

There were some key challenges for foundation year provision which we explored.

Main issues that either are having an impact at the moment or are presumed to have an impact post-2012 were:

- significantly higher fees for students in HE
- restricted numbers of total students from each institution
- current high demand
- concern over the level of demand post 2012

### **Cost of foundation years**

One of the key issues that we explored was the assumption that seems to have taken root amongst network practitioners, that it is a good idea to have cheaper foundation years. It was recognised that the nature of delivery to foundation year students requires probably a higher degree of teaching input and teaching skill than other cohorts of students. Providing cut-price foundation years may be sending the wrong message to VCs and potential students.

If the foundation year is to be charged at a lower rate than other HE years, how will the institution resource that? This could mean a lower level of resources for foundation years, it could also mean that the foundation years are not as valuable to the institution if they attract less funding.

### **Why have foundation years?**

Although it is fair to say that everyone agreed that foundation years provide an opportunity to widen participation and access to our institutions the last year has seen a shrinkage in the numbers of foundation years and the sizes of those foundation years. If an institution can no longer grow its undergraduate provision, and if there is high demand for that provision (i.e. all places can be filled with students who have all the requirements for level 1 entry) what is the argument for continuing with foundation years? If as seems likely this year, there will be many students who are unable to gain a place at university even though they have UCAS points that far exceed those of students on many of our foundation years; should they not feel let down that they have done all that has been asked of them by the education process yet still not found a place in higher in higher education. However, in the same institutions places were ring fenced for students who have not achieved at school.

### **Foundation year perception**

many organisations have a perception that foundation year students are not retained, do not complete. The emphasis across all institutions in a marketplace where numbers are limited, is likely to be one where they allocate the resources to students who are most likely to complete and remain at the institution.

### **Demand**

there were various views as to whether demand is likely to remain buoyant or significantly decrease. The strong feeling that although certain programs are likely to see strong demand (especially vocational programs) it was felt that programs without vocational focus would see a drop in demand from students from lower socio economic groups.