Higher Education Field Academy

Report 2009 & 2010

Prepared by
Carenza Lewis MA ScD FSA
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1. INTRODUCTION

Between March 2009 and September 2010, a collaborative venture between the University of Cambridge and Aimhigher, funded by Aimhigher East Anglia, HEFCE and English Heritage resulted in the successful provision of 34 University of Cambridge Higher Education Field Academy (hereafter HEFA) summer schools in East Anglia by Access Cambridge Archaeology (hereafter ACA).

As in previous years, formal monitoring and anecdotal feedback at each stage have shown that HEFA summer schools are extremely successful in providing participants with an inspiring and useful learning experience that positively influenced their attitudes to Higher Education. This report provides figures for participation, impact and learners’ and teachers’ responses to HEFA via both formal and informal feedback, and some initial analysis.

Although this report covers 2009 and 2010, it should be noted that the statistics for earlier years (2005–2008) are very similar in all respects, indicating that the HEFA programme is very consistent in the way in which it delivers on its aims.
2. AIMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION FIELD ACADEMY (HEFA) SUMMER SCHOOLS

HEFA summer schools aim to raise educational aspirations and widen participation in Higher Education (HE) amongst target groups by providing a programme of high-quality, structured, educational activities for young people (1) from sectors currently under-represented in HE and/or (2) at risk of failing to fulfill their academic potential in years 9–12. HEFA summer schools aim to build confidence and motivation, provide chances to learn a range of new and transferable skills, inform participants about applying to university and the opportunities open to them at university and to raise educational aspirations, particularly regarding progression to university. In summary, the overall aims of HEFA summer schools are those of Aimhigher, namely to provide enjoyable, substantial, challenging, HE-led experiences which will:

- Reinforce a commitment to learning and progression to HE;
- Raise attainment and aspirations to enter HE;
- Build the skills and confidence necessary to progress to HE;
- Provide opportunities to experience aspects of HE student life;
- Provide information about progressing to HE.

In fulfilling these aims, HEFA summer schools are designed to:

- Raise the educational aspirations of participants by providing the opportunity to acquire, develop, refine and demonstrate new skills, experience and confidence.
- Increase learners’ understanding of the opportunities open to them at tertiary level and their knowledge of how to access these opportunities.
- Increase learners’ capacity to succeed in applying to and studying at university by providing activities which enable them to reinforce generic transferable skills in team-working, problem solving, communication, presentation and planning.
- Give learners an opportunity to meet and work with students from other schools/colleges.
- Give learners a chance to experience aspects of HE student life.
- Provide learning programmes which are challenging while still being achievable.
- Allow progression.
- Complement and extend the work of Aimhigher area partnerships.
In addition, in order to add value to the HEFA summer school experience over and above the Aimhigher/DfES requirements, HEFA summer schools are devised and structured specifically in order:

- To provide participants with the chance to complete, from start to finish, a piece of demanding independent original HE-level work in order to develop and apply their skills and demonstrate their capabilities. This work is of a type completely new to them, which involves the learning of new skills, employing a range of different learning methods, including cognitive, practical, personal and technical skills, and culminates in a formally-assessed written element which provides enduring and tangible evidence of achievement.

- To have real academic value and rigour, in order to allow participants to be proud of their achievements on the course and to develop confidence in their abilities to cope at tertiary levels.

- To ensure that HEFA activities are varied, well-organised and stimulating so that all learners will be able to find something to enjoy.

- To ensure that learners on HEFA summer schools should be able to achieve something of value for a wider constituency (such as academia, the local community, their test pit ‘host’) as well as for themselves, in order to see that they can make contributions that are valued by others.
3. HEFA COURSE STRUCTURE

In 2009–10, thirty of the University of Cambridge HEFA summer schools followed their now well-established three-day non-residential format. HEFAs are three-day courses, mostly aimed at learners in school years 9 and 10, which give them the chance to develop new learning and personal skills and build their enthusiasm and confidence for higher education as they run their own small-scale field project unearthing and interpreting new evidence as part of a research programme at the University of Cambridge.

On days 1 and 2, HEFA learners experience carrying out original HE-level research in a new outdoor environment with new people. Following the initial introductory and instruction session, learners are divided into mixed-school teams of three or four and work independently, digging 1m² test pits themselves, with support from school staff, student volunteers and the archaeological team assembled by ACA. They complete all elements of their project – measuring out, de-turfing, digging and sieving in spits, cleaning and recording finds, section drawing, sampling, backfilling and making good – for themselves, carefully following directions in the HEFA handbook over two days, with guidance provided by HEFA staff. In doing this they develop and refine skills in team working, meeting and working with new people, project planning and management, work-scheme implementation and task management, personal organization, time management, data observation and recording, analytical skills, data interpretation and verbal presentation and discussion.

**HEFA timetable Days 1 and 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>09.00</td>
<td>Arrival and registration at Field Academy base in village location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>09.15</td>
<td>Introduction to HEFA – course structure and learner aims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.15</td>
<td>Test pit digging – instructions and health and safety briefing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>Break and refreshments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.15</td>
<td>Learners are divided into mixed-school excavation teams and relocate to test pit sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.30</td>
<td>Begin test pit project – laying out, surveying in and deturfing test pit. Continue when ready to removing spoil in 10cm layers, sieving for finds, washing and recording finds and recording details of excavated layers, as detailed in HEFA handbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lunch around test pit (timing flexible).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.30</td>
<td>Prepare to finish for the day. Clean equipment. Return to base with equipment, finds and Record Booklet and check these in with HEFA organisers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>End of day – depart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>09.00</td>
<td>Arrival and registration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>09.00–09.15</td>
<td>Collect equipment and return to test pit site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>09.15</td>
<td>Continue test pit excavation and recording.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lunch (timing flexible).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.45</td>
<td>Return to base and check in equipment, finds and Record Booklet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>End of day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The third day of each HEFA summer school brings learners into a HEI, usually the University of Cambridge, in order to experience life at university. A varied day of activities is provided, when learners will collate and assess the results of all the test pits dug in the course of their HEFA, visit and dine in one of the university colleges, and find out more about applying to university.

**HEFA timetable Day 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>10.30</td>
<td>Arrival in Cambridge for registration and refreshments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>‘University from here’ workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.30</td>
<td>Divide into small groups and depart for tour and lunch in a Cambridge college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.30</td>
<td>Whole group session reconstructing ‘maps-through-time’ of village excavated on days 1 and 2 by compiling and mapping evidence from the HEFA test pits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.30</td>
<td>Presentation of awards to winning test pit teams and closing session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>End of course. Depart</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the three days of excavation and the university visit are completed, pupils are provided on departure with copies of the records they made for their test pit excavation, while maps, photographs and a report on the ceramic finds are promptly uploaded to the HEFA website to enable learners to produce a written report recording and analysing their excavation. Full written guidance is also provided in the HEFA ‘going-home’ packs and one-to-one advice is available from the HEFA team via e-mail.

Writing the report develops skills in report structuring and planning, expressing complex ideas clearly, making inferences about particular observations, making inferences about generalised observations, report presentation and writing quality.

Learner’s written assignments are submitted to ACA via their schools. These reports are copied, assessed by ACA and the originals returned to them with comments on this, and on their fieldwork performance, accompanied by a certificate to mark their achievement in completing the course. Performance reports returned to participants via their schools aim to provide a rigorous, thorough and valid assessment of participants’ performance across the full range of practical, cognitive, personal and writing skills which HEFA summer schools aim to develop. Copies are retained in case learners ask for references in the future and also for possible future research purposes.

Four of the HEFA summer schools held in 2009–10 followed a new residential format. Each residential HEFA lasts for four or five days. Day-time activities are similar to those on non-residential HEFAs, but time spent digging, analysing results and writing up is interspersed with opportunities to explore the locality while staying away from home, either camping or (mostly) in university accommodation, giving learners an additional and deeper experience of life in higher education than non-residential courses can provide.
4. HEFA 2009 & 2010 PROVISION AND RECRUITMENT

Scale of HEFA provision in 2009 & 2010

1,029 learners attended a total of 34 HEFA summer schools between March 2009 and September 2010. In total, two non-residential HEFAs were held in Bedfordshire, six in Cambridgeshire, six in Essex, two in Hertfordshire, ten in Norfolk and four in Suffolk. One residential HEFA was held in the Peak District for students from the Cambridgeshire region and the Peak District, and three in Cambridge for students from Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, London and Birmingham.

HEFA recruitment in 2009 & 2010

HEFA in 2009 and 2010 provided places funded by Aimhigher and HEFCE for learners in the six East Anglian counties and a smaller number from other parts of England, funded by HEFCE and the colleges of the University of Cambridge.

Recruitment to HEFA summer schools in 2009 and 2010 overall was generally very good with 83% of all places filled. In nearly all cases, all available places were filled in advance of course commencement and unfilled places were due to last-minute withdrawals which took place so late in the recruitment process that it was not possible for places to be filled by reserve candidates. In some cases, school groups of 10 or more pupils pulled out with only a few days notice, usually as a result of a failure to identify an exam timetable clash. This is regrettable, as had more notice been given and/or more commitment/effective organisation shown by schools/learners, all places could have been filled.

Figure 1: HEFA 2009–2010 attendance by county.
Recruitment to HEFA in 2009 and 2010 was also successful in achieving an almost exactly equal balance of male and female pupils attending (516 boys and 513 girls). It is pattern notable in every year since its inception 2005 that HEFA courses have consistently achieved an almost exact balance of male and female participants. This is particularly gratifying in view of the fact that overall, 2/3 of those who get involved in Aimhigher activities are girls. The majority of all learners attending HEFA in 2009 and 2010 were from Aimhigher cohorts and/or had no parental/family history of entry to HE.

![HEFA 2009 & 2010 participants by gender](image)

In all, the ACA HEFA programme in 2009 and 2010 provided a total of more than 3,400 face-to-face aspiration-raising days for young people in the region. These days were supplemented and embedded by extended learning taking place in schools and at home for those learners who completed written assignments. HEFA in 2009 and 2010 also provided more than 600 higher education contact days for school staff.
5. HEFA 2009 & 2010 MONITORING AND FEEDBACK

Monitoring and data collection
Monitoring and feedback systems developed and refined over the course of HEFA 2005–8 were used to monitor the delivery and impact of HEFA in East Anglia in 2009 and 2010. These include:

- Formal ‘before and after’ feedback forms completed by learners at the end of the third day in Cambridge,
- Comments by learners in their submitted written assignments, and
- Report forms on each learner completed by supervisors on each test pit.

Completed feedback forms were received from more than 90% of the learners who attended HEFA courses in 2009 and 2010. In 2010 a new element was added to the feedback forms completed by HEFA participants to identify the extent to which they felt they had achieved a number of the main specific learning aims of the HEFA programme. This data is reported on in section 8, for 2010 only.

All the feedback shows that there is a very high level of participant satisfaction with the Higher Education Field Academy, amongst learners and teachers alike. This is strongly reflected in learners’ responses, not just in their comments about the courses, but also in the extent to which their confidence in their own abilities is shown to have improved and their attitudes to their future progression to higher education have become more positive. It is also clearly evident in the comments of the teachers and school staff who accompanied the learners, supervised and observed their fieldwork activity for two days, and witnessed their responses during all parts of the HEFA and afterwards, including on and after their return to school.
6. LEARNERS’ FORMAL ASSESSMENTS OF HEFA

Learners’ attitudes to their time on HEFA have been analysed from the responses of 929 HEFA participants who completed ‘before and after’ feedback forms after the end of Day 3. These can be analysed and made available broken down by HEFA course, school and other criteria if required.¹

The first question asked of students on the feedback form relates to their overall enjoyment of their HEFA summer schools (figure 3). As a central aim of HEFA is to provide participants with a positive and enjoyable experience of life and learning in Higher Education, it is key to its success that participants enjoy their time on HEFA. It is clear from participants’ responses that HEFA is indeed providing learners with a very enjoyable experience, a finding which is amply supported by anecdotal comments received from students and teachers (see section 9).

Figure 3: HEFA 2009–2010 participant satisfaction ratings.

¹ In reading the figures presented and analysed in this report, it should be noted that not all students attending HEFAs completed feedback forms, not all of those who did complete them filled in all sections, and in some questions students ticked more than one box. For all these reasons, total numbers of responses do not always add up to the same figure.
The next question aims to identify the extent to which participants’ expectations of HEFA were met (figure 4). High numbers reporting that they enjoyed HEFA more, or much more, than they expected to indicates that in the vast majority of cases (84%), participants’ expectations were exceeded, in many cases considerably so (36%). This is important, as if participants’ expectations of the extent to which they will enjoy the demands of the HEFA course are exceeded, then their attitudes to learning at tertiary level generally are likely also to be positively impacted.

![Figure 4: HEFA 2009–2010 participant expectations.](image)

Many respondents to the question asking which aspects of their HEFA course they had most enjoyed (figure 5) ticked more than one box, suggesting they felt they had gained from the HEFA experience in many ways. The highest number of positive responses was for ‘learning how to do something new’ (674 responses) closely followed by ‘meeting and working with new people’ (667 responses) and ‘finding things’ (666 responses) and then ‘working in a team’ (644 responses). These responses demonstrate the wide range of ways in which learners on HEFA feel they benefitted from the opportunities the course offered in 2009 and 2010, and also shows that they are taking the work they are doing seriously. It is particularly interesting to note that ‘learning something new’ scores marginally more highly than the superficially more attractive ‘finding things’. Nearly half of all respondents appreciated knowing that they were contributing to valuable university research, suggesting that they are responding well to the responsibility and challenge of carrying out work at HE level which is of value to others.

![Figure 5: HEFA 2009–2010 participant enjoyment by activity.](image)
HEFA participants are asked about the impact the summer school has on their attitudes to staying on in full-time education for school years 12 and 13. Most pupils attending HEFA are already intending to stay in education post-16, indeed, many are recruited on these grounds, so the rise in these numbers are never going to be very high, but it is noteworthy that HEFA in East Anglia in 2009 and 2010 does seem to have been very effective in firming up the 16–18 educational intentions amongst many of those who were previously uncertain. Feedback indicates that HEFA succeeds in this aim, with 80% of all respondents reporting that after completing HEFA they felt more positive about staying on in education after the end of compulsory schooling. This is important, as completing their education to year 13 is the easiest and most direct route for them to progress to university.

Widening participation in Higher Education amongst under-represented groups is the central aim of the HEFA summer school programme funded by Aimhigher and HEFCE, and feedback on the impact HEFA involvement has had on participants’ attitudes to, knowledge of and aspirations regarding university is collected in a number of questions and evaluated in order to ensure that the HEFA programme consistently achieves the best possible results for its participants in this respect.

Feedback clearly indicates that HEFA participation has a positive impact on participants’ attitudes to university (figure 7a & 7b): 84% agree or strongly agree that they feel more positive about going to university after completing their HEFA summer school, and 86% agree or strongly agree that they know more about university after their HEFA course than they did before. In many cases these are respondents who may already have been considering university but feel more, or much more, positive about the idea having completed HEFA.
Intending to apply to university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number before HEFA</th>
<th>Number after HEFA</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>% by which ‘after’ responses are higher/lower than ‘before’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>–131</td>
<td>–47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>–23</td>
<td>–45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8a: Pre- and post-HEFA responses to question ‘Are you intending to apply to University?’.

Considering applying to Cambridge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number before HEFA</th>
<th>Number after HEFA</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>% by which ‘after’ responses are higher/lower than ‘before’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>–94</td>
<td>–19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>–94</td>
<td>–50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8b: Pre- and post-HEFA responses to question ‘Are you considering applying to Cambridge.

The positive impact that HEFA has on participants’ attitudes to university is also reflected in the ‘before and after’ responses in HEFA questionnaires, which sought to identify the extent to which participants changed their minds about going to university as consequence of their HEFA experience (figure 8a). Participants were asked about their intentions regarding their future education before beginning and after completing their HEFA summer school, and the responses compared. The increase in the number of positive responses and, as a corollary, the reduction in the number of negative responses is significantly high. The number intending to apply to university before starting their HEFA summer school (586) rises by 25% (to 732) by the time it is completed. Similarly, the number who definitely rejected considering university is almost halved over the course of the HEFA summer school. Many of those said they would be considering applying to university in the future by the end of their HEFA experience had previously been unsure whether
or not to go to university, changing their minds from ‘maybe’ to ‘yes’ by the end of the summer school. It is notable that by the end of the HEFA programme in 2009 and 2008, 80% of HEFA participants were definitely intending to go apply to university, while only 3% (28 out of 910) of participants were definitely still disinclined to apply to university.

HEFA is also aimed at learners who might already be considering university but might not consider an appropriately wide range of options for this, or may be aiming inappropriately low in their choice of university. Feedback shows that HEFA also has a very positive impact on educational aspirations at this higher end of the HE spectrum, reflected in attitudes to applying to the University of Cambridge (figure 8b). The number stating that they would consider applying to the University of Cambridge is nearly doubled, rising overall from 225 saying they would consider applying to Cambridge before they attended HEFA to 405 after. At least 50% of all those students answering ‘no’ to this question before the academy had changed their minds to either ‘yes’ or ‘maybe’ by the end. Similarly, the number of those definitely not considering applying to Cambridge is halved. This all represents a significant increase in the number of those feeling sufficiently confident and inspired to consider aiming very high within the HE spectrum by applying to the University of Cambridge, evidence of a quite profound change in their perceptions of the opportunities potentially open to them for their future. This is particularly significant, given that one of the concerns expressed about the recent rise in numbers attending Higher Education from under-represented sectors, including those from poorer families and/or areas, has been that they are tending not to progress to Russell Group and Oxbridge Universities. HEFA seems to be successful in encouraging young people to aim high in their choice of university.

Taken together, the responses to questions about university attitudes and aspirations clearly indicate that HEFA is having a significant impact in both (i) positively changing or firming-up intentions regarding progression to Higher Education amongst participants who were initially negative or uncertain about this, and (ii) in raising aspirations regarding the level at which application to HE should be aimed among those who previously would not have considered a university like Cambridge.
8. LEARNER ATTAINMENT ON HEFA

Learner fieldwork during HEFA

Learners on HEFA are divided into mixed-school teams of three or four for the first two days of the summer school. They spend most of these two days working independently in their team with an adult supervisor, who may be a member of school staff from their own or another school, or a student volunteer from a local HE institution (student volunteers have been recruited from University of Cambridge, University of East Anglia, University of Bedford, University Campus Suffolk, Peterborough Regional College and University of Hertford). Supervisors mentor the individuals in their team for the duration of the HEFA, and also assess their performance by completing standardised report forms for each learner. Learner performance is graded 1–5 in three main areas: (1) effort/interest, (2) behaviour/attitude/initiative and (3) achievement/standard of work and skills developed/applied. Assessments are made at four regular intervals over the two days. The results of assessments can be combined and converted to an overall percentage. After each HEFA summer school is completed, the grades awarded are used to provide learners with a written report showing their performance in each of these areas over the two days, and also with individual free-text comments from their supervisor.

A summary of the marks given by supervisors to 745 learners in 2009 and 2010 is provided below (figure 9) (NB the remainder of the 1,029 learners who attended in those years were assessed using a new assessment framework being piloted in 2010 and are not included here). The 745 assessments show a very high level of attainment, with the great majority of learners (83%) gaining overall marks above 80%, and 66% gaining marks over 90%. Although this seems high, it does reflect observations by staff (from schools and the ACA team), who consistently note the high level of enthusiasm and commitment learners apply to the HEFA tasks. This is also evident in anecdotal comments from learners, some of which are included in section 9 (Participant views of HEFA, below). It is notable that there is very little gender-based variation in performance: 83% of boys and 84% of girls were graded 80% and above. Within this top range, however, there is some gender distinction evident: slightly more boys than girls are graded at the highest level (90% and above) (69% of boys compared to 63% of girls). This is counter-balanced by slightly larger proportions of girls graded between 80 and 90% (21% of girls compared to 14% of boys).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2009 &amp; 2010</th>
<th>Male (no.)</th>
<th>% of total male</th>
<th>Female (no.)</th>
<th>% of total female</th>
<th>Total (no.)</th>
<th>% total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90–100% (A*)</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80–89% (A)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>70–79% (B)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>60–69% (C)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>59% and below (D&amp;E)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>366</td>
<td></td>
<td>379</td>
<td></td>
<td>745</td>
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</table>

Figure 9: HEFA 2009 & 2010 fieldwork grades (combined for effort, attitude and standard of work) assignment marks.
This data indicates that the outdoor academic research programme that HEFA summer schools provide represents a very effective model for enabling boys and girls alike to enjoy applying and stretching their skills. It is particularly notable that within this programme, boys are able to excel without eclipsing the performance of girls.

Skills development by learners during HEFA

HEFA aims to provide participants with the opportunity to develop transferable cognitive and personal skills which will enhance their ability to learn and raise the standard of their work, thus supporting them in succeeding in the future in gaining a place at the best university for them. Thus, attending a HEFA course aims to ensure that aspirations are not only raised, but are also more likely to be fulfilled. To assess the extent to which HEFA succeeds in this aim, participants in 2010 were asked to comment on the extent to which they felt HEFA had helped them develop skills in six main areas: verbal discussion of ideas; working to set standards; creative thinking; reflective learning; working with persistence; and team working. For each of these, participants were asked to indicate whether the time they had spent on HEFA had ‘helped a lot’, ‘helped quite a lot’, ‘not made any difference’, ‘hindered’ or ‘hindered a lot’. Asking participants to answer these questions fulfils two functions: it firstly provides valuable data indicating the extent to which HEFA is succeeding in its aims, and secondly encourages participants to identify and think about the skills they have learned. Recognising the new skills they have developed in this way raises participants’ confidence in being able to deploy these effectively in their learning in the future, thus contributing to raising both aspiration and achievement in the future.
The first skill set HEFA aims to enable students to develop is that of being able to discuss their own and other people’s ideas and talk about what they’ve done and discovered to different people. 76% of respondents (370 out of 486) reported that their experiences on HEFA had helped them in developing these skills (figure 10).

![Figure 10: Impact of HEFA in 2010 on development of participants’ skills in discussing and communicating ideas and information.](image)

The second skill set encompasses those relating to knowing how to complete an investigation which seeks to find new data by correctly following set procedures and appreciate the value of working to set standards. 80% of respondents (388 out of 485) reported that their experiences on HEFA had helped them in developing these skills (figure 11).

![Figure 11: Impact of HEFA in 2010 on development of participants’ skills in completing an investigation looking for new data by following set procedures and working to set standards.](image)
The third skill set is that of creative thinking – this is used during HEFA in many ways, including using imagination intelligently to come up with ideas to explain findings and to solve problems. 78% of respondents (378 out of 485) reported that their experiences on HEFA had helped them in developing these skills (figure 12).

![Figure 12: Impact of HEFA in 2010 on development of participants’ skills in using creative thinking intelligently to explain observations and solve problems.](image)

The next set of skills HEFA expect participants to develop are reflective learning skills, i.e. the ability to assess how well tasks have been carried out (both by themselves and by others in their team) and to identify and make necessary changes. 76% respondents (368 out of 486) reported that their experiences on HEFA had helped them in developing these skills (figure 13).

![Figure 13: Impact of HEFA in 2010 on participants’ reflective learning skills (assessing how well participants and others approach set tasks and identifying necessary changes).](image)
The fifth skill set HEFA aims to develop revolves around the ability to work persistently hard and to maintain a high standard of work and positive attitude to tasks throughout. 83% (403 out of 485 respondents) reported that their experiences on HEFA had helped them in developing these skills (figure 14).

![Figure 14: Impact of HEFA in 2010 on participants’ skills in working persistently and to a high standard over a sustained period of time.](image)

The final skill set which participants are specifically asked about at the end of their HEFA summer school concern those involved in being an effective team worker, including focusing on completing their own tasks correctly and to time and helping ensure that others have the help they needed. 87% (420 out of 485 respondents) reported that their experiences on HEFA had helped them in developing these skills (figure 15).

![Figure 15: Impact of HEFA in 2010 on participants’ team-working skills.](image)
Overall, feedback on skill development in 2010 indicates that HEFA is very successful both in providing opportunities for participants to acquire and develop a wide range of key transferable skills for life and learning, and also in ensuring that participants recognise that they themselves have developed these skills. On average, 80% of respondents reported that HEFA had helped them develop the new skills they were asked about. It is also notable that HEFA is shown to be able to impact at a consistently high level on participants’ skills across the full, very wide, range of skills on which feedback focuses (figure 16): in no area of skills did less than 76% of participants report a positive impact, and this percentage (of respondents reporting a positive impact) varied by only 12% between different skill sets, from 76% (reflective learning) to 87% (team working).

Post-HEFA written assignment (extension learning)

319 written assignments were submitted by HEFA participants in 2009 and 2010 and have been assessed and marked. As the written extension is optional and has to be carried out by learners in their own time or in extra-curricular school sessions, a submission rate of nearly one in three indicates a significant level of commitment by learners and shows how highly the HEFA learning opportunity is rated by learners and schools/school staff. Rates of submission of completed written assignments varied considerably from school to school, from 100% to 0%. Marks were awarded as percentages according to standard criteria (figure 17), which allows them to be compared with GSCE/‘A’ Level grade boundaries). Marks for the HEFA assignments were generally good, ranging from 53–98% and averaging 79%. Overall, around a third of submitted assignments gained marks in the top (80% and above
range) (i.e. the equivalent of A/A*), a third in the 70–79% (B) range, and a third in the 60–69% (C) range. Within this, however, there are significant differences in the patterning of marks when broken down by gender. Overall, a significantly greater number of girls than boys submitted written assignments (180 from girls compared with 139 from boys). Girls were significantly more likely to produce very a good report with a mark in the range 80% and over (A/A* equivalent): 44% of assignments completed by girls fall into this grade band, compared to 19% of assignments completed by boys. The percentages gaining middle-range marks (70–79%, equivalent grade B) were the same for both genders, but a considerably larger proportion of boys than girls gained marks in the 60–69% range. Numbers gaining a mark below 60% were below 10% for both genders, but a much larger percentage of boys (9%) fell into this range than girls (1%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2009 &amp; 2010</th>
<th>Boys (no.)</th>
<th>% of total boys</th>
<th>Girls (no.)</th>
<th>% of total girls</th>
<th>Total no.</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80% and above (A/A*)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70–79% (B)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60–69% (C)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59% and below (D–E)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
<td>319</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 17: HEFA 2009 & 2010 written assignment marks.*

Both the submission rates and the range of marks indicate that the time, effort and attention given to preparation of the assignments clearly varies considerably between individuals and also from school to school, which seems in part to reflect the support the school has been willing or able to offer learners for this stage of the academy. Overall, however, the standard is very high, showing that learners are taking a pride in their work and that they have absorbed what they have learned during the two fieldwork days. Those pupils who completed the assignment have the benefit of a substantive, assessed piece of work which can be used for future reference, for inclusion in their school portfolio and as a permanent memento of their HEFA experience.
9. PARTICIPANT VIEWS OF HEFA

Comments by learners

One of the characteristics of young people attending HEFA which is regularly commented on by all present during HEFA courses is the great enthusiasm that the experience generates amongst participating pupils (and school staff). This is not easy to document via the formal feedback form, so some of the written comments from learners attending HEFAs in East Anglia in 2009 and 2010 are included below, selected to give a flavour of the range and tone. Comments are all taken from written statements, either on test pit record booklets, feedback forms, written assignments, or in e-mails to HEFA project staff. Original punctuation is included. Most of these comments are unsolicited, and all are supplied as free text with no prompting questions beyond (in some cases) the question ‘what did you enjoy about the Field Academy?’ The comments provide a vivid flavour of learners’ attitudes to their time on HEFA. Respondents are identified here simply by their initials and school, but can be sourced to individuals via HEFA records if required.

‘This experience for me was one in a million.’ (HC, Hessett 2009)

‘I feel the skills and experiences I had will be useful throughout the rest of my life.’ (DJ, Cottenham 2009)

‘All in all, this was one of the best things I’ve ever done.’ (DH, Binham 2009)

‘The archaeological dig was very good and I learned a lot from it. As well as keeping me physically fit, it tested my brain. The people I worked with were very nice and the day at the university helped me gain a fantastic insight into what life is like at uni. Thank you!’ (SR, West Mersea 2009)

‘It helped me to develop more of an idea about what university life would be like, and exactly what is on offer more particularly at Cambridge University. Overall, I found it interesting, exciting and I thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience!’ (ED, Castor 2009)

‘I did like the work as it was outside and a hands-on experience.’ (YJ, Coddenham 2009)

‘The experience has given me the confidence to integrate with my peers in different situations.’ (LC, Coddenham 2009)

‘I feel that the dig was very interesting because it was good to learn about the history of a settlement and feel like I am actually helping to discover new things and learn how archaeology works. I also feel I’ve gained more confidence by working with other people I’ve never met and teamwork and leadership skills.’ (KC, Carleton Rode 2009)
‘I really enjoyed our 3-day trip and it has opened my eyes to different jobs out there. At first I thought I would hate it, but surprisingly, I enjoyed it. It was a good challenge and I enjoyed meeting new people. It has given me new skills I will never forget and helped me to make some new good friends.’ (HS, Binham 2009)

‘My aim was to have a good time, meet new people, and learn new skills and mainly to find good pottery, and I succeeded in everything. It has been a great experience for me, and if I ever had the chance to do it again, I’d take it, guaranteed.’ (TL, Terrington St Clement 2009)

‘I do recommend other students to go on this trip as it’s an excellent chance.’ (HS, Binham 2009)

‘I have learnt so much from this project and had such a good time. Overall, it has been an amazing project and I’m so happy that I was able to attend.’ (AC, Sharnbrook 2009)

‘Although the digging was hard work, it was great to be able to work in a team of people I had never met before. I have learnt how to communicate with people I may not necessarily normally meet in a work-like environment. My confidence has improved and I have learnt to manage my time more effectively.’ (RF, Pirton 2009)

‘(What I enjoyed most was) learning about the history of Cambridge University and the opportunities which we could have in the future and how to get there.’ (IW, West Mersea 2010)

‘I feel it was a new and good experience for anyone to see not only history and archaeology but also for Uni life.’ (WB, West Mersea 2010)

‘It’s a brilliant chance for everyone!’ (JM, Writtle 2010)

‘I enjoyed the whole experience and learning new things.’ (JW, Little Hallingbury 2010)

‘It was good working with professionals and helping out their investigations.’ (BS, Little Hallingbury 2010)

‘I really enjoyed being told about our finds and learning what the results we came up with meant. It was a really great opportunity and I am grateful to have had the chance to participate in it!’ (KH, Little Hallingbury 2010)

‘I enjoyed learning about the history of Little Hallingbury and seeing how all our research came together and showed what it looked like back in time. It was a very interesting experience and a good way to meet a couple (of) new friends.’ (GC, Little Hallingbury 2010)

‘Thanks for the wicked experience.’ (MT, Little Hallingbury 2010)
'I enjoyed knowing that we were making important archaeological discoveries. I really enjoyed working with new people.' (KB, Cottenham 2010)

'(What I enjoyed most was) doing something different that could influence my career choice when I am older. I think it is a really good experience.' (EW, Cottenham 2010)

'I would love to do a similar experience again.' (AL, Chediston 2010)

'I really liked meeting new people and working together. I thought it was really fun.' (HT, Chediston 2010)

'(What I enjoyed most was) the whole experience in general! It was a very valuable experience! I loved it!' (SE, Chediston 2010)

'It's given me inspiration to go to University. Thanks!' (SN, Chediston 2010)

'Brilliant. Want to do it again.' (HA, Chediston 2010)

'I enjoyed learning about our finds and what time period they came from. I also enjoyed learning more about myself as a person and the people I worked with.' (RH, Chediston 2010)

'LOVED IT ALL!!! It was the greatest experience of my life.' (CD-K, Chediston 2010)

'I enjoyed being treated and talked to like an adult. I thought the teamwork aspect was particularly good.' (GN, Chediston 2010)

'Just the whole experience was fantastic.' (HD, Coddenham 2010)

'(What I enjoyed most was) visiting the University and knowing that I have found things from different ages and that they were important.' (GG, Coddenham 2010)

'AWESOME!' (JM, Coddenham 2010)

'I enjoyed bonding with people from other schools, also getting an inside look at Uni.' (HL, Carleton Rode 2010)
‘(What I enjoyed most was) meeting new people and having fun while learning!’ (BD, Sharnbrook 2010)

‘A great time to meet new people from different schools.’ (RC, Sharnbrook 2010)

‘(What I enjoyed most was) the fact it was something new in a new place, different from our normal surroundings.’ (DA, Pirton 2010)

‘I loved looking around Cambridge University. I feel the skills that I’ve learnt over the last few days will be really useful in later life. I have had an absolutely fantastic time! It was brilliant fun and I feel like I’ve learned so much. I would recommend this to anyone!’ (GM, Pirton 2010)

‘The supervisors were really friendly and helpful.’ (CN, Pirton 2010)

‘I have just loved this experience and would love to have the chance to do it again.’ (DB, Binham 2010)

‘It was very good, I really want to do it again.’ (MR, Binham 2010)

‘(What I enjoyed most was) having to meet and socialise with members of the public.’ (JK, Binham 2010)

‘Thank you so much for the opportunity of working with the people at HEFA. It has been amazing and an experience that I will never forget.’ (LG, Thorney 2010)

‘It was a highly enjoyable experience discovering things centimetres under my feet. It opened my eyes discovering things that have not been touched in hundreds of years. Thanks.’ (LW, Thorney 2010)

‘Thank you so much for this experience, I had a lot of fun and it was great to actually work in our own test pit. Thanks again ☺️ xxxx’ (ES, Thorney 2010)

‘The staff were awesome and great. Thank you for having me. It was a wonderful experience ☺️’ (HI, Castor 2010)

‘HEFA has given me a great experience and helped me to learn more about University.’ (ES, Castor 2010)

A number of themes recur repeatedly in the above comments. Particularly notable are the very high levels of overall enthusiasm and enjoyment, sentiments conveyed vividly in participants’ own words such as ‘one in a million’, ‘one of best things ever’, ‘a brilliant chance for everyone’, ‘LOVED IT ALL!!!’ and ‘AWESOME!’ Again and again, participants volunteer their opinions that they enjoyed finding out more about university, meeting new people, were impressed by the friendliness of course staff, enjoyed working with experts, enjoyed doing something difficult and/or challenging, loved the excitement of discovery, enjoyed being in new places and enjoyed doing something that they knew was important. A frequent comment is that participants would love to repeat their HEFA experience and would enthusiastically recommend HEFA to others.
Comments by school staff

A high ratio of school staff to students is usually characteristic of HEFA courses. This helps schools embed the experience and the sense of connection with the host university (and thus the world of Higher Education) within the school after the HEFA ends, and also allows staff a chance themselves to develop new skills, new interests and often to see the pupils they teach in a new light. Comments from school staff who have attended HEFA, which are received in written form either on reports or by e-mail, are therefore particularly useful as they are based on first-hand experience of working with the pupils on HEFA, and also of seeing them in the days, weeks and months and even years afterwards. A few examples of written comments from staff attending HEFAs in East Anglia in 2009 and 2010 are included below. As in the section above, comments are identified here simply by their initials and school, but can be sourced to individuals via HEFA records if required.

‘A brilliant day for them – and me, thank you!’ (KK, Acle 2009)

‘A really enjoyable two days’ (BH, Carleton Rode 2009)

‘Fantastic – a great opportunity for our students’ (SW, Carleton Rode 2009)

‘This is a really excellent course. My team worked really hard throughout both days, and despite only being a team of three, got down to 80cms! It is wonderful to be able to talk to the professionals and yet let the students manage the whole project themselves’ (PT, Coddenham 2009)

‘Having attended several previous courses, I can confirm that HEFA has a very positive influence both in terms of generating enthusiasm for the discipline of archaeology and a practical engagement with the past, and ambitions for higher education’ (CT, Coddenham 2009)

‘This experience promoted a good team atmosphere with girls and boys from different schools mixing easily and learning from each other’ (MW, Little Hallingbury 2009)

‘An amazing experience for the students, it was very thought-provoking. The students felt that they had come away with a lot more information and ideas about higher education. Let’s do it again!!’ (TL, Girton 2009)

‘I enjoyed their company and was pleased to meet other students from other schools... A very useful experience which showed how determined and helpful students can be.’(JM, Binham 2010)

‘A “school project” that wasn’t a school project... I enjoyed it immensely.’ (DM, Binham 2010)

‘The opportunity to find out about a subject that they do not study at school to broaden their view of education.’ (GS, Binham 2010)

‘The opportunity to do research and find evidence that contributes towards a larger scheme and an ongoing project.’ (Binham 2010)
‘They loved the whole experience… Excellent for all students.’ (GG, Acle 2010)

‘I felt they really enjoyed it – getting mucky and doing actual research… It was nice to see the students in a different light as they had to adapt to change which was fantastic and felt they did really well.’ RG (Thorney 2010)

‘An amazing experience. On the Thursday the school was doing a rewards trip to Thorpe Park. A couple of students were thinking about doing the reward trip instead but after Day One decided they’d rather complete the HEFA course.’ (JF, Thorney 2010)

‘(They were) treated like young adults.’ IN

‘(The students enjoyed) meeting Cambridge ex-undergraduates and talking about College life (as well as) meeting archaeologists who worked in the field… (The HEFA experience) taught them about perseverance and the importance of accurate reporting.’ (SS, Thorney 2010)

‘Excellent for all students’ and ‘let’s do it again’ are a common theme of staff comments. Recurring sentiments evident in comments from school staff, in 2009 and 2010 as in previous years, are the enjoyment staff found in taking part and working with learners, how much they felt that learners themselves had enjoyed and benefited from HEFA.
10. LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS AND TRACKING OF HEFA IMPACT

During 2009 and 2010, students who attended HEFA in 2008 and 2009 and moved beyond compulsory education age were tracked in order to assess the choices they have made regarding their continuing education. To date it has been possible to elicit responses from c. 350 former HEFA participants.

![Figure 18: HEFA participant educational destinations 1.5 years post-HEFA.](image)

Schools attended by pupils participating in HEFA in 2008 and 2009 were contacted in order to track pupils’ post-16 destination and current educational plans, with individual named forms sent to each school for each pupil. Responses were received regarding the destination of approximately 1/3 of participants. In many cases, it was not possible for schools to obtain or to pass on information regarding students who were no longer studying in the same school from which they had attended HEFA. The limited size of this response makes statistical analysis of problematical: it is recognised that students who have left full-time education may be less likely to be contactable, and it is accepted the 1% figure for these categories may not accurately represent the reality of all former HEFA students. That said, returns were also very low from schools in counties where post-16 education is primarily delivered via sixth-form and FE colleges rather than secondary schools, where pupils do continue their education but cannot be tracked from year 11 to year 12. Anecdotal reports from staff at all schools indicate that high numbers of former HEFA pupils do continue to sixth-form learning, mostly to ‘A’ levels in preparation for university application. Of those students for whom completed longitudinal tracking forms have been received, it is notable that the percentage of former HEFA pupils who have ultimately committed themselves to study for ‘A’ levels (88%) is higher to that indicated in post-HEFA feedback from 2009 and 2010 (83%), and very close indeed to that given for numbers intending to stay in education post-16 (89%), suggesting that the actual choices of HEFA students at the end of year 11 may well be fairly accurately predicted by the statements given in post-HEFA feedback.
Learners who previously attended HEFA were also invited to indicate what their post-18 educational aspirations were, in order to find out what, if any, subject they were intending to study. The range of responses was very wide, and included: Agriculture, Anthropology, Archaeology, Architecture, Art, Astrophysics, Biology, Civil Engineering, Classics, Computer Animation, Computing Science, Criminology, Economics, Forensic Science, Engineering, English, English Literature, Environmental Science, French, Food Technology, Geography, Geology, Graphic Design, History, Italian, Journalism, Law, Marine Biology, Mathematics, Medicine, Meteorology, Midwifery, Music Journalism, Music Production, Nursing, Palaeobiology, Pathology, P.E., Philosophy and Ethics, Politics, Physics, Psychology, Science, Social Work, Sport, Sports Psychology, Teaching, Textiles, Veterinary Science and Zoology. The subject the largest number of students were interested in studying was Medicine.

Longitudinal tracking of HEFA participants also provides an opportunity to assess the longer-term impact that former participants felt that HEFA had had on them, with the benefit of 18 months hindsight. A selection of their comments are as follows:

‘It was an interesting experience that gave me new skills and improved my teamwork.’ (DB, studying ‘A’ levels in Biology, Business Studies, Maths and Physics)

‘A thoroughly enjoyable trip and a useful life experience’. (PM, studying ‘A’ levels in Maths, Further Maths, and Geography)

‘It was extremely fun and I would recommend it to anyone. Please let me know if there are any more going on.’ (CT, studying ‘A’ Levels in Art, Business & Economics, German, Maths and Physics)

‘Interesting and organised. Cambridge visit proved useful.’ (AM studying ‘A’ Levels in Chemistry, Maths, Music, Technology and Physics)

‘It was fun and not boring (like on tv!). Fascinating how little bits of pottery can be so old and tell you so much. Once the assignment was completed I felt a real sense of achievement.’ (TR, starting a vocational qualification in Engineering)

‘It was fantastic. A good experience and would really love to do it again.’ (AM, studying for ‘A’ levels)

‘Everything was well organised. Meeting students at Cambridge and them taking us around meant I saw that studying at Uni could be fun – not all lectures – and this took a weight off.’ (FD, studying for a vocational qualification in Animal Management)

‘Just thought it was brilliant. Wish I could do it again.’ (SC, studying ‘A’ levels in Human Biology, Resistant Materials, Psychology and Sports Studies)
‘It was a good experience and I learned a lot of new things.’ (LC-A, studying ‘A’ Levels in Art, Biology, Critical Thinking, Economics and History)

‘I absolutely loved the trip and thought the trip to the university was really fun and taught me so much.’ (GK, studying ‘A’ Levels in Art, English, Performing Arts and Theatre Studies)

‘It was a good occasion and helped with team work.’ (SR, studying ‘A’ Levels in Biology, English, Maths and Public Services)

‘I got a lot out of it and enjoyed doing it. I learned to work with other people.’ (LM, studying ‘A’ Levels in ICT, Physics, Product Design, Maths and Further Maths and planning to study Architectural or Civil Engineering at university)

‘It helped me to make my decision on whether or not to go to university.’ (SG, studying ‘A’ Levels in Biology, Business Studies, German and Health and Social Care, planning to study Biology at university)

‘It made me think about staying on for A-Levels and going to university.’ (AW studying ‘A’ levels and planning on studying Engineering at university)

‘The academy was both educational and rewarding. I really enjoyed myself and would like the opportunity to do something similar again.’ (MS, studying ‘A’ Levels in Drama, English Literature, Geography, History and hoping to study English or History at Cambridge University)

‘Was really great to learn about archaeology and the history about Coddenham. it was amazing to go to Cambridge University and see the Colleges. Really loved it.’ (CS, studying ‘A’ Levels in Biology, Chemistry, German, General Studies and Maths and planning to study Forensic Science at university)

‘I found the field academy very informative and it opened an interest into history related careers, possibly a history teacher. I found that two days on site was well spent.’ (GP studying ‘A’ Levels in Critical Thinking, Geography, History, Law and Maths and planning studying Law or History at university)

‘Really well done, cannot praise it enough! Had an absolutely fantastic time. Very well organised and the ‘experts’ were very inspiring. Very satisfying to find some actual artefacts! Have inspired me to take a degree in a history related subject and possibly become an archaeologist. (JM studying ‘A’ Levels in Classical Civilisation, English Literature, Geography and History and planning to study History or Archaeology at university)

‘It was really good and gave me more thoughts about university.’ (AC, studying A Levels in Business Studies, Chemistry, French, Maths and Further Maths and planning studying Maths at university)

‘It was a very, very enjoyable experience, one that I would not otherwise have chosen to do myself, but I’m glad that I was chosen. It was thoroughly enjoyable!’ (PB studying ‘A’ Levels in Biology, Chemistry, Maths and Psychology and planning studying Medical Science at university)

‘It was a great opportunity for me to learn more about life at university.’ (WK, studying ‘A’ Levels in Biology, Chemistry, English, Maths and Physics and planning studying Medicine at university)

‘The field academy was really enjoyable and it gave me the confidence that I needed.’ (LB, studying ‘A’ Levels in Biology, Chemistry, Maths and German)
‘It was a great opportunity to meet and make new friends. I’m still friends with them now!!’ (LK studying ‘A’ Levels in Geography, Maths, Psychology, English Language and Photography)

‘It was a brilliant week and I enjoyed it so much. I learnt a lot about life in general and found out about university.’ (CV, studying A Levels in Physics, Spanish and English)

‘It made my choice of going to University definite. I would recommend it to everyone.’ (RA, studying A Levels in Sciences and Maths)

‘After my experience in Cambridge, I am more determined to go to university. And it has helped me choose what sort of things I would like to do in the future and has taught me about the wide range of doors which are open for me.’ (FB, studying A Levels and planning studying Textiles or Journalism at university)

The longitudinal tracking demonstrates the wide and lasting educational and aspirational benefits of attendance at a HEFA summer school, in terms of the elevated educational destinations of former HEFA participants, their considered opinions of the impact it had on them, and the subjects they are interested in studying at University.
11. CONCLUSION

The conclusions from the feedback on ACA HEFA summer schools in 2009 and 2010 are that the programme is succeeding in:

1. Raising the educational aspirations of participants: this is demonstrated in (1) metric feedback on participants’ attitudinal changes to both post-16 education and higher education showing c. 80% feel more positive about these on completing HEFA, (2) in participants’ ‘before and after’ responses demonstrating the way in which their intentions have been positively impacted in the course of their HEFA summer school experience, showing rises of 25–80% in numbers intending to apply to university and Cambridge respectively and (3) in their written comments.

2. Increasing learners’ understanding of the educational opportunities open to them at tertiary level and their knowledge of how to access these opportunities: this is demonstrated in (1) metric feedback indicating that 84% of participants felt they knew more about university after HEFA than before and (2) in their written comments.

3. Increasing learners’ capacity to succeed in applying to and studying at university by providing activities which enable them to reinforce generic skills in team-working, problem solving, communication, presentation and planning: this is shown in metric feedback data showing the wide range of ways in which participants feel they have benefited from attending HEFA.

4. Giving learners an opportunity to meet and work with students from other schools/colleges: this is shown (1) in metric data showing ‘meeting and working with new people’ to rank second in participants list of aspects of HEFA they enjoyed most and (2) in frequent references in participants’ comments about HEFA to enjoying the people they met and worked with.

5. Giving learners a chance to experience aspects of HE student life: this is demonstrated in (1) metric feedback indicating that 84% of participants felt they knew more about university after HEFA than before and (2) the frequency with which this is mentioned in participants’ written comments.

6. Providing learning programmes which are challenging while still being achievable: this is demonstrated in (1) recent endorsement of HEFA by OCR (qualifications and awards body) as a programme which promotes valuable and worthwhile learning, (2) the quality of the written assignments HEFA students produce and (3) the standard to which the fieldwork activities are carried out.

7. Ensuring that HEFAs are structured to allow progression: this is demonstrated by (1) the quality of practical and written work carried out, (2) by metric feedback indicating that students of all abilities/experience have been able to benefit by learning new things and (3) by participants’ written comments indicating that skills they learned on HEFA have contributed to onward learning.

8. Complementing and extending the work of Aimhigher area partnerships: this is demonstrated by the longevity of the partnership of ACA with Aimhigher in delivering HEFA summer schools which has to date lasted for 5.5 years: places on HEFA summer schools in four counties are recruited by Aimhigher staff, and HEFA courses in most cases form part of a suite of Aimhigher engagements with target young people.
In summary, feedback shows that HEFA is:

- Providing learners with a very positive learning experience.
- Giving learners a very enjoyable experience of Higher Education.
- Providing an educational and vocational challenge which learners have enjoyed responding to in a serious, adult and effective manner.
- Allowing pupils to develop transferable skills for life and learning in school and for higher education.
- Boosting participants’ confidence in their abilities.
- Building confidence and enthusiasm amongst participants for applying to University.
- Building confidence and enthusiasm amongst participants for applying to the University of Cambridge.

Finally, longitudinal tracking shows that the positive impact of HEFA is an enduring one, still impacting on participants years after they have completed their HEFA summer school. This is evident in their comments and in evidence showing that the significant rise in educational aspirations which HEFA achieves appears to be maintained in the long term and that intentions regarding progressing to higher education are followed through to study at ‘A’ Level and plans for post-‘A’ Level tertiary education.

Carenza Lewis
HEFA Project Director
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‘It was a fantastic experience that inspired me, if possible, to go to Cambridge University’ (subsequently offered a place at Peterhouse – neither parent attended university)