

## FdA in Pensions Administration and Management – Programme Specification

**This document applies to students who commence the programme in or after September 2017**

1. Awarding Institution/Body	University of Worcester
2. Teaching Institution	Heart of Worcestershire College and the Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals
3. Programme accredited by	N/A
4. Final Award	FdA
5. Programme Title	FdA Pensions Administration and Management
6. Pathways available	There are no pathways available on this programme. Progression is available to the BA (Hons) in Applied Business and Management (Pensions) at the University of Derby. Applications are made through the CIPP.
7. Mode and/or site of delivery	At regional centres throughout the UK
8. Mode of attendance	Part time, predominately distance learning
9. UCAS Code	N /A
10. Subject/Professional Benchmark Statement	<a href="#">QAA subject benchmark statement: General Business and Management, 2007</a> <a href="#">Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark, 2010</a>
11. Date of Programme Specification Preparation/Revision	June 2013; August and October 2014 – amendment to regulations; January 2015 – RPL Amendment. November 2016 – Change to College name and RPL amendment. August 2017 – AQU and IQC amendments

### 12. Educational aims of the programme

The FdA in Pensions Administration and Management is a programme designed around the needs of employers in the pensions sector.

The programme is designed for all pension employees, irrespective of managerial background who:

- Are currently employed in the pension sector.
- Wish to develop or consolidate their professional skills.
- Aspire to positions of management within the pension sector and so improve their career development prospects.
- Seek to develop and/or update the technical skills required by the pension sector.

Students learn on a distance basis through study of the materials supplied for each module by the CIPP. Each module is also supported by a formal teaching day, revision opportunities and tutorial support. Teaching, learning and support are discussed more fully later in this specification and in the Course Handbook. The 15 modules that make up the Foundation Degree are completed in a 36 month period.

The programme has two focuses, the first being the development of the many technical skills required of an employee in the pensions sector and the second being the development of management skills appropriate to the management of a small group of employees. In both cases the programme encourages students to relate new knowledge and skills to their own workplace situation and to develop a wider understanding of how their organisations function. In particular, the purposes of the programme are to provide students with:

- The knowledge, understanding and skills to become more effective in their professional roles;
- The capacity to develop and apply technical and managerial skills;
- A critical understanding and a proactive approach to the contribution their sector makes to their organisation as a whole;
- The ability to be an independent learner, explore their potential and increase their awareness and confidence;
- The basis for further professional development and encouragement to take responsibility for their own CPD and those for whom they are responsible;
- Progression opportunities to other HE programmes or professional awards.

Foundation Degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- Knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles in their area(s) of study, and of the way in which those principles have developed.
- Ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied.
- Knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in the subject(s) relevant to the named award, and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study.
- An understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- Use a range of established techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis.
- Effectively communicate information, arguments and analysis in a variety of forms to specialist and non specialist audiences, and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively.
- Undertake further training, develop existing skills and acquire new competences that will enable them to assume significant responsibility within organisations.

And holders will have:

- The qualities and transferrable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision making.

(The Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark, 2010, para 42)

### **13. Intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment**

On successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

## Knowledge and understanding

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate, to a professional level, the technical requirements necessary for a career in the pensions sector</li><li>• Operate as the manager of a small team of pensions employees (WWO)</li><li>• Assess the contribution of the pensions function to the organisation as a whole</li></ul>	<p><b>Examples of teaching, learning and assessment methods used:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 44% of the content relates directly to the technical requirements of pensions administration. Assessment is a mixed diet of examination and assignment.</li><li>• 38% of the content is designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead a small team in a technical discipline</li><li>• The management theme expands throughout the course enabling students to place their function within a whole organisation context</li></ul>
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## Skills and other attributes

<p><b>Intellectual/cognitive skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluate the professional development needs of themselves and others</li><li>• Take personal responsibility for and expand the boundaries of their own learning (IOLP)</li></ul>	<p><b>Examples of teaching, learning and assessment methods used:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Module FDPP 2337 has been specifically designed to enable students to take a proactive approach to their professional development needs. The managerial techniques of appraisal etc studied in FDPP1228 complements this and allows students to assist in the development of others</li><li>• As participants in a distance learning course students must take responsibility for their own learning from an early stage and appropriate support measures e.g. tutorial, helpline, study days, revision school etc recognise and react to this. Pensions is a narrow specialism and the course design reflects this in its early stages however the introduction of a range of management topics increasing to 83% of the content in Year 3 enables students to develop the wider learning skills essential both to this level of study and also to enable progression. This is complemented by a similar shift in emphasis in assessment with examination in the early period giving way to increasing use of assignments in the latter stages thus allowing students to</li></ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake further training and development that will enable them to assume significant responsibility within organisations</li> <li>• Use a range of techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information (ICT)</li> </ul>	<p>practice the wider research skills and prepare them for lifelong learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This FdA prepares students for junior management roles within a payroll setting. In this it is both vocationally relevant and also prepares students for the managerial level most frequently found within their particular workplace setting. Progression to an appropriate Honours degree is a realistic option upon completion of this award.</li> <li>• The range of finance based pensions modules require analytical skills to be applied to a variety of data. The use of case studies during examination further develops this skill.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Practical skills relevant to employment &amp; professional development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effectively communicate information, arguments, and analysis in a variety of forms (COMMS)</li> <li>• Solve complex problems through critical analysis (AON) (PS)</li> <li>• Apply underlying concepts and principles to an employment context</li> </ul>	<p><b>Examples of teaching, learning and assessment methods used:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignments form a vital communication method and allow this skill to be assessed. The Work Based Project challenges students to further develop through a major, research based, piece of work.</li> <li>• The course allows students to deploy two routes to achieve this outcome. As stated previously they may take a financial bias where there is ample scope for problem solving in many of the modules assessment pieces. They may also prefer a managerial bias and assessment in those modules lend themselves to the analysis of problem situations.</li> <li>• All of the content of this course is directly relevant to the student's workplace. Most of the scope for demonstrating this, however, lies in the assignment strand of the assessment devices. These represent 75% of the overall assessment load and are all work based. That is they require the student to examine and discuss issues they encounter in their workplace and propose solutions.</li> </ul>
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analysis in a variety of forms (COMMS)															
Solve complex problems through critical analysis (AON) (PS)			X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Apply underlying concepts and principles to an employment context (IOLP)					X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

## 14. Assessment Strategy

The strategy is based on guidance from the Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark Statement to consolidate the assessment of learning in the workplace with more traditional means.

Assessment options have been selected as being appropriate with the programme being a blended learning course. Other considerations regarding the selection of assessment tools have been:

- The need to meet the requirements of both the University of Worcester ([UW Quality Standards for flexible and distributed learning](#)) and those of the CIPP.
- The technical nature of much of the content lends itself to the selection of examination in certain subject areas.
- Employers expectations that the qualification will provide proof of technical competence.

As a result of these considerations assessment for this programme is through a mix of work related assignments and examinations. Examinations ensure that a student has to physically appear at regular periods in order to pass the course and are the most appropriate assessment technique to provide proof of technical competence. Work related assignments provide greater freedom for students to demonstrate their own development in areas such as critical analysis and to relate their learning to their workplace. Thus the assessment strategy has been devised to address the considerations above and also be appropriate to the technical nature of the subject.

73% of assessments, the assignments, on the programme are work based. Work based learning is therefore integrated with the assessment strategy where possible. Although the course design team are of the view that all the assessments are work related it is accepted that the assignments are the assessments where students will be able to directly apply their work place experiences to their study and vice versa.

The FdA in Pension Administration and Management has 11 out of 15 modules that have an assessment element linked directly to the student's workplace. The assessment criteria are available in the Student Handbook.

Examination schedules and assignment submission schedules are detailed in the Key Date Schedule on the student web site for direct entry students, or will be negotiated with the employer alongside release dates for the teaching periods. The latter applies only where an employer is sponsoring a discrete group of students. In this case the agreed schedules will be issued to students pre start in a bespoke Key Date Schedule.

In marking assessed work, Internal Verification and Moderation form part of the quality assurance procedure. Assessed work will be subject to the University of Worcester procedures. The University of Worcester Link Tutor is also given full access to these materials and asked to comment formally through UW channels and also informally on an ongoing basis. Where there is some doubt as to the authorship of an assessment the

programme will follow the University of Worcester published policy for investigating plagiarism.

Formative assessment is also an important feature of the programme and takes place through the personal tutor, feedback on progress with the module study guides and, unusually, feedback on examination performance.

In line with the University of Worcester [Assessment Policy](#) assessments for the individual modules have been designed to enable students to demonstrate that they have successfully met each learning outcome. Each module outline thus specifies an assessment strategy outlining the nature of the summative assessment exercises it employs and the respective weighting of each assessment item in its overall assessment loading. If a student fails to achieve a learning outcome no compensation within module assessments is possible. This means that students must pass all elements of assessment. Regulations governing failure are set out in the UW Taught Courses Regulatory Framework.

All examination assessments are marked as either Pass or Fail with a minimum pass mark of 70%. This may appear high but it is a guarantee to the profession that a high standard of technical competence has been achieved.

The minimum pass mark for work assessed by assignment is D- in line with normal University practice.

## 15. Programme structure and requirements

The Foundation Degree in Pensions Administration and Management comprises the following 15 mandatory modules, there are no optional modules:

### Award Map

#### Year One

Code	Title	Level	Credits	Status	Assessment	Responsibility
FDPE1111	Introduction to Pensions Schemes	4	15	M	Assignment	CIPP
FDPE1112	Pensions Payroll	4	15	M	Examination	CIPP
FDPE1113	Roles and Responsibilities	4	15	M	Assignment	CIPP
FDPE1114	Accruing and Improving Benefits	4	15	M	Examination	CIPP
FDPP1115	Working in a team	4	15	M	Assignment	HOW

#### Year Two

Code	Title	Level	Credits	Status	Assessment	Responsibility
FDPE1227	Exploration of Benefit Entitlement and Early Leavers	4	15	M	Examination	CIPP
FDPP1228	Leading the Team	4	15	M	Assignment	HOW
FDPE1229	Retirement and Death Benefits	4	15	M	Examination	CIPP
FDPE2221	Human Resources and Communication	5	15	M	Assignment	CIPP

FDPP2222	Define & manage systems, security & risk	5	15	M	Assignment	CIPP
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### Year Three

Code	Title	Level	Credits	Status	Assessment	Responsibility
FDPE2333	Pensions Policy and Strategy	5	15	M	Assignment	CIPP
FDPP2334	Improving Services and Operations	5	15	M	Assignment	HOW
FDPP2335	Understanding Customers and Clients	5	15	M	Assignment	HOW
FDPP2336	Work based project	5	30	M	Assignment	HOW/CIPP
FDPP2337	Personal effectiveness and professional development	5	15	M	Portfolio	HOW

Students who complete the 15 modules, and thus accumulate 240 credit points, are eligible for the award of Foundation Degree in Pensions Administration and Management. Students, who exit, having completed 120 credit points, qualify for a Certificate in Higher Education.

The programme is designed to allow students to complete the Foundation Degree in Pensions Administration and Management award in part time mode over a period of up to 3 years.

## 16. QAA and Professional Academic Standards and Quality

There is no specific QAA Subject Benchmark for the subject matter within this Foundation Degree however the CIPP is the leading body, nationally, for pensions related qualifications and, as such, is acting in the role of a Lead Body. The CIPP has an employer membership base of over 5000 organisations and it is through consultation with many of these members that the competences required of an employee working in the pensions sector have been established. These competences have been further refined into key areas of knowledge and understanding and it is these that have been used to inform both course design and assessment strategy for the FdA in Pensions Administration and Management.

The programme conforms to the requirements for undergraduate qualifications set out by 'The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland – August 2008'. The FdA in Pension and Administration and Management is located at Level 5. The Programme Learning Outcomes (Section 16) have been devised with full reference to the Descriptors for a qualification at Level 5.

The programme also conforms, both in design and execution, to the QAA Foundation Degree qualification benchmark (May, 2010)

## 17. Support for students

The following support services are in place to provide for students on the programme:

- Induction programme with inputs from HOW, CIPP and UW.
- Designated personal tutor – contractually bound to provide both evening and weekend access to students via e-mail and/or telephone. Precise times of availability



are agreed between tutor and tutor group. The personal tutor may, in some cases, also be the module tutor but this is generally the exception.

- Direct telephone re-routing to CIPP qualifications team in the event of tutor unavailability.
- Guaranteed 48 hour response time for all enquiries within business hours.
- Project selection advice and guidance for the Work based project in the event that the student's manager does not wish to contribute.
- Access to the contact details of other members of the tutor group for mutual support.
- Comprehensive study-pack accompanying each competence based module.
- A weekly e-mail magazine sharing payroll changes and issues.
- A monthly magazine.
- Access to HOW's VLE for wider research opportunities.
- Access to CIPP and HOW's student support offering a range of support services.

## **18. Admissions policy, criteria and procedures**

### **Admissions Policy**

The Course Team aim to provide fair and equal access to a university education to all those who have the potential to succeed or benefit from it. This programme is a Foundation Degree, as such it is designed specifically for applicants who are currently working in, or have access to, an active, real time pensions environment.

### **Entry requirements**

The normal minimum entry requirement for Foundation Degree courses is the possession of 4 GCSEs (Grade C/4 or above) and 1 A Level (or equivalent Level 3 qualification).

The current UCAS Tariff requirements for entry to this course are published in the prospectus and on the UW website <https://www.worc.ac.uk/journey/a-z-of-courses.html>

See [Admissions Policy](#) for other acceptable qualifications.

We welcome applicants who hold alternative qualifications/experience different to those specified as a minimum entry requirement who can demonstrate the ability to benefit from the course and show their potential to complete the course successfully. Although recent preparatory study at an appropriate level is recommended, students may be considered on the basis of prior professional work/experience and /or other assessment procedures including the assessment of personal suitability. Staff at the CIPP will be able to offer information, advice and guidance on the various options available to applicants.

It is an absolute requirement for admission that the applicant be working in, or have access to, a pensions environment.

### **Recognition of Prior Learning**

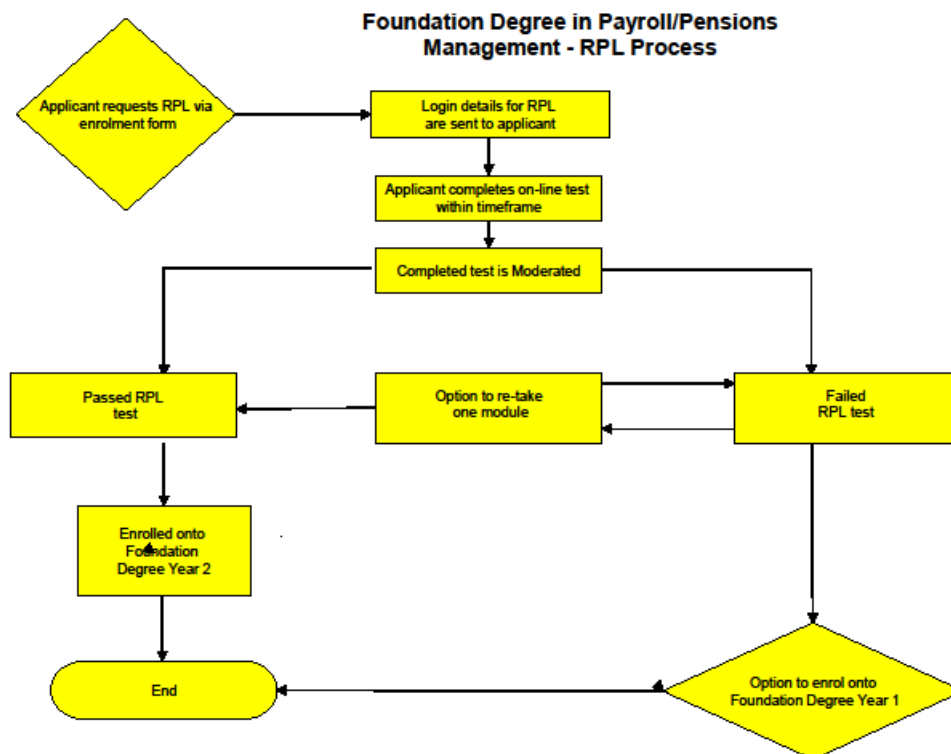
Details of acceptable level 3 qualifications, policy in relation to mature students or applicants with few or no formal qualifications can be found in the prospectus or on the University webpages. Information on eligibility for recognition of prior learning for the purposes of entry or advanced standing is also available from the University webpages or from the Registry Admissions Office (01905 855111). Further information on Recognition of Prior Learning can be found at <http://www.worcester.ac.uk/registryservices/941.htm>

Students with extensive professional experience in the Pensions sector may also be considered eligible for recognition of prior learning.

Applicants seeking RPL will normally be invited to undertake an on-line examination. This examination has been designed to test prior learning, however achieved, against the learning outcomes of the Year One modules. The standard of this examination will be equivalent to that of these five modules. The examination will be administered through a secure Moodle application. Responses will be marked numerically and a 'pass' mark of 70% set. Each completed examination will be signed off by CIPP management prior to the RPL decision being notified to the applicant. All RPL examinations will be recorded as an initial QA check and stored for future reference. All completed RPL applications will be subject to both internal and external moderation as with any other form of assessment.

Applicants who successfully pass the RPL examination will join the course at the commencement of Year Two.

The RPL process is outlined below.



### Admissions procedure

Entry to the programme shall require all applicants to apply to the CIPP using HOW application forms. These give a variety of information about current work experience, qualifications and motivation. These will be checked by the Associate Director of Pensions Qualifications who must be satisfied, based on the entry criteria outlined above, that the applicants are at the appropriate stage in their development to benefit from the programme and capable of undertaking a programme of academic work. This data is held at HOW, CIPP and the University of Worcester.

## **19. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning**

Course management is through a partnership between CIPP and HOW supported by the University's Link Tutor. Members from these institutions form the Curriculum and Delivery Steering Group which is the management body for the course. Methods for review and evaluation of teaching, learning, assessment the curriculum and outcome standards include:

- On line student feedback immediately following each taught session
- On line student feedback immediately following each tutorial
- On line year-end student feedback
- Annual Monitoring Report completed by course manager.
- Institutional review including external scrutiny.
- Quinquennial course review, including external scrutiny.
- Teaching observation (HOW model).
- External examiners reports.
- Employer forums hosted by the CIPP.
- Link tutor reports.
- Annual review and re-contracting of teaching staff.

Due to the nature of the programme, HOW employ an auditor responsible for reporting across the provision. The auditor's role involves lesson observation and the suitability of venues wherever they may be in the country and providing reports on findings to HOW and the CIPP. Each observation visit also contains the opportunity for student feedback directly to the auditor. Observation reports are considered by the Steering Committee.

Mechanisms for gaining student feedback on the quality of teaching and their learning experience.

- Module feedback questionnaires
- Tutorial feedback questionnaires
- Year end questionnaires
- Discussion with the visiting auditor
- On-line student forum
- Contact with personal tutor
- Tutorial support systems

The delivery and support systems have been developed over the past fifteen years by the CIPP and HOW and are, therefore, tried and trusted. HOW and CIPP jointly develop and provide a range of staff development activities designed to improve teaching and learning for CIPP staff. HOW staff attend similar University of Worcester sponsored events and acknowledge the role of the HEI in cascading good practice and research to the College. There is also an annual event for all course tutors which addresses significant change as a result of legislative changes etc. In addition all CIPP tutors are Members of the Institute and it is a requirement of membership that 30 hours of CPD be undertaken each year.

## **20. Regulation of assessment**

There are two intakes to the course per annum: Autumn and Spring. There are 2 Subject Assessment Boards (SABs); April and September, each of which is followed by a Board of Examiners (BoE) meeting. The terms of reference for these Boards is set out in the Taught Courses Regulatory Framework. The SAB and BoE is chaired by the Head of Worcester

Business School or nominee and results are prepared by the University for presentation to the Boards. A Registry Services officer supports the Board and prepares the minutes. The Head of Collaborative Services is an ex officio member of the BoE.

Module results are presented to the SAB for confirmation on a rolling basis, ie they are presented to the next scheduled Board following completion of moderation of assessment for the module concerned. Provisional results are normally released to students on the Friday of the week in which moderation occurs and students who have failed are issued with the details of reassessment items of coursework shortly thereafter.

Students are given a 3 week period in which to resubmit or, in the case of examinations, the next available re-sit opportunity. Results of reassessed modules are confirmed at the next scheduled Board, except in relation to the final modules in Year 3 which, if a student fails, are reassessed following the September Subject Assessment Board, and confirmed by Chair's action. This is in order to permit the students to graduate with their cohort. The September SAB will make a clear decision as to whether any outstanding reassessments for students scheduled to graduate can be confirmed by Chair's action and, where appropriate, specify the involvement of the External Examiners.

The arrangements for reassessment in the event of module failure are therefore different from those for most of the other University courses and the Taught Courses Regulatory Framework has required amendment for this course. The regulations that follow have been approved to apply to the FdA Pensions Administration and Management.

### **The course operates under the University's Taught Courses Regulatory Framework**

#### **Requirements to pass modules**

- Modules are assessed using a variety of assessment activities which are detailed in module specifications.
- The minimum pass mark is D- for each module or a pass for examinations for each module. .
- Students are required to submit all items of assessment in order to pass a module, and in some modules, a pass mark in each item of assessment may be required.
- Full details of the assessment requirements for a module, including the assessment criteria, are published in the module outline.

#### **Submission of assessment items**

- Students who submit course work late but within 5 days of the due date will have work marked, but the grade will be capped at D- unless an application for mitigating circumstances is accepted.
- Students who submit work later than 5 days but within 14 days of the due date will not have work marked unless they have submitted a valid claim of mitigating circumstances.
- For full details of submission regulations please see the Taught Courses Regulatory Framework.

#### **Retrieval of failure**

- Students are entitled to resit failed assessment items for any module that is awarded a fail grade.
- Reassessment items that are passed are capped at D- or 'pass' in the case of examinations.
- For all other modules, which are assessed by coursework, re-assessment will take place in the 3 week period immediately following each result or for modules assessed

by examination, the next available re-sit opportunity. The result dates are published annually in the Key Dates Schedule.

- These provisions supersede item 12.3 in the Taught Courses Regulatory Framework of the University of Worcester.
- If a student is unsuccessful in the reassessment, they have the right to retake the module (or, in some circumstances, take an alternative module); the module grade for a re-taken module is capped at D-.

### Requirements for Progression

- Students at Level 4 may be permitted to progress to Level 5 when they have passed at least 90 credits at Level 4.
- A student who fails 90 credits or more due to non-submission will be required to withdraw from the University.
- Students who pass less than 90 credits but have submitted all items of assessment will be required to retake modules.

Award	Requirement
Cert HE	In order to be eligible for the exit award of Certificate in Higher Education in the named subject/area of study, a student must have passed at least 120 credits in total including the mandatory modules for level 4 of the award as specified on the award map.
Foundation Degree FdA in Pensions Administration and Management	120 credits at Level 4 and 120 credits at Level 5 as specified on the award map.

These awards are not classified.

## 21. Indicators of quality and standards

Heart of Worcestershire College underwent a QAA / IQER Institutional Review of its HE provision in January 2012. In expressing confidence in the College's performance, the following aspects of good practice were recognised:

- the thorough and robust monitoring and action planning arrangements assure standards and the quality of learning experiences within the higher education provision of the College
- the provision of an integrated system of support addresses the needs of all higher education students
- the many opportunities provided by employers enable students to acquire and demonstrate work-related skills and enhance their employability
- there are multiple opportunities for students to provide feedback and the College has developed innovative ways to facilitate feedback for the benefit of all students (IQER, 2012)

The Validation Panel (July 2013) made the following commendations relating to the FdA in Pensions Administration and Management:

1. The system for delivery of the flexible distributed learning experience through Moodle is excellent and innovative enriching the students experience
2. The support mechanisms available for Moodle
3. The support mechanisms in evaluation and feedback for tutorials is robust

4. The fact material is centrally written ensures a consistent approach to all students, promotes standardised information and the script behind it ensuring a common base line for every student.
5. Well thought out structure of the course that suits the professional requirements for Pensions management and ensures appropriate development of critical skills and application of theory.
6. The shared collaborative approach between CIPP and HOW that has built on the good practice of payroll through the development of this programme.

## **22. Graduate destinations, progression and links with employers**

### **Graduate destinations**

The course has been designed for those already working in the pension sector wishing to develop their careers by enhancing their skills and knowledge in preparation to becoming pension supervisors and managers. The focus therefore is upon career development and there are ample success stories from current students and recent graduates to support this stance.

### **Progression to Linked Honours Degree/Top Up Degree**

Students who successfully complete the Foundation Degree in Pensions Administration and Management are able to progress their studies through a top up arrangement with the University of Derby where the BA (Hons) in Applied Business and Management (Pensions) has been designed to fully articulate with this Foundation Degree. Owing to the complementary design of the two programmes there are no transition arrangements and students who wish to progress should apply to the CIPP.

### **Links with employers**

Employer involvement is central to Foundation Degrees. The programme has been designed in direct consultation with employers and via extensive engagement with the CIPP representing key employer groups and organisational business functions in the UK.

The involvement of employers in the design of this programme has been significant, Employer involvement in the course continues at a steering level with employer representatives on the Board of the CIPP and regular employer forums hosted by the CIPP.

At the course level all of the CIPP tutors are practising pension experts, and are also active pension managers. This approach brings a very high level of currency and experience both to the course and to student learning.