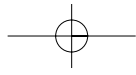


### Definition of learning and skills sector providers

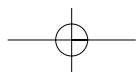
Throughout the document we have used the generic term learning and skills 'provider.' For the purposes of this document provider refers to further education colleges; special designated institutions; providers of work-based learning; employers delivering Learning and Skills Council funded provision; local authorities (former external institutions, adult and community learning provision and, where relevant, work-based learning); Jobcentre Plus providers; centres of higher education offering further education; school sixth forms; independent former external institutions; Ufi/**learn**direct hubs; and specialist colleges for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The National Quality Improvement Body (NQIB) is the working title for the new body. The actual name will be announced in spring 2005.



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## Foreword

### by the Minister of State

In June this year, Charles Clarke announced the Department's intention to establish, by April 2006, a new national body to drive forward improvement in the learning and skills sector.

The National Quality Improvement Body will be central to the Department's and the Learning Skills Council's (LSC's) vision of excellence for the sector, recognising that colleges and other providers are committed to achieving the best for learners, employers and society.

The Department and the LSC have worked closely with the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) in designing the new body. I am pleased that the LSDA is prepared to take on this new strategic role in supporting the sector's improvement and commit to the radical reshaping which will be required.

This report sets out progress on developing the vision, role and responsibilities of the new body and how it will work with providers and other partners in quality improvement. I would greatly value your views on what we propose.

We will publish the outcomes of our consultation with you, together with further details about the new body, by March 2005. In the meantime, please give our proposals your careful consideration and help us in the next steps of our thinking.



Dr Kim Howells  
*Minister of State for Lifelong Learning,  
Further and Higher Education*  
November 2004

## Section one:

### Vision and Strategy

1. The Department's Five Year Strategy sets out a vision of a learning and skills sector that is able, by 2008, to:
  - be fully responsive to the needs of learners and employers;
  - attract strong and effective staff and leaders;
  - identify and meet its own priorities and targets for improvement, drawing effectively on the findings of inspection and annual self-assessment.
2. To achieve this vision, the Department is streamlining and rationalising the improvement and accountability system in learning and skills. All the organisations involved need to work together to deliver this change and ensure that there is real commitment to making it happen in the pursuit of excellence across our sector.
3. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has a primary role for ensuring the quality of provision in each area meets the needs of learners, employers, communities and the economy. The LSC will continue to have direct working relationships with providers throughout its business cycle focusing on planning; target setting and reviewing performance against success measures. The Inspectorates will, through the new inspection arrangements from 2005, put even greater emphasis on improvement and on provider capacity to self-improve.
4. Responsibility for managing change and improving quality lies first and foremost with providers. Many good providers have already embraced self-improvement. The National Quality Improvement Body (NQIB) will support further this cultural shift. The creation of the new body will improve the support and advice providers can draw on to improve quality and increase responsiveness.
5. The Department and the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) have been working together to assess the feasibility of the LSDA taking on the new role. While much detailed work remains to be done, LSDA have agreed that it will be re-shaped to separate its strategic commissioning role as the new body from its current delivery role, which the Department expects to be sustained under new arrangements. The Department intends to move forward with the LSDA into the transitional stage of this work.
6. The creation of the NQIB is a key step in creating a network of responsive and self-improving providers. The majority of providers are already committed to doing a good job for their learners and for employers. Despite this, poor provision which fails to meet learners' needs still persists and too much provision remains mediocre. It is imperative, therefore, to accelerate quality improvement and to build on what has already been achieved through the *Success for All* reforms.
7. The NQIB, working with the LSC and the inspectorates, will develop for agreement by Ministers a compelling and inspirational vision for improvement and responsiveness across the sector. In addition, the Government will look to the NQIB to encourage everyone working in the sector to be advocates for continuous improvement, leading to increased responsiveness, excellent learning opportunities for all, and a sector which delivers to all parts of society.

8. The NQIB will work closely with the sector and key partners to develop sector improvement strategies which generate commitment and buy-in from the frontline. The new body will promote a shared understanding of excellence and quality while recognising the diversity of the sector.
9. The NQIB's quality improvement strategy will chart how to deliver in practice the vision for the sector articulated by the NQIB, government and key partners. It will recognise that primary responsibility for maintaining and raising standards lies with providers. Its strategy will focus on three priorities:
  - **Building Provider Capacity for self regulation and self improvement** – supporting culture and system change to underpin this shift and ensuring the development of quality materials and services.
  - **Securing commitment from the sector to quality and responsiveness priorities** – developing capacity to interpret national priorities into provider quality and change programmes and supporting effective implementation.
  - **Accelerating improvements in provider performance** – developing a dynamic model for improving practice which is fit for the diverse contexts of the sector and that can motivate the whole sector to aspire to world class performance.
10. The success of the NQIB will be judged not only by measures in the accountability framework but also by the sector's contributions to a healthy, diverse and inclusive society, by the sector's own growing capacity for self regulation and improvement, and by employer views on the responsiveness of providers. Equality and diversity will be key priorities for the NQIB. The new body will also have an important role in disseminating good practice, to support the LSC in its duty to promote equality and diversity.

## Section two:

### What the NQIB will mean for Providers

11. The overall purpose of the NQIB will be to secure better outcomes for learners, employers, communities and the economy by providing a strategic focus for improvement activity in the learning and skills sector.
12. It will bring greater coherence and efficiency to improving quality and reduce confusion among providers about where to go for reliable advice and support. The new body will also support providers to respond to strategic change in the sector, such as the phased introduction of the 14-19 curriculum reforms – for example, by advising on new teaching and learning approaches.
13. The NQIB will ensure that all providers have access to a single authoritative source of advice to support them in implementing their three-year development plans and addressing areas for quality improvement as identified by themselves, the inspectorates and through the LSC review process. Where providers are failing to meet headline targets or inspection has identified concerns about quality, they will be expected to work through a programme of tailored improvement activities. The new body will do this by offering a brokerage service and tailored support packages to providers for quality improvement. High performing providers will also be able to draw on services through the NQIB in their pursuit of excellence.
14. The NQIB will champion excellence and encourage providers to celebrate success. Providers acknowledged as excellent will be encouraged to engage in sharing and disseminating good practice and innovation to drive up the performance of the sector overall.
15. The NQIB will act as a catalyst for change in the way providers improve. It will evaluate quality improvement services and materials on offer commercially to providers, and provide information on their effectiveness. It is intended that the NQIB will not engage directly in delivering quality improvement activities itself, but would pilot, test and evaluate approaches. It will commission and contract for materials and services which reflect national priorities. Increasing the effective contestability of service delivery will be a key driver for the new body.
16. The Department will continue to work with provider representative organisations, including the Association of Colleges, the Association of Learning Providers and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education in developing the NQIB role.

### Section three:

## Roles and Responsibilities of the NQIB

17. Working with key partners, the NQIB will be responsible for developing and implementing a three-year strategy on quality improvement to be agreed by Ministers. Working within the framework of priorities agreed by Ministers, the NQIB will:

- propose strategic priorities for quality improvement to the Department, based on analysis of performance in the sector;
- take forward a quality improvement strategy for the learning and skills sector within a framework of priorities agreed by Ministers;
- design, test and evaluate improvement strategies which deliver a targeted approach to quality improvement;
- manage roll out of quality improvement strategies and ensure effective implementation of strategic priorities;
- enhance the capacity of providers to regulate and improve their own performance;
- ensure quality assured services and materials are available to providers, which recognise the distinct and diverse nature of the learning and skills sector;
- identify, promote and support transfer of innovation and good practice;
- promote a strong and effective network of organisations delivering quality improvement services.

18. The NQIB will contribute to the development of a more coherent and streamlined system for quality improvement. The new body will work closely with key partners, such as the Department, the LSC, the inspectorates, Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) and the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) to ensure that there is a coherent approach to quality improvement throughout the sector. Annex A sets out the role and relationships of these organisations.

#### Section four:

### Next Steps and Transition Arrangements

19. Following the announcement by the Secretary of State in June 2004 to establish the NQIB, this report sets out current progress on the role and responsibilities of the NQIB and describes how it will work with other major organisations which have a responsibility for improving the quality of education and training.
20. Further work will be carried out to develop detailed proposals for the governance, organisational structure, funding, location and staffing of the NQIB. Over the next few months the Department will consider further streamlining of the number of organisations involved in quality improvement. Elements of improvement effort currently undertaken across the Department will transfer to the new body.
21. Response to the questions in Annex B will inform the development of future work programmes for the NQIB. It is intended that a summary of your responses, together with a further statement from the Department on the NQIB, will be published in a final report by March 2005 on the *Success for All* website [www.successforall.gov.uk](http://www.successforall.gov.uk).
22. A transition plan will be developed setting out arrangements that will come into force from April 2005 until the launch of the NQIB in April 2006. The plan will take into account the need to ensure that key improvement work in progress will not be impeded by the change.



## Section five:

### The Consultation Process

23. This report is being made available to all providers of education and training funded by the LSC, and all key bodies involved in quality improvement. If you have any questions about the consultation process or would like clarification on any points in this document, please contact either Anthony Evans on 0114 2591667 or Steve Hunter on 0114 2594870 at the Standards Unit of the Department.
24. The consultation period will begin on 16 November 2004 and **will close on 8 February 2005**. A questionnaire is provided at Annex B for you to complete. Please ensure that your response reaches us by the closing date. If you wish to obtain a paper copy of this document it can be downloaded as a pdf. or word version from [www.dfes.co.uk/consultations](http://www.dfes.co.uk/consultations). Other copies can be requested by email from [dfes@prolog.co.uk](mailto:dfes@prolog.co.uk), or telephone 0845 602 2260.
25. Your views and the information you send us may be disseminated within the Department. If you respond by e-mail, it will be assumed that by doing so, you are content for any confidentiality disclaimer generated by your organisation's information technology (IT) system to be overridden, unless you specifically state otherwise. Please ensure that if you do not want your name or, where applicable, that of your organisation, to be disclosed, you state this clearly in your response. (When compiling statistics on responses received, those made on terms of anonymity will be included).
26. The consultation invites your views on the responsibilities and priorities of the NQIB, and these will be taken into account in the further development of the new body. The key questions are set out in the response form at Annex B.
27. The consultation is being conducted in line with the Code of Practice on Consultation. The full version of this code can be accessed at [www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/Code.htm](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/Code.htm). If you feel that the consultation does not satisfy these criteria please contact the Department for Education and Skills, Consultation Unit, 2nd Floor Area A, Castle View House, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2GJ, email: [NQIB.Consultation@dfes.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:NQIB.Consultation@dfes.gsi.gov.uk)

## Annex A:

# Roles and Responsibilities

## The Department

1. The Department is responsible for the overview and strategic direction of the post-16 learning and skills sector. It has to ensure that all those involved in the sector understand their respective roles and responsibilities in working towards the achievement of excellence.
2. The Department has joint responsibility with the LSC for the overall implementation of *Success for All* reform programme. The Standards Unit within the Department will establish and maintain effective relationships with the NQIB and with other key partner agencies involved in quality improvement. Ministers will determine the strategic priorities, annual programme and budget for the NQIB. The Department will monitor the performance and effectiveness of the NQIB.

## The LSC

3. The LSC is responsible for the planning and funding of post-16 provision in line with Government policy. In addition, the LSC plays a key role in monitoring the quality of provision and taking appropriate action when providers are failing. The LSC aims to further quality improvement and will promote excellence in the learning and skills sector through the development of appropriate regulatory funding and monitoring frameworks which place quality improvement at the heart of the LSC agenda.
4. The LSC's new business planning cycle includes an annual review of the extent to which providers meet objectives set out in their three-year development plans. The LSC's assessment will take into account the risks providers faced when implementing their plans. A key element of the review will be the identification of learners' achievements, and this will be informed by the provider's self-assessment and a detailed analysis of the learners' success rates, using national benchmarks. The review will also highlight good and poor practice. If aspects of provision are found to be either unacceptable or failing to improve, the provider concerned will be required to draw up a detailed plan for their improvement within a specified period. The provider will be advised to make use of the services of the NQIB when implementing this plan. The LSC will monitor the plan's implementation and if it finds this ineffective, the provider may lose funding for this area of work, in line with the LSC's policy of withdrawing funding for all unsatisfactory provision. The LSC will share findings from its annual reviews, and its continuing relationship with providers, with the NQIB and the inspectorates. The NQIB will take account of these findings when determining priorities for action, including strategies for the prevention and improvement of poor performance.
5. The Department, the LSC and the inspectorates are developing new success measures that will command wide spread acceptance. These will be used when making an analysis of a provider's performance and comparing learners' success rates with new national benchmarks. This analysis will be shared with providers and will underpin the annual dialogue with them on quality improvement. The NQIB will need to work closely with the Department, the LSC and the inspectorates to support ongoing development in this area. The LSC will work with the NQIB to organise regional and national events to celebrate excellence and improvement in the post-16 sector.

## The Inspectorates

6. Under the Learning and Skills Act (2000) the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) jointly inspect general Further Education (FE) colleges with Ofsted reporting on provision for learners aged 16-19 and the ALI on provision for adults. They also jointly inspect independent specialist colleges for learners with difficulties and/or disabilities and FE provision in Higher Education (HE) institutions.
7. The ALI is responsible for inspecting work-based learning, including training for apprentices. It also inspects adult and community learning, Ufi Ltd Learndirect provision, education and training in adult prisons and provision funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Jobcentre Plus.
8. Ofsted is responsible for the inspection of post-16 provision through the Connexion strategy, including local Connexions partnerships and the careers service, local authority youth services and provision for 14-19 learners within a local LSC area. Together, with Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) Probation they inspect education provision in Youth Offending Teams (YOTs); with HMI Prisons they inspect education provision in Youth Offending Institutions (YOIs) and detention centres; with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) they inspect education provision in local authority secure children's homes (LASCH).
9. The status and accountability of Ofsted requires inspectors to make judgements about quality and standards in FE and to report such findings independently of government.
10. Inspection by the ALI and Ofsted takes place against the *Common Inspection Framework*. In the new inspection cycle, starting in 2005, inspection will be differentiated by performance of providers based on previous inspection grades and recent evidence of performance. Inspection reports will focus more clearly on setting out improvement priorities for providers. Where a provider is found at inspection to be inadequate, an action plan will be agreed by the LSC with the provider, and monitored by the inspectorates. Where a provider is adequate but has some inadequate provision, the action plan will be agreed and monitored by the LSC. In both cases, the action plan will be incorporated into the provider's development plan and reflected in targets if appropriate.
11. As part of developing and agreeing a post-inspection action plan, providers will be advised to use the support and services available through the NQIB. The NQIB will take account of inspection findings in setting priorities for quality improvement in the sector.

## Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK)

12. The LLUK is being developed as the Sector Skills Council for the learning and skills sector. Council members will mainly be employers who provide and support lifelong learning, including adult and community learning, further education, higher education, library archives and information services, work-based services and youth work. The LLUK will ensure the availability of up-to-date data on the size and nature of the workforce in the sector and set standards for staff at all levels. It will work with the Teacher Training Agency and HE Academy on initial teacher training and with the CEL on leadership development. The LLUK will provide guidance to employers in the sector on recruitment and retention. It will help the sector's employers respond to their needs by drawing out the implications for staff development of changing demands for skills.

13. The NQIB will lead on determining quality improvement strategies the learning and skills sector in England needs. The new body will consult the LLUK on strategies which have implications for workforce development. LLUK will ensure that strategies for staff development in the learning and skills part of its remit are reflected in the Sector Skills Agreement. LLUK will lead in setting standards for the sector's workforce and will identify the qualifications its members need to have. It will ensure that national priorities for improvement as identified by the NQIB are appropriately reflected in standards and qualifications.

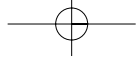
#### **Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL)**

14. The focus of CEL's work is to enable individual leaders and teams to work more effectively. CEL's mission is to improve the standard of leadership and the diversity and talent pool of leaders in the learning and skills sector. It will achieve this by focussing on leadership development for individuals and sector wide strategic development of leadership. This will include, succession planning, leadership capacity building and improving the diversity profile of leaders. It will develop future thinking in leadership, creating a new body of sector based leadership research and clear impact measures.

#### **Other Organisations involved in Quality Improvement**

15. This paper does not deal with the relationship of the NQIB to other partners and organisations involved in quality improvement, such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (QCA), the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) the Basic Skills Agency (BSA), and Ufi Ltd (Ufi). The NQIB's relationship with these and other related bodies will be addressed in the next phase of this work.





**Annex B:**

## Questionnaire and Response Form

Name
Name of organisation you are replying on behalf of:
Position in Organisation:
Address
Type of organisation (e.g. college, work-based learning providers, partner organisation, etc)
Date

1. In what way should the NQIB support providers to enhance their own quality improvement capacity?

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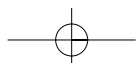
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**2. How can NQIB best support providers in managing and implementing quality in the context of new strategic priorities, such as 14-19 reform?**

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**3. How can the NQIB help providers make their self-assessment more rigorous?**

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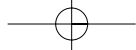
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4. How do you think the NQIB could best help providers to improve performance?

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5. In clarifying the quality improvement landscape, are there any issues you feel are not addressed by the current proposals and which you would like to see addressed in the next phase of our work?

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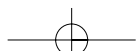
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6. Are there any other issues you would like to raise on improving quality in the learning and skills sector?

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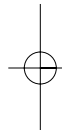
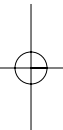
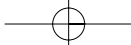
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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSE.**

Please respond by 8 February 2005 online by selecting the 'Respond on-line' option at the beginning of the consultation webpage.

There is also an option on the first webpage to download copies of the consultation document and questionnaire. Once completed hard copies can be returned to the Department for Education and Skills, Consultation Unit, Area 2A, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2GJ; or by email to: [NQIB.CONULTATION@dfes.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:NQIB.CONULTATION@dfes.gsi.gov.uk)





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# Standards Unit

National Quality Improvement Body  
for the Learning and Skills Sector

Progress Report – 16 November 2004

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