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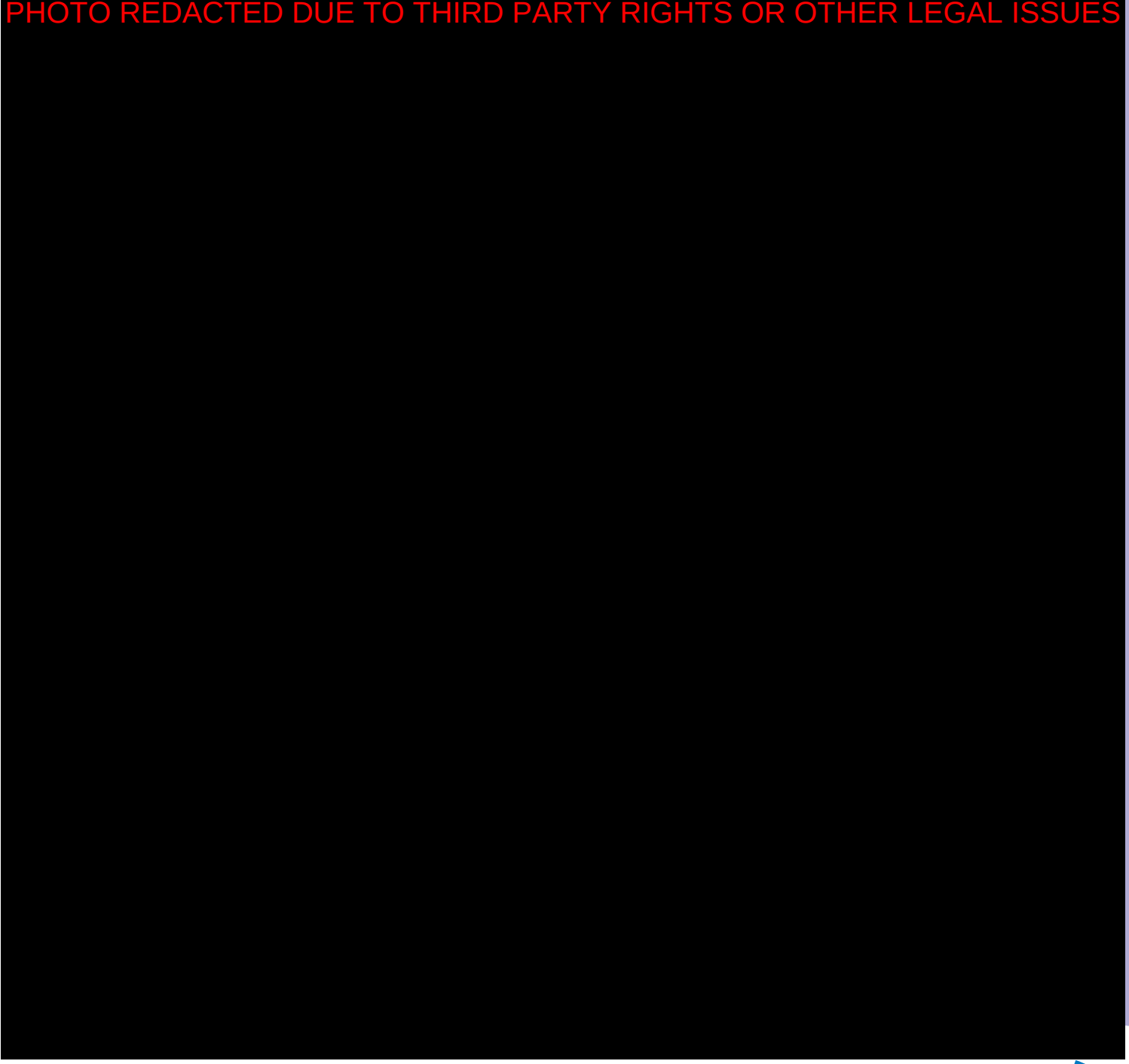
Orientation Guidance for Qualified Teachers Entering Further Education

England

LIFELONG LEARNING UK

Skills for Learning Professionals



LIFELONG LEARNING UK

Skills for Learning Professionals

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Introduction

Why do we need Orientation Guidance?

What usually happens when someone who is already a qualified teacher starts working in the further education (FE) sector? Is it largely assumed that their existing professional training equips them automatically for their new teaching role? Does the provider organisation's induction fully meet their needs or are there some important gaps in knowledge and understanding that need to be filled? If so, what might be an appropriate and useful way of addressing those gaps?

The answers to these questions are based on a research and consultative exercise undertaken on behalf of Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK). The research involved analysing the differences between the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and the Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) professional standards, undertaking extensive interviews with stakeholders and practitioners and gathering data through an online survey. From this it emerged that there were indeed some significant gaps as well as a great deal of consensus about what the gaps were. In short, there was unequivocal support for some kind of orientation module that would facilitate the entry of qualified teachers into FE.

What is it for?

This Guidance document is designed to supplement the generic process of induction and to provide support to an orientation module which sits within a framework of units leading to nationally recognised qualifications to support professional development. The need to provide a supplement to induction and give support for the transition of teachers who already have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) was identified by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS).

The Orientation Guidance is based on a person centred approach which aims to encourage practitioners and managers to reflect on the rich and varied experiences people bring to the sector from their previous professional experience. It is designed to help them identify areas where they might have gaps in their knowledge or need to build on their existing skills in new ways to meet the unfamiliar demands of the FE environment.

Each section of the Orientation Guidance has a common format and is linked wherever possible to the relevant standards. It contains a reflective exercise and a summary of key issues relating to the topic area. We have used quotations from practitioners wherever we thought they might help to illustrate actual experiences within FE of general relevance. Further sources of information and support are listed at the end.

In the course of developing the Orientation Guidance we have been regularly reminded of just how complex and challenging the FE sector is, and how its future development and success will need critical and creative thinkers. These challenges are due to the significant policy changes, the patchiness of resources in a sector that is widely recognised as the 'poor relation' and the general shifting of reality in times of rapid change. This has led us to include in each section a 'provocation' – a series of questions designed to challenge, provoke and stimulate further thinking and discussion.

Who is it for?

Although the primary target audience for this Orientation Guidance is qualified teachers who have transferred into the FE sector on a part time (sessional and/or fractional contracts) and full time basis, we hope that managers and those involved in recruitment and selection may also find it useful. The Guidance highlights just what relevant attributes and experience qualified teachers can bring to the sector and describes a reflective professional development journey that starts from the strengths and needs of each individual.

How can it be used?

The Guide can:

- be given to practitioners to read and reflect on before a more formal introduction to their induction and personal CPD programme
- be used to support any appropriate mentoring relationships
- provide a focus for peer support or learning sets
- provide the underpinning structure for an orientation module with optional accreditation
- provide background information for those involved in recruitment and selection
- signpost people to further sources of information to develop their understanding of the key issues

Building on Professional Development and Licence to Practise

The Guidance document can be used as a starting point for individuals to think about their own unique professional development plan. It provides a structure for initial reflection only. It is not a substitute for a comprehensive process of induction, nor is it 'a quick fix' to address staff development needs.

All the quotations and the examples used have been drawn from interviews with practitioners, managers and those responsible for planning initial teacher training courses. Many of those we interviewed had worked in the schools sector as well as in further education. Their experience comes from colleges, work based learning (WBL) providers and adult and community learning (ACL). A full list of contributors can be found in the appendices.

The expectation that from September 2007 employees in the sector will undertake at least 30 hours a year of continuing professional development (CPD) informs the statutory context for the development of the Orientation Guidance. It is suggested by the Institute for Learning (IfL) that effective CPD practice incorporates the use of peer review in the planning, implementation and evaluation of impact on practice. You will find many references to peer processes in the sector throughout this Guidance.

This Orientation Guidance has drawn on the voices of practitioners we interviewed and their commitment to the sector. These stimulating and reassuring reflections are based in everyday experience and should inspire those coming into the sector to both value the skills they bring and to be open to new opportunities for professional development.

Structure and Content of the Orientation Guidance

This Guidance is organised in six sections dealing with the following topics:

- Reflective Practice
- Further Education – Policy Framework and Funding
- Access and Progression
- Diversity of Learners
- Teaching and Learning
- Assessment

Each section follows a common format which covers:

- Brief introductory explanation of the section
- Reflection on the differences between the TDA and LLUK professional standards and their implications for the FE tutor in that context
- The LLUK professional standards that apply to the section
- Information describing key aspects relating to the relevant topic under different headings
- Suggestions of things to think about and do
- Provocation – questions designed to stimulate further interest and learning on the topic

Section 1
Reflective Practice and CPD

In this section we explain why reflective practice and CPD are essential in the FE sector for learners, teachers and organisations. Below are the relevant LLUK professional standards and we begin by reflecting on the difference between these and comparable standards of the TDA.

It is in this area of professional reflective practice that the best in both sectors could usefully complement each other. On the one hand, the schools sector has developed the effective use of mentoring and coaching. On the other, there is some excellent practice in FE in the use of peer led quality improvement strategies that support individual continuing professional development. The strengths of practice in both sectors create a rich diversity of experience to draw upon.

The two sets of professional standards actually cover very similar terrain. They share a focus in relation to three particular areas: reflection and evaluation of your own practice; acting upon the advice and feedback from mentoring and coaching; and having up to date knowledge of your specialist area. But they also differ in significant ways with the LLUK overarching professional standards which stress the importance of having an outward focus; the use of peer led teams and the need to keep pace with the environment of rapid change.

'The reality of working within the sector is complex. We don't help by making it all sound so simple, then people can't work with complexity. We need to develop reflective practice eg 'it's about me taking responsibility for my own learning and practice rather than being told what to do'

Ex FE teacher now working for NIACE

What responsibility have you taken so far for your own CPD and how might this change in the FE sector? Comparing the different emphases in the TDA and LLUK standards may help you to think about this challenging area of personal and professional development.

LLUK Professional Standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector in England

Specific standards identified as relevant to this section:

Professional Values

AS 4 Reflection and evaluation of their own practice and their continuing professional development as teachers

AS 5 Collaboration with other individuals, groups and/or organisations with a legitimate interest in the progress and development of learners

Professional Practice

AP 4.3 Share good practice with others and engage in continuing professional development through reflection, evaluation and the appropriate use of research

BP 2.6 Evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of own teaching including consideration of learner feedback and learning theories

Domain C – Specialist teaching and learning

CS 1 Understanding and keeping up to date with current knowledge in respect of own specialist area

CK 1.2 Understand ways in which own specialism relates to the wider social, economic and environmental context

Emphasis on employability

The process of personal and professional development in FE is challenging. If you previously taught in the schools sector you might have assumed that you had chosen a lifetime's career. For teachers in FE, the fluidity, complexity and rapidly changing priorities mean that continuity of employment is much more uncertain. One crucial way that practitioners in FE can deal with this uncertainty is to be proactive about their professional development.

'People in schools see it as a job for life, they don't need to consider the vagaries of funding and the need to continually reinvent yourself, keep up to date with latest qualifications, inspection requirements and personal marketability – there's no guarantees.

FE constitutes so many different areas and people enter with such diverse experiences. CPD must support a highly personalised pick and mix approach including assessors awards, mentoring and coaching, sources of referral for all aspects of IAG, behaviour management – there's a need to give professional credibility to those areas that are often regarded as 'fluffy' skills – like employability skills and life skills. And the need for vocational competence is crucial.'

(Ex comprehensive school teacher now working in WBL)

Looking outwards; policy context

The LLUK standards on reflective practice sit within a broader domain of professional values and practice. They make specific reference to evaluating and developing practice in promoting equality and inclusive learning and engaging with diversity. The evaluation of learning also takes account of the impact on the learner's local community, and its contribution to effective citizenship. This is entirely consistent with the demands on the FE sector to contribute directly to a range of local, regional and national economic and social targets that are increasingly closely defined and determined. The effective FE practitioner has to be able to look outward as well as inward when reflecting on their own practice and development.

Emphasis on peer processes

The LLUK professional standards make specific reference to sharing good practice with others; an area where the use of peer led teams in FE often provides a different context for professional development.

'Increasingly in schools, people will work in programme teams and will be asked to write quality assessment reports and action plans. There's one big difference. In schools such activity and teams are usually led by the head of subject. In FE we are often asked to collaborate on any number of different 'projects' without a leader.'

(Ex school teacher now FE Manager)

For some, the shift from being 'directed or led' in an activity of self-assessment to being a proactive member of a working group can be challenging. Initially it may require a certain level of confidence, openness and risk taking to fully participate in such groups, but the benefits are significant in terms of general personal and professional development.

Attitudes and values

One of the recurring themes in the transition from schools to FE is the necessity to engage with the different attitudes and values that inform the post compulsory sector. The diversity of the student/learner group, the diversity of the curriculum and the significant challenges that are involved in attracting and keeping the most disadvantaged learners in education and training combine to demand a special set of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Negotiation, joint responsibility and mutual respect ideally underpin the relationships between colleagues and the learners. For teachers who are used to being regarded by their pupils as an authoritative source of knowledge and wisdom this shift is not always easy.

'We've got to foster a 'we're all in this together attitude'. The key is not to set yourself up as an expert. You bring your specific skills. For example I can do literacy work with you, but you need to be able to tell me the practicalities and share in the discussion about how we are going to make this happen. It's all down to establishing relationships.'

(Ex primary school teacher now working in WBL)

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Section 1 *cont.*

Reflective Practice and CPD

Making a start

Ideally your employing organisation will be actively supporting your professional development because all publicly funded providers are now required to offer 30 hours of continuing professional development to all full time staff. In reality it might be difficult to fit this into your timetable when there are competing priorities.

'Schools are under pressure with targets but most are not competing directly for funding – the ethos is about providing a good education rather than attracting funding. It's a big difference. Everything in FE is so fast – courses suddenly disappear, you need a thorough understanding of the sector and its policies. Self-reflection means you have to see what's lacking in the organisation and market your own professional profile - match it to what the college might need. For example I advised a colleague who specialised in theatrical makeup (and her course had closed) to go out there and see what she could offer to the art department. You need versatility and networks and to chase your own CPD really, really, chase it. Some people are in college for a year and haven't started – who can afford to delay their own continuing professional development?'

(Ex school teacher now in FE)

Provocation

- Can you afford to delay your own professional development?
- If you face barriers to accessing the kind of programme you need, what will you do?
- Can you argue with evidence that it is in your employer's interests to invest in the development of your skills?
- What particular skills, experience and current knowledge are you bringing to your new role that might be useful to share with your peers and what opportunities exist for sharing new ideas or good practice?

'We will invest an ever greater share of public funds only in those colleges that offer high quality programmes of learning.'

Section 2

Further education - policy framework and funding

In this section we explore the impact of policy and funding on the FE teacher's role and responsibility and their responsibilities within the changing environment and FE quality framework. We begin by reflecting on the differences between the LLUK and TDA standards.

The LLUK underpinning principles and professional standards complement the explicit commitment to equality, diversity and inclusivity that pervades the TDA standards. But there are many different external factors in the post compulsory sector which impact directly on how the sector is organised, the way it is funded and the kind of curriculum in terms of programmes and qualifications that is on offer. These factors reflect a complex web of interrelated policies designed to tackle economic, social and environmental problems as well as meeting the needs of individual learners.

'The whole system has demonstrated great flexibility in continuing to adapt to new challenges, to reflect and respond to the diversity of its local communities, and has a strong track record in tackling inequality and reducing achievement gaps. From adult basic skills to the delivery of Foundation Degrees and postgraduate programmes, the sector will be at the forefront of the UK's attempts to transform its skills profile. To do so, the broader FE system has to help meet two strategic challenges: the transformation of the 14-19 phase in order to deliver significantly higher participation and improved skills outcomes and progression, and the simultaneous up-skilling of the adult workforce'.

(Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances Update July 2007)

LLUK Professional Standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector in England

Specific standards identified as relevant to this section:

Principles and Professional Values

AS 1 All learners, their progress and development, their learning goals and aspirations and the experience they bring to their learning

AS 2 Learning, its potential to benefit people emotionally, socially and economically and its contribution to community sustainability

AS 3 Equality, diversity and inclusion in relation to learners, the work force, and the community

AS 5 Collaboration with other individuals, groups and/or organisations with a legitimate interest in the progress and development of learners

Knowledge and Understanding

CK1.2 Ways in which own specialism relates to the wider social, economic and environmental context

CK 4.2 Potential transferable skills and employment opportunities relating to own specialist area

Purpose and drivers in Further Education

When we talk about the FE sector in this Guidance document it is important to distinguish between the different types of organisations that deliver FE and the different types of provision that these organisations deliver. The organisations that deliver further education include FE colleges, Local Education Authorities (LEAs), work based learning providers, voluntary sector organisations and some higher education institutions. But an FE college may well be delivering a mixture of vocational, academic and community based adult learning; likewise a Local Authority or third sector organisation might be delivering vocational qualifications, non accredited informal learning and some academic provision. This diversity of providers and provision reflects a complexity of purposes, drivers and funding that can be very challenging.

The FE sector is driven by explicit economic and social policy agendas. For example England lags behind its competitors particularly during the 16-18 phase, when fewer young people stay on in education and training, as well as in the proportion of its workforce having intermediate skills qualifications. The characteristics of the labour and skills markets are also changing dramatically. The demand for higher level skills is increasing especially for businesses facing global competition, producing high

Section 2 *cont.*

Further education - policy framework and funding

specification products or facing high levels of technological change. Employers already 'outsource' many elements of production and service delivery and are now increasingly looking overseas to overcome critical skills gaps. The government's view is that the FE sector must address this crisis in the labour market if the UK economy is to continue to grow.

Government policies also emphasise the links between the skills needed for employment and local regeneration opportunities. Economic competitiveness is closely linked to social inclusion but only if local people have the necessary skills and confidence to take up local employment opportunities. It is argued that this can only happen through collaboration in terms of planning and delivery involving regional development agencies, Job Centre Plus, Local Authorities, FE colleges, third sector organisations and other providers.

An important element of government policy is the improvement of the skills of public sector workers who are critical to social political and economic agendas. If people are employed in health, social care and education and in Local Authorities they have a big impact on the nation's quality of life especially for those who are most reliant on public services. FE can make a significant contribution to widening participation by offering accessible, relevant and local educational experiences.

The current emphasis throughout the sector is on learning for progression which will lead directly or indirectly to employability.

'Even if you think you are teaching an academic subject like an A level you're still required to think about employer engagement – building links outside the institution, this takes time and effort and research and phone calls. Teachers need to reflect upon the employability skills inherent in their subject and build on these to enhance their students' future.

They need to remember the activities they have engaged in at school that have stressed the whole person such as National Records of Achievement and activities and project weeks they may have been engaged in for key skills development. It's exactly the same - but employability is more real because there is more possibility that a student will go directly into a real job.'

(Ex school teacher)

But this emphasis on employability sits alongside other priorities resulting in difficult decisions as to how resources are prioritised and enormous challenges in terms of coordinating and planning initiatives to produce the greatest impact.

Other drivers affect the sector too. For example, Local Authorities have their own Public Service Agreement targets (which include social inclusion, neighbourhood renewal and community cohesion). While for many third sector organisations the main drivers are their organisation's social mission and the needs of their clients within the context of current government policy.

These overall themes of skills development, employability, social inclusion and partnership work drive the sector at local, regional and national levels and determine how the sector is funded.

Funding principles you need to know about

Since 2001 much of the FE sector has been funded and managed by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the largest government agency funding educational provision. As we go to press there are plans for the LSC's role to be replaced by LEAs, the National Apprenticeship Service and two new organisations; the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) with responsibility for learners who are post-19 or aged 14 to 19 respectively.

Changes in funding arrangements are a permanent feature of the sector but it is important to understand that FE colleges are self-governing, incorporated bodies and are expected to operate on a business basis. They increasingly have to generate their income directly from employers and individuals either through initiatives like Train to Gain (TtG) or on a self-financing basis. Community based adult learning is vulnerable within this business model. Providers and partnerships can currently access funding from the LSC through a 'safe-guarded funding stream'. This supports clearly defined priorities in terms of a curriculum that is wider than the employability agenda and in terms of meeting particular target groups.

There are several other major funding streams for the sector including the European Social Fund (ESF), Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (soon to become the Working Neighbourhoods' Fund) and money from LEAs. These different funding streams all have their own very specific aims, purposes and required outcomes. They also each have their own strict monitoring requirements and payment is usually dependent on successful outcomes. Some provision is funded from a variety of different sources. Funding arrangements can often involve the tutor in complex and time consuming monitoring and reporting activities.

Funding works on the principle of 'purchasers' and 'providers' rather than on any sort of generalised funding 'grant'. The local statutory agencies and employers and to an extent learners, determine in principle what services they want and then effectively 'buy' them from the provider of choice. This can create competition between providers. The choice of provider is made on the basis of a combination of factors including cost effectiveness, track record, expertise and crucially quality.

The funding system is often described as a 'demand led' system rather than a 'supplier led' system and is very different from how it used to be when the providers had an amount of money 'granted' that they could then decide how to spend. Consequently there is continual monitoring to ensure that programmes are 'financially viable' and sometimes the most carefully planned and designed curriculum is abandoned. The implications of the current funding system and the challenges it presents permeate the sector.

'The main differences for me are that colleges are not so well organised as schools. There is a much more diffused hierarchy in colleges, you can't find out how it all hangs together. In schools it's more transparent, how it all works, who's in charge and what are the main issues and strategies. Schools are more like families. You can easily go under in a college – it takes a long time to understand the structure e.g. why you can't just photocopy what you need. The funding driven aspect is so different.'

(Ex school teacher)

Quality Improvement Framework

The improvement strategy for the FE sector is designed to take forward the FE White Paper 2006 (Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances) and its overall themes include the economic mission, employability and the greater emphasis on user needs and choice. Personalisation, workforce development and the drive towards self-regulation are all features which are intended to support the skills strategy and the current 14-19 strategies.

Performance and quality are assessed by the providers themselves through a cyclical process of self-assessment reports (SARs). The provider's SAR is a major source of evidence for the inspections which are undertaken by Ofsted and which in the future will be incorporated into the overall LSC Framework for Excellence. The Framework will support providers to undertake robust self-assessment and to become part of peer-referencing groups as a means of validating their self-assessment and transferring good practice.

The Framework addresses three main performance areas - responsiveness, effectiveness and finance.

All teachers in FE are involved one way or another in the inspection and regulatory framework. Retention and achievement in every single programme counts and the organisation needs to provide evidence that the quality of teaching and learning is systematically observed and weaknesses in performance are addressed. You will also be expected to participate in curriculum review meetings. In a competitive environment the consequences of poor quality are extremely serious for a provider's financial stability.

'We will invest an ever greater share of public funds only in those colleges that offer high quality programmes of learning. We will not continue to bale out colleges that persistently fail on quality.'

(The Skills We Need: LSC sets out its priorities 2005/6)

Collaboration

Most of the delivery of LSC funded provision is based on local and regional partnership planning arrangements. Basically if externally funded provision has not been planned it will not get funding so commitment to a range of partnership meetings is increasingly a requirement for those working in FE irrespective of seniority.

FE institutions vary but they are most effective when working closely with other sectors and other providers so partnership working is a strong cultural theme

This is particularly important when trying to tackle student disengagement and disaffection.

For example partnership working is particularly helpful for reaching young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). A range of voluntary and statutory organisations will have access and existing relationships with this vulnerable group and the combined efforts of many agencies will be required to achieve results. In this example the local Connexions service is likely to play a significant role. Currently, Connexions Partnerships bring together all the key youth support services in an area to provide support on education, advice on housing, careers, money, health and relationships for all 13-19 year olds.

Section 2 *cont.*

Further education - policy framework and funding

Marketing

In some of the more proactive organisations, tutors are increasingly expected to engage, to a greater or lesser extent, in discovering and developing new markets for the FE provider's services. This can involve a range of different activities from relational marketing to brokerage. The underlying skills required are being able to take the initiative, from research to 'cold calling', and then establishing productive relationships that are based on skilful questioning, analysis and being able to tease out demands. Those demands then have to be matched to a 'learning offer' – either one that is already available or one that will need to be created. In this context curriculum content, method of delivery and costs all have to be negotiated.

Changing Environment

Like the rest of the public sector, FE has experienced a great deal of change and reform over the last 10 years. This is likely to continue. It is important therefore for teachers coming into FE to be aware of what these changes mean as they are likely to influence the nature and type of provision that is promoted within your organisation and they will have implications for you in terms of who, what and how you teach.

Here are some examples of recent reforms and initiatives:

- the 14-19 reform strategy, the Tomlinson Report and the recently established Diplomas
- the government's response to the Leitch Review of Skills, the move towards giving employers more of a say in what will be offered by FE and making FE organisations more responsive to individuals and employers
- Skills for Life (sometimes referred to as Functional Skills), the national strategy for improving the literacy, language and numeracy skills of 2.25 million adults by 2010
- the introduction of key skills that underpin success in education, employment, lifelong learning and personal development
- the attainment levels of young people and their aspirations to enter higher education and courses such as Foundation Degrees
- the reform of the Children's Workforce, including developing the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for staff – many of whom, such as nursery nurses, train in the sector

Things to think about and do

- Identify and find out about particular national policies that have had an impact within your institution? What were they and why? You could start with some of the examples mentioned above.
- Test your knowledge of how current initiatives affect the subject/s area in which you are involved, for example?
  - Train to Gain (sometimes called Train2Gain)
  - Skills for Life
  - Functional Skills
  - Foundation Learning Tier
  - Framework for Excellence
  - Qualifications and Credit Framework
  - Diplomas (16 – 19 year olds)
  - Funding and Full Level Two
  - Funding and Level Three achievement
  - Local PSA targets

Provocation

You have probably spotted some of the tensions in this section that you may well have to manage in practice.

- With so many different types of organisations and learners, how can you decide what the purpose of FE really is?
- Is it possible to achieve a balance between responding to the priorities set by national government and being able to respond to the needs of disadvantaged people in local areas who do not fit into the priority groups?
- What is the relationship between non vocational (learning for pleasure) and vocational learning in the agenda for lifelong learning?
- What might be the implications when providers compete for contracts in one context and collaborate in partnerships in others?

Section 3
Access and Progression

In this section we summarise the tutor's responsibilities to the learner regarding Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and how they can support the progress of learners into and through FE.

Colleagues from the schools sector will bring a detailed understanding and experience of how the roles and expertise of other professionals can be drawn upon to support children's well being and their learning. The TDA standards clearly define the focus of the teacher's responsibilities to identify and support children and young people whose progress is affected by changes or difficulties in their personal circumstances. The impact of difficult personal and family circumstances on attendance and achievement are well understood.

In the FE sector, however, the focus and responsibility of the tutor in relation to student 'progression' is very different. The tutor is responsible for ensuring that students have access to a range of IAG as a matter of entitlement and as a fundamental aspect of equal opportunities and inclusion. This covers course information, professional advice on progression opportunities including career and other courses and access to all sorts of other support services of a more personal nature.

It is important to understand and delineate the responsibility of and individual tutor for this and identify what the IAG service and the IAG workers can offer. The tutor's skills in utilising the IAG services will have a noticeable effect on student retention which in turn has an effect on funding and inspection.

'The tutor is held responsible for retention and drop out. You can't massage the figures. Every single thing is recorded and % attendance rates are monitored regularly. Funding depends on retention as well as achievement. You can't threaten the students if they don't attend. It's not statutory, unlike school, so the challenge is for the tutor to be proactive about ensuring/supporting attendance. Students and new tutors are not necessarily used to this regime of caring. Tutors are often slow to do something about drop out – early intervention is the key.'

(FE manager and tutor)

LLUK Professional Standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector in England

Specific standards identified as relevant to this section:

Domain F Access and Progression

Teachers in the lifelong learning sector are committed to:

FS 1 Encouraging learners to seek initial and further learning opportunities and to use services within the organisation

FS 2 Providing support for learners within the boundaries of the teacher role

FS 3 Maintaining own professional knowledge in order to provide information on opportunities for progression in own specialist area

FS 4 A multi-agency approach to supporting development and progression opportunities for learners

A summary of the IAG service

The IAG service offers free, confidential and impartial advice and the service standards are publicly displayed at the relevant offices. Learners can visit these services as often as they like and can be confident that they will not be cajoled into doing anything they do not want. Ideally, students should be able to simply ring up or knock on the office door and make an appointment. Tutors can help learners, either individually or as a group, to make the initial contact.

IAG services help in three different ways

- Learner progression – on to further courses and employment
- Learner support in terms of accessing additional money and resources
- Signposting to specialist counselling and support services

Basic information about the course and the support services is given to the student in the first week as part of the learner contract. This includes a course outline and the help that is available including personal counselling, educational counselling and careers advice.

Section 3 *cont.*

Access and Progression

a) Progression

'It's not at all like the careers advice you have in school. We're doing learners a real disservice if they don't access it. How will they know how to progress or what jobs and further training they may go on to? How will they know how to present themselves for jobs and interviews? The guidance process is all about reflection which is the key to the learning and it supports the process of transferring learning to, say, vocational areas.

Dealing with the requirements of jobs, qualifications, funding etc needs trained people with up to date information. It changes all the time and it can have terrible consequences to give out wrong information. There are new courses coming on stream all the time. Guidance workers have a vast network of contacts. Teachers are always going on their past experiences, and are not up to date. We have to encourage people with progression and skills- if you leave a course with nothing else, you must at least have a good CV and you can get help to develop one from the IAG workers.'

(FE manager)

Sometimes an FE college will have specialist IAG workers for example in relation to a particular vocational area such as childcare. They are an invaluable source of knowledge having networks of employers and other providers as well as up to date and extensive labour market information.

b) Learner support and access funds

Under the Special Needs and Disabilities Act, funds are available for all kinds of additional support. This ranges from providing additional support workers to technical aids. There are also access funds applicable within FE colleges and ACL for help with bus fares, childcare, transport, books or whenever lack of money stops someone from doing a course, but these funds are limited. Learners need to show evidence of financial hardship and fill out forms.

c) Specialist counselling and support

As a tutor you may notice signs that specific intervention or counselling support may be needed. Examples might include persistently being late, absences, lack of concentration, and lapses in personal hygiene or presentation, or unexplained bruises. In school these signs would probably be followed up through the school office and child protection procedures. In FE the tutor needs to take responsibility and be proactive about seeking out an opportunity for a quiet word with the student and to tactfully and sensitively explore whether there is some need for further guidance and support. In other cases, a learner in a crisis might approach you directly.

Boundaries

Many learners will have problems of a personal, medical, financial, legal, psychological nature that will need the support of fully trained counsellors and professionals. In these circumstances it is essential to be clear about your own role in supporting learners.

The tutor's role is to signpost them to the appropriate sources of help with the support of the IAG service as appropriate. In such cases is important for students to know that you are not a counsellor but that you will listen, and let them know how much time you have to do this.

'Often you can't deal with things then and there especially if you're running to your next class. It's about finding the right form of words to say I'm sorry I can't stop now, but I could meet up at lunch time. Would this be alright for you? But really it's refer, refer, refer. We can help people make the phone call and help them get the appointment they want.'

(FE tutor)

Referral skills that tutors need

Five critical skills you may need to develop to ensure that learners do not feel 'fobbed off':

Clarity

Checking what the learner wants

Checking what the learner means

Caring

Showing sensitivity

Explaining your action

Confidentiality

Agreeing what is to be recorded

Agreeing what will be passed on

Contracting

Building up trust

Agreeing a course of action

Contact

Leaving the door open

Are there differences for adult and community learning (ACL) and work based learning (WBL)?

If provision is funded by the Learning and Skills Council, the provider will be obliged to offer an appropriate IAG service to students. ACL providers often have their own IAG workers but the service may be less well resourced than a centralised, college based service. WBL suppliers often buy in the service from Connexions or Careers Guidance Services. Some library services also provide this service. Whichever part of the sector you are working in, you will need to have the appropriate information and frame of mind to support your students. This can be much more challenging if you are working in relative isolation, but remember the services are there to be called upon and used to meet your learners' needs.

External signposting

Tutors can offer suggestions for further follow up courses or progression to other institutions and keep up to date information pertinent to their subject area. In ACL tutors can also keep a register of local community development activities from parent groups to local campaigns, and opportunities for volunteering in the voluntary sector. In WBL contexts, tutors could keep abreast of employment and training opportunities in the company and look for trends that might affect your learners.

Things to think about and do

You might like to explore ways in which you can support learners to progress both within your own institution and beyond. The check list below gives you some ideas of what you could do:

- Provide the appropriate leaflets describing the service with contact names and numbers
- Collect relevant information relating to your subject area and opportunities for further courses, employment opportunities and trends
- Invite IAG workers in mid year to let people know about the service and to start people thinking about next steps and again at the penultimate session
- Build IAG unto the curriculum – encourage students to keep a folder of information relating to their progression interests
- Hold informal lunchtime meetings for students to meet with an IAG worker to have a general discussion

'If we don't ensure learners have access to IAG we're doing them a great disservice. Everyone's knowledge is linked to gender, class, age, geography, past experience and the more limited someone's background, the more limited their sense of opportunity. You can't think about things that you haven't had the chance to think about. It's a part of all tutors' role to open up possibilities for their students.'

(FE tutor)

Provocation

Ideally information advice and guidance for individual learners should be available at the appropriate time but it is not always recognised as a crucial part of the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) process. Too often the ILP can be seen as a bureaucratic, time consuming paper exercise rather than an important and meaningful dialogue with the learners.

- What strategies could you develop to ensure that learners are regularly encouraged to reflect on their future learning and employment goals?
- How can you develop your practice to create an atmosphere or environment in which learners are able to raise difficult issues that might be interfering with their progress?

Section 4
Diversity of Learners

In this section we explore the diversity within the sector and what it means for teaching and learning.

If you have had experience of teaching in an inner city school or one where there are significant numbers of new migrants you will already have had a great deal of experience in dealing with diversity. The emphasis placed on diversity and inclusion within the LLUK professional standards is a reflection of the great diversity not only of learners and their range of motivation, but also of the curriculum itself and of the different settings across the FE sector. The agenda of social inclusion and widening participation is generally a critical part of the FE provider mission to support both communities and individuals.

'Going into groups of older students, and teaching at a lower level than they are used to, is a bit of a shock for a lot of teachers. So skills of recognising and valuing diversity and flexibility are very important.'

(Ex teacher)

LLUK Professional Standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector in England

Specific standards identified as relevant to this section:

Professional values and practice

Teachers in the lifelong learning sector value:

AS1 All learners, their progress and development, their learning goals and aspirations and the experience they bring to their learning

AS2 Learning, its potential to benefit people emotionally, intellectually, socially and economically, and its contribution to community sustainability

AS3 Equality, diversity and inclusion in relation to learners, the workforce and the community

AS5 Collaboration with other individuals, groups and/or organisations with a legitimate interest in the progress and development of learners

Diversity and Social Inclusion

Diversity

In an earlier section we described the policy drivers and the different funding regimes that affect FE and result in there being significant diversity in the sector. This includes diversity of learners, of qualifications/programmes, of providers and of locations within the sector.

Learners range from 14 (through the Increased Flexibility Scheme) to those over 60. Since June 2007, the FE sector has been overseen by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) although some parts (such as education and training for 14 – 19 year olds in compulsory education) fall within the remit of the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF).

The student group includes:

- targeted learners in communities of high disadvantage
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners
- learners not yet ready for work
- learners at work from apprentices to high level employees
- adults preparing for entry to university
- learners undertaking a wide range of vocational and academic subjects at pre entry level to HE levels
- people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Because of its capacity to deliver a diverse and practical curriculum, the FE Sector plays an important role in bolstering alternative basic post-16 provision for many learners. This can be demanding and time-consuming for teachers.

FE constituencies

Most of FE is delivered by colleges, work based learning providers both public and private, LEAs or adult and community organisations. The college locations are very varied and include large multi-site institutions, specialist institutions such as those that serve people with learning disabilities, distance learning, residential or agricultural colleges. WBL organisations vary greatly in terms of size. They range from small private specialist training companies to large public sector institutions. A significant proportion of the provision is delivered on site in the work place. Much of the highly targeted further education provision is delivered through Local Authorities and voluntary sector organisations such as the Workers Education Association (WEA) and is located in adult and community organisations such as schools, community centres, health clinics, libraries while some is delivered by universities.

The following facts highlight the diversity of the sector:

- 16% of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds (against 7.9% of the population in 2003/4)
- 2.5m students are female as against 1.6m males (2003/04)
- 37% of adult learners in FE are in the category for 'widening participation uplift' funding. This means that providers get additional funding for these learners because they come from areas in which the social and economic indices of deprivation are relatively high
- approximately 6% of the total numbers of learners in FE are identified as having learning difficulties and or disabilities

Inclusive learning is an important feature of FE and was the focus of the Tomlinson Report which was published in 1996. As a result, there has been an increased focus on inclusive learning to ensure that learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties are safeguarded without the labelling that had been previously attached to them. Many providers are currently exploring e-learning with its potential to equalise the experience of these groups of learners by looking at how to re-design learning to maximise accessibility.

One example of a programme that is specifically designed to be socially inclusive is Entry to Employment, sometimes known as E2E. It is a learning programme which helps young people who are not yet ready or able to directly enter an Apprenticeship programme, a further education course or work. This is a nationally developed programme that can be tailored to fit individual needs and replaces the 'old' Life Skills, Preparatory and NVQ Level 1 training programmes. The programme usually involves 16-30 hours of learning a week and is delivered by specialist providers including the voluntary and community sector.

Learning on E2E programmes takes place in a range of stimulating settings. Consideration is given to learners' preferred learning styles and interests in order that creative learning solutions can be developed. Learning takes place in a range of in-door and out-door settings using a range of different methods. This includes class room type activities, one-to-one coaching, group activities, discussions, projects presentations from speakers, on line e-learning, open learning, work placements and experience, external visits, outward bound activities, volunteering etc.

'Teachers coming into FE assume students are motivated …there's confusion with the notion of post compulsory education – students aren't necessarily here voluntarily. At school you come knowing that it is compulsory but you think you're moving into a situation in FE where students don't have to be there if they don't want. Colleagues in FE possibly make the mistake of thinking that the mechanisms in the two sectors are fundamentally different but they aren't. Behaviour management and the tone of the classroom may be different, but teachers coming from schools have huge reserves of talent and techniques to draw on that they don't necessarily know they have'.

(Ex school teacher)

Learners from local communities

Delivering programmes in community based settings allows for greater outreach into the communities served by an FE provider. These programmes can also be part of a wider social inclusion strategy. For example they might be helping a Local Authority meet its PSA targets on family learning. People from local communities may be affected through social disadvantage or have other restrictions such as care responsibilities that prevent them from going to large institutions like colleges.

Outreach provision is designed for under-represented or disadvantaged groups so they can learn locally in a friendly atmosphere. It is an important way of reducing the barriers to learning. In many areas community based provision offers people their only opportunity for learning and acts as the 'first step' on what is hopefully a longer learning journey. Without this it might not be possible to engage and advance a significant number of adult learners for whom conventional provision is inaccessible. Outreach provision is sometimes supported by a crèche and additional learning support such as a language assistant.

Whilst much of this learning encourages individual confidence building, community based learners might also require specific support with an area of community development such as running a community newspaper or setting up a self help group. This kind of provision is often delivered in partnership with another agency or organisation such as a local library, school or community health trust. Most outreach provision is tailor made to meet the needs of the learners and involves the tutor in designing the curriculum – setting aims and objectives; establishing the learning outcomes, the methods and the assessment strategy and developing the resource material. This affords the tutor with significant freedom to be creative, but involves considerable amounts of preparation.

Section 4 *cont.*
Diversity of Learners

Learners at work

Work based learning gives young people and adults the opportunity to learn on the job, build up their knowledge and skills and gain qualifications. This type of training can be done through an Apprenticeship programme relating to a wide range of occupations but many people who are at work attend college in their own time and pay for their own training.

Another group of work based learners come through Train to Gain (TtG), the most recent work based learning initiative funded by the LSC. Through this, businesses are given funding if they have employees who need to gain their first full Level 2 and Skills for Life numeracy and literacy qualifications. For employees who already have significant experience it provides the opportunity to 'jump' to Level 3.

The scheme is operated through a skills brokerage service provided by the LSC. The brokers are expected to offer free impartial and independent advice to businesses; match them and their training needs with training providers and ensure that training is delivered to meet the needs of the business. TtG was introduced to FE in 2006 initially as a pilot and is now being delivered more widely across the sector.

Work based learners undertake a range of programmes in FE. They might be developing their skills in numeracy and literacy; working on their key skills such as communication, team work; social and interpersonal skills; or achieving skills and qualifications that can support them in their current or future employment.

As a tutor you will also need to be aware that with effective and supportive teaching work based learners often gain some additional benefits from completing their FE programme. They might, for example, increase their confidence in their abilities generally, develop their critical thinking skills and be enthused about learning and motivated to take on new experiences and opportunities. For the individual learner this kind of progress may well lead to a better quality of life; improve their job prospects and give them more idea of what they want to do in the future.

Learners aged 14-19

Some students who are aged 14 -19 are based in school but study vocational courses in college. The recent FE White Paper, *'Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances'* (March 2006), means the number of these vocational courses will increase. The category of 14-19 year olds is an area which is undergoing a significant amount of change at the moment. It encompasses key stage 4 which leads to GCSE examinations, AS and A-levels, International Baccalaureate, NVQs and other vocational qualifications.

Increasingly learners in this group will be studying for the new Diploma – a qualification which combines classroom learning with practical hands-on experience. These learners will be based at their school or colleges but will also have the chance to do some of their learning in other schools, colleges or in the workplace, as an element of work experience is a mandatory component of a Diploma programme. Initially the Diploma is being taught in selected partnerships of schools and colleges.

The Diploma is a qualification that is also designed to help the learner make decisions about their future, whether to carry on studying or to seek employment. The first five Diploma subject areas will be available from September 2008 and it is intended that by 2011, there will be 17 Diplomas delivered through consortia in areas across the country.

Gateways and Barriers to Learning

Learners in FE can be any age over 14. In fact people in their 90's have been known to win adult learner awards for their progress and achievement. Mature learners bring a tremendously diverse life experience with them when they enter the learning environment. Their knowledge of the world, the challenges they have faced, the variety of jobs they might have done, all contribute to a rich, varied, interesting and often entertaining resource for everyone to draw on. The challenge for the teacher is to find ways of encouraging people to share their experiences and knowledge in order to stimulate new learning. Exploring this hinterland helps the tutor to make the learning relevant and can be actively used to inform the content and delivery of the curriculum. Building on people's experiences can help to build confidence and reinforce strengths. Their willingness to critically engage with the teacher and with peers can provide a very stimulating and rewarding experience.

On the other hand many people in FE have often experienced a range of barriers to learning in the past and indeed are still struggling to get over some very negative previous experiences. Many have had a history of interrupted schooling through for example migration, illness or caring responsibilities. In any group it is likely that there will be someone who will describe their school experiences as full of humiliation and fear of failure and will have experienced bullying and discrimination. Many learners have high levels of anxiety especially to do with exams, tests, and performing in public like 'reading aloud' or doing a presentation. These very negative feelings about school may present particular challenges for some teachers so it is important to concentrate on what opportunities the FE environment presents to the teacher that can help to address these issues despite the challenges that it presents.

'Teachers are used to their base room –this means they can shape certain aspects of their environment, (like) arranging furniture. In FE you keep having to put the furniture back, and you have to carry your resources with you. Lessons can feel compartmentalised as you deliver on separate, multiple sites and you're travelling between centres. The job can feel very different and unsettling. But the greater flexibility can enable teacher creativity – less legal requirements re tracking and different sites can open new opportunities to be inventive, by merging groups, arranging tutorials, team teaching etc'.

(Ex school teacher)

A significant number of learners within the FE sector will experience many other barriers to learning. These might include lack of confidence, limited functional skills and various language barriers. Also the impact of poverty, dependency on public transport, poor housing and other commitments such as childcare and caring responsibilities may affect motivation and concentration. .There are also people in the sector with chaotic life styles linked to poverty, mental health problems and addictions who will find it particularly challenging to be in a learning environment. The courage that people often need in order to take the first step into (or back into) education can be quite literally overwhelming and you will need to draw upon everything you have ever learnt about learning theories and teaching methods as well as drawing on your own life experience and your empathy.

Things to think about and do

'When I did the introduction to counselling course, the ages ranged from 18 – 62. There were 13 people in the class some with no qualifications of any kind and some had degrees. There were people from three different continents and two thirds were women. Two people in the group had disabilities. The motivation ranged from those who wanted to increase their self confidence and self awareness to those who were intending to eventually become qualified practising counsellors. Yes it was a challenge – for all of us. But the tutor made it work. It was a fantastic group and I know there have been some lasting friendships established'.

(Learner at an FE college)

Imagine this is the composition of your group. How will you make it work? What factors will you take into account when planning your first few lessons? How will you establish a supportive group atmosphere? How will you use the diversity of this group to enrich the learning experience?

Provocation

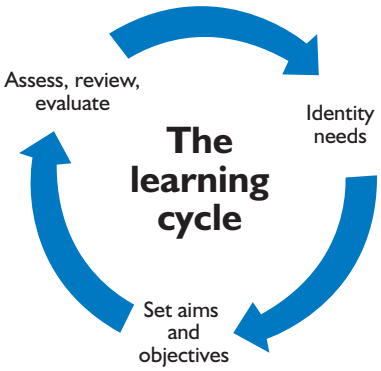
All organisations receiving public funding will have an equal opportunities policy and will be required under the race relations amendment act to be proactive about tackling discrimination. In an FE environment, as in a school, the responsibility for dealing with discriminatory behaviour in the classroom is very much on the individual teacher. However the FE teacher is much more likely to be working in relative isolation and will not have the back up at hand of a management hierarchy.

- What are the implications of this for you?
- How will you deal with discriminatory attitudes and behaviours in your classroom? How will you define your responsibilities?
- What will you do if there are those in the group who are directly affected by discriminatory attitudes?

Section 5
Teaching and Learning in FE

It is important to remember that the principles and practice of good teaching do not change. If you are an experienced teacher coming into the sector, you should have confidence in the transferability of your knowledge and experience. In this section we focus on some elements of your teaching and learning practice that might need realigning to take account of the FE context.

The learning cycle illustrated below is the foundation of all effective teaching and training. The stages of the cycle involve analysing needs; setting aims and learning outcomes; assessing learning; reviewing and evaluating learning and teaching; and using feedback in order to readjust needs. This cycle underpins the planning of each lesson and the overall structure of any programme. The language and the jargon might differ within and between the sectors, but the underlying process is exactly the same.



When comparing the TDA and LLUK standards there are significant differences in emphasis in terms of the core relationships between the tutor and the learner and between the tutor and the curriculum. There is considerable emphasis placed on valuing and responding to individual motivation and using learners' experience in the design and delivery of the curriculum. This encourages learners to take responsibility and make decisions about their learning and so become more independent and autonomous.

Teachers are expected to actively negotiate the curriculum with individual learners and there is a relatively high emphasis on using learner feedback. Again this promotes active learning and aims to ensure that learning remains relevant.

There is significant emphasis on differentiated learning in order to meet individual learner needs and the onus is on the individual teacher to be proactive in their programme planning to ensure a personalised and differentiated approach to teaching and learning is thoroughly embedded.

You will bring different approaches you have developed previously and it is important to use them and feel confident to share what works with colleagues.

'Coming from secondary school I'm bringing across a lot of learning styles, lots of activities. With the students in my tutor groups I've taught them about learning styles and teaching styles so in the area I run, the health sciences, they will be very vocal in their reports. They will say things like 'I would like a variety of teaching styles, more activities', so they're becoming more aware of the learning and teaching styles and they're putting pressure on the other teachers to be more creative.'

(Ex secondary teacher)

LLUK Professional Standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector in England

Specific standards identified as relevant to this section:

Domain B: Learning and Teaching

Teachers in the lifelong learning sector:

AP 1.1 Encourage the development and progression of all learners through recognising, valuing and responding to individual motivation, experience and aspirations

BP 1.1 Establish a purposeful learning environment where learners feel safe, secure, confident and valued

BP 1.2 Establish and maintain procedures with learners which promote and maintain appropriate behaviour, communication and respect for others, while challenging discriminatory behaviour and attitudes

BP 2.2 Use a range of effective and appropriate teaching and learning techniques to engage and motivate learners and encourage independence

BP 2.3 Implement learning activities which develop the skills and approaches of all learners and promote learner autonomy

BP 2.4 Apply flexible and varied delivery methods as appropriate to teaching and learning practice

BP 2.5 Encourage learners to use their own life experiences as a foundation for their development

BP 2.7 Use mentoring and/or coaching to support own and others' professional development where appropriate

BP 4.1 Collaborate with colleagues to encourage learner progress

BP 5.1 Select and develop a range of effective resources, including appropriate use of new and emerging technologies

CK 1.2 Understand ways in which own specialism relates to the wider social, economic and environmental context

Relationships with Learners

Whatever the age or social background of learners, it is important in FE for a tutor to be able to establish different types of relationships with learners that are appropriate to different contexts. For example, you may need to make a decision about whether you want to be called by your first name. Some learners might be uncomfortable with this, others might expect it, and there might be an organisational protocol. Forming more 'equal relationships' that draw on fundamental processes like acknowledging the skills and experiences of the learners in positive ways can create a more informal atmosphere in which many people flourish. You may be confronted with different challenges depending on which part of the sector you are entering. For example, teaching in the community and working with minority ethnic groups you might feel that more informal relationships and methods of teaching and learning are appropriate, but some of your students might have very different expectations. Their respect for the profession and traditional ideas about teaching methods might make them feel uncomfortable at first with informality and in this situation you might have to explain and negotiate carefully. The situation would be quite different in other parts of FE, such as vocational learning, where a more structured and somewhat prescribed curriculum has to be delivered.

Active and independent learning

Promoting the development of greater responsibility and accountability for learning on the part of the individual learner means that the role of the FE tutor is complex. This is reflected in the language that is sometimes used to describe those who 'teach' in the sector, for example, tutor, teacher, trainer, lecturer or facilitator are all used. Facilitation of learning is a key concept that underpins the relationship between the tutor and the learner.

FE tutors therefore need to devote time and skills to help learners explore a range of learning styles and be aware of their own learning preferences. Developing different approaches to learning can give learners the confidence they need to engage in discussion about how they learn. This can, at the same time, help them to recognise the support they will need to learn in a range of different ways. Learners can then be helped to develop strategies for extending their repertoire and practice applying them in a range of learning contexts. Encouraging independence is considered to be an important foundation for embedding a personalised approach to teaching and learning.

As learners grow in expertise and confidence, they become increasingly able to take responsibility for their learning experiences and the balance between learner and tutor can then shift. Confident learners can also be encouraged to provide peer support, which is a powerful way of consolidating and passing on new learning skills while providing a satisfying and rewarding experience for the learners themselves.

Flexibility

Whether the target group is single mums or refugees or a group of employees the response has to be flexible and timely. The FE tutor has to be able to create a curriculum to meet specific needs and demands quickly. The reform of the qualifications framework and the introduction of the national Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) is designed to support this flexible needs led curriculum. Under the QCF learners can get accreditation for 'bite-size learning' and can accumulate credits towards full qualifications.

What is expected of tutors in FE

Tutors in FE are expected to take on a range of responsibilities. For example, you might be expected to:

- Plan and prepare lessons for a range of qualification types and levels for day and evening classes, and workshops
- Research and develop new subject matter and teaching materials, including online resources
- Provide tutorials for distance learning
- Monitor, assess and mark students' work; including setting formative and summative assessments
- Act as a course leader for a particular programme or qualification
- Act as a personal tutor; providing additional support for students when necessary
- Take part in course team meetings to monitor, evaluate and develop relevant courses
- Liaise with awarding bodies to ensure quality
- Contribute to the provider Self-Assessment Report (SAR)
- Attend parents' evenings, open days and careers/education conventions
- Organise work placements and/or carry out learner assessments in the workplace
- Work in partnership with another agency/organisation to develop new curricula
- Undertake some outreach or marketing activity

Section 5 *cont.*

Teaching and Learning in FE

The types of courses taught in FE are many and varied and depend to some extent in which part of the sector a tutor is located. Some examples of what is provided are:

- vocational courses which train students for careers in, for example, catering, construction and childcare, often leading to vocational related or national vocational qualifications (Scottish/National Vocational Qualifications or S/NVQ)
- academic subjects (like maths and English) often leading to qualifications such as GCSEs and A levels
- first steps for adults returning to learn
- leisure and personal interest activities

Support for learners

How learners are supported can play a critical role in helping them to develop their confidence, motivation and independence that is essential in FE. There are three aspects to this:

- undoing barriers to learning
- motivating learning and achievement
- broadening horizons for future steps after completion of the programme.

There is a wealth of research on the benefits of good support. Some providers, for example, are developing ways of offering support that actively engage learners in self help and peer support. Tutorial support is often regarded as a central component on programmes. Helping individuals to reflect on what they have learned is crucial for developing expertise and building confidence.

One tried and tested method of helping learners to review what they had learned at a college is based on a review model developed by staff. What they came up with was a simple and learner-friendly approach, based on the question 'Has the penny dropped?' The model, which is now in use throughout the college, offers the following questions for learners to review their learning.

- Was the aim of your lesson explained?
- Was it connected to your previous lesson?
- Were the teaching and activities interesting?
- Did the teacher or trainer check that you understood?
- Did the penny drop? – Yes – I know more than when I came into class.

One of the challenges for tutors in work based or distance learning is that learners can often feel isolated. This means finding ways that enable the learners to feel part of the wider learning community through, for example, occasional meetings, online forums, peer mentoring or similar activities. In community based and adult education classes tutors often make use of the coffee break to encourage social interaction, and organise trips to places of mutual interest such as galleries or the theatre.

Another challenge in FE is often the variability of resources and finding different and creative ways to still enable learners to progress towards their learning objectives.

Things to think about and do

Activity

Where and what you teach can be very varied and you will need to adapt teaching/learning activities to the different environments. The length of each 'session will almost invariably be longer than in schools which creates different demands on teachers and learners.

'FE timetabled slots are often longer than in the schools and so planning skills and application of a range of teaching strategies need to be developed. Assessment methods are often very different from those in schools; particularly on vocational courses e.g. portfolio building; assignment writing and assessment.'

(Ex school teacher)

Bearing in mind the comments above, fill out the grid below. Try and think 'out of the box' – for instance, just because you're in a lecture theatre, does that mean you can only give a lecture?

Setting	**What different teaching methods or activities would be possible in this environment?**
Classrooms	
Lecture theatres	
Workshops	
Kitchens	
Laboratories	
Demonstration rooms	
Workplace	
Community centre	
Online	

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Section 5 *cont.*

Teaching and Learning in FE

Provocation

There is a lot in this section about roles and relationships. It is important to give this challenging area some thought and make some decisions about what kind of teacher you will try to be in this new environment. In essence, what kind of messages will you actively convey to your learners? There are no hard and fast rules, but it is always wise to aim for consistency and to be able to offer a reasonably convincing rationale for the decisions you have taken.

- What would be your ground rules for your own and your learners' behaviour in the teaching/learning environment?
- Where do you sit on the spectrum between teaching and facilitation?
- How will you help learners become more independent in their learning?
- How can you help learners to develop the confidence and communication skills specifically for taking part in the learning dialogue?
- How will you review your effectiveness in teaching and learning?

Section 6
Assessment

In this section we go into considerable detail about key issues to do with Assessment in the FE sector. We begin by exploring the difference between the TDA and LLUK professional standards regarding assessment.

The LLUK standards include a detailed and separate domain devoted to Assessment for Learning. This section of the standards emphasises issues such as range, responsibility and equity in relation to assessment for learning. The standards flag up the links between the individual teacher's assessment practice and the overall quality requirements of the organisation concerning the assessment and monitoring of learner progress. The emphasis is very much on assessment for learning rather than on simply meeting the requirements of external bodies such as the exam boards, although they do cover assessment of learning too.

On the surface the emphasis in the TDA standards is rather different. The standards on assessment come under the umbrella of a section called Assessment and Monitoring. The standards are less detailed and cover the necessity to know about the assessment arrangements relating to public examinations and qualifications; the importance of formative assessment and the use of local and national statistics to monitor progress and raise levels of attainment.

However it is important to recognise from the outset that as teachers coming from schools into the FE sector you will bring a lot of expertise about assessment and will almost invariably have had some recent INSET training on assessment for learning due to the current government stress on this area of pedagogy. It is important that the process of orientation draws out, and builds on, this expertise. In this section we will introduce four specific areas relating to assessment for you to consider. These are: initial assessment and individual learning plans; assessment for learning; vocational assessment and assessment in the workplace and finally assessment in the non accredited provision that is most commonly delivered through adult and community learning.

LLUK Professional Standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector in England

Specific standards identified as relevant to this section:

Domain E Assessment for Learning

Teachers in the lifelong learning sector are committed to:

ES 1 Designing and using assessment as a tool for learning and progression

ES 2 Assessing the work of learners in a fair and equitable manner

ES 3 Learner involvement and shared responsibility in the assessment process

ES 4 Using feedback as a tool for learning and progression

ES 5 Working within the systems and quality requirements of the organisation in relation to assessment and monitoring of learner progress

Initial assessment

Because of the diversity of people entering the FE sector in terms of past experience, skills and knowledge base and the enormous diversity of the provision in terms of what is on offer, the process of ensuring that people are on appropriate courses is complex but crucial.

It is regarded as the right of the individual to have their learning needs fully analysed and addressed. On the basis of robust initial assessment the individual is then in a better position to take responsibility for their learning. Another important factor to be aware of is the link between the retention of students and funding. The FE sector is heavily penalised financially when students drop out and the retention statistics are a key indicator in any judgements made about the overall quality of the provision. Conversely, retention and achievement is financially rewarded and score highly in quality assessment.

So what does initial assessment actually measure?

Initial assessment instruments can measure attainment or potential.

Measures of attainment help assess what level of basic and key skills the student has already achieved and what gaps or weaknesses there are in relation to their intended or chosen programme of study. This information is used to identify where individuals may need extra support.

It is a process that can also be used to help identify appropriate learning programmes for individual students who are unsure about their next steps. It can also be used to identify the level at which a student should start their study of basic or key skills.

Section 6 *cont.*

Assessment

How?

The initial diagnostic assessment tends to be done by a separate team and not by the actual teaching staff. This is particularly the case in a large FE college. Teachers, however, have to get to grips with the implications of those diagnostic tests. There are a lot of support materials available to help you understand more about how you can address some of these needs in your own curriculum area. Various helpful, informative websites are listed at the end of the Orientation Guidance.

'CPD should provide opportunities for people to come in and have a look at some of the government initiatives and the excellent materials that have been developed but are seriously underused – like the embedding materials. When colleagues have seen the Sure Start/Child and Parenting Classes and the embedded materials for childcare it's like Christmas. So many other examples can be found in the core curriculum for adults, Access for All. There's a huge focus on new initiatives and an assumption that everyone is trained appropriately to deliver. The turn over of staff is quite dramatic especially in work based learning – so there should be provision for core areas of CPD to be visited and revisited'.

(Ex school teacher/manager now working in WBL)

Initial assessment draws on a range of sources of information. Testing, on its own, is not appropriate and is unlikely to provide enough quality information, so a variety of evidence and information is normally used. These sources are likely to include a combination of self-assessment, discussion and the use of an electronic diagnostic tool as well as the records or reports of previous attainment as appropriate. Although a GCSE A-C is regarded as a level 2 qualification, it will not be a measure of Key Skills. Evidence from GCSE results, for example, can only ever be part of the information needed to establish an individual's current ability or future potential in key skills. A combination of these methods will provide the most complete and accurate information. However, this information must then be interpreted and incorporated into the learner's individual learning plan.

Initial assessment and Individual Learning Plans

Initial assessment is not necessarily a once-and-for-all process. It can be repeated at intervals throughout a learning programme in order to provide evidence for progression to higher levels of skills or to confirm earlier achievements.

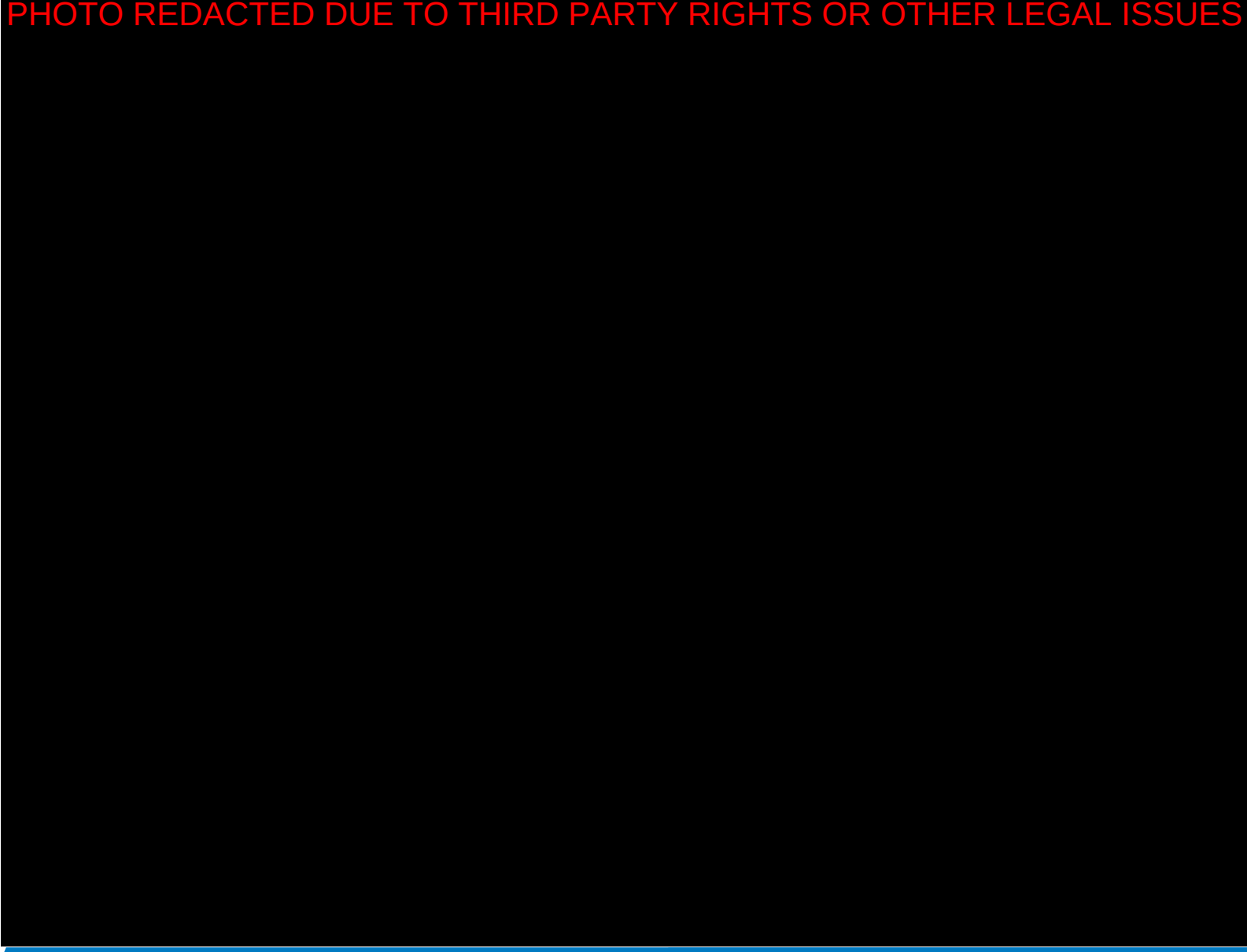
The initial assessment is used to inform the detail of each individual's learning plan (ILP). Each student in the FE sector has their own individual learning plan. These should be used to inform the regular review of the student's progress and are a tool for learning as well as tangible evidence to the inspectorate that the student's learning journey is planned and regularly reviewed.

Assessment for Learning

Assessment for learning means regularly (every session) using evidence and feedback to identify where students are in their learning and then using this information to plan what they need to do next in order to progress towards their goal. School teachers with recent experience who are transferring to FE will very likely have a detailed understanding of the principles and practice involved with the assessment for learning because it is a current priority within DCFS National Strategies.

The LLUK standards spell out the concept in detail and reinforce the importance for the individual learner; the significance in relation to issues of equity; and the shared responsibility between teacher and learner.

Because the FE environment can provide more flexibility for the delivery of teaching and learning there may well be greater scope for the teacher to link assessment for learning with a generally more 'personalised' approach to their delivery.



'School teachers don't necessarily know all the buzz words in FE but probably understand assessment for learning better than most in FE. They come with a tool kit of techniques that would enhance the institution's understanding if they only realised it. Colleges don't necessarily understand Assessment for Learning as well as schools because of the current national strategies and the requirements on secondary teachers'.

(Ex school teacher, now manager in FE sector)

Section 6 *cont.*

Assessment

Vocational assessment and assessment in the workplace

People moving from schools to colleges may well have to get to grips with vocational assessment for the first time. School teachers will be used to monitoring and tracking against a range of targets relating to SATS, GCSEs and a whole range of other academic qualifications.

Assessing within a vocational portfolio is very different because the emphasis of the assessment is on the practical application of knowledge and skills. The assessment decision effectively comes in three stages:

- Where will you find evidence of this competence?
- How will you assess this evidence against the given criteria?
- How will you validate your assessment decision?

A wide range of methods to assess competency are used and it might be appropriate to pursue an Assessor Award.

It is also possible that you might have to write your own assessment tasks either individually or collaboratively with colleagues.

Assessment issues in community based adult learning

Much of the learning that is delivered through community based adult learning is non-accredited. Increasingly it is targeted at those who are hardest to reach and are likely to have no qualifications. In order to maximise the possibility of progression for this group of learners, the current primary funding agency LSC requires there to be a system in place called RARPA. This stands for Recognising and Recording Progression and Achievement. The success of this system depends on effective initial assessment, regular feedback and assessment of progress during the course and appropriate advice on completion about progression opportunities. This process of RARPA is formalised through the use of a proforma for each learner that is completed in dialogue with the course tutor.

Quality Issues

The basic structures that underpin quality improvement in schools such as appraisal and the observation of teaching and learning will be very similar in FE colleges, ACL and FE in HE contexts. The conducting and recording of assessments, the cross moderation of assignments and the arrangements for internal verification and external moderation will be quite different. Awarding bodies operate to the same basic quality standards in terms of assessment procedures, but the amount and the detail of the bureaucracy will vary. It is essential that you are familiar with all the relevant administrative arrangements to do with assessment.

Things to think about and do

- Thinking about initial assessment, visit the Basic Skills Agency website and familiarise yourself with the range of materials available. Make a note of any specific publications that are relevant to your particular curriculum area
- Think about how you have used the principles of assessment for learning in a school context. List all the different kinds of activities that you have used to provide opportunities for informal assessment and student feedback. Describe how these could apply to your current teaching practice in the FE sector. What adjustments would you want to make – if any?
- What skills are necessary to undertake effective peer assessment? How could you help your students develop these skills?
- How would you go about drafting your own assessment activity in your own specialist area?
- How do you collaborate with others to ensure equity and consistency in assessment processes e.g. what are your responsibilities in relation to internal verification and moderation activities?

Provocation

There is significant emphasis given to self-assessment, self-awareness and reflection in almost all areas of pedagogy and professional development.

- How would you evidence to your students that you are also committed to self assessment?
- How could you model good practice?
- What scope is there in your current FE environment to be more adventurous and creative in your assessment practice?

Section 7
Summary Activity

Having worked your way through the Orientation Guidance, it might be useful to reflect on how informed you now feel about the sector and what areas you would like to investigate further. The following questions relate to each section of the Orientation Guidance and are designed to focus on some of the most important areas. Use your current knowledge base and experience to sketch out some responses to the questions below and then assess your performance.

In the final column you could score yourself on a scale of 1-10 (1 = you're on the first step of the learning journey and 10 = you feel reasonably confident)

Areas for possible development	Key points	Self-assessment
What skills are needed to be an effective, reflective practitioner? What strategies help this process? What is the relationship between personal-assessment and the organisational self-assessment processes required by Ofsted?		
How is FE funded? What current government policies determine the funding priorities? What is the impact of this funding on the delivery organisation and on the curriculum?		
What responsibilities does the teacher in FE have for supporting the individual access and progression opportunities for learners? What issues of boundaries need to be considered in this area of work?		
What factors influence the diversity of the sector? How important are considerations of social inclusion and widening participation within the sector?		
What are the principles of effective teaching and learning? How might the FE teaching environment both challenge and extend opportunities for developing good practice in teaching and learning?		
Can you identify four different dimensions of assessment practice that are relevant within the FE Sector?		
What is the teacher's responsibility in each domain?		

This exercise should help you to assess both what you have learnt from the Orientation Guidance and what you still need to find out about. You can now continue to plan your own individual continuing professional development programme.

Good luck and enjoy the process.

Resources

Relevant Publications

Coffield, F., Moseley, D., Hall, E., Ecclestone, K., (2004) Learning styles and pedagogy in post-16 learning – a systematic and critical review. Learning and Skills Research Centre (LRSC) supported by the LSC and DES.

Hamilton, M. and Hillier, Y. (2006) *The Changing Faces of Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy*: A Critical History. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham books.

Fielding, M. (2007) *From personalised to person-centred*, available at www.teachingexpertise.com/articles 2008

McGivney, V., (1993) *Women Education and Training: Barriers to Access, Informal Starting Points and Progression Routes*. NIACE ISBN 1872941427

Nashashibi, P (2004) *The alchemy of learning – Impact and Progression in Adult Learning*, Pub NIACE ISBN 185338870X

Department for Education and Skills, 2005. *Equipping our teachers for the future – reforming initial teacher training for the Learning and Skills Sector*

Department for Education and Skills, (2005) *14-19 Education and Skills White Paper*

Department for Education and Skills (2002) *Success for All*

Ofsted (November 20040 *Why colleges succeed* HMI 2409

Training Development Agency and Lifelong Learning UK, (February 2007), *Report on Training and Development Guidance for Teachers of Diplomas*

Hyland, T., and Merrill, B., (2003) *The Changing Face of Further Education: Lifelong Learning, Inclusion and the Community*, London, RoutledgeFalmer

Kennedy, E., (1998) *Learning Works: Widening Participation in Further Education*, London Further Education Funding Council

Department for Education and Skills (2006) *Personalising Further Education*

Department for Education and Skills, (March 2006) *Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances*

Learning and Skills Council Annual Report 2006/07 *Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives*

Useful Websites

FE White Paper – one year on - can be found on
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/furthereducation/uploads/documents/FEWP_OneYearOn_web2.pdf

A list of resources on adult learning can be found on
http://www.vark-learn.com/english/page.asp?p=bibliography

The website VARK is a guide to teaching and learning styles
http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp

There is a Glossary of FE terms on the QIA Excellence Gateway EG Wiki
http://wiki.qia.oxi.net/wiki/index.php?title=Wiki_Glossary

The QIA Excellence Gateway provides useful information as do other education sites such as ACLearn, Ferl, CETT, Learning and Skills Web and the Excalibur Good Practice Database (all of which can be accessed through the new QIA Excellence Gateway portal).
http://excellence.qia.org.uk/

The entire Learning Aim Database is available to search online.
The database is also available for download in a variety of different formats.
http://providers.lsc.gov.uk/LAD/downloads/LADdownload.asp

The Equipping our Teachers for the Future document published by DIUS is available to download from:
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/furthereducation/uploads/documents/equippingourteachersforthefuture-115-161.pdf

The Matrix Standard is the national quality standard for any organisation that delivers information, advice and guidance for learning and work.
http://www.matrixstandard

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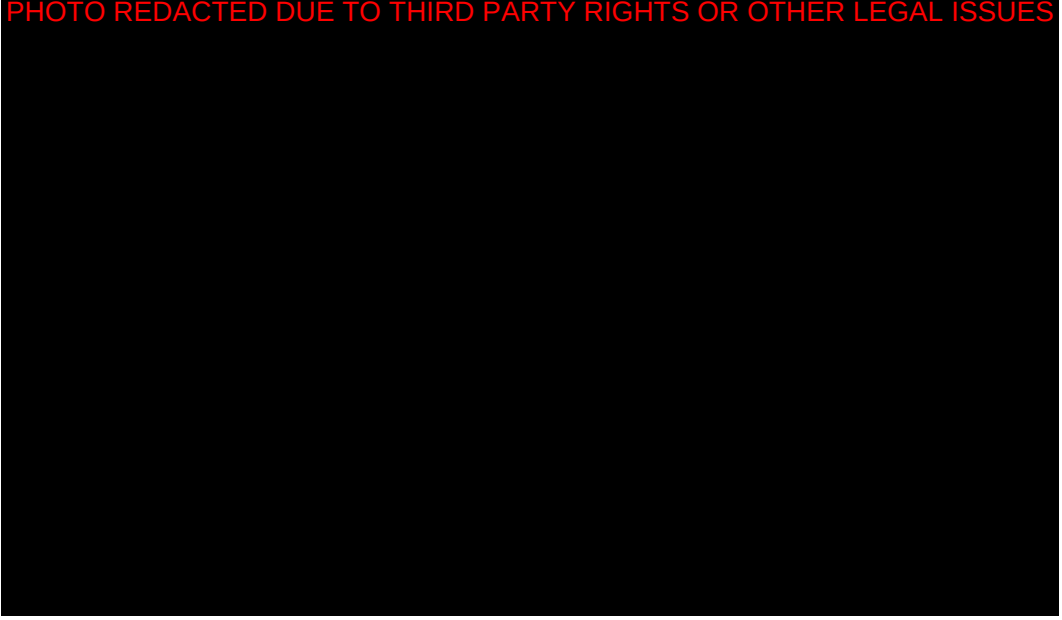

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Ref: FE Orientation Guidance 0508 V1.0

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