

# The "Increased Flexibility Programme" in Leicester

Leicestershire's Increased Flexibility programme looks set to expand again in 2006-7. This programme has seen extensive increases in the range of courses offered and the number of students involved over the past 4 years.

Student interviews for places on the vocational courses are currently taking place within the Leicester City Partnership with over 500 applicants for next year's programmes. For 06/07 academic year, we have expanded the number of Training Providers involved. We are now working with Stride Training for hairdressing and construction and Chill Enterprises for music technology.

The recognition of vocational courses in the school Achievement and Attainment Tables has given significant currency to the achievement of vocational qualifications. These opportunities have enhanced the Key Stage 4

curriculum, motivated students, given them an opportunity to experience learning in a different environment, increased progression into the Post 16 sector and contributed to additional achievement in the City. The VESA team works closely with the staff delivering the programmes and their managers to ensure that students have a quality experience and achieve the planned qualification.

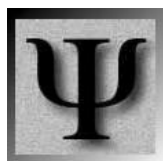
On June 26<sup>th</sup>, we celebrate the achievement of the current Year 10 students at an Award Ceremony to be held at Leicester College at 4 p.m. All students will be given a certificate and there will be prizes for the best and most improved students in each group. We are hoping that all school staff and providers involved in the programme will attend and support their students.

For further information contact **Viv Laxton or Graham Conway**

## Alternative Qualifications – Beyond GCSE

Severn Trent's Visitor Centre was the venue for a conference which provided a platform for local schools and colleges to find out more about the expanded range of non-GCSE courses that are now available. Awarding Bodies represented included NCFE, ABC, ASDAN, NOCN as well as Edexcel and OCR. Judith Mulhearn from Nottingham City LA provided a stimulating key-note input which encouraged centres to exploit new-found freedoms to create stimulating and more appropriate curriculum for our KS4 learners. Within the new Achievement & Attainment Tables (AATs), a single GCSE has a 20% threshold value, thus 5 GCSEs (or their equivalents) remain as the basic benchmark for schools. The numerous courses that are now available on Section 96 come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from a minimum of 5% to a maximum of 80% of contribution to the threshold.

Of particular interest are the "smaller" courses with a threshold contribution of 5 or 10%, many of which are vocational and have evolved from smaller, less well known Awarding Bodies. At the other end of the spectrum, a number of schools are either running or considering substantial courses such as BTEC Introductory or First and OCR National courses. VESA has been working systematically through Section 96 and the QCA Open Qualifications website to produce an "at a glance" guide to what is available, including levels, cost, and assessment details etc. This information will be made available at future management and network sessions, starting with the **14-19 Vocational Coordinators' Network** meeting on **12<sup>th</sup> June**. **For more information or to discuss curriculum development and related CPD needs please contact Stuart King or Brian Sanderson.**



## Student 'A' Level Revision Conference

### VESA Psychology User Group Teachers Lead the Way

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> April nearly 200 Year 13 students from schools across Leicester and Leicestershire took part in an 'A' level Revision Conference at the University of Leicester, sponsored by Aimhigher and organised and run by members of the VESA Psychology User group,

Students had the opportunity to revise topics such as Approaches, Issues and Debates, Relationships and Exam Skills. They also experienced a day at University, using the facilities on campus.

Kelly Ginns from Lutterworth Grammar School, and the group organising the event worked extremely hard to make it a success and refresh the memories of students preparing to take their exams this summer. For many, this event

triggered their revision process by answering that all important question, "Where do I start?"

We received many positive comments from students - "It was a really good day, I hadn't started any revision yet, but this gave me something to go on". Certainly, the staff involved in organising the event found it worthwhile and are considering the possibility of running further revision conferences in the next academic year for Years 12 and 13.

In the meantime, the Psychology User group will be holding a staff conference at **Brooksby Hall on 22<sup>nd</sup> June**. If you would like to attend or receive further information, details can be obtained by contacting **Graham Conway or Jacqui Harley at VESA or by looking on our Website.**



NEWS FROM LEICESTER + SHIRE VESA 13-19 EDUCATION SUPPORT AGENCY - SUMMER TERM 2006

## Exciting development in accreditation for PDC

A new and very flexible qualification has been submitted to QCA for approval and inclusion in the Section 96 list of qualifications for learners 14-16. This new qualification will give nationally approved accreditation for learning through the Personal Development Curriculum and will be equivalent to either 1 or 2 GCSEs (see details below)

*"This is a good opportunity to build upon the success of the local best practice developed in Leicester over the last 10 years and we welcome its flexibility."* - Claire Madigan Head of the Life Skills Faculty, The City of Leicester College.

### Background to development of the Qualification:

The qualification (current proposed title: Personal, Health, Social and Careers Education) has been submitted to QCA by NOCN (National Open College Network) whose aim is to have approval for **first delivery in September 2006**. This new qualification will replace the existing NOCN qualification (NOCN Award for Careers Education and Preparation for Working Life) which has until now been delivered through the locally devised WrAP and LPDP programmes.

Achievement will be recognised at Level 1 and Level 2 in the first instance. NOCN aims to add Entry Level 1, 2 and 3 and Level 3 units where applicable once approval has been obtained.

### Key characteristics of the new credit-based qualification are as follows:

- 1 Credit equals 10 guided learning hours (GLH)
  - 90 GLHs equal to 1 GCSE\*
  - 180 GLHs equal to 2 GCSEs\*
- \* These principles already approved by QCA*

The new qualification is made up of 2 Mandatory Units

- Personal Career Development
- Personal Development Reflection

and a range of optional units under 4 identified 'ROUTES'

- Route 1: Careers Education and Guidance
- Route 2: Personal and Health Education
- Route 3: Social, Moral and Cultural Responsibility
- Route 4: Enterprise and Work-related Learning

The **structure and content** of the qualification has been designed to enable schools to give external currency and value to some of the best learning experiences they provide for their students e.g. **FE/HE Tasters, Preparing for Work-based Learning, Work-Experience and Apprenticeships, Drugs Awareness, Crime Prevention, Interview Techniques etc.**

For further details of the structure and content of the qualification (e.g. list of specific units available within the 4 Routes) as well as

some examples of the extreme flexibility of the new qualification, please visit the VESA website at [www.vesa.org.uk](http://www.vesa.org.uk).

On Thursday the 14<sup>th</sup> June we are hosting an event at Launde Abbey where interested parties could come to gather further information. **If you are interested in attending or getting further information, please contact [kay.ives@vesa.org.uk](mailto:kay.ives@vesa.org.uk).**

### 06/07 Conferences

VESA Pre-16 Conference  
9<sup>th</sup> November 2006

VESA Post-16 Conference  
30<sup>th</sup> November 2006

Health & Social Care  
Student Conferences  
GCSE 11<sup>th</sup> December 2006  
AVCE 26<sup>th</sup> March 2007

East Midlands 14-19 Conference  
1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2007

Work Related Learning  
Conference  
22<sup>nd</sup> February 2007

AVCE Leisure & Tourism  
Student Conference  
5<sup>th</sup> March 2007

Progress File Conference  
28<sup>th</sup> March 2007

Alternative Curriculum  
Conference 24<sup>th</sup> May 2007

VESA 13-19 Conference  
14<sup>th</sup> June 2007

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# VESA

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Knighton Fields Centre, Herrick Road, Leicester LE2 6DH  
Tel: 0116 270 7942 Fax: 0116 270 9759  
E-mail: [firstname.lastname@vesa.org.uk](mailto:firstname.lastname@vesa.org.uk)  
[www.vesa.org.uk](http://www.vesa.org.uk)



## PLUS proves a real success

It is widely recognised that young people with poor basic skills are more likely to become disengaged from school and to be young offenders. Consequently, improving students' basic skills is a key objective for the ESF project 'Pathways to Vocational Success', which is targeted at the hardest to help students in the nine Leicester/shire schools.

To support project schools in addressing this key issue VESA has worked closely with the Youth Offending Services (YOS) to introduce schools to the PLUS strategy. Leicestershire YOS is a 'Champion site' for the PLUS strategy and it has successfully used the PLUS resources with their client group. In the past year ESF schools, such as Burleigh and Babington, have piloted PLUS materials and are delighted with the impact that the resources are having on their students in terms of increasing motivation and achievement.

Following the introduction of this successful initiative, VESA would now like to offer the opportunity of involvement in the PLUS strategy to all City/County schools, and have arranged the following training events:

**Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> June, 1.30 -3.30 venue to be confirmed (target group: KS4/5 teachers)**

**Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> June 1.30-3.00 venue to be confirmed (target group: KS3 teachers)**

For more details about PLUS and/or these training events please contact Graham Conway or Jacqui Harley at VESA

## Recognising Personal Development - Raising Achievement, Adding Value

"Every Child Matters" and the requirement to include Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS) in the 14-19 curriculum have focused curriculum managers' attention on the need for a coherent skills development strategy for their learners. Much will be left to individual centres to decide which way forwards. For example, schools & colleges can now formally recognise and accredit the three Wider Key Skills of Improving Own Learning & Performance (IOLP), Working With Others (WWO) and Problem Solving (PS). These important personal and interpersonal key skills are highly valued by industry and Higher Education and are now formally classed as qualifications earning "league table" points. Each skill carries with it a 15% threshold contribution at levels 1 and 2. Potential vehicles for skills development and accreditation include the tutorial programme,

incorporating student review and target setting, Work Experience and enrichment programmes (e.g. Enterprise activities, volunteering, peer mentoring and community service). During 2006-7, VESA will extend its support programme to help centres address the needs of teachers and curriculum managers in the inter-related areas of **Key, Basic and Functional Skills**. One strand of support will concentrate on the "main" skills, especially Numeracy and Literacy (& preparation for the emerging Functional Skills). A second strand will focus on the "wider key skills" – developing practical approaches designed to incorporate them into various programmes and evolving a skills strand to the "PLTS".

**For further information please contact Stuart King at the VESA office.**

## Progress File Update

Most newsletter readers will be aware of the recent DfES decision to cease supplying Progress File materials and resources from April 2006 onwards. Many colleagues in schools, colleges and other partner organisations felt sufficiently moved to write to DfES registering their concerns with this decision. We were particularly encouraged by the excellent attendance at the Progress File conference on 6<sup>th</sup> April and also by the almost universal recognition that **the principles and practices underpinning Progress File** should be sustained locally despite the DfES decision. There is a significant commitment to retain as much as possible of the excellent local practice developed in Leicester & Leicestershire over the past 6 years.

Preliminary discussions with local partnership groups has indicated interest in sourcing and supplying a local Progress File Portfolio and/or Presenter using similar arrangements to the previous national model. Feedback at the Progress File conference reinforced support for this approach. As a result, a letter has now been sent to all schools, colleges and other partners to establish the level of interest in developing a local Progress File, what this would look like and how much it should cost. We are also investigating the possibilities for local sponsorship for this "product".

A half day event has been organised on **Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> June at 1.00pm at Knighton Fields Centre** to share the outcomes of this survey. This will take the place of the Key Stage Progress File Consortia meetings organised for the summer term. The event will also be used to demonstrate the latest version of the electronic Progress File and ILP currently being piloted in the City and County.

**If you have any questions about Progress File developments please contact Tim Farthing or Sylvia Caddick at VESA.**



## Update on the Aimhigher "Way Ahead" national project for LAC

The statistics relating to the under-achievement and low progression rates of Looked after Children [LAC] and care leavers have been well publicised and are now well understood in education, social services and other partner organisations. For example, only 1 per cent of care-leavers progress on to higher education, compared with 40 per cent of school-leavers.

There are now major initiatives and developments underway with the common aim of improving the life chances of LAC and improving the educational outcomes for this cohort. Part of this wider effort is a national Aimhigher project called "The Way Ahead" that has been funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England [HEFCE] and is being led by the Leicestershire Aimhigher Partnership. The Partnership includes representation from the local HEIs, LSC, Connexions Leicester Shire, VESA, Local Authority Education and Social Services Departments and LANTERN. The focus of this project is on raising aspirations, achievement rates and participation in further and higher level study for LAC.

Some of the early successes of the project have included:

■ "Way Ahead" events in the City and County. In Leicester City, these events pre-date the national project and have been particularly successful. For the last 3 years the local partners have worked with Leicester College

to organise an annual event for foster carers, social workers and other staff working with LAC to improve the awareness of options and opportunities 13-19. The 2006 event offered taster activities for LAC and their carers that encompass printing, fashion, textiles, dance, digital photography. The event was held on 14<sup>th</sup> February over half-term and thereby had the added benefit of providing holiday provision for foster carers.

■ Publications such as "Supporting Gifted and Talented Looked after Children" and "Supporting Success – Giving young people in care the best possible chance to succeed" are being disseminated locally and nationally. The project is also in the final stages of completing a national DVD that uses LAC case studies to illustrate the 14-19 pathways into HE.

■ A particularly interesting and innovative aspect of the project is a pilot of "Designated Teachers/Tutors" in Post 16 settings. Leicester College and Loughborough College are now piloting Designated posts with the aim of supporting transition for LAC and improving retention rates. Although only appointed in the summer of 2005, the early feedback has been positive suggesting that fewer LAC have dropped out of courses than in previous years. The pilots will run up to December 2006 at which time we will be able to assess the impact of these roles on 2 cohorts of LAC as they move through from school into post-16. We have been particularly pleased with the level of interest expressed by other colleges and providers in Leicestershire which are also beginning to appoint Designated staff for LAC. Clearly, many providers are now seeing such developments as an important

part of their response to the Every Child Matters agenda of supporting vulnerable children and young people.

The project has also seconded a researcher from De Montfort University who is currently undertaking a data analysis exercise with the aim of improving partners' understanding of what influences achievement and progression for LAC.

For further information about the Aimhigher "Way Ahead" national project please contact **Sang Townsley, Tim Farthing or Megan Jones on 0116 2707942 or email sang.townsley@vesa.org.uk**

For pilot Designated Staff in Colleges contact details are:-

**Sally Webster [Leicester College] at swebster@leicestercollege.ac.uk or 0116 2242002 Ext 5031**

**Alison Pickering [Loughborough College] at alisonpickering@loucoll.ac.uk or 01509 215831**

## Aimhigher...

On **22nd June at Beaumanor Hall** we will be holding the 2006 Aimhigher half day conference. The event will give participants an opportunity to discuss the planned developments in Aimhigher for the period 2006 -08 including changes to school and college funding. The benefits and challenges laid down by Aimhigher will be raised by a number of short keynote presentations, and examples of good and interesting practice will be shared through a series of workshops. More detailed information about the conference will be sent to school and college widening participation and gifted & talented coordinators shortly.

**Please contact Neil Stock for further information.**