6 February 1998

CIRCULAR

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 1996-97 TO 1997-98

To
Principals of colleges

Circular type
Information

Summary
Confirms college performance indicators for 1996-97 to 1997-98

Reference number: 98/04

Enquiries:
Research and statistics support desk
01203 863224

98/04

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 1996-97 TO 1997-98

INTRODUCTION

1 This circular confirms the college performance indicators to be published by the Council for the period 1996-97 to 1997-98.

BACKGROUND

2 College performance indicators for 1994-95 and 1995-96 were published in February 1997 and September 1997 respectively. When the performance indicators were confirmed to the sector in Circular 94/31, the Council indicated that a review would be carried out after the initial two-year period.

3 The existing indicators were reviewed, with the assistance of the performance indicators and management statistics (PIMS) group, to determine which college performance indicators should be published for the period 1996-97 to 1997-98. The proposals were published for consultation in Circular 97/36 and colleges were asked to respond by 28 November. The results of the consultation and the Council's response are set out below.

RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

4 Two hundred and forty-one responses to the consultation were received, of which 239 were from sector colleges. The number of responses by region and by type of college reflected the sector as a whole.

5 There was a high level of support for the proposals, with over 90 per cent of colleges in agreement with most of them. The level of support for the Council's overall approach to performance indicators was slightly lower.

Approach

6 A total of 81 per cent of colleges agreed that the Council's existing approach to performance indicators should continue, that is:

- they should be defined to allow reliable comparisons between institutions and over time
- they should be calculated from data already collected for other purposes; there should be no special data collection
- they should cover the following key areas of activity in colleges: recruitment of students, students' commitment to their learning programmes, students' achievements, particularly in relation to the national targets for education and training, and value for money.

The approach is confirmed for 1996-97 and 1997-98.

Changes to Performance Indicators

7 A summary of the college responses to each of the proposed changes is set out at the annex to this circular. The high level of support for the proposals is welcomed. The Council agreed at its meeting of 11 December that:

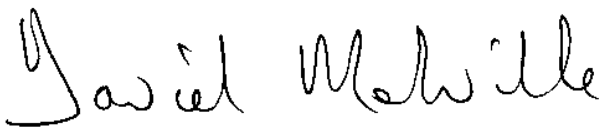
- the titles of the indicators will be amended as shown in annex A to Circular 97/36
- no change will be made to PI 1 (achievement of target), PI 2 (student number trends) and PI 6 (out-turn average level of funding)
- PI 3 (student continuation) will be extended to cover a wider group of students and the improvements to the calculations set out in Circular 97/36 will be made
- PI 4 (achievement of qualifications) will be disaggregated into three parts according to the number of guided learning hours a qualification is being studied for
- PI 5 (attainment of NVQs or equivalent) will be extended to include the higher level national target.

8 The changes can all be implemented using existing data provided by colleges to the Council in the individualised student record (ISR) and involve no additional data collection from colleges.

NEXT STEPS

9 Performance indicators for 1996-97 will be published in September 1998. Individual college performance indicators will be sent to colleges for confirmation between March and June 1998. The national publication may be brought forward if data for sufficient colleges are available earlier.

10 Where changes to the indicators are implemented, the results for earlier years will be recalculated where possible to be consistent with the current definition and will then be made available to colleges on the Internet.



RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION: CIRCULAR 97/36

Question		*Respondents No.*	*Agree %*	*Disagree %*
1	The approach to performance indicators should remain unchanged	230	81	19
2	The titles of the indicators should be amended as shown in annex A to Circular 97/36	236	95	5
3	PI 1 (achievement of target): no change for 1996-97 and 1997-98	235	98	2
4	PI 2 (student number trends): no change for 1996-97 and 1997-98	232	97	3
5	PI 3 (student continuation)			
	a. extend to cover all students studying for 12 weeks or more	232	95	5
	b. improve the calculation as shown in paragraph 14, annex A, Circular 97/36	230	93	7
6	PI 4 (achievement of qualifications): disaggregate into three groups of qualifications according to their glh	235	82	18
7	PI 5: add higher level achievements	229	93	7
8	PI 6 (out-turn ALF): no change for 1996-97 and 1997-98	233	95	5

Commentary

A number of colleges indicated that they strongly supported the changes proposed for PI 3 (21 colleges) and PI 4 (13 colleges). There were a number of additional comments raised by colleges:

- that when students leave college for good reason, for example to take up employment, there is no way to reflect this in PI 3 (13 colleges)
- that PI 4 should be disaggregated but using slightly different groupings than those proposed in the consultation (17 colleges). There was no common view of different groupings to be used
- that the Council should work towards replacing PI 4 with a measure of 'value added' (15 colleges).

Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
February 1998