

# Raising Standards In Post-16 Learning

## Self Assessment and Development Plans

MARCH 2001



*Employment*  
*Service*



# Contents

	Page
Overview of the post-16 quality improvement arrangements	2 - 7
Introducing the new arrangements	8 - 10
LSC and ES Quality Requirements	11 - 14
Self-assessment	15 - 17
Development plans	18 - 20
Target setting	21 - 22
Monitoring and Review	23 - 25

## Overview of the post-16 quality improvement arrangements

### Purpose

1. This publication sets out:

- ▶ requirements of the Learning Skills Council (LSC) and the Employment Service (ES) for raising standards in post-16 learning
- ▶ arrangements for self-assessment, development planning, target setting, monitoring and review by the provider
- ▶ the respective roles of the provider, the LSC, ES and the Inspectorates.

### Rationale for continuous improvement

2. Providers of post-16 learning will be expected to establish and sustain a **culture of continuous improvement** to ensure that:

- ▶ all learners achieve excellence through learning
- ▶ they facilitate teaching and learning excellence
- ▶ learning represents value for money
- ▶ learning meets the needs of learners, employers and the local community and benefits the economy as a whole.

3. In order to achieve excellence in all its does, the provider must ensure that:

- ▶ staff at all levels are committed to the pursuit of excellence
- ▶ problems impeding the achievement of excellence are resolved promptly
- ▶ ways of achieving excellence are shared throughout the organisation
- ▶ all staff wish to give of their best
- ▶ the drive for excellence focuses on improving learners' achievements.

4. Rigorous self-assessment and good development planning should be an integral part of an organisation's management. The elements which are key to the achievement of continuous improvement in post-16 learning are:

- ▶ self-assessment
- ▶ development plans and the setting of targets
- ▶ monitoring and review
- ▶ LSC/ES support and the sharing of good practice
- ▶ external inspection.

## What are providers required to do?

5. The primary responsibility for improving the quality of provision rests with the provider. The purpose of self-assessment and developing planning is self-improvement. Providers are required to carry out **an annual self-assessment** and evaluate all aspects of their provision and agree a **development plan** with the LSC/ES. The development plan should set out how the provider aims to achieve excellence. The provider will monitor continuously the implementation of its development plan. Providers are required annually to:

- ▶ produce a self-assessment report which meets LSC/ES requirements, makes judgements against the quality statements in the Common Inspection Framework and identifies strengths and weaknesses and other improvements needed
- ▶ grade their provision using the Inspectorate grading scales and grade descriptors (using the agreed five point grading scale for all published and aggregated grades)
- ▶ produce a development plan that shows how they will address the issues identified and build on strengths
- ▶ provide progress reports during the year on the development plan
- ▶ set realistic targets such as those for learners' retention, achievement, completion of courses or programmes, progression to further learning or employment
- ▶ send the self-assessment report and development plan to the LSC/ES within agreed timescales and make adjustments to targets/milestones if necessary to meet LSC/ES requirements
- ▶ monitor and review whether planned actions lead to the required improvements
- ▶ update the development plan, in discussion with the LSC/ES.

## Scope of the provider self-assessment

6. When carrying out self-assessment, providers must address all the quality statements in the **Common Inspection Framework and the LSC/ES quality and financial probity requirements** (table following paragraph 38 refers). Providers will need to refer to the **guidance/handbooks** produced by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (the ALI) and the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) and refer to the list of evaluative statements when grading the quality of their provision.
7. Self-assessment must be carried out with rigour, irrespective of whether the provider has 20 or 200 learners. Whatever the size of the provider, the same questions need to be asked.

## Self-assessment Process

8. The LSC/ES will not impose any particular self-assessment models and providers may choose a self-assessment process to meet their needs. Arrangements for self-assessment will apply equally to all providers, including providers which contract with more than one local LSC or ES District Office and providers which contract with the National Employer Contracts Service (paragraph 17 refers). The LSC/ES will assess the effectiveness of the providers' self-assessment processes and check that they are being carried out with rigour. The LSC/ES will work closely with providers which need additional support, and will produce guidance to help them establish effective self-assessment practices. General guidance for all providers on the conduct of self-assessment is set out in paragraphs 50-53.

## Role of the LSC and ES

9. Through the robust management of contracts, the LSC/ES will seek to secure from all its providers, agreed volumes, good provision and value for money. The LSC/ES will work closely with key partners, such as the Inspectorates, Awarding Bodies, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the National Training Organisations (NTOs), to ensure that providers raise standards and offer programmes, courses and curricula of excellence.
10. It is a key contractual requirement that the provider produces a self-assessment report and a development plan. The LSC/ES will review the effectiveness of the development plan and meet with the provider to discuss its implementation. The effectiveness of the providers' self-assessment process and development plan will be taken into consideration by the LSC/ES when making decisions about future funding and contracts for the provider. The LSC/ES will:

- ▶ make judgements on the rigour of the providers' self-assessment processes (but will not make judgements on the validity of the providers' gradings)
- ▶ decide whether or not to approve the providers' development plan, agree targets and milestones
- ▶ identify those providers who need help and support to improve their services for learners, and those providers against whom sanctions may need to be applied
- ▶ monitor and review providers' progress in implementing agreed development plans and reaching related targets/milestones
- ▶ identify providers that are achieving excellence, recognise their success and reward them appropriately
- ▶ invest to raise standards
- ▶ monitor providers' compliance with contractual requirements (and related funding requirements)
- ▶ assess providers' performance, taking account of inspection reports, progress towards meeting agreed targets, and evidence that development plans are being implemented
- ▶ provide comparative data on retention and achievement to facilitate benchmarking and stimulate the development and sharing of good practice
- ▶ facilitate cooperative working between providers and support networking activity.

## Role of the Inspectorates

11. The inspectorates will provide an independent public account of the quality of learning, the standards achieved and the efficiency and effectiveness with which resources are managed. They will aim to bring about improvement by identifying strengths and weaknesses and highlighting good practice. Their reports will be an essential source of information on the quality of provision and will help the LSC/ES decide when to intervene to reward providers, give them help and support, or evoke sanctions against them.
12. Inspections will focus primarily on the experiences and expectations of individual learners through the evaluation of:
  - ▶ learners' achievements and standards of work, taking account of learners' prior attainments, and the goals that learners have been set
  - ▶ the quality of teaching, training and learning
  - ▶ other aspects of provision that affect the standards achieved, such as the range, planning and content of courses or programmes, resources and the support for individual learners
  - ▶ the effectiveness of leadership and management of learning, how it is quality assured and improved, and how efficiently resources are used to ensure that the provision gives value for money
  - ▶ the extent to which provision meets the needs of all learners, irrespective of their ability, and promotes equality of opportunity in respect of access and participation to learning and learners' gender, race, age, disabilities and learning difficulties.

## How will the LSC, ES and Inspectorates work together?

13. The inspectorates will work closely with the LSC and ES to promote a culture of self-assessment among providers, leading to continuous improvement and the achievement of excellence and the highest standards.
14. Close working relationships between LSC/ES and the Inspectorates will also be important to ensure that their requirements take full account of the impact on providers in respect of requests for information and evidence collection. To minimise any unnecessary demands on providers, the LSC/ES and the Inspectorates will provide each other with the information they need to plan and conduct their respective business and, wherever possible, these communications will be handled electronically. Similarly, providers will be required to provide their self-assessment report and development plan electronically (paragraph 47 refers). The LSC/ES will make available to the Inspectorates, copies of provider self-assessment reports, development plans and other relevant data. This will reduce the requirement on providers to replicate data when preparing for inspection. It should not then be necessary for providers to submit these documents and data to inspectors prior to the inspection. Providers still have a responsibility, however, to collect and maintain accurate data for use in decision-making.
15. The LSC, the ES and the Inspectorates will also be working together to develop common criteria for determining Value for Money (VFM) to ensure that judgements made across the whole post-16 sector are fair and objective. The LSC/ES will, in due course, publish the criteria and terms of reference to be used when determining the extent of VFM provided.

16. The LSC and ES will work closely together to develop and implement common procedures for gathering information from providers about self-assessment, development planning, target setting and arrangements for quality assurance. The LSC and ES will do all that they can to ensure that the procedures are not bureaucratic and that providers who contract with both organisations, will be able to submit the same set of information to each, wherever practicable.

### **National Providers (for LSC funded provision only)**

17. Providers who contract through the National Employer Contracts Service (NECS) will be required to assess the quality of their provision with the same degree of rigour as those providers contracting with local LSCs. National providers contracting with NECS will be required to carry out self-assessment and produce a self-assessment report and development plan which accurately reflects all areas of their provision. The self-assessment report of national providers should cover the work of staff in every location. The development plan will also need to identify what improvements are required in specific locations as well as for the organisation as a whole.
18. The NECS will be responsible for monitoring, reviewing and assessing provision. They will involve the relevant local LSC in decisions that need to be taken when any local provision falls below an acceptable standard,

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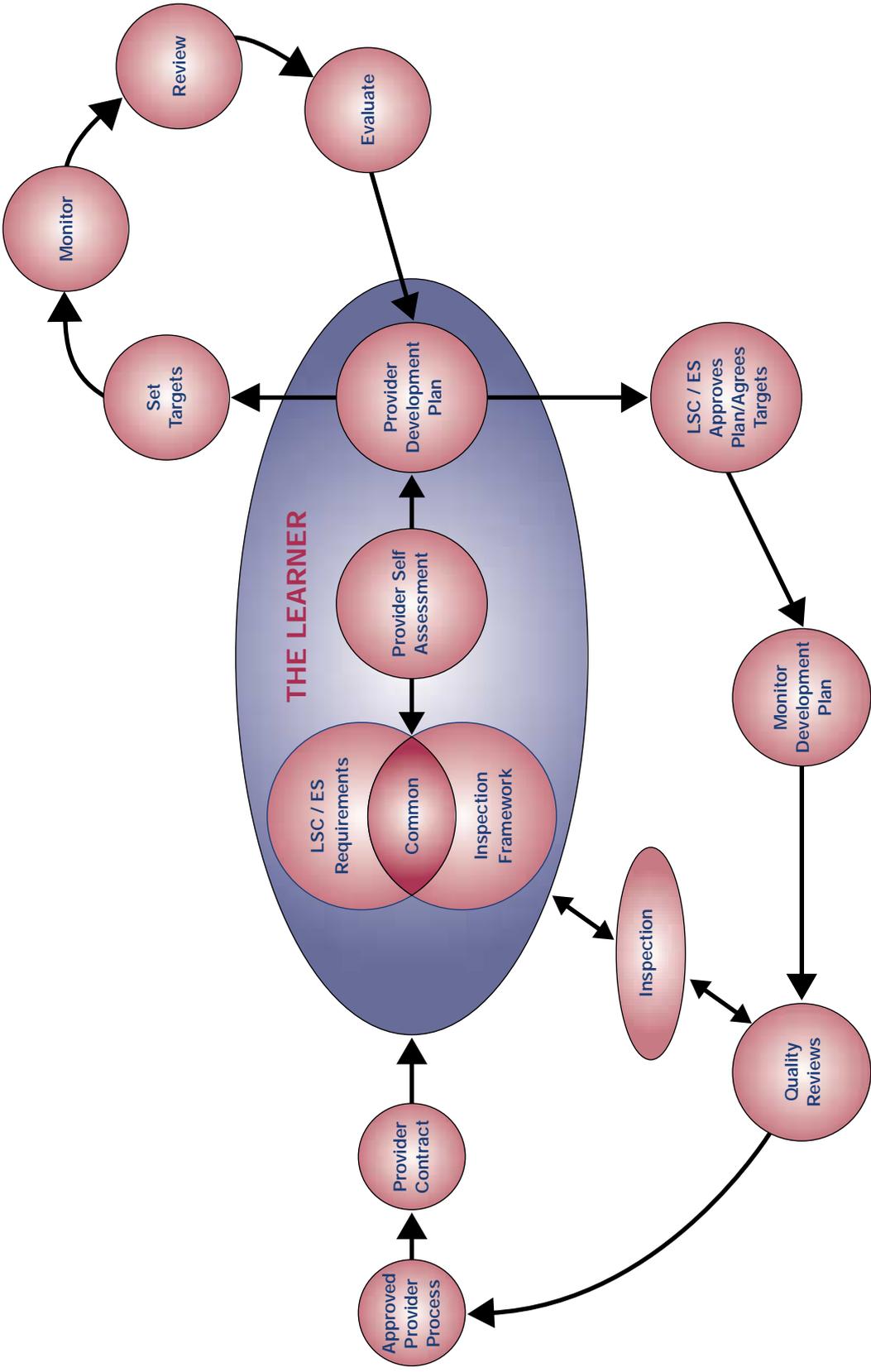
### **School 6th forms**

19. The detailed quality and support arrangements for **school 6th forms** have yet to be determined and are subject to further discussion between the LSC, Local Education Authorities and Ofsted during 2001-02 (paragraph 30 refers).

### **Equality of Opportunity**

20. Arrangements for monitoring the continuous improvement of provision will include evaluation of how providers promote equal opportunities through all aspects of their work. The LSC and ES will work with the Equal Opportunities Commission, Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission and other relevant bodies to ensure that provider, and where appropriate employers, are fully aware of their legal responsibilities to uphold equality of opportunity. They will monitor closely the action providers take to support and encourage equality of access and participation of learning opportunities and close gaps between different groups in learning and job outcomes.

# Provider Continuous Improvement



## INTRODUCING THE NEW ARRANGEMENTS

21. The first year for the new arrangements, which is also the LSC's first year of operations, will be a transitional period during which the new arrangements for self-assessment and inspection will be introduced. The introduction of the ALI will bring about a new direction for ES, using the provider as the **'unit of inspection'**. As set out in the timetable below, during 2001, the ES will continue with the final cycle of Units of Delivery **New Deal 18-24 inspections and reinspections**. These inspections and reinspections will be carried out against the Common Inspection Framework. To help those being reinspected, the ALI has produced a guidance document showing how the quality statements in the Training Standards Council (TSC) publications, *Raising the Standard and Partners for Quality*, relate to the criteria in the Common Inspection Framework.
22. The new quality arrangements set out in this document will be phased in over a period of time to minimise disruption to providers and to allow the LSC and the ES time to establish new systems. These arrangements will be reviewed during 2001 and revised as appropriate, to take into account feedback from providers and operational experience. Accordingly, this publication will be periodically updated to take account of such changes.
23. From April 2001, all providers will be subject to the **LSC/ES requirements** which are aimed at raising standards across post-16 learning. The LSC/ES recognise that some providers will need both time and help to implement the required changes. Furthermore, some providers will be able to improve their performance sooner than others. **The LSC, the ES and the Inspectorates will continue to work together** to develop guidance for providers and establish appropriate support arrangements. The LSC, the ES and the Inspectorates have drawn up a formal agreement (*CONCORDAT*) setting out their respective remits and how they will work together to raise standards in post-16 learning.
24. A key change for providers from 1 April 2001, will be the introduction of the **Common Inspection Framework**. The indicative timescale for implementing inspections against the Common Inspection Framework is:

▶ April 2001	Inspection of work-based learning for young people and The New Deal 18-24 begins
▶ May – July	OfSTED and ALI joint inspections of the first 5 colleges
▶ September	Inspection of all FE colleges on a 4 year cycle begins
▶ October	Pilot inspection for ES provision by provider begins
▶ January 2002	Inspection of learndirect begins
▶ April 2002	Cycle of provider as unit of inspection for ES provision begins
▶ September 2002	Inspection of Adult and Community Learning begins

25. It is acknowledged that **providers will need time to become familiar with self-assessment**, the new inspection arrangements and requirements under the Common Inspection Framework.

26. Between April and the end of September 2001, **providers who already self-assess** may send their current self-assessment reports to the LSC/ES, if requested to do so. After **September 2001**, however, all providers will be expected to carry out self-assessment in accordance with the Common Inspection framework and the requirements of the LSC/ES, using the most up to date performance data available. It is acknowledged that complete data on learner achievements for 2000-01 will not be available to all providers by September 2001. Where this is the case, providers will be required to **adjust their self-assessment reports by the end of March 2002 at the latest**, taking account, as appropriate, of any updated performance data on learner achievements.
27. The LSC/ES requirements for self-assessment, preparation of development plans and preparation for inspection are broadly similar to those of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and the TSC in respect of further education colleges and work-based learning providers. But it is important to emphasise that the **scope of the self-assessment** is different in that it now needs to address the Common Inspection Framework and the LSC/ES requirements (paragraphs 36-38 refer).
28. **Providers, for whom self-assessment and inspection is new** (for example Ufi and LEA funded Adult, Community Learning and ES programme centres), will be given time to take account of arrangements which are being piloted. These providers will be encouraged to complete self-assessments as soon as practicable during 2001-02 and are required to **submit their self-assessment reports and development plans to the LSC/ES by the end of March 2002, at the latest**.
29. Further **guidance and support** for providers will be given by the LSC/ES in collaboration with the Inspectorates and through the work of other key partners such as the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA), the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), the Basic Skills Agency, NTOs and local Lifelong Learning Partnerships.
30. From April 2002, the LSC will take on responsibility for funding **school sixth forms**. The LSC will not however directly monitor school sixth form provision. Detailed quality and support arrangements for school sixth forms have yet to be determined. The LSC will discuss with Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and OfSTED the way the arrangements for raising standards in post-16 learning will operate for schools with sixth forms. The LSC will draw on OfSTED reports for information on the quality of provision in sixth forms. Once the details have been finalised, the LSC will issue guidance to LEAs and schools with sixth forms about the quality monitoring and support arrangements for 2002/03 onwards.

## Background

31. This guidance has been written in consultation with the ALI and OfSTED. It complements the Common Inspection Framework which sets out the principles of inspection of post-16 non-higher education and training. This guidance draws extensively upon the lessons learned from the cycle of FEFC college inspections and the inspection of work-based learning and New Deal carried out by TSC.
32. The White Paper '*Learning To Succeed*', the *LSC Prospectus* and the *Raising Standards in Post-16 Learning* made reference to the Government's commitment to invest in post-16 learning and the need to raise standards and ensure the consistent pursuit of excellence through post-16 provision. The LSC/ES aims to develop and build, over time, a coherent and highly effective strategy for monitoring the continuous improvement of all post-16 learning and in a way that minimises bureaucracy on providers.
33. The new arrangements have been designed to ensure that the interests of the learner come first and are of paramount importance. In order to achieve the objective of **placing the learner at the heart of the system**:
- ▶ all providers will be subject to the same degree of rigour in assessing the quality of their provision
  - ▶ all providers will be expected to seek continuous improvements in the quality of their provision and maintain the highest of standards
  - ▶ the arrangements will be fit for their purpose and applied flexibly to take account of learner needs in a diversity of contexts
  - ▶ providers who deliver high quality provision will be rewarded
  - ▶ sanctions will be imposed upon providers failing to achieve improvements within a reasonable timescale
  - ▶ bureaucracy will be kept to a minimum, consistent with safeguarding public funds
  - ▶ the future arrangements will build on existing good practices and will develop in line with the continuous improvement principles
  - ▶ that policies for equality of access to learning and for ensuring equality of learning and job outcomes are integral to the new arrangements.
34. The LSC, as part of its Corporate Plan, will publish a **Quality Improvement Strategy** setting out its priorities for raising standards. **The ES has published a Quality Framework** which will be the basis of its approach to maintaining and improving quality in ES funded learning provision from April 2001.
35. The LSC/ES will, where appropriate, help providers to comply with the new quality assurance requirements. For example, some providers have staff with modest qualifications or no qualifications at all. Whilst recognising some of these staff are excellent and innovative teachers, the LSC will give them support and encouragement to gain appropriate qualifications and thereby further their professional development.

## LSC AND ES QUALITY IMPROVEMENT: SCOPE OF THE PROVIDER SELF- ASSESSMENT

36. The requirements set out below relate to provision funded by the LSC/ES from April 2001. **The Common Inspection Framework will form the basis of these requirements and is central to the model for raising standards.** Providers will need to refer to the Inspection Handbooks and ensure that their self-assessment answers all the key questions set out in the Common Inspection Framework.
37. The LSC/ES will require providers to address, through their self-assessments, **related aspects of quality and financial probity** which are set out in the table below. To help providers carry out their self-assessment, the table shows how the LSC/ES quality requirements and financial probity relate to the key questions under the Common Inspection Framework.
38. The LSC/ES will issue, in due course, further guidance for providers on meeting these related aspects of quality and financial probity. The LSC/ES will review these requirements during 2001-02 taking into account planned research & development work, feedback from providers and operational experience. The LSC will, in discussion and agreement with key partners, issue separate annual guidance to providers, to take account of new priorities and/or targets that are agreed as part of the LSC's national quality improvement strategy. The LSC/ES will expect providers to take account of specific issues arising from the Inspectorate annual reports.

### SCOPE OF THE PROVIDER SELF- ASSESSMENT

#### Achievement and Standards

The Common Inspection Framework focuses on:

##### **1. How well do learners achieve ?**

In respect of this key question, the LSC/ES will require providers to:

Maintain accurate **performance data** to demonstrate that they are minimising drop out rates, delivering high completion and achievement rates, and ensuring appropriate progression to employment or other learning.

## SCOPE OF THE PROVIDER SELF- ASSESSMENT

### Quality of Education and Training

The Common Inspection Framework focuses on:

#### 2. How effective are teaching, training and learning?

#### 3. How are achievement and learning affected by resources?

In respect of this key question, the LSC will require providers to:

Report progress to the LSC on meeting the new requirements for all staff to have minimum qualifications. These requirements stipulate that:

- ▶ from September 2001, **all new unqualified teachers** who become employed to teach an FE course leading to a nationally recognised qualification at an FE college are required to hold, or work towards and achieve in a specified time, a recognised teaching qualification based on the FENTO standards, appropriate to their role.

*(Notes: 1. There will not be a requirement for existing teachers who are unqualified to take a qualification, but support will be given for tailored professional development, again based around the FENTO standards or appropriate equivalents*

*2. The FENTO standards will not be appropriate to learndirect learning*

*3. It is intended that work-based learning provider's staff will need to become qualified against FENTO standards or appropriate equivalents)*

- ▶ all teachers employed to **teach basic skills** in an FE college will be required to hold, or work towards and achieve in a specified time, a specialist basic skills qualification.

Both the LSC and ES will require providers to:

- ▶ have an up-to date **plan for the professional development and training of all its staff** (including managers and volunteers), and clear timescales for implementation
- ▶ ensure that the concept of **'the safe worker'** is promoted within all learning programmes
- ▶ conduct regular checks across their provision and set out Health & Safety improvement action as an integral part of the development plan
- ▶ have active systems in place to ensure that risks to learners are identified and reduced to the lowest practicable level
- ▶ instigate systems for discovery and **reporting and recording of accidents to learners**, investigate such accidents, analyse incidents and organise appropriate prevention measures

#### 4. How effective are the assessment and monitoring of learning?

#### 5. How well do the programmes and courses meet the needs and interests of learners?

#### 6. How well are learners guided and supported ?

## SCOPE OF THE PROVIDER SELF- ASSESSMENT

### Leadership and Management

The Common Inspection Framework focuses on:

#### **7. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?**

In respect of this key question, the LSC/ES will require providers to:

- ▶ ensure that all learners receive a statement of their **Learning Entitlement** and understand their responsibilities as learners:  
*(Notes: 1. The LSC and the ES will specify the common core requirements for all parties involved. Providers will have discretion to decide how these should be conveyed to learners and employers in the light of local circumstances.  
2. Arrangements for receiving feedback, including complaints, from learners and customers will be established for both the LSC and providers).*
- ▶ take account of the LSC's quality improvement strategy and targets relating to self-assessment and development plans
- ▶ introduce and implement national and local priorities, including changes to curriculum/subject areas eg Basic Skills, Key Skills, etc within agreed timescales
- ▶ ensure systematic and regular management review of the continuous improvement process
- ▶ confirm that corporate governance is in accordance with statutory obligations and current best practice (including Companies Acts, charities legislation)
- ▶ maintain good working relationships with the LSC/ES
- ▶ maintain good working relationships with key partners and customers, participating as appropriate, in developing and promoting good practice with other organisations, including other providers
- ▶ have effective systems for gathering feedback, including customer surveys, **learner satisfaction surveys** and **leaver surveys** and act upon the feedback to make improvements
- ▶ **promote equality of opportunity through every aspect of their operation and, in particular, ensure access, participation and closing equality gaps in learning and job outcomes by:**
  - ▶ taking specific action to recruit learners from groups under-represented on courses and programmes
  - ▶ setting targets to increase access and participation to learning from under-represented groups, to close equality gaps in learning and job outcomes
  - ▶ reporting progress to the LSC/ES on meeting these targets
  - ▶ identifying strengths and weaknesses in the promotion of equal opportunities and report on these in the self-assessment report
  - ▶ ensuring that development planning includes ways of improving the promotion of equal opportunities.

## SCOPE OF THE PROVIDER SELF- ASSESSMENT

### Leadership and Management (CONT)

The Common Inspection Framework focuses on:

#### **7. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?**

In respect of this key question, the LSC/ES will require providers to:

- ▶ **Demonstrate financial probity and value for money by:**
  - ▶ ensuring funding claims are valid and submitted to the LSC/ES in accordance with LSC/ES guidance
  - ▶ producing clear evidence of the proper use of funds
  - ▶ maintaining sound internal controls
  - ▶ comparing their performance with that of other providers and gathering feedback from customers, learners and employers, to ascertain that they are providing value for money.

## SELF- ASSESSMENT PROCESS

39. Rigorous self-assessment enables providers to identify their strengths and weaknesses. All staff should be committed to carrying out self-assessment thoroughly and objectively. It is essential that self-assessment is complemented by development planning to rectify weaknesses, build on strengths and implement other improvements identified by the self-assessment process. No changes will occur as a result of self-assessment unless this information is acted upon. Providers must therefore ensure that effective and systematic cycles of planning, implementation and evaluation are in place.
40. Providers are required to carry out a comprehensive **self-assessment across the whole of their provision at least once a year**. They should produce an annual self-assessment report which clearly identifies the strengths and weaknesses in provision. This report should be complemented by a development plan which clearly identifies areas of provision where improvement is needed. The LSC/ES will not prescribe dates or timescales for the self-assessment process. Providers will be given the discretion to **carry out the self-assessment at a point in the year which best fits with their strategic and operational planning cycle**. The provider should inform the LSC/ES on the timetable that it is working to, so that both parties can plan the related monitoring and review arrangements.
41. The use of grades to summarise judgements is an established part of inspection that will continue. Providers will be **required to grade their provision** using the evaluative statements published by the inspectorates and record their grades in the self-assessment report. Providers are required to **use the five-point numerical scale** for everything except lesson observation in colleges.
42. The primary function of provider's grading their own provision is to inform themselves on the standard of their provision. Providers may find it helpful to undertake peer assessment or other external verification when conducting their self-assessment and gradings. The gradings will also provide an important indicator of quality when the LSC/ES reviews performance with providers in the intervening years between inspection. Any **gap between the provider self-assessed grades and those of inspection will also be a key qualitative measure**.
43. In the year of inspection, the inspection gradings and feedback from the Inspectorates will form a significant source of the evidence that the LSC/ES will use in making their judgements. Inspection grades alone, however, will not decide funding allocations to providers. Other key factors will also need to be taken into account, such as the value-added elements in learners' achievements, the extent to which learners achieve their goals and feedback from customers.
44. The **LSC/ES will not prescribe any standard method for carrying out self-assessment** as it is acknowledged that there is no standard approach that will necessarily work well for all types of organisation. Providers may wish to draw on features from effective self-assessment processes outlined in paragraphs 50-53.

45. Providers should ensure that their self-assessment process is an integral part of their strategic and operational planning and is not a bolt-on activity. Providers should also draw on experience of effective business improvement practices such as those associated with the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Business Excellence Model, Investor in People, ISO9000, Charter Mark, etc. Providers are expected to state in their self-assessment reports, any external standards that they are working towards or have achieved.
46. Although the LSC/ES will not prescribe the methods by which self-assessment should be conducted, they will seek to ensure that best practice is adopted and that providers have access to good quality guidance and advice. The LSC/ES will, over time, produce guides on **good practice** in post-16 learning. The LSC will work closely with the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and other bodies to arrange training events and to facilitate networking between providers, in order that they may share ideas and good practice.
47. **Providers will be asked to submit to the LSC/ES, the latest version of their self-assessment report and development plan, either electronically via email or by sending on a disk**, within agreed timescales, to fit with the regular provider performance reviews. The LSC/ES staff will advise providers on the appropriate formats for electronic transfer or using disks. Providers will therefore need to keep their self-assessments up to date and ensure that progress against development plans is regularly reviewed during the year. Providers may be asked to provide evidence to substantiate self-assessment judgements.
48. The provider will need to demonstrate that it has an effective and rigorous continuous improvement processes and that their development plan provides a sound basis for raising standards. Where the LSC/ES judges a development plan to be inadequate, the provider will be required to discuss with the LSC/ES how the deficiencies will be rectified. **The LSC/ES will work closely with the provider, offering support** as appropriate to help them address any issues that have been identified. The LSC/ES will, however, invoke sanctions against providers who fail to rectify weaknesses adequately within agreed timescales.
49. Providers will be inspected on a four year cycle. In the year of inspection, the LSC/ES will provide the Inspectorates with the latest version of the provider's self-assessment report and development plan. Providers will not have to produce a separate self-assessment report for inspectors, although they may wish to give them an updated version of their existing self-assessment report.

## LSC AND ES CRITERIA FOR JUDGING THE QUALITY AND RIGOUR OF SELF-ASSESSMENTS

50. **The criteria that the LSC/ES will use to judge the quality of the provider self-assessment process** has been derived from comparable criteria used by inspectors and the funding bodies. The provider will need to demonstrate that it has:

- ▶ encouraged staff at all levels in the organisation, including sub-contractors and employers, to evaluate their performance and identify areas for improvement
- ▶ involved the learners in the self-assessment process through structured surveys, questionnaires or inviting learners to participate as members of the self-assessment team or other means e.g. regular consultative committees

- ▶ made effective use of performance data, including national benchmarks and management information
- ▶ dealt adequately with all aspects of the organisation's activity and, in particular, focused on the quality of learners' experiences and the standards they achieve
- ▶ carried out self-assessment honestly and objectively, using agreed criteria for identifying strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement
- ▶ substantiated self-assessment judgements with clear evidence, including use of any third party evaluations e.g. external verifier reports
- ▶ arranged for the self-assessment report to be approved by chief executive, principal or director and endorsed, where appropriate, by the governing body or board members
- ▶ ensured that self-assessment is an integral part of strategic and operational planning and quality assurance arrangements
- ▶ ensured that self-assessment leads to action in the development plan, or in the year of inspection, the post-inspection action plan.

## FORMAT OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

51. The LSC/ES will **not prescribe a standard format for the self-assessment report**, recognising that providers may wish to produce their report in a format that best suits their organisation. The structure of the self-assessment report should, as far as possible, be similar to that of **published inspection reports**.
52. Providers are required to produce one self-assessment report for the whole organisation and for all its provision. The self-assessment and development plan will need to take account of standards in specific locations as well as the organisation as a whole.
53. Providers should take account of experience drawn from current good practice on producing self-assessment reports. The best self-assessment reports:
  - ▶ evaluate, identifying strengths and weaknesses, rather than describe provision
  - ▶ are honest and objective and deal even-handedly with weaknesses as well as strengths
  - ▶ focus on teaching and learning, and learners' achievements
  - ▶ contain clear evidence to substantiate firm judgments, such as accurate data on learners' achievements and performance with trends analysed over time
  - ▶ take account of the views of learners', employers and other customers
  - ▶ are written in plain English.
54. The LSC/ES will work with providers and national bodies to identify and disseminate good practice in self-assessment and in the writing of self-assessment reports.

## DEVELOPMENT PLANS

55. If it is to be effective, a provider's self-assessment must lead to actions that improve the quality of their provision. Most organisations conducting self-assessment will generate many areas for improvement. Some action can be quick and simple. Other action, however, may have cost implications and will require careful planning. It is, therefore, important that providers prioritise action for improvement on the basis of:

- ▶ taking forward those areas for improvement which are paramount to the learner and need to be addressed immediately
- ▶ consolidating strengths
- ▶ rectifying weaknesses promptly
- ▶ identifying areas for improvement to pursue in the long term and for which careful planning is essential.

56. Unplanned action to address every issue and rectify every weakness identified through self-assessment may prove counter-productive and have an adverse effect upon staff morale. It is important, therefore, that providers have a well-considered development plan. A well-considered development plan can serve to motivate staff and give a clear sense of direction to their work.

57. **Providers are required, each year, to produce a development plan and submit this to the LSC/ES with their self-assessment report.** The development plan must explicitly link to all actions arising from self-assessment against the Common Inspection Framework and the LSC/ES requirements. The **structure of the Development Plan should be in tabular format** and set out:

- ▶ areas requiring improvement
- ▶ targets for improvements
- ▶ specific actions required to achieve the necessary improvements (including costings for actions where appropriate)
- ▶ a clear statement of the expected outcomes of specific actions
- ▶ criteria for judging whether actions have been carried out successfully
- ▶ who is responsible for ensuring that actions are carried out
- ▶ the priority given to each action
- ▶ timescales for the completion of actions with milestones where appropriate
- ▶ arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on progress
- ▶ dates by which actions have to be completed and outcomes achieved
- ▶ the extent of involvement of key partners in drawing up the plan, and in the subsequent reviews and evaluation of its effectiveness.

58. The provider development plan will need to take account of **national and local priorities** such as those relating to basic skills, widening participation, etc.
59. Providers will have to submit their development plan to the LSC/ES for approval. The LSC/ES will develop and **publish its criteria for approving plans and also details on the approval process**. The LSC/ES may require amendments to plans, as a condition of approval. The LSC and the ES will work closely together to develop common practices and to ensure that the approval criteria are applied with consistency. As part of the approval process, **the LSC/ES will discuss and agree targets and milestones** specified in the development plan. They will also agree arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of the plan's implementation and arrangements for reviewing progress.
60. In cases where the development plan is not approved, the LSC/ES will write to the provider setting out what further work is needed to bring the development plan up to the required standard. If the provider fails to produce an acceptable development plan within agreed timescales, the LSC/ES will implement appropriate sanctions.
61. **Progress against agreed development plans** will be discussed as part of the regular LSC/ES monitoring arrangements (see paragraphs 77-82). The LSC/ES will judge whether the development plan has been delivered and has been effective in bringing about improvements. Where the LSC/ES judge that the plan has not been implemented effectively, the provider will be required to explain in detail how improvements will be achieved. The LSC/ES will work closely with the provider to help bring performance and progress back on track. Sanctions, however, will be evoked against those providers who fail to make sufficient progress in implementing their development plans within agreed timescales.
62. **Updating development plans following inspection** - providers (including those not in scope for re-inspection) will be required to update their development plan within two months of the publication of an inspection report and take account of inspection findings as appropriate.

## RE-INSPECTION

63. **Re-inspection:** Provision which is judged less than satisfactory (i.e. graded 4 or 5) will be re-inspected, and may also be subject to monitoring inspections. The scope of the re-inspection will depend on the seriousness of the weaknesses. From 1 April 2001, underperforming providers subject to re-inspection will fall into one of two categories:

- ▶ Full re-inspection of all aspects of provision will take place where provision is inadequate. The assessment that provision is inadequate is a matter for the inspectorates. As a guide, this will normally arise where one third or more of the curriculum/occupational area of provision is less than satisfactory or where there is a less than satisfactory standard of leadership and management.
- ▶ In all other cases, there will be a partial re-inspection which will be confined to those aspects of the provision that were less than satisfactory.
- ▶ All re-inspections will take place within two years; the inspectorates will set the timing. Providers may request an early re-inspection. In such cases, the inspectorates will seek advice from the LSC/ES.

## POST-INSPECTION ACTION PLANS

- 64. Post-inspection action plans for providers who are in scope for re-inspection** - following inspection, providers in scope for re-inspection, will be required to produce a post-inspection action plan to take account of specific issues raised by inspection, within two months of the published report. The two months is intended as the maximum time allowed. In practice, providers will be expected to start work on their action plans immediately following the feedback meeting with the Inspectors. The post-inspection action plan should be produced as a separate document and attached as a supplement to the provider development plan. The post-inspection action plan should be produced in tabular format using the same format as the development plan (paragraph 57 refers).
- 65.** LSC/ES staff will **attend the post-inspection meetings** between the provider's staff and inspectors. The LSC/ES will work closely with the provider to develop the post-inspection action plan and will be responsible for approving these plans, taking advice from the Inspectorates as necessary. The LSC/ES will monitor the implementation of agreed actions in the plan.

## EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS

- 66. After re-inspection**, providers who are awarded satisfactory grades will return to the normal cycle of four-yearly inspection. The decision on whether a provider moves out of either re-inspection category rests solely with the Inspectorates. If a provider does not obtain satisfactory grades at re-inspection, the Inspectorates will meet with the LSC/ES to consider what action is required. The LSC/ES may decide to work with these providers. They will agree an **Emergency Plan** with the provider to accelerate the rectifying of weaknesses. The LSC/ES will closely monitor implementation of the Emergency Plan, which should, normally, be implemented in full within six months of the re-inspection. Where the LSC/ES judge that the Emergency Plan has been effective, the provider will return to the normal cycle of reviews.
- 67.** If the LSC/ES judge that the emergency action plan has not brought about the required improvements in provision, they will then decide whether to withhold funding from the provider concerned, either fully or in part. Under the *Learning and Skills Act, 2000*, the LSC has reserve powers to: make proposals for closure of an inadequate school sixth form or LEA maintained 16-19 institution; to put in place new governors at FE colleges; withhold funding from providers.

## TARGET SETTING

68. The LSC/ES will work together to determine appropriate targets for all providers. In the meantime, providers will continue to work towards reaching the targets stipulated in their contracts from April 2001. For example, ES providers will have job performance targets set out in their contract. **Time will be needed to establish baseline performance data across post-16 provision** before new targets are introduced.
69. The LSC/ES will expect to see year on year improvement, or maintenance where high performance levels have already been attained. As a general rule, providers should set themselves annual targets. Generally these should include **targets for learners' recruitment, retention and achievements**. The targets should be realistic and providers should take relevant benchmarking data into account when determining them. The LSC/ES will discuss targets with providers and ask them to justify those which appear to be unrealistic or insufficiently demanding when compared with performance levels for the sector.
70. The LSC/ES will help providers to frame their targets, particularly in respect of those providers which have little or no experience of setting targets.
71. The LSC will monitor standards across post-16 learning and later this year, will publish proposals for national targets as part of its three-year corporate plan (*The LSC will publish a consultation document on its corporate plan in the Spring 2001, including proposals for national outcome targets*).

### The use of Provider Performance Indicators

72. The LSC/ES will establish, over time, key performance indicators for all of post-16 learning. **A range of indicators will be developed to reflect the diverse range of provision across post-16.** Many providers, such as further education colleges, external institutions and ES providers, already have performance indicators and they should continue to use these. Although there may need to be some modifications or additions in order to ensure consistency across all of post-16 learning. For other providers, for example in community-based provision, the LSC will work closely to develop an appropriate and complementary set of indicators.
73. **Further development and research work is needed** to develop the full range of indicators to enable, for example, 'like with like' comparisons and value-added judgements to be made particularly where there are no qualification outcomes. This development work will also need to ensure the robustness and comparability of data; ensure that targets do not adversely distort behaviour; do not sacrifice quality for quantity; and provide contextual information and guidance to help users interpret the performance data.
74. The performance indicators the LSC/ES will establish are expected to include:
  - ▶ learners' achievement rates (such as qualifications, jobs or other specified learner outcomes)
  - ▶ extent of learners' individual achievements (i.e. the distance travelled or the "value-added" factor)
  - ▶ learners' recruitment retention and participation rates
  - ▶ proportion of learners progressing to employment or further learning

- ▶ proportion of learners from groups under-represented in post-16 learning
- ▶ inspection grades
- ▶ incidence of accidents at learning or at work
- ▶ learners', employer and other relevant parties satisfaction rates
- ▶ incidence of complaints
- ▶ value for money.

## Benchmarking

75. Benchmarking will play an important role in the self-assessment process. Benchmarking enables providers to compare their performance with others, providing an external perspective for setting realistic improvement targets. It also enables the LSC/ES to rank the performance of providers. Benchmarking is becoming more widely used across all sectors and is now considered a valuable management tool in colleges of further education. It is acknowledged, however, that benchmarking will be new to many providers. **Over time, the LSC/ES will help these providers understand and use benchmarks**, by providing relevant benchmarking data and performance information. It is also recognised that benchmarks may not necessarily exist for some areas of post-16 learning, such as some aspects of adult and community learning and that research will be needed to help them.
76. The LSC/ES will work with national partners to develop and disseminate common benchmarks for all providers, **building on existing best practice** across the sector. For example, LSDA has been working closely with colleges to develop their benchmarking capacity and have published good practice guidance for colleges.

## MONITORING AND REVIEW

### LSC/ES Monitoring

77. The LSC and ES will, over time, work together to develop common approaches to **monitoring visits**, alignment of review timetables where practicable and sharing of data. This is in recognition of the importance of reducing bureaucracy on providers and to ensure consistency in approach between both organisations. Some aspects of assurance will be unique to the particular programmes funded and will require a high level of specialist knowledge that the other body will not need to have. Other monitoring activities may have considerable overlap. The LSC/ES will develop protocols for the conduct of monitoring activities and further guidance will be issued to providers.
78. From April 2001, LSC/ES will visit providers **regularly to monitor** the implementation of development plans and progress towards reaching agreed targets and milestones. During these visits, providers will have the opportunity to discuss quality assurance issues with LSC/ES staff. In turn, LSC/ES staff will identify any help and support providers may need. The outcomes from these will be used by the LSC/ES to inform the provider review process. The LSC/ES staff, or parties acting on their behalf, will also visit providers to monitor the effectiveness and probity of providers' financial management.
79. The nature and frequency of the monitoring **visits will vary depending on the risk and issues identified** and will be subject to discussion and agreement between LSC/ES and the provider. As a minimum, LSC/ES staff will usually visit the provider two or three times a year. LSC/ES will wish to visit those providers with no apparent level of concern, to identify excellence and innovative approaches that can be shared with other providers who are experiencing difficulties.
80. The monitoring activity carried out by LSC/ES staff will not overlap with, or duplicate, the work of the Inspectorates. LSC/ES staff will not advise the provider on self-assessment grades. They will, however, comment on, and make judgements about, the range and validity of evidence used to substantiate judgements made in the self-assessment report. LSC/ES staff will only discuss the provider self-assessment report in the context of quality assurance and the production of the development plan.
81. As part of their monitoring activity, LSC/ES staff will meet learners, and the staff of providers and subcontractors. These visits will provide opportunities for LSC/ES staff to familiarise themselves with the provider delivery arrangements.
82. As part of the contract management and maintenance activity, the LSC/ES will meet with providers to discuss and review all aspects of their performance. Providers will be encouraged to enter into open and regular dialogue with the LSC/ES on issues which concern them. They will be invited to suggest how their working relationship with the LSC/ES might be improved, and to raise problems over contracts and agreements.

## Provider Reviews

- 83.** The LSC and the ES will carry out regular **provider reviews**. The purpose of these reviews is to assess provider performance as a whole, to establish progress against requirements of the funding agreements and to encourage continuous improvement in the quality of provision. The reviews will take account of a wide range of evidence about providers, drawn from self-assessment reports, progress on development plans, performance data, reports from examining and awarding bodies, the monitoring of financial management and inspection findings.
- 84.** The LSC/ES will judge the respective performance of providers, and identify those providers who need help and support, and whose performance gives cause for concern and the use of special measures. Providers will be informed, on a confidential basis, of the main findings of their reviews. Where appropriate, these reviews will be conducted jointly between the LSC and ES. The LSC/ES will develop procedures for managing the provider review process and further guidance will be issued to providers.

## Provider Review Findings

- 85.** The LSC/ES will take findings from the reviews into account when deciding on intervention to reward providers or to evoke sanctions against them. Providers will be rated according to the quality of their performance. The LSC/ES will, in due course, issue guidance on the review process and will notify providers of the rating scales.

## Recognising and Rewarding High Performers

- 86.** Awards to providers whose performance is judged to be excellent will not be made until 2002-03 at the earliest, thereby allowing time for the LSC/ES to build up relationships with providers, arrangements for monitoring provider' performance to establish themselves, and inspection evidence to become available.
- 87.** Further work will be undertaken to develop the criteria for rewarding providers of excellence and to define the rewards and recognition arrangements.
- 88.** Colleges which were awarded accredited status by FEFC will be included in the first round of inspections under the Common Inspection Framework. There will be no new awards of accredited status from April 2001.

## INVESTING IN QUALITY

### Standards Fund

- 89.** The LSC will inherit separate systems for investing in quality. Colleges of further education have been supported from the FE Standards Fund, LEA adult and community education from a small element of the Schools Standards Fund, and work-based learning providers from TEC discretionary funding. As a transitional measure, the current FE standards fund, and arrangements for Adult and Community Learning, will continue to operate in 2001-02 and the LSC initiative fund will be available to support the development of standards in work-based learning. The LSC will develop a unified system for funding standards in post-16 learning, to operate from 2002-03.

## GOOD PRACTICE

90. A key role for the LSC/ES is to support providers in the development of their provision through identifying and developing good practice and ensuring that it is disseminated effectively. The LSC/ES will support and secure the provision of quality networks, conferences and workshops to facilitate the sharing of good practice. The LSC/ES will inform providers on the arrangements for supporting good practice as part of the ongoing monitoring and review process. Providers will be expected to share good practice with one another and work collaboratively with other organisations to raise standards.
91. The LSC/ES will work with their many key partners, such as LSDA, NIACE and NTOs, to promote good practice amongst providers. The LSDA will cover the whole scope of post-16 learning in terms of research and development and the professional development of staff. The Agency will offer consultancy, issue publications and organise training events and networks covering activities such as:

- ▶ developing rigorous quality assurance systems, including self-assessment
- ▶ benchmarking
- ▶ preparation of self-assessment reports
- ▶ devising and implementation of development plans.







Copies of this publication can be obtained from:

The local offices of the Learning and Skills Council

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**INVESTOR IN PEOPLE**