



# ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE

*DRAFT GUIDANCE ON INSPECTION FOR PROVIDERS*

*Interpreting the  
Common Inspection Framework*



## GENERAL GUIDANCE ON INSPECTION

### ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 to bring together the inspection of adult learning and work-based training into the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- education for people aged over 19 in further education colleges
- the University for Industry's **learnirect** provision
- adult and community learning
- training delivered by the Employment Service (ES) under the New Deals.

The ALI shares responsibility with the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) for the inspection of further education colleges. While the ALI is responsible for inspecting provision in colleges for adults, OFSTED inspects the provision for students aged 16-19. OFSTED leads the inspections of colleges.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the ALI collaborates with OFSTED in area-wide inspections of all education and training provision for 16-19 year olds. OFSTED leads these inspections. The ALI leads all the inspections that are in its sole remit. The Learning and Skills Act gives the ALI the power to undertake commissioned inspections of non-publicly funded provision.

The ALI is required to report annually to the Secretary of State on the quality of provision within its remit. The ALI may also make other reports relating to education or training within its remit, as it considers appropriate.

The ALI is a non-departmental government body and is independent of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Its board has nine members including the chairman and the chief inspector. The inspectorate has a single national headquarters, in Coventry. There are no regional offices. Supporting the chief inspector are four directors of inspection and a director of business services. In addition, there are:

- 12 inspection managers
- 120 full-time inspectors (by April 2002)
- 850 associate inspectors (by April 2002)
- 80 support staff.

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<sup>1</sup> OFSTED has produced a *Handbook for Inspecting Colleges* which gives the background to arrangements and explains how colleges will be inspected.



Approximately two-thirds of the full-time inspectors were recruited from its predecessor inspectorates; the Training Standards Council, and the Further Education Funding Council. The chief inspector and the directors are based at the ALI's head office; the inspection managers and full-time inspectors are home-based.

Under the provisions of the Learning and Skills Act, an ALI inspector has, at all reasonable times, a right of entry to premises on which education and training within its remit is provided.

## KEY FEATURES OF POST-16 INSPECTION

The Learning and Skills Act established the following inspection arrangements:

- The extension of OFSTED's remit to include the inspection of provision for 16-19 year olds in further education colleges, tertiary colleges and sixth form colleges.
- The ALI is responsible for inspecting post-19 provision in colleges.
- The two inspectorates will work together to plan a joint inspection programme for colleges. Joint inspections, including inspectors from both inspectorates, will be directed by OFSTED and will lead to a single inspection report.
- The ALI will be responsible for inspecting work-based training for all age groups. In addition, the ALI will have responsibility for the inspection of:
  - New Deals
  - Adult and community learning
  - University for Industry (Ufi) **learndirect** provision.
- The ALI will also have the power to undertake commissioned inspections of privately-funded provision.
- All inspections will be based on a common inspection framework.
- OFSTED is expected to carry out more comprehensive inspections of school sixth forms and ensure they are inspected in as much depth as 16-19 provision in colleges.



- In partnership with OFSTED, the ALI will carry out the inspection of all providers of 16-19 education and training within a particular area.
- The ALI and OFSTED will be asked to evaluate post-inspection action plans and advise the LSC and the Employment Service (ES) on their adequacy.



## COMMON INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

The *Common Inspection Framework* (see <http://www.ali.gov.uk>) identifies the three main functions of inspection as follows:

- to give an independent, public account of the quality of education and training, the standards achieved and the efficiency with which resources are managed;
- to help bring about improvement by identifying strengths and weakness and highlighting good and poor practice;
- to keep the Secretary of State, the LSC and ES informed about the quality and standards of education and training.

The framework meets the requirement of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000*. In general, the Act sets out:

- the principles which apply to the inspection of post-16 non-higher education and training;
- the specific evaluation requirements which apply to the inspection of individual providers of education and training.

The framework requires inspectors to form an overall judgement as to:

*How effective and efficient is the provision of education and training in meeting the needs of learners, and why?*

The framework specifies that in forming their overall judgement, inspectors need to take into account:

- achievements and standards
- the quality of education and training
- leadership and management

and answer seven key questions:

- How well do learners achieve?
- How effective are teaching, training and learning?
- How are achievement and learning affected by resources?
- How effective are the assessment and monitoring of learning?
- How well do the programmes and courses meet the needs and interests of learners?



- How well are learners guided and supported?
- How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

The scope of each question is defined by evaluation requirements. For example, in answering the question, 'How well do learners achieve?', inspectors evaluate:

- success in achieving challenging targets, including qualifications and learning goals
- the standards of learners' work in relation to their learning goals
- learners' progress relative to their prior attainment and potential
- the development of personal and learning skills.

Under each question, the framework also specifies possible measures of quality. Inspectors use such measures when arriving at their judgements on quality.

## **BROAD PRINCIPLES OF INSPECTION**

The *Common Inspection Framework* is used by the ALI, and OFSTED for inspections under Part III of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. The ALI's remit is wide and the process of inspection takes into account the different contexts in which learning takes place. A series of separate documents, published on the ALI's website, explain how the *Common Inspection Framework* can be applied to different types of learning. Particularly detailed attention is paid to explaining how the framework applies to adult and community learning, and the University for Industry's *learnirect* provision, since, up until now, there has been little inspection of these areas.

The programme of inspection is planned on a quarterly basis. Providers normally will be given between six to 12 weeks' notice of inspection.

Inspections are planned to suit the circumstances and size of the providers. Most inspections involve teams of between two and 10 inspectors. Each inspection is led by a full-time inspector who is supported by an assistant lead inspector. Most inspections take place over one week, but some may take longer in order to cover the provision satisfactorily.

Inspectors' judgements are based on evidence. Types of evidence include observations of learning, interviews with learners and providers' staff, and documentary evidence, such as that relating to training, assessment, verification and awards. The LSC and the ES collect data from providers. It is essential that



these data and additional data providers may give inspectors at the time of inspection, are accurate.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT, INSPECTION, ACTION PLANS**

The primary responsibility for improving the quality of provision lies with the provider. It is vital that providers themselves regularly evaluate all aspects of their provision and seek to improve its quality continuously. The process of continuous improvement by a provider should include:

- self-assessment
- development-planning and target-setting
- monitoring and reviewing the extent to which plans are achieved and targets are met
- sharing good practice
- external inspection.

The LSC and the ES are publishing guidance to providers on self-assessment which has been endorsed by the ALI and OFSTED. Providers are required to produce a self-assessment report annually, the core of which should comprise an evaluation based on answers to the seven key questions of the *Common Inspection Framework*. In addition, providers are required to evaluate other related aspects of quality and financial probity. In drawing up their self-assessment report, providers should make judgements about their performance and identify strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed. All judgements should be supported by reliable evidence and lead to grades, which are assigned according to the grading scales published by the two inspectorates.

Providers should send their annual self-assessment report to the LSC/ES. When an inspection is planned, the LSC/ES sends the provider's self-assessment report to the inspectorate leading the inspection, along with other relevant information, such as, learner records, data on achievements and development plans. The inspectorates use the self-assessment report when planning the inspection. Inspection reports include judgements on the rigour of the self-assessment process and the thoroughness of the self-assessment report. Following the inspection, the provider submits to the LSC/ES a plan detailing how it intends to respond to the inspection



findings. This post-inspection action plan should be linked to the provider's development plan. The LSC/ES is responsible for assessing the appropriateness of the action plan and for monitoring its implementation.

Where inadequate or weak provision is identified, the inspectorates will offer advice to the LSC/ES on whether the provider's action plan adequately addresses the weaknesses identified during the inspection. From time to time in other instances, the LSC/ES may wish to consult with the inspectorates on the adequacy of action plans.



## GRADING

### Grading scale

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- grade 1 - excellent
- grade 2 - very good
- grade 3 - good
- grade 4 - satisfactory
- grade 5 - unsatisfactory
- grade 6 - poor
- grade 7 - very poor.

In summarising their judgements about the quality of provision in curriculum or occupational areas and about the quality of leadership and management, inspectors use a five-point scale. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding
- grade 2 – good
- grade 3 – satisfactory
- grade 4 – unsatisfactory
- grade 5 – very weak.

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

Seven point scale	Five point scale
Grade 1	Grade 1
Grade 2	
Grade 3	Grade 2
Grade 4	Grade 3
Grade 5	Grade 4
Grade 6	Grade 5
Grade 7	



## What is graded?

In the case of the inspection of a provider, the following aspects are graded:

- each curriculum/occupational area inspected. The grade awarded to each area is determined by the judgements inspectors make in their response to the seven key questions of the *Common Inspection Framework*. Where a provider offers more than one aspect of the ALI's remit in an occupational area, for example New Deal and work-based learning, then individual grades for each aspect also are awarded.
- leadership and management. An overall grade is awarded for leadership and management. In addition, contributory grades are given for equality of opportunity and quality assurance. These contributory grades are taken into account when determining the overall grade for leadership and management.

## REPORT STRUCTURE

Where an inspection of a provider involves only the ALI, the ALI inspection report contains the following sections.

### 1 A summary which includes:

- a brief descriptive paragraph about the provider
- an overall judgement on the provision
- brief statements on the quality of each type of provision inspected, for example work-based learning or adult and community learning, and a summary of the judgements about leadership and management
- a table of grades which includes:
  - a grade for leadership and management and grades for equality of opportunity and for quality assurance
  - grades for occupational/curriculum areas
- a statement of the overall key strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed

## **2 A commentary on the provider which covers:**

- the provider and its context including:
- the number of learners
- programmes offered
- the location of the provider
- the provider's funding arrangements
- local/regional employment data
- local/regional educational achievement data

## **3 A section on the inspection findings which includes:**

- details of the composition of the inspection team and the nature of evidence base
- grades for learning sessions observed
- an evaluation of each curriculum/occupational area
- data on learners' achievements in each curriculum/occupational area inspected
- an evaluation of leadership and management, including equality of opportunity and quality assurance.

The structure of inspection reports for colleges carried out jointly by the ALI and OFSTED, will be explained in OFSTED's *College Inspection Handbook*.



## THE PROVIDER'S NOMINEE

Each provider is invited to nominate a senior member of staff to work with the inspection team. The nominee plays an important role in ensuring that the inspection team has access to all relevant evidence and that the inspection runs efficiently and effectively. The nominee should:

- have a detailed understanding of the provider's learning programmes and operations
- hold a sufficiently senior position to ensure the co-operation of the provider's staff at all levels, before, during and after the inspection;
- be able to carry out the role with an appropriate degree of authority, without the need to refer continually to other senior members of staff

The nominee is invited to attend meetings of the inspection team but does not contribute to decisions on grading. The lead inspector ensures that the nominee is fully aware of the evidence used to support inspection judgements. Should the nominee consider the inspectors' evidence base is incomplete, he or she may present additional evidence if this is available.

The nominee helps the inspectors arrange meetings with people they wish to interview and ensures inspectors have easy access to relevant information. The lead inspector looks to the nominee to ensure that the provider's staff are available for meetings as scheduled and that documents are available, as agreed during the planning phase of the inspection.

If the provider or the provider's staff voice concerns about the inspection process, the nominee should raise these promptly with the lead inspector and, where possible, help to resolve them. The lead inspector keeps the nominee informed of significant issues that emerge during the inspection. In order that inspectors may explore these issues further, the nominee may be called upon to provide additional evidence, or arrange additional meetings with staff or learners.

The nominee is asked to make arrangements for the feedback of the inspection findings to the provider and other relevant parties. The lead inspector liaises with the provider's nominee over the inspection team's use of the provider's facilities. The provider's nominee is expected to respect the confidentiality of discussions in the base room and inspectors' exploratory deliberations.

## INSPECTION ACTION PLANS

Following the inspection, the provider sends an action plan to the relevant funding body, irrespective of the grades which were awarded. The action plan must clearly show how weaknesses and the other improvements needed that are identified by inspectors will be addressed. It should also contain proposals for building on the strengths identified in the inspection. The LSC/ES is responsible for approving the action plan. Where an inspection has identified inadequate or weak provision, the ALI, and where appropriate OFSTED, will be consulted by the LSC/ES on whether the action plan addresses the weaknesses adequately.

In general, the action plan should:

- specify details of the actions to be taken and their intended outcomes;
- ensure that all the weaknesses and other improvements needed identified in the report have been addressed;
- show how existing strengths may be built upon and how new strengths may be achieved;
- specify who is responsible for implementing the actions;
- state the target dates by which action must be completed;
- give details of arrangements for monitoring progress in implementing the plan.

## REINSPECTION

Where an inspection results in a third or more of curriculum or occupational areas and/or leadership and management being graded 4 or 5, the entire provision will normally be reinspected. Where less than a third of the curriculum or occupational areas offered by a provider are graded 4 or 5, then only these areas will be reinspected. All reinspections are normally carried out within two years of the original inspection.

## EVALUATION OF INSPECTION

The ALI is committed to the continuous improvement of its own performance. It gathers information about its performance in a number of ways, including evaluation of the:

- inspection process by providers
- performance of the lead inspector by members of the inspection team, including associate inspectors
- performance of members of the inspectorate support team, including associate editors.



The ALI reports regularly to the ALI's board on the quality of its work and progress in meeting its targets.

## **COMPLAINTS AND REVIEW OF EVIDENCE**

OFSTED and the ALI are preparing a complaints and review procedure which will apply to all post-16 inspection