

- NHSU will propose education and training priorities
- SHAs will agree it (through a multi-stage *Gateway* process)
- NHSU will commission or develop it
- SHAs will then exert local influence to secure use and payment through consortia of SHAs

3.15 Progress on the business model is welcome if overdue. In particular, proposed costings have not yet been devised for the existing portfolio of NHSU courses or tested on customers. This means major uncertainty – and risks – for course volumes once charging begins in April 2005.

3.16 Given that the business model appears to rely on SHA agreement to secure local buy-in to NHSU-badged provision, and involve payment of NHSU by consortia of SHAs, it is unclear why NHSU should require such a large comms. and marketing function (a budgeted complement of 31).

3.17 NHSU has recognised the importance of portability of qualification and has started to develop a credit system to underpin portability of the programmes it offers. There would be advantages in the system being extended, over time, to cover a wider range of learning programmes used by NHS employers, and not just those developed by NHSU.

## **IMPROVING PROCUREMENT – THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC PARTNERS**

3.18 Securing the portability of training is one way of improving the value that the NHS obtains. The centrepiece of NHSU's work to improve the offering from the education sector to the NHS has been its academic partner programme. NHSU has undertaken a procurement to secure a number of consortia of higher education providers (distributed so as to achieve national coverage), in order to -

- exert real influence with and co-operation from the higher education sector
- carry out joint development work on approaches to training
- work together to develop high quality material on quality standards.

3.19 The NHSU philosophy is that close relationships with a number of selected providers will lead to a better understanding of the needs of the NHS, a better focus by universities on the needs of their customers and therefore offer better value. The partnerships are fairly young and NHSU has indicated that it is "only just getting going on practical application". What is clear at this stage is that -

- both the higher education sector and the NHS are confused about the role of the partnerships
- the partnerships suggests a strong dependence on the role of influence as opposed to improving the robustness of procurement processes themselves
- it is unclear what, if anything, the partnerships have delivered to date