



"Raising achievement and increasing access to Higher Education"



An Evaluation of 'Up2uni'

**A staff development programme
to develop the role of teachers in guidance
and encouraging pupils**

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Introduction

- .1 This report is based on an external evaluation of the Up2uni project (2004-2006) delivered by the Education Liaison Office of Manchester Metropolitan University and funded by North West Aimhigher. REAP,¹ which is based in Lancaster University's Department of Educational Research, undertook the evaluation.
- .2 The Up2uni project is a staff development programme designed to support practitioners who are advising prospective students about higher education (HE). The original objectives of the evaluation were to:
 - Report on the effectiveness of the project and outcomes achieved;
 - Comment on good practice within the project;
 - Identify areas for improvement or modification for future delivery, sustainability and transferability of lessons learned from the project.
- .3 In accord with recommendations for Aimhigher evaluations, the Up2uni evaluation is designed to: build on previous research and evaluation offering a focused examination of an initiative; be responsive to, and useful for, a range of stakeholders operating at different levels; support the case for practice; and take account of equality and diversity (Bell et. al. 2003).
- .4 This report is divided into four main sections:
 - **Section 1** provides an overview of the Up2uni project by outlining the context in which the project was developed and delivered and by summarising the objectives and achievements
 - **Section 2** outlines the evaluation methodology, the framework used to reflect on the project, the data collected and factors influencing the evaluation
 - **Section 3** covers the key features of the Up2uni project which include targeting, session content, training delivery, work-based learning (WBL), regional links and sustainability
 - **Section 4** returns to the evaluation frameworks and provides an overview of project achievements including suggestions for future developments by the Up2uni project, NW Aimhigher and others interested in developing and delivering a staff development programme to enhance information advice and guidance (IAG).

¹ REAP: Researching Equity, Access and Participation Group (formally the Community Access Programme). For further details see web address <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects.REAP.html>

Section 1: Up2uni Project Overview

1.1 Background

- .1 The Up2uni project is based on previous research and development by McGrath and Millen, in particular the findings from the 'Getting them in' project' (2003) that McGrath (2005) discussed further in a paper entitled 'Getting in is easy – if any place will do' in which she reflected on the guidance students needed and school delivery methods used to provide information advice and guidance (IAG) about higher education (HE).
- .2 The 'Getting them in' project showed that the 'professionals' students rely upon most for information about HE are their form or personal tutors but that often "tutors feel under-equipped and over-pressured for the demands of being a comprehensive expert" on HE.
- .3 According to Houghton's (2002) typology of helpers, tutors may be regarded as 'peripatetic helpers' who offer what support they can but draw primarily from personal experience rather than from any expertise. Peripatetic helpers typically find it difficult to access staff development to support them with IAG and yet are often preferred as an initial if not the sole source of guidance because of their accessibility.
- .4 The Up2uni project was designed to provide practical assistance to practitioners who are unable to attend events such as the 'Getting them in' conference where, as one delegate observed, "virtually none of the participants attending are classroom practitioners".

1.2 Pilot Study

The pilot study was offered in the Greater Manchester and Cheshire areas. Practitioners were asked about the help they needed to provide IAG and their preference with respect to modes of delivery. They identified three areas of concern, which became the basis for three sessions:

- **Applying to HE** – covered how to tackle Personal Statements and References on UCAS forms;
- **HE Finance** – covered the complexities of Student Finance;
- **Routes to HE** – covered how to obtain an effective overall grasp of the type of HE courses available and routes into HE.

1.3 Up2uni Objectives and Outreach Model

- .1 Based on previous research and the pilot study, the Up2uni project proposed an outreach model that would:
 - Develop and deliver a package of 100 staff development sessions to schools, colleges and centres of work-based learning across the Northwest covering all five sub-regions of, the Aimhigher NW region;
 - Raise awareness, provide information and increase the skills, confidence and knowledge base of over 1,000 staff who are known to

be the key influence on career and HE decisions made by young people;

- Undertake research, staff development and dissemination activities that link with others funded by Aimhigher Northwest and other Aimhigher regions;
- Generate national media interest and foster productive relationships between Aimhigher and other regional bodies.

.2 The key aspects of the outreach model included delivery:

- at the practitioners' workplace
- cost free to the school/college
- at a time when no cover was required
- by 'experts' with experience
- recognising existing expertise amongst practitioners
- providing a summary of important details for staff to keep and re-use
- involving a tailored session to meet the individual institution's needs.

The underpinning principles and effectiveness of this model are discussed later in sections 3 and 4.

1.4 Up2uni Outputs

1.4.1 Delivery achievements

- .1 The Up2uni has successfully achieved all of its numerical targets. MMU's Educational Liaison Unit funded some additional sessions that bring the total number of sessions to 115 reaching 916 members of staff working with post 16 young people. This included core sessions and some additional sessions delivered in response to specific requests, for example, referencing workshops and a tailored session for WBL tutors.
- .2 A total of 74 schools, colleges and centres of work-based learning across the Northwest took part in the Up2uni project during the period from March 2005 to July 2006. Some institutions participated in both years and others expressed an interest in future sessions recognising the need for ongoing professional development to enable them to provide up-to-date IAG and support new staff.

	Aimhigher institutions	Non-Aimhigher Institutions
Number of schools/colleges Connexions Services visited during project	59	15
Number of sessions delivered	99 *	16

* includes additional sessions not part of portfolio but delivered as part of Up2uni, for example WBL sessions and referencing workshops

Figure 1: A breakdown of institutions and sessions

- .3 The geographical spread was achieved with delivery to institutions from all five Northwest Aimhigher sub-regions of: Cheshire/Warrington (16), Cumbria (6), Greater Manchester (25), Greater Merseyside (17) and Lancashire (10).
- .4 The full range of institutional types was included: Schools with a 6th Form (38); 6th Form Colleges (13); FE Colleges (18) and WBL Centres (5). From the 74 institutions, 59 were designated with Aimhigher status. Of the 15 not designated with Aimhigher status 6 institutions were independent.

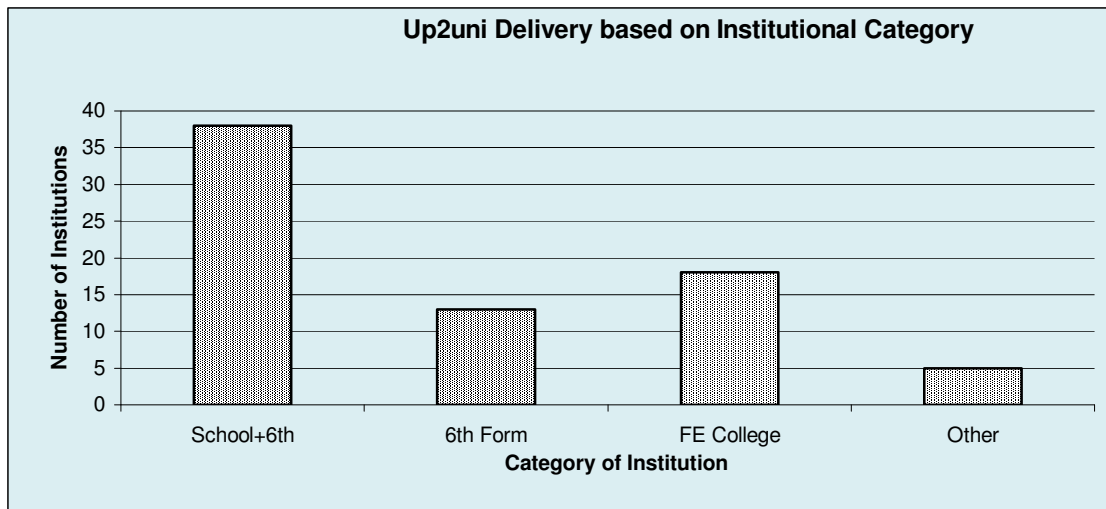


Figure 2: Breakdown of Up2uni workshops by type of institution

There were three main types of session delivered. Applying to HE was the most popular accounting for 70% of the sessions.

Type of Session	Total number of sessions
No. of <i>Applying to HE</i> sessions	81
No. of <i>Student Finance</i> sessions	16
No. of <i>Routes To HE</i> sessions	15
Other	3
Number of staff participants	916 765 worked in Aimhigher institutions

Figure 3: Breakdown of Up2uni workshops by session content

1.4.2 Research, development and dissemination achievements

The Up2uni project engaged in a range of research and dissemination activities that helped inform, extend and promote the project, these included the:

- Production and distribution of two newsletters to promote and highlight the overall importance of IAG in supporting students' decision making about the future;
- Presentation of three conference papers at the Aimhigher Research Network's symposium and national conference;
- Development of laminated materials with key information for participants.

Section 2: Evaluation Methodology

2.1 Evaluation Frameworks

- .1 This section outlines the evaluation frameworks used for the external evaluation, describes the data collected and issues influencing the evaluation process.
- .2 The evaluation of Up2uni is based on two complementary models. The first is the CIPP model developed by Stufflebeam (2002). This CIPP checklist considers the project from the perspective of Context, Impact, Process and Product, with each issue explored by asking questions with respect to the overall aims of the project:
 - **Context** - What needs to be done?
 - **Impact** - How should it be done?
 - **Process** - Is it being done?
 - **Product** - Did it succeed?
- .3 The product evaluation is scrutinised by asking questions about the project's:
 - **Impact** - Were the right beneficiaries reached?
 - **Effectiveness** - Were their needs met?
 - **Sustainability** - Were the gains for the beneficiaries sustained?
 - **Transportability** - Did the processes that produced the gains prove transportable and adaptable for effective use in other settings?
- .4 To complement the CIPP model and provide a focus on indicators for change and future development, the external evaluation uses a second framework based on the enabling, process and outcomes (EPO) methodology (Helsby and Saunders, 1993). The EPO model uses the following headings:
 - **Enabling dimensions** – that need to be established or already in existence, e.g., policies, space, time, people and resources;
 - **Process dimensions** – that relate to actions, ways of doing things, styles, behaviour and practices;
 - **Outcomes** – referring to ‘end points’, goals, desired products, numerical targets.

2.2 Data collection

- .1 The evaluation is based on three main sources of data:
 - A brief literature review focusing on decision making, staff development and other Aimhigher activities designed to support the delivery of Information Advice and Guidance (IAG);

- Documentary evidence associated with the project was provided by the Up2uni team including the original bid, previous research on which the project was based, materials produced throughout the project;
- Empirical data consisting of evaluation feedback from participants (provided by the Up2uni team), 15 qualitative interviews with participants, interviews with the members of the Up2uni team and 11 individual participant questionnaires (see Appendix 1).

2.3 The sample

- .1 The Up2uni project manager identified and negotiated access to interview participants. This was generally very helpful, however, for some practitioners time was a limiting factor that made it difficult when arranging interviews.
- .2 The interviews involved staff from all types of institution including 6 practitioners from schools with a Sixth Form, 4 practitioners from FE Colleges, 1 practitioner from a Sixth Form College and 2 Connexions Advisors. The geographic spread of the sample institutions involved all five of the sub-regions of the Northwest.
- .3 The staff interviewed held various posts within their organisations ranging from Assistant Head to Careers Advisor and most had responsibility for Aimhigher within their organisation. Staff availability inevitably varies according to their position, timetable commitments, workloads and phase of professional life (Day et. al., 2006). Given the pressures on staff we are grateful for the time given to talk to us.
- .4 The sample therefore allowed us to explore the suitability of the processes and content from the perspective of different types of institution and staff with different levels of experience and responsibility. Both institutional context and staff experience have been identified as factors to influence the implementation and change process, which is a key focus of the Up2uni project.

2.4 Evaluation considerations

- .1 The formal evaluation was undertaken later than originally planned which did influence decisions about the evaluation process including: the decision not to use a quantitative survey, the difficulties gaining access to practitioners and the decision to focus on the WBL sessions. It did, however, mean that it was possible to begin to explore the extent to which the sessions had begun to influence practice.
- .2 There were three reasons we decided not to invest time in a quantitative survey approach. Firstly, since the evaluation focus was to obtain an understanding and insights into how the sessions impacted on practice it seemed more useful to invest time in interviews. Secondly, feedback already received by the Up2uni personnel suggested that participants did not always distinguish the Up2uni brand from other Aimhigher activities, and thirdly, because Up2uni was delivered over a long of time it was felt

that the time lapse would vary to such an extent that the participants would not be able to remember the sessions well enough to comment.

- .3 Despite the decision not to use a questionnaire as a formal part of the evaluation process it was agreed to pilot a follow-up questionnaire that might form part of the project outputs and if successful be used in a more systematic way in the future (see Appendix 2). Different versions of the questionnaire would need to be tailor-made to target practitioners working in particular institutions such as those working in schools with a 6th form, in FE colleges and with WBLs.

Section 3: Key Features of the Up2uni Project

3.1 Overview

- .1 This section reports on six features of the Up2uni project by describing the main activities, identifying emerging issues and offering recommendations. These features are:
 - Targeting and Recruitment – a way to access participants
 - Session Content – a process of negotiation
 - Training Delivery – a person, a product and a process
 - Work-Based Learning – a case study
 - Regional Links – a strategy for coherence and embedding good practice
 - Sustainability – a challenge for the future
- .2 The purpose of this section of the report is to provide an account for reflection by others engaged in developing staff development programmes or other Aimhigher projects that offer a package of activities to schools and colleges.

3.2 Targeting and Recruitment – a way to access participants

- .1 The Up2uni project used several methods to gain access to participants throughout the Northwest and achieve a geographic spread of different types of institution. These methods included newsletters and flyers sent directly to existing contacts and via Aimhigher colleagues to cascade publicity to schools and colleges in their locality.
- .2 The project was advertised through the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) Newsletter and institutions were invited to take part in the project. MMU has a mailing list of 795 institutions throughout the Northwest and the assumption was that there would be a 10% take-up from these institutions who all received copies of the newsletter.
- .3 Institutions were not targeted by geographic location, institutional type or socio-economic pupil intake. It was decided in the early stages of the project that to achieve the remit of 100 sessions there was not time to develop a more targeted approach.
- .4 The use of an existing mailing list proved to be a successful and cost effective strategy. The response to the invitation was reported to be quick and bookings came in within a few days of the Up2uni newsletter going out with a “higher than normal” response rate.
- .5 By using the MMU mailing list 'non Aimhigher' schools received and accepted the invitation to get involved in Up2uni. To avoid exclusion and resentment, MMU's Education Liaison Unit funded the activities delivered to schools without Aimhigher status.
- .6 To increase the likelihood of gaining access to participants throughout the whole of the Northwest Up2uni personnel also promoted the workshops

using flyers and newsletters to regional Aimhigher managers, other Aimhigher practitioners at Aimhigher events and the NW Project co-ordinators' meetings. Colleagues were asked to draw attention to the workshops in schools and colleges within their region using their existing methods of communication.

- .7 With the exception of the WBL case study reported in section 3.5 access via sub-regional Aimhigher contacts was not particularly successful. The take-up response for the Aimhigher cohort was affected by the enthusiasm and attitude of the individual co-ordinators. One sub-regional co-ordinator was not keen to promote the project because it was felt that the project was "stepping on the toes" of the work that was already being done in the sub-region. (See section 3.6 for further discussion about regional links).
- .8 The approach to targeting also influenced participants' perceptions about who was providing the Up2uni staff development. Several participants believed that the sessions had been "offered" by MMU rather than Aimhigher. One Careers Advisor told us that "*The trainer did 2 of the 3 [sessions] that Manchester Met offered*" and another reported "*We've got a good relationship with MMU*". It is important to point out that all publicity included Aimhigher and MMU logos and it was clear in material describing the project that Aimhigher provided funding for MMU to deliver the project.
- .9 Although this confusion may be inevitable this raises a number of implications for Aimhigher NW as well as an individual institution. For Aimhigher NW, the selection of an institution with an existing reputation, knowledge base, and in this project, a network of potential recipients, is cost effective and allows good practice to be disseminated throughout the region.
- .10 For the HEI funded to deliver a regional project, there are potential positive spin offs and an enhanced reputation with schools, colleges and tutors. In Up2uni the targeting approach meant that MMU liaison team tended to work with institutions that they already had contact. Consequently, the additional Up2uni contact may have helped to reinforce their existing reputation. If they had been successful in recruiting larger numbers from schools who they did not work with regularly they would have also gained by establishing access to additional institutions with whom they could work in the future.
- .11 However, it is worth noting that there are also disadvantages for HEIs responsible for delivering a regional project. For example, MMU received a request for an additional follow-up activity that they were not able to deliver because the school request was outside their institutional Aimhigher remit. This placed MMU in the position of appearing to 'let down' the school. Although they explained why they could not meet the request and passed on the details to the school's local Aimhigher sub-regional HEI they were not able to control the follow-up. (See section 3.6 on Regional Links)

3.3 Session Content – a process of negotiation

- .1 Initially the programme offered three sessions 'Applying to HE', 'Student Finance' and 'Routes to HE' based on the findings from the pilot study. All sessions covered a range of topics. For example, 'Applying to HE' was the most popular session and encompassed topics including: 'Writing References', 'Making Use of Tutorial Time' and 'Student Finance'.
- .2 In accordance with the principles of the Up2uni outreach model, prior to each workshop there was a process of negotiation about the content and the context in which guidance is delivered within a particular institution.
- .3 The same process was followed for all institutions registering for an Up2uni workshop. The trainer made telephone contact with the institution and used a 'pre-workshop proforma' (see Appendix 3) to:
 - find out the guidance practices that were already in place;
 - discuss the chosen workshop to confirm it was the most suitable and find out any specific areas of concern;
 - identify the specific needs of the institution including the balance of new and experienced staff, and other contextual information.
- .4 Many of the participants reported that the process of negotiation was extremely helpful and was one reason why the sessions were, in the majority of cases, considered to be informative and effective.

“He took the time to tailor-make it for the institution...and this worked well for the staff” (Work Development Co-ordinator, FE College).
- .5 Nevertheless, although the pre-workshop negotiation process shaped the session content, the flexible mode of delivery enabled a responsive approach to individual requests for information additional to the planned session content. This approach helped to ensure session content was relevant to individual practitioners and often allowed staff participants to share knowledge with their colleagues. For instance, in those institutions where attendance was compulsory, staff had the opportunity to respond from their personal perspective whilst having the opportunity to discuss their institutional HE policy with team members in an environment managed by an 'outsider expert'. This brought additional benefits, as one participant explained:

Towards the end of the session we had a debate [not instigated by the trainer] about government policy and education... and this was good for the staff (Assistant Head Teacher and Head of 6th Form).
- .6 Several participants reported that it was satisfying to have their practices confirmed as “good practice” and seemed to find this reassuring.
- .7 The negotiation process and dialogue based on the pre-workshop proforma also helped to establish a rapport with the trainer, confirm practicalities about the event including time, location and the profile and number of participants. This was a successful approach in all but one situation and in only one workshop did no one attend. This was due to a miscommunication with the institution; according to the trainer the school organiser “*was unable to find anyone to attend the session*”.

- .8 This situation highlights a number of factors that may contribute to the success of a staff development session. For instance: the need for commitment from the participating institutions and not just the member of staff requesting the workshop; the position and power of the institutional co-ordinator; and the fact that when sessions are 'free', there is no come-back if the institution fails to fulfil this commitment. In future, it is recommended that the approach adopted by Up2uni of making contact with the institutional organiser and or the institutional office on the day prior to the session to confirm session details is continued.

3.3.1 Applying to HE

- .1 The menu included: factors to take into account when selecting institution, course, the UCAS application form including advice about supporting online applications, the importance of personal statements and the role of personal references. There was interest in supporting young people to write their personal statements and this became the focus of a specific session.
- .2 Much of the positive feedback focussed on the 'Writing References' section of the Applying to HE session, which appears to indicate a demand for staff development in this area that the session was able to address. Several requests were made for additional workshops on referencing, which accounted for additional sessions.
- .3 Feedback from participants suggests that it is often basic messages that HEIs may have assumed school and college staff know that make the biggest impact on staff awareness. The approach was designed to be a step-by-step process. Several participants commented on how helpful it was that "*He [the trainer] took the time to tailor-make it for our staff*". However, even when the time is taken to adapt materials it may not be possible to cater for individual needs, as one participant said:

I felt that the input given by the leader was too complex, assumed too much knowledge from his audience. What would have been helpful would have been a simple step by step approach in layman's language that we could use simply and easily with our students.

- .4 It was interesting that according to some participants it is not always factual knowledge that practitioners need, but rather an awareness of process such as, "*how things are done, how the system works*". For instance, one Head of 6th Form pointed out that tutors did not realise the need to stress upon students how important it is for them to 'personalise' their statements because so few universities interview.
- .5 Several participants commented on how reassuring it was to know that admissions tutors could be contacted. One Head of 6th Form described how tutors at their school benefited from a greater understanding of the way UCAS application forms are processed and this new knowledge had changed their practice.

"The [trainer] suggested that we state on the form that the school would be happy to discuss students with extenuating circumstances and this has been the most helpful piece of advice [given]. ... It is a good idea

because some of [our] students have difficulties that staff feel should be taken into consideration with their application form but tutors sometimes don't want to "put things in writing" because students can ask to see what has been written about them. I did this and as a consequence an admissions tutor from [the university] phoned to talk in detail about a student's special needs." (Head of 6th Form at School with a 6th Form)

This is one of a number of examples that illustrate the impact on practice resulting from an increased understanding of the process.

3.3.2 Student Finance

- .1 The menu included: summary of current financial support and indicated forthcoming changes. The availability of specialist funding e.g. Disabled Students' Allowance for disabled students was mentioned and further details about where to get additional information supplied.
- .2 Participants rated the 'Student Finance' session positively because it "*really helped the staff to get to grips with the new changes*" (Assistant Head Teacher and Head of 6th Form). And most especially since the area of finance, as one Deputy Head remarked, is one where staff need "*constant reinforcement*" as a result of the current state of flux.
- .3 In addition to this the workshops not only supplied information but also gave staff a greater confidence to talk to parents. For example, one Deputy Head of 6th Form commented that he had colleagues who had found the 'Student Finance' session particularly useful because it helped them to "*give the annual presentation to parents in Year 13*".
- .4 The student finance session also addressed the specific needs of disabled students and directed practitioners to additional sources of information. This is a welcome addition because as both the McKenzie and Diamond (2006) NW Aimhigher disability project and Lancashire Aimhigher's Disability project have identified there is a lack of awareness amongst staff and consequently young people about the additional funding available for disabled students. (See section 4 re: tackling diversity)

3.3.3 Routes to HE

- .1 This menu included: the range of different entry qualifications and higher education qualifications available, including foundation degrees and work-based learning opportunities.
- .2 This session was less popular than the other two sessions, possibly because the other sessions addressed the more immediate needs and concerns of the participants. However, there is a strong argument to encourage tutors to become informed about the diverse range of HE opportunities because this would allow them to support young people in the decision-making processes of where and how to apply.
- .3 An interesting observation from one participant concerns pupils' feedback about the IAG provided by the school.

“Something that has been cropping up recently is 'that some of the students think that because of Aimhigher there is too much pressure to go to university'. I think we need to give them more information about vocational courses so we are having an intensive day soon that we have adapted to their particular needs. There is an assumption that they will go to uni but we need a more across the board approach.”
(Deputy Head at a 6th Form College)

Choosing the right course and making an informed decision is important if young people are to avoid early drop out.

- .4 Reasons for drop out are varied and complex. A common reason for early drop out from HE is enrolment on the wrong course or at the wrong institution, a result of making an uninformed decision. Quinn et. al., (2005) highlight some of the factors that the Up2uni staff development project is designed to tackle. They found that:

Almost without exception, students felt that they had made poorly informed subject choices. The process of choosing a university and a course was 'rushed', particularly for those who entered via Clearing, and left many leaving through a prospectus with no real sense of what they should be looking for other than they thought it would be 'interesting'. However, with little guidance from family, university or schools, the reality of the course often proved different to expectations. (p18)

- .5 Consequently, activities designed to support staff delivering IAG, especially 'peripatetic helpers' (Houghton, 2003) like form tutors, are therefore vital, particularly because these practitioners may be the only 'official' with whom a student has contact. The importance of them gaining access to staff development opportunities to increase their knowledge and understanding of the routes into HE should not be underestimated.
- .6 In the original bid, the Up2uni project identified that one group of staff for whom an increased awareness of the routes to HE was likely to be particularly important were based in the WBL Centres and for those tutors working at FE Colleges with work-based learners. However, gaining access to this group, and enabling them to recognise that progression to HE may be relevant to their students is notoriously difficult. This is probably because the norm in most of these institutions is for students not to take the HE route.
- .7 It is not surprising therefore that this proved more of a challenge for Up2uni. It is to the credit of the Up2uni personnel as well as serendipity that they took advantage of an opportunity to respond to this specific need, by developing a customised session specifically for WBL tutors (see WBL session).

3.4 Training Delivery – a person, a product and a process

- .1 The trainer, materials used and mode of delivery are inevitably central to any staff development programme and provided the focus for follow up interviews; these issues are discussed below (see sections 3.4.1 to 3.4.3).

- .2 In addition, all Up2uni sessions were evaluated using an End of Session evaluation sheet that gathered both quantitative and qualitative data (see Appendix 4 for copy).
- .3 The End of Session evaluation sheet provided a snapshot of initial impressions, which indicated that overall the sessions were very well received. As Figure 5 indicates, when asked to rate the sessions on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 5 represents 'very positive'), all aspects of the programme were rated at between 4.3 and 4.6. The End of Session evaluation sheet included the opportunity for participants to comment anonymously, offer additional comments, and raise outstanding questions and concerns for the Up2uni team to follow up. Some of these are reported in the Up2uni Report (Millen, 2006).

Category of Evaluation	March – July 2005	September 2005 – July 2006
Content	4.6	4.6
How useful to you personally?	4.5	4.5
Presentation materials	4.5	4.3
Usefulness of tutor checklists for Applying to HE and Student Finance	4.5	4.6
		mean scores

Figure 4: Overall evaluation

- .4 With the increasing interest in evaluating the impact of interventions, as well as satisfaction, it is recommended that additional thought be given to the inclusion of some statements that require participants to rate other aspects of the workshop. For instance, it would be useful to have: feedback on the trainer; an indication of the intention to use the materials; and feedback on the timing and location of the event would provide information for the host institution.
- .5 An extra open question to gauge what participants intended to do following the workshop or how they intended to change their practice would also be useful in assessing impact. Of course, intention or '*espoused theories*' as Argyris² and Schon (1974) explain does not lead to action that is the outcome of their '*theories in use*'. Nevertheless, by getting participants to reflect on current practice and actively think about what they might do in the future there is more chance that they may make changes to their action as a result of an increased awareness that influences their intentions.

² For an introduction to the ideas of reflective practice and organisational learning see Smith, M. K. (2001) 'Chris Argyris: theories of action, double-loop learning and organizational learning', *the encyclopedia of informal education*, www.infed.org/thinkers/argyris.htm. Update: 28th January 2005

3.4.1 The trainer – a person

- .1 It appeared that a major factor that contributed to the project's success was the suitability of the main trainer. The trainer was a former head of 6th form with 30 years experience working within the secondary sector and brought the relevant skills including an understanding of institutional culture and an expertise working with post-16 year olds to ensure the effective delivery of the session.
- .2 There was very positive feedback about the trainer, as the following two comments indicate:
 - “We couldn't have asked for more from him.” (Deputy Head of 6th Form)
 - “as an ex-teacher and former head of 6th form [the trainer] understood the time constraints we were working under.” (Assistant Head Teacher and Head of 6th Form)
- .3 Having both expertise and a realistic understanding of the pressures involved for practitioners working with potential HE students ensured that the trainer was able to deliver the sessions “*at the right level*” to both 'experienced practitioners' who had varying degrees of knowledge about HE and, 'new practitioners' who had little or no knowledge of supporting young people applying to HE. (See comment about step-by step process 3.3.1.3).
- .4 Some groups also included what the trainer described as “*the cynics*”; a category of staff that was confirmed by one Deputy Head who remarked:
 - "The evaluation forms were all excellent ... even the ones from the cynics!"
- .5 The overall response to the trainer was that it was useful to have an 'outsider', or as one participant remarked a “*fresh face*” to come in to talk with staff, but it was especially important that the 'outsider' was seen to be an “*expert*” in the field.
- .6 Comments from a Director of Studies confirmed the benefits of an external trainer for new and experienced staff to keep up to date. Whilst they felt that there was nothing they could not have told the staff, using 'an outsider' seemed to alter the dynamic and influenced how the information was received.
- .7 Although experienced staff were already familiar with completing the UCAS forms they also found the sessions useful in extending their knowledge, for example, the discussions arising from the shift to on-line applications. It is important to remember that staff development for a mixed audience of new and experienced staff relies on a trainer who is able to combine the delivery of information and facilitate more experienced staff to share their knowledge.

3.4.2 Resources – a product

- .1 There were four types of resource produced and distributed by the Up2uni project:
 - newsletters,

- handouts of power point presentations,
- a laminate checklist of stages in the application process and,
- for participating institutions, a copy of the report from the 'Getting them In' project.

These resources aimed to raise awareness, communicate key messages and list other sources of IAG. Overall the resources were cost-effective and the reusable laminate checklist and workshop handouts were both up-dated during the lifetime of the project.

- .2 The two newsletters distributed contained information of workshops and related information concerning changes to the HE application process and funding arrangements. This resource was widely distributed and served to promote the project, raise awareness of the importance of guidance and offer a programme of workshops, which was accessed by 74 institutions.
- .3 None of the questionnaire respondents had seen the newsletter, which suggests that it may not have been distributed within the institutions - although the newsletters were sent to all participants in separate individually named envelopes. Dissemination of material is an ongoing challenge for projects. The 'dissemination to an institution' is one aspect of the dissemination process that it is possible for a project to have some control over. However, dissemination 'within an institution' is important for the wider exchange of information, unfortunately this is outside the control of project staff. One possible solution to this potential barrier to dissemination is to make materials available on the web, publicise the address on handouts distributed to all participants attending the staff development sessions and, draw participants attention to its existence and purpose.
- .4 The presentation handouts were distributed to workshop participants. They contained copies of power point slides that summarised key messages covered in the training (see sections 3.3 which summarises the workshop content) and were used by the trainer to stimulate discussion. They were not designed as a stand-alone resource for use in isolation and were not therefore available for wider distribution.
- .5 The laminate checklists designed for the 'Applying to HE' and 'Student Finance' sessions outlined the application processes and contained links to other resources that participants might use in supporting young people with making decisions and applying to HE. This was designed to help busy teachers to use during 'form registration' or to act as an aide in class discussions about HE. The resource was deliberately minimalist in the hope that its simplicity would enhance its usefulness and not be off-putting. This was based upon the notion that a large binder of notes is discouraging for the busy tutor who is 'expected' to include the 'extra' topic of HE into their form-time schedule.
- .6 This resource was used in various ways by participants. For example, some institutions kept it in a central location for easy use by staff in the office, others planned to use it as an aide mémoire for in-house staff

development sessions as well as the intended use as a resource for tutors providing guidance for young people.

- .7 Further attention to the presentation and layout of the laminate checklist and the possibility of additional checklists for specific topics covered by the Up2uni sessions is recommended. This would provide an additional mechanism for raising the awareness of a wider audience and providing reference materials to remind practitioners about steps involved in different activities. Although in making this recommendation we recognise it is important to retain the succinct, self-contained format, which was a distinctive feature of the two Up2uni laminate checklists.
- .8 To support wider dissemination, it is recommended that the checklists are made available via the web, ideally arranging for them to be located on the TiGER website, which is a NW Aimhigher staff development resource, which would help embed this work as well as extending the range of practitioners benefiting from the project. However, it is important to emphasise that the checklists would be offered as 'supporting material' and not 'stand alone' and have been provided by Up2uni.
- .9 A copy of the 'Getting them in' report was provided for each institution. This was in many senses an 'added extra' and in effect the Up2uni project offered an extra opportunity to disseminate this resource. For the institutions, it provided supplementary information and demonstrated that the outreach model and approach adopted by Up2uni was based on evidence that helped to assure the quality of the provision. The decision to distribute this resource is an example of how the participants of this project benefited from the provider's previous work; as such it increased the 'value for money' of the project.
- .10 Not all projects are in a position to adopt this strategy, however, the distribution of research or other resources to extend the knowledge base and understanding of participants is an important one which we would endorse. Earlier work by Lancaster University's REAP Group has identified that teachers are often unaware of where or how to obtain relevant information. Consequently, by providing resources or links that make it easier to acquire materials, staff development sessions can change from a basic awareness raising activity to one that supports further changes in practice.

3.4.3 Workshop delivery – a process

- .1 The underpinning principles outlined in the outreach model influenced the format and mode of delivery of the for Up2uni workshops. The workshops were free and delivered in the practitioners' workplace at a time negotiated with the institution. The workshop trainers were recognised as 'experts' with relevant personal and professional knowledge and skills that enabled them to facilitate the participants to share their experiences. Each workshop was tailored to the needs of the institution and included reference materials that summarised key points.
- .2 Workshops took place at a time chosen by the institutional organiser. This meant that the willingness of the Up2uni team to respond and fit in

with the institution was important. Often sessions took place after the school day:

“we did these [workshops] specifically at twilight time because the college has found “this is a good time to get staff to attend.” (Careers Adviser)

- .3 With the exception of some Connexion events, delivery was always in the institution. This meant it was convenient and it is clear that this was a big factor in enabling a relatively high turn out. However, Cook refers to the work of McDiarmid (1995), who explains the importance of *mental space* that is defined as “*the opportunity for teachers to get away from their classrooms both mentally and physically to think about their work*” (McDiarmid, 1995: p6). The on-site delivery although convenient did perhaps limit the benefits of ‘*getting away*’ that Cook (1997) has noted and minimise the ‘*opportunities for networking and learning from others*’ identified by Houghton (1997).
- .4 Inevitably decisions about where to hold and, who to invite to a staff development session remain a compromise. In the context of the Up2uni workshops the decision to deliver on-site was according to participants an important one. It is possible that future sessions might be offered that built in more time for reflection.
- .5 Workshops lasted around 90 minutes and consisted of a power point presentation during which participants asked questions or shared their own experiences. This didactic / presentational approach was chosen to maximise the use of time and cover a wider range of topics. The success of this type of delivery is reliant upon the qualities and attributes of the trainer, in this respect it might be regarded a ‘high-risk strategy’. However, as already discussed, the trainers were one of the strengths of the Up2uni project.
- .6 Although the focus was on covering the content and conveying key messages from HE, the trainers were flexible and responded to suggestions from the institutional contact who was in the best position to know how the Up2uni workshop would be most useful. As one Careers Adviser explained:

The one thing that everybody enjoyed this year rather than the first year was the “sharing”. When [trainer] did it last year he did it from a university perspective but this year he asked the staff about their perspective. I asked [the trainer] to do this “on purpose” so the staff could be more involved so that they would feel more ownership of it.
- .7 The participants attending the workshops varied according to the type of institution and, the status and powers of persuasion of the institutional contact. The composition of the group influenced the delivery and overall workshop experience. There appeared to be a greater sense of satisfaction amongst those Heads of 6th Form and Careers Advisers where the whole staff were required to attend the sessions. As one Head of 6th Form explained, this meant that: “*we all had a consistent understanding ... [and there is] clarity now about what is expected*” (Head of 6th Form). The advantages of having experienced and new staff

together were also acknowledged; according to one participant it meant, *“that they would hear the same message”* (Assistant head teacher).

- .8 Several participants reported the benefits gained from having different types of staff present as this provided an opportunity for staff to learn from each other. For instance, a number felt it was important to include the specialist subject teachers to increase the communication between form tutors and specialist subject teachers. They believed that this would allow subject specialists to understand the whole process and be in a better position to give relevant details that would help the personal tutors to include relevant subject-related information within the reference.
- .9 It seemed that the willingness of the trainer to facilitate discussion between colleagues rather than operate as the sole source of knowledge helped to encourage staff to recognise what and how they could help each other to support young people.
- .10 When developing a staff development programme or even delivering a single session it is worth giving serious thought about the delivery methods used. Feedback from some participants included suggestions for activities that might have been used to extend sessions and build on the presentational awareness raising approach by increasing understanding. Sometimes, though not always, as this project shows, it is useful to employ a more interactive approach. However, where the organisers allowed the session to run for its full 90 minutes there were more opportunities for interaction and interactive sessions were more easily developed in “follow-up” sessions such as The Reference Clinic.

3.5 Work-Based Learning (WBL) – A case study

3.5.1 Identifying a need

- .1 As we have mentioned earlier in this report, during the course of the project it emerged that tutors working with work-based learners needed additional information and an alternative way of approaching the possibility of progression to HE with their learners. This section summarises some of the emerging issues.
- .2 The trainer formed the impression that the WBL tutors felt they were “*low down in the pecking order*” at their institutions and he remarked that one tutor said to him: “*WBL tutors are usually the last to be told anything in this place*”. Even when they were involved, some of the WBL tutors were sceptical about the relevance of the original training for students engaged in WBL programmes and in some cases assumed that HE was not an option for this group of learners. The assumption that HE is an option is far less common with learners pursuing vocational qualifications.
- .3 These learners often have other barriers to overcome, including their employer's attitudes. However, as the Up2uni trainer explained:

“I had no expertise in working with WBL tutors but became an ‘agent of my own propaganda’ – i.e. it is important to offer HE to all students.
- .4 As Action on Access indicate, interest in work-based and vocational qualifications is increasing with a myriad of new initiatives and proposed developments being introduced in the next few years.

Learners on vocational work based programmes are a key target group for Aimhigher and although this area of work is challenging, many partnerships are working with training providers, employers and other partners to focus on the aspirations, achievement, and progression of this group of learners. (Action on Access website, 2006)
- .5 Despite the possible benefits of a workshop focused on issues from the perspective of WBL it emerged that in some areas of the Northwest there may have been some hostility towards the development of the WBL sessions. Details of the concerns were raised with the Up2uni administrator, who has since left the project and so it has not been possible to explore these reservations further.
- .6 Introducing new developments is often dependent on serendipity. During Stage 1 (March – July 2005) it emerged that other Aimhigher sub-regions were proactively trying to tackle progression of work-based learners. The commitment and interest of Cumbria Aimhigher in this target group provided the basis of a productive collaboration and is an example of synergy between a regional project and the work of a sub-region.
- .7 By working with Cumbria Aimhigher on the development of 'Up and Away programme' for WBL, the Up2uni project gained access to a college and a group of WBL tutors with whom they could pilot and develop a new set of resources especially to support WBL tutors. The materials were then used to deliver additional workshops to other colleges in Cumbria. The

Up2uni trainer speculated that interest and a willingness to participate by the colleges was also influenced by the wider county HE agenda and formation of the University of Cumbria.

3.5.2 The importance of working collaboratively

- .1 In addition to the wider policy context, the local Aimhigher co-ordinator played a crucial role in negotiating access. According to the Up2uni trainer they were “*instrumental in setting the [pilot] up*”. The importance of local knowledge and contacts to gain access to local institutions is not surprising.
- .2 Whilst there are exceptions, it is recommended that regional projects seeking local development and delivery should try to work actively with local contacts to gain access.
- .3 To their credit Up2uni used this approach, however, as this case study shows, collaborative work is a two-way process. For local co-ordinators to invest their time and effort the product or service offered by a regional project must be relevant and complement their objectives. When this happens local co-ordinators can play an important role in assisting regional project staff to gain local access.
- .4 The successful collaboration with Cumbria Aimhigher was clearly influenced by the fact that both Up2uni and the sub-region were trying to achieve the same goal at the same time. Up2uni provided a solution for the 'Up and Away' project in the form of staff development, and the 'Up and Away' project provided Up2uni with institutions interested in piloting and developing materials for WBL.

3.5.3 Changing institutional policy and practice

- .1 Following the WBL pilot, the sessions were offered and “*picked up at the other colleges in Cumbria in different ways*” which according to the Up2uni trainer may have been a result of the amount of “*muscle*” the WBL co-ordinators had with their senior management. For example, where the WBL co-ordinator held a relatively senior management role this affected the college’s acceptance of and take-up of the WBL session. This was an example of what Buchanan and Boddy (1992) refer to as the 'senior stance' that is one of four components that influence change.
- .2 The other components are also relevant to providing IAG for WBL, they are: shifting sands – where circumstances change frequently, interlocking – where the interdependency of institutional factors is recognised; and ownership – necessary for personnel commitment.
- .3 At one college, the session was compulsory and had clear support from senior management (a positive senior stance). This 'whole staff' approach provided a common experience that involved all WBL tutors working together to share ideas and begin to develop a shared understanding about how they would work in the future (a sense of ownership).
- .4 In contrast, at another college the emphasis seemed to be on:

“being seen to be taking part so that the college could claim that they had tied up WBL and HE so that in effect the college was able to run it up the flagpole”.

Not everyone attended the session, including the organiser, so that awareness was not as widespread, which may make it more difficult to bring about change in the future. In other words, this was a case where there was a limited 'senior stance' that appeared to restrict the sense of 'ownership' and is likely to reduce the impact.

- .5 The Up2uni trainer suggested that for the sessions to be effective, senior management need to adopt a style that is inclusive rather than tokenistic so that all staff, including the management, need to be “*on-board*”. The trainer also believed that for the links to be made between WBL and HE, college policy needs to become “*official*” and say that “*HE is an entitlement for all NVQ Level 3 students*”.

3.5.4 Transferability

- .1 The WBL pilot and materials are now available for Up2uni to disseminate in other areas. The active involvement of WBL tutors in shaping the content and voicing their concerns means that the core resource is based on responding to the needs of WBL tutors. However, as with the other workshops the discussion about institutional context, content, format and audience remain an important part of the process.
- .2 It is recommended that questions about the local politics and social and economic factors that will impact upon the work-based learners, their tutors and their employers are also taken into account and that these factors are included in the development of a WBL pre-workshop proforma. Increased local awareness may also lead to a better understanding of how the sessions will be received by the stakeholders who will ultimately play a pivotal role in supporting young people to progress to HE. For instance, equipping WBL tutors to raise the awareness of young people about HE options is only part of the process. There is also a need to raise the awareness of employers.

3.6 Regional Links - a strategy for coherence and embedding good practice

3.6.1 Project connections

Exploring links before, during and when projects are reviewed and considered for future funding is a useful exercise when thinking about how to address regional coherence and embed good practice. The Up2uni project was one of 21 projects funded by NW Aimhigher in 2004. It was one of two projects designed to '*develop the role of teachers in guidance and encouraging pupils*'. It also contributed to or has the potential to be informed by a further 6 projects.

Developing the Role of Teachers in Guidance and Encouraging Pupils (11-16) to consider HE

- .1 A number of the findings from the research undertaken by Foster (2005) reinforce the need for a project like Up2uni. For instance, 93% of teachers used their own experience of HE as their main source of knowledge; given the myriad of changes within the HE system as well as the application process this is worrying.
- .2 From the survey, 58% of teachers felt they knew about courses and departments with a good reputation, however this was only in their own subject specialism, again of concern is the fact that only 21% felt that they were confident with respect to the application procedures (UCAS, GTTR, etc.).
- .3 It is important to remember that this project focused on staff working with pupils aged 11-16, whereas Up2uni concentrated on post 16 staff who one would hope, because they are more likely to be engaged in the actual application process, would be more aware. Nevertheless, Foster's research does highlight a need for more staff development, with only 37% of teachers indicating that they had access to staff development activities about HE.
- .4 It is recommended that the Up2uni model and the lessons learned be considered as a base for developing a staff development programme for staff working with 11-16 pupils.

Advice and Guidance Materials for Teachers, FE Lecturers, WBL Trainers (Greater Merseyside Connexions)

- .5 The materials from this project have not been reviewed as part of this evaluation; however, it is recommended that opportunities to disseminate these materials at future Up2uni workshops for this target group be explored.
- .6 What is clear from the Up2uni project is that the provision of materials is not necessarily sufficient to ensure a change of practice. Although it is outside the remit of this evaluation, it is recommended that opportunities for possible dissemination of the materials to other sub-regions be explored.

Regional Themes: WBL and Vocational Progression (Halton College)

- .7 The purpose of this project was to "*establish a 'Good Practice Forum' (virtual and physical) to enable WBL providers to exchange information, develop ideas and learn from best practice models*". This seems an ideal network of practitioners who could either be recipients of future Up2uni workshops, or, be part of a pilot to 'train the trainers' which may be a useful strategy for wider scale dissemination. The Up2uni workshops might also be used to disseminate advice and guidance materials from the Halton College project, if they are still available.

North West Research Network and Conference (Salford and MMU)

Regional Newsletter (Chester College)

- .8 Up2uni project disseminated findings by using these two dissemination mechanisms funded by NW Aimhigher. This is a cost effective approach and has helped to ensure that the findings from Up2uni were shared with others in the Northwest. Knowledge of the network and distribution of the regional newsletter however has not been assessed and is outside the remit of the Up2uni evaluation.
- .9 Awareness of these two dissemination mechanisms is important not only for Up2uni and it is recommended that this is something NW Aimhigher explore when evaluating the overall impact of the programme of projects. This might be achieved by a brief electronic questionnaire.

Regional Themes: Rural Issues

Regional Themes: Disability and Vulnerable Groups (Edge Hill)

- .10 Although there was no formal link with these two projects, they each offer insights into specific issues, which it is recommended Up2uni take into account in future sessions. The first regional theme of 'rural issues' is obviously only relevant for rural institutions or for those with pupils living in rural areas. Although staff working in these institutions may be aware of the additional barriers associated with rurality it is important to make sure there is time allocated to discussing this issue within the sessions.
- .11 The second regional theme of disability produced a useful overview of good practice throughout the Northwest and highlighted issues that impact on the decision making and application process of disabled students. References to disability were made in the student finance session. However, given the hidden nature of some disabilities and the findings of the Lancashire Aimhigher Disability project concerning the lack of teachers' awareness about disabled students' eligibility to participate in HE, it is recommended that Up2uni workshops make a point of highlighting the different support mechanism and flagging up the learning and financial support available for disabled students.

3.6.2 Practitioners working collaboratively

- .1 The Aimhigher co-ordinators had the potential to play two intermediary roles within the project at both the 'take-up' and 'follow-up' stages. Potentially the co-ordinators had the capacity to connect the sub-regional

delivery of the project within its wider Aimhigher Northwest regional context. For those co-ordinators who were unable or reluctant to promote the project in its initial stages there was a missed opportunity to reach out to their Aimhigher schools and colleges and to extend the range of activities available from NW Aimhigher.

- .2 Although the promotional strategy used by Up2uni meant they reached their targets the role of Aimhigher Co-ordinators and number of institutions recruited this way was disappointing. From a regional perspective it is perhaps a cause for concern, or at least further consideration. There are however a number of reasons why Aimhigher sub-regions may not have been able to play a more active role in the 'take up', pressure to prioritise their own targets, a possible duplication with past, present or future staff development plans, a misunderstanding about what was on offer.
- .3 Whatever the reason, it is recommended that the synergy between regional and sub-regional projects be discussed at both a strategic and operational level. It would be useful if sub-regional plans were required to explain how they would engage with a regional project such as Up2uni, this may help ensure that work undertaken is embed at a sub-regional as well as a regional level.
- .4 As discussed in 3.2.11 the follow-up stage resulted in advantages and disadvantages for the deliverers of Up2uni. The sessions were successful in raising awareness and this created a demand for follow-up activities for staff as well as young people. Whilst Up2uni was able to respond to requests for staff development and offer institutions a follow-up activity, they were reliant on sub-regional Aimhigher practitioners based in other HEIs to provide 'follow-up' for young people. The demand for young people's activities e.g. campus visits is a welcome, albeit unplanned sign of impact and is not, in many ways a surprising outcome. We recommend that future staff development projects take into account the implications of raising expectations and consider how 'follow-up' activity will be delivered and by whom.
- .5 Based on the WBL case study where close collaboration took place it is clear that when staff in a regional project and a sub-regional Aimhigher co-ordinator work collaboratively it may be possible for both to benefit and achieve their respective goals.

3.6.3 Geographic spread

- .1 Place is an issue in any Northwest project and raises issues about the extent to which Aimhigher distributes its resources within the Northwest. It cannot be ignored that geographic spread matters in the Northwest, not only because there are differences both between and within urban and rural locations, but also because the region contains pockets of relative affluence and deprivation.
- .2 The Up2uni project was aimed at staff, which allowed any institution to take part. The sessions were offered to all schools and it would appear that that the astute 6th form teams at the independent/selective schools and those institutions in affluent areas have also benefited from the free

service. It is therefore an area of concern that more schools and colleges with lower progression into HE were not specifically targeted. This would however, only have been possible if there was increased time and resources for greater collaboration, or resources to invest in a more targeted approach.

- .3 It is important to acknowledge that the initial Up2uni bid emphasised *people*³ and not *places*. Indeed, the emphasis was upon reaching practitioners rather than targeting specific locations but in order to reach some people we believe it is necessary to go to particular places (MacDonald et. al. 2005). We recommend that future regional and sub-regional projects consider how they might identify and specifically target institutions deemed to be needy.

³ In trying to calculate the reach of the project and the number of people who may have been affected by the project Millen (2006) states, "From the number of practitioners taking part, one can conservatively surmise that up to 14,000 students (nearly 12,000 in Aimhigher institutions) have potentially been affected by the up2uni project".

3.7 Sustainability – A challenge for the future

- .1 The sustainability of any project is dependent on embedding within an organisation or project structure and, future and ongoing funding. The Up2uni project is no different (see further comments in section 4). A sign of their commitment to the venture is the intention of the Education Liaison Office at MMU to explore the possibility of providing an administrative base for Up2Uni activities from within its core budget.
- .2 However, this is not likely to be sufficient to ensure the sustainability of Up2uni activities, which remain dependent on regional Aimhigher funding or other external funding to support the delivery of the workshops as well as developing and disseminating the resources and ideally moving into the next phase whereby they begin to 'train the trainers'.
- .3 Another way of thinking about sustainability is to consider whether the impact on participants is likely to be long-term. The underlying ethos of the sessions was to “*empower*” the practitioners rather than to provide “*model answers*” about how to fill in application forms. For this to happen, it is likely that a change in understanding as well as an increased level of awareness will have taken place. It is arguably difficult to capture and measure levels of impact in terms of understanding because of the abstract nature of the concept.
- .4 We cannot assess impact on the students' understanding of the application process. However, we do have evidence of workshop participants who have grasped ideas and changed their practice which provide evidence of impact that may help achieve some sustainability of the IAG practices advocated by Up2uni trainers. For example:

“The tutors now go back to the subject specialists to ask for subject related information for the UCAS forms.” (Deputy Head of 6th Form)
- .5 Another example related to the Writing References session was recalled by one Careers Adviser from an FE College who was aware that the quality of some of the references from his college had been somewhat “*iffy...because basically the staff were under-selling the students*”. As a consequence of the session the college are now in the process of producing guidelines to help tutors. Students are encouraged to include research to find out about universities, courses and subjects and to include the open day visits they have made to institutions on their UCAS forms; staff are also advised to reinforce this in their reference. This is new practice and one that the Careers Adviser considers to be a “*significant advance*”.
- .6 Another participant said that the teachers at her school now include a section in the UCAS form explaining that the school would be happy to discuss “*a student with extenuating circumstances*”. As a consequence the Head of 6th Form received a telephone call from an admissions tutor wishing to talk about one of their student's special needs. They felt that the process had become “*humanised*” and that this was a reminder:

...that admissions officers are real people who want to help students but sometimes teachers forget this when they are filling out HE forms (Head of 6th Form).

This experience has arguably helped to change perceptions as well as build relationships between the school and admissions tutor. It is also an example of how participants have been empowered to change their practice, which in the long term may help to sustain some of the IAG messages presented in Up2uni workshops.

Section 4: Up2uni Project Evaluation Summation

Summary

This evaluation report set out to assess the overall impact of the Up2uni Project by identifying indicators for change and recommendations for future development. This final section reviews the Up2uni project in terms of the questions identified in Stufflebeam's (2002) CIPP evaluation checklist by scrutinising the impact, effectiveness, sustainability and transportability of the project alongside the enabling and process dimensions and, outcome indicators described in the EPO model (Helsby and Saunders, 1993).

4.1 CIPP Evaluation - impact, effectiveness, sustainability and transportability

4.1.1 Impact - Were the right beneficiaries reached?

Up2uni used a cost-effective targeting strategy, which achieved a speedy response. However, this meant that a number of participating institutions were those that already had established links with MMU resulting in a geographic skew focused around the Manchester and Cheshire areas. The programme successfully achieved all of its numerical targets although the targeting approach did generate a number of non-Aimhigher schools.

4.1.2 Effectiveness - Were their needs met?

Participants in Up2uni reported high levels of satisfaction. The additional feedback obtained during the evaluation process strongly suggests that the pre-workshop discussion ensured that the majority of participants' needs were addressed. More importantly the process provided an effective mechanism for raising the institutional organisers and other participants' awareness about what they needed to know. The flexibility of the trainer ensured that issues to emerge during the workshop could also be addressed, which added to the overall effectiveness of the workshops.

- To recognise the importance of the pre-workshop discussion and benefits of pre-session preparation for both the trainer and the recipients of the training.

4.1.3 Sustainability - Were the gains for the beneficiaries sustained?

There was clear evidence of participant and institutional changes in practice including use of the Up2uni laminate resources following the workshops. The extent to which these gains are sustainable is more difficult to assess, primarily because some of the content is in constant need of updating, particularly with regard to student finance and alternative routes to HE. There is a clear ongoing need for follow-up and related staff development sessions in the future.

4.1.4 Transportability - Did the processes that produced the gains prove transportable and adaptable for effective use in other settings?

- .1 The workshops helped to raise the staff awareness and increase their understanding of what the young people might do to find out about and prepare their applications. There was some evidence of changes in practice suggesting that information and ideas have been transported for use by staff working in individual institutions. The effectiveness of this transfer was not evaluated and remained self-reported. Use of the laminate handout provided a useful aide mémoire to guide staff in adopting a new approach.
- .2 The Up2uni project used a small number of high quality trainers. The original proposal included the development of 'train the trainers' workshops. Although this activity did not happen⁴, this remains a useful objective and strategy for longer-term sustainability and dissemination of the materials. It is recommended that any 'train the trainer' course seeks to recognise and identify the situations that the Up2uni trainers dealt with by drawing on their previous experience and tacit knowledge and enable trainees to generate their individual solutions to these issues.
- .3 A potential focus for transporting the lessons learned as well as some of the content of the Up2uni project would be to offer workshops for staff working with 11-16year olds and particularly those teachers working in schools without a 6th form in areas of deprivation. This would require some changes to the materials and a shift in emphasis. The Up2uni team however have demonstrated their ability to adapt for a different audience by developing workshops suitable for staff working with WBL in FE colleges.
- .4 It is important to remember that tailoring materials and adapting them for use in different contexts requires the trainer to take account of both the individual institutional needs and the wider socio-economic context within which the institution is situated.

4.2 The EPO Model – Enabling, Process and Outcomes

4.2.1 Enabling dimensions – that need to be set up, be in place, policies, space, time, people and resources

Enabling Dimension	Brief descriptor
Network of school and FE contacts	MMU Educational Liaison's existing mailing list and communication system allowed Up2uni to publicise and recruit schools and FE colleges from the start. Some Aimhigher and other HEI assistance was obtained, however, to extend reach or provide a more targeted approach others needed to take a more active role.

⁴ Instead time was spent piloting and developing new materials for work-based learners – see section 3.5

Enabling Dimension	Brief descriptor
MMU Educational Liaison unit	<p>Already established with a positive reputation, existing personnel ready to start immediate delivery allowed the project to start immediately.</p> <p>Departure of administrative assistant placed additional demands on the unit, however, this did not impact overall delivery.</p>
Previous research	<p>'Getting them in' project provided a firm foundation and insights in what was required, the Up2uni project used this work to inform initial pilot and develop core materials.</p>
Trainers	<p>All trainers had existing experience of delivering staff development sessions, this was supported by knowledge and understanding of the working context of schools and FE college. The main trainer was identified as a particular strength of the project.</p> <p>With respect to wider dissemination there is a concern that the success of the project was too closely linked to the individual trainer's personal qualities and experience.</p>
Pre session Proforma	<p>Developed during the pilot study and used to ensure the workshops were tailored to specific group needs.</p>
Portfolio of sessions	<p>Three core workshops provided a breadth and covered relevant IAG issues including the application process, the financial arrangements and routes into HE.</p>
Newsletters	<p>Provided an effective launch for the project and was a useful mechanism for sharing important messages about the application process and changes to the financial arrangements.</p> <p>To extend impact of the newsletter, further thought might be given to either a regular Up2uni newsletter for schools to provide IAG messages and links to resource or to explore with Local Authorities the possibility of a regular Up2uni / Aimhigher feature in an existing publication.</p>
Regional networking	<p>Up2uni staff attended some regional project meetings and attempted to encourage colleagues to promote the staff development opportunities in their localities – the success rate of this approach was disappointing.</p> <p>There were missed opportunities to make connections with other regional projects. Working in partnership is a complex process, it requires time and needs both potential partners to recognise the benefits. The pressure of work and demands on Aimhigher staff makes this difficult – a top down approach for project staff to work collaboratively is unlikely to be successful, however, there would seem to be a role for the NW region to actively encourage and facilitate projects to work together.</p>

Figure 5: Enabling dimensions of the Up2uni project

4.2.2 Process dimensions – that relate to actions, ways of doing things, styles, behaviour and practices

Process Dimension	Brief descriptor
Pre session proforma	<p>Provided the basis of a discussion about the audience, the areas of content to focus on a willingness to be responsive and offer a tailor made session rather than an 'off the shelf' presentation was a distinctive approach that was welcomed by participants</p> <p>Tailoring the material enhanced the quality it also added to the time, a factor that needs to be taken into account when planning for the future.</p>
Flexible approach	<p>The trainers experience and knowledge base ensured that the workshops were flexible in content and delivery e.g. there were opportunities for staff to discuss concerns as they emerged and 'interrupt the power point presentation'.</p>
Regional newsletter and conference presentations	<p>Informed other practitioners in the region about Up2uni and encouraged discussion about the importance of staff development including the features of the outreach model, which others might use to support them in staff development activities in which they were engaged.</p>
Presentational style	<p>Although the presentation style was didactic this was balanced by opportunity to have further discussion if any issues emerged and ensured the content was covered. For staff needing or preferring a more interactive approach the workshop successfully provided them with a shared knowledge base, which they could use in the future.</p> <p>For institutions bringing staff from across the institution it is possible that brief activities to enable staff to meet each other would have been useful for networking and future institutional collaboration. However, given the time available it is recognised that this would have impacted on the content covered and is something for individual institutions to consider.</p>
Outreach model	<p>A set of guiding principles (developed during the pilot and informed by previous research) that influenced HOW Up2uni staff worked with institutions. The outreach model was influential in determining when, where and what was covered during the workshops.</p>
Professional and quality assured	<p>All workshops were evaluated with respect to content, materials, overall usefulness of the session and usefulness of laminate checklists</p>

Figure 6: Process Dimensions

4.2.3 Outcomes – referring to ‘end points’ goals, desired products, numbers.

Outcomes	Brief descriptor
Power point presentations	A set of four power point presentations on 'Applying to HE', Student Finances, Routes to HE and WBL exist. Although the presentations are not in a stand alone format they are ready for further adaptation and development for use by other trainers once they have been trained.
Laminate checklists	During the project 2 laminate checklists with core information were produced (and updated). Staff valued these concise documents primarily because they were brief and easy to use in a variety of ways. The possibility of developing other checklists with core messages for distribution in schools across the region would be useful – however, it is important to remember that the confidence to use these resources is likely to be influenced by attendance at the session which has explained the underpinning philosophy and relevance of the messages. Enabling staff to understand the relevance and purpose is anticipated to bring about a greater change in practice than simply providing a checklist of actions.
74 institutions and 916 participants	Up2uni achieved its numerical targets delivering staff development sessions in a range of different types of institution, across the whole region.
Newsletters and Conference papers	Disseminated lessons learned as well as promoting the project to Aimhigher practitioners so that they could publicise it to local institutions. Conference papers also served the purpose of highlighting the importance of providing IAG and the role that teachers and tutors play in offering this type of support to the young people with whom they come into contact.

Figure 7: Up2uni Outcomes

4.3 Conclusion

- .1 The external evaluation of the Up2uni project has identified the following positive features of the project that appear to have made the greatest impact on participants:
- A negotiated content prior to the session enabling delivery to be relevant to context and needs of staff.
 - A credible, respected and skilful deliverer able to relate to the wide range of staff attending the sessions.
 - An ability of the project to respond to the need for additional targeted resources on writing references and to incorporate this within the portfolio of sessions offered.

- A responsive approach that has resulted in the development of work-based learning sessions that have complemented and provided a synergy with the Cumbria sub-regional activity 'Up and Away'. This warrants further dissemination across the region.
- .2 Although up2uni has achieved its targets it would have benefited from additional support from Aimhigher Co-ordinators and the use of alternative strategies to gain access to Aimhigher practitioners. It has now established contacts and a positive reputation amongst educational providers. The Up2uni project is well placed to develop the knowledge and understanding by; offering existing participants alternative sessions from the current portfolio, delivering sessions to new institutions and preparing materials for use by other Aimhigher practitioners who would benefit from an opportunity to be 'trained' in their delivery.
 - .3 Embedding the good practice by extending the number of trainers within the region is likely to increase the number of school, FE and WBL tutors reached and thus increase the impact on the IAG provided to young people at the crucial decision making stage in their educational journey.

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Appendix 1: Questions for Telephone Participants Up2uni Evaluation

NB Adapted layout of interview schedule

Up2uni – Overarching Questions for the Evaluation

Has Up2uni provided tutors with an effective model of advice and guidance that they are now using?

If so, is the new model sustainable at their school/college?

What was the model of guidance like prior to Up2uni? How has the model of guidance changed?

Topics covered during interviews

- ? Publicity – newsletter, word of mouth, perception of who delivered session MMU / Aimhigher
- ? Reasons for getting involved – links with other staff development / Aimhigher activities
- ? Workshops attended – content and reasons for choice
- ? Expectations prior to the session, were these met
- ? Views about the session – usefulness, quality, materials, trainer, relevance, level, suitability, covering diversity, comparison with other staff development,
- ? Gains from attending the session – personal, institutional, knowledge, ways of working
- ? Has the Up2uni programme influenced your views about HE?
- ? Impact on practice – benefits gained, new ideas, information, materials
- ? Key message and examples of change
- ? Interest in future sessions

If they were the person who chose the session:

- ? Their role in school
- ? Staff Participants – profile, how were they recruited – compulsory / optional
- ? Views about the pre session proforma and its use to support tailored approach

General Comments:

- ? Suggestions for improvement

Appendix 2: Evaluation of Up2Uni 2005-06

How would you rate the usefulness of the activity?

Up2uni (please tick all that apply)	Excellent	Very Good	Average	Poor
1. Applying to HE				
2. Understanding different routes to HE				
3. Student finance				

How did you first find out about the training? (Tick one)

1. Received a letter of invitation
2. Received an Up2uni newsletter
3. Received information from someone else in my school/college
4. Found out from someone outside my school/college
5. Other, please state

Why did you attend the Up2uni training? Was it because you

1. Were told to attend
2. Were asked to attend
3. Volunteered to attend after an open invitation in your school/college
4. Other

Please explain

Do you have any comments about the overall administration of the process – e.g. information provided, arrival of trainer?

Name 3 ways in which you feel the Up2uni programme has impacted on you and your colleagues (e.g. benefits gained, new ideas, used information and materials).

- 1
- 2
- 3

How does Up2uni link with and support other activities in your school/college?

Please circle all the phrases that describe your experience of the Up2uni training.

reassuring useful confusing informative good use of time
 practical too long boring relevant a waste of time
 too short interesting accessible too general extra pressure

Please indicate your view by circling <u>one</u>	Strongly	Agree	Not	Disagree	Strongly	N/A
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number on each line	Agree		Sure		Disagree	
The Up2uni training was tailor-made to suit this school/college	1	2	3	4	5	6
Before the training I felt confident talking to young people about progression into HE	1	2	3	4	5	6
The training increased my knowledge of HE	1	2	3	4	5	6
I would be interested in attending a follow-up session	1	2	3	4	5	6
The Up2uni newsletter is helpful	1	2	3	4	5	6
The training has helped me to support the young people here	1	2	3	4	5	6
Pupils are now more confident in making informed decisions about HE	1	2	3	4	5	6
The laminated information sheets have been very useful for staff	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have changed how I support young people thinking about HE	1	2	3	4	5	6
I feel confident advising disabled students about disclosing their disability	1	2	3	4	5	6

Name 3 ways in which you feel the Up2uni training has benefited your pupils/students.

- 1
- 2
- 3

How has the Up2uni programme affected your practice?

How has the Up2uni programme influenced your views about HE?

We welcome further comments on any aspect of the up2uni programme.

Name:	Telephone:
Organisation:	Email:
Role in organisation:	Would you be willing to be involved in a telephone interview Yes /No (please circle)

Please email: XXX or return to

Appendix 3: The Preliminary Contact form

NB Adapted layout of the preliminary contact form used to guide pre workshop discussion

Up2uni – Staff Development sessions

School Profile information

1. Name of School / College...
2. Contact name, position, and telephone number...
3. Approx. no. of students in Y1/Y12: & in Y2/Y13:
4. What proportion of students, in general, go on to HE?

Staffing structure of advice system:

1. How is advice/guidance delivered? (e.g. any “whole year group” sessions, or “central” provision? All via tutors? Any input by specialist staff? Throughout or at particular points of the year?etc
2. What HE topics are specifically addressed with students, approximately when, & in groups of what approx. size?
3. How and when are the following tackled at present:
 - a. Personal Statements
 - b. References?
4. Do students see their references?
5. Student access to careers resource base – timetabled? Specific times only? Etc
6. Do the students apply on-line?
7. How much if any of their timetable do tutors have for guidance work?
8. Roughly how often are students seen 1 to 1?

Staff Development Opportunities

1. What is available to tutors by way of:
 - a. Training?
 - b. Ongoing support/INSET
 - c. Materials?

For the proposed session:

1. How many participants?
2. Are they new to HE guidance/experienced/a mixture?
3. Any particular issues you'd like addressed? If you will be attending sessions on routes to HE or student finance please be specific about the areas you would like to be covered eg Foundation years, foundation degrees, sources of income, applying for funding, managing money.

Appendix 4: Evaluation Sheet

Up2uni - Staff Development programme

NB This is an adapted layout, the original included Up2uni and MMU Logos

Please give us some feedback under the headings below before leaving the session. It WILL be used in planning any further work.

Please give a rating where requested* on a scale of 1 to 5, where: 1 = very negative, 3 = neutral, and 5 = very positive.

Title of Activity:

	Comment	Rating (1 to 5)
Content of Presentation*		
How useful was it to you personally?*		
Please list any topics not addressed that you feel should have been		
Presentation Materials*		
Usefulness of Tutor Checklist*		
Have you any suggestions for improvement of this topic?		
Are there any further topics on which you'd value tutor support?		

Any other comments:

Thank you very much for your trouble