefits to an employer?

Foundation degrees can be included as an option in existing employer’s training programmes. By offering such opportunities to their workforce, other employers have found that staff turnover decreases. Employers that have invested in Foundation degree development for their workforce have been able to define clear productivity and efficiency gains. If taking on new employees who have taken a Foundation degree, businesses can benefit from them having the relevant skills and experience to their business sector.

## Who are Foundation degrees suitable for?

Foundation degrees are suitable for:

- Employees who have relevant experience but not necessarily formal qualifications
- Employees who have completed level 3 qualifications e.g., NVQ3 or an Advanced Apprenticeship and want to achieve more
- School and college leavers who have completed level 3 qualifications and wish to gain an employment-focussed degree

## Where can a Foundation degree be taken?

Foundation degrees are delivered by universities, colleges and sometimes by other training providers and are currently available in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Students learn in a way which suits the employer and the individual which can include distance learning, work-place learning and online learning.

## How long does it take?

A full-time Foundation degree usually takes two years to complete.

## Why should we be involved?

Foundation degrees are designed by employers working closely with further and higher education colleges and universities. Sector Skills Councils and other professional bodies are also actively involved in their design and implementation. Work-based learning is integral to the Foundation degree. Foundation degrees are, therefore, distinctive to other qualifications in which work-based learning or placements are peripheral.

Foundation degrees are an opportunity for employers to get a qualification that is fit for purpose, innovative and flexible to meet their needs.

## How does fdf<sup>2</sup> work with UK industry and businesses?

**fdf** works with employers, employer representative bodies and other partners to shape and enhance higher education in a way that meets the requirements of businesses and industry

**fdf** provides information and support for employers who are seeking new development opportunities for their workforce

For larger employers this may involve the development of new higher education provision that specifically meets their needs. **fdf** assists employers throughout the development process by, for example, helping to identify suitable university or college partners, exploring whether existing in-house training can be accredited and providing advice on funding.

**fdf** helps smaller businesses to identify existing higher education provision that specifically meets their requirements, or provision that can be adapted to meet the needs of individual employers or employees. We also look to support the development of new programmes that meet the requirements of groups of local or regional SMEs.

## Who pays for a Foundation degree?

Employers could choose to support their employees by offering them financial assistance. There are loans available for students taking full-time courses; part-time students may be eligible for grants towards fees and course costs. Financial support for part-time students has improved recently.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/founddeg/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fdf.ac.uk/>