



UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

An initiative that provides undergraduate and postgraduate study for those working on oil rigs has taken the plaudits in this category. Plymouth University's Hydrographic Academy offers employees of global geo-sciences company Fugro the opportunity to overcome massive logistical and geo-graphical barriers to learning.

About 430 students from 38 countries have enrolled on the bachelor's and master's level programmes since they began in June 2012.

The courses, which are designed to meet full Quality Assurance Agency standards and accreditation criteria set by industry bodies, have proved so popular there is now a waiting list.

The Hydrographic Academy offers modular courses in hydrography, oceanography and meteorology that can be taken and paid for individually so that learners can fit study around their work and income.

The learning resources and assessments are loaded on to memory sticks because of the predominantly offline nature of offshore work, but further materials, video conferencing and Skypes tutorials are available when students are online.

The judges described the projects as a "powerful example" of employer engagement and were impressed by the fact that it offers a new entry point to higher education.

Sir Deian Hopkin, president of the Natural Library of Wales and one of our judges, said: "The Hydrographic Academy builds on the university's long engagement with the marine industry.

"The flexible modular programmes are provided both offline and online, using the full range of new learning technologies, supported by intensive teaching and fieldwork when student are on shore leave"