

Circular 00/19

Quality Improvement

Standards Fund 2000-01: Non-sector Colleges

Summary

This circular sets out the Council's use of the standard funds for 2000-01 to help non-sector college providers of further education improve the quality of their work. It provides an analysis of the responses received to Council Circular 00/09, *Standards Fund 2000-01 for Non-sector College Providers of Further Education*.

The circular indicates the initiatives that are being funded within the four categories of funding. These are: institutional improvement; improving teaching and learning; training and development for senior managers who have direct responsibility for managing Council-funded provision and dissemination of good practice. The circular sets out the administrative arrangements for applications and for the allocation of funds.

Contents	<i>paragraph</i>
Introduction	1
Consultation	4
Implementation	7
Timetable	11
Support for Providers	17
Monitoring and Evaluation	19

Annexes

- A Responses to Consultation
- B Four Categories of the Standards Fund
- C Administration Procedures
- D Administration of Funds
- E Eligible Items of Expenditure
- F Application Form Category 1
- G Application Form Category 4
- H Eligibility Summary

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Standards Fund 2000–01: Non-sector Colleges

Introduction

1 The Council is committed to extending the use of the standards fund to other providers of further education. Learners, wherever they study, should be entitled to good-quality provision. The standards fund was introduced in 1999-2000 to underpin the drive to raise standards in further education. Some £4 million of the standards fund has been set aside in 2000-01 for non-sector college providers of further education.

2 This circular provides an analysis of the responses received to Council Circular 00/09 and sets out arrangements for using the standards fund in the financial year 2000-01 to help providers to improve the quality of their work.

3 Where earlier Council circulars are referred to in this document, copies are available on the Council's website or from the Council's communications team. For those providers without ready access to the Internet, the contents of the quality improvement unit's web pages referred to in this circular can be provided on paper. Please contact Bettina Bullock in the quality improvement unit for further information (tel 024 7686 3290).

Consultation

4 The Council published Circular 00/09 in April 2000. It set out proposals to distribute funding from the standards fund for 2000-01 in four categories:

- institutional improvement
- improving teaching and learning
- training and development for senior managers who have direct responsibility for Council-funded provision
- dissemination of good practice.

5 Recipients were asked to respond to the proposals by 10 May 2000, and invited to comment upon them.

6 In summary, the proposals in Circular 00/09 were strongly supported by the 117 respondents who replied. Of these responses, 69% were from

non-sector college providers of further education. There was 93% or more support to five of the eight proposals. One other proposal received 89% support and the other two (post-inspection support and dissemination of good practice) were supported by 83% of all respondents. Local education authority (LEA) maintained external institutions are not eligible for these latter two categories because they are not inspected by the FEFC's inspectorate. If LEA responses are excluded, 94% of respondents supported proposals for post-inspection support and dissemination of good practice. Details of the responses to Council Circular 00/09 are provided at annex A.

Implementation

7 The standards fund will be allocated under the four categories that are described in more detail at annex B. Most of the funding will be allocated by formula or made available on application. However, financial assistance for providers for post-inspection support and for dissemination of good practice will be allocated on the basis of the Council's approval of providers' costed action plans. To help providers, the Council has posted guidance on action planning and a template for costed action plans on the quality improvement unit's web pages on its website.

8 Providers that are not eligible for financial assistance for post-inspection support in the financial year 2000-01 will become eligible once they have been inspected. Once inspected, providers may also be eligible for funding under category 4, dissemination of good practice. The Council expects a smooth transition to the new arrangements put in place as a result of the Learning and Skills Bill beyond April 2001.

9 Information about the application process for 2000-01 and the arrangements for administering funding are set out in annexes C and D. Activities for which funding may be used are listed at annex E and the application forms are at annexes F and G. Providers need to ensure that they complete the application form appropriate to the initiative for which they are seeking funding.

10 Annex H gives a summary of the different types of non-sector college providers of further education and the categories of standards funding for which they are eligible. Only those providers that have

Council-funded students* enrolled on programmes during the teaching year, 2000-01, and also had some students enrolled in the previous year, 1999-2000, will be eligible for standards funding.

Timetable

11 The Council is keen to start support for work on raising standards as soon as possible so that providers across the sector can demonstrate their commitment to achieving measurable improvements.

12 Providers eligible for post-inspection support will be notified about their funding. For those inspected between September 1997 and April 2000, applications should be sent to the Council by the end of September 2000. Other providers should send their applications within two months of receiving notification that they have been awarded funding. Funding will be made available when providers' costed action plans are approved. Independent specialist colleges for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities should send applications to the Council by the beginning of November 2000, following the training and development programme and briefing events for these institutions.

13 Initiatives under category 2 (improving teaching and learning) are a priority for the Council. During summer 2000, providers will be informed about the number of facilitator days they have been awarded to take forward the basic skills quality initiative (BSQI). They will also receive information about arrangements for training basic skills staff. Details about other initiatives for which providers will receive an allocation will be sent to principals by July 2000.

14 The training and development programmes for senior managers with direct responsibility for managing Council-funded provision will begin in autumn 2000. Consultative groups will shortly be set up to help develop priorities for the senior management training programmes. Programmes will be designed to focus on management skills as they apply in the context of the different types of non-sector college providers of further education.

15 For providers inspected between September 1997 and April 2000 and awarded a grade 1, applications should be sent to the Council by the end of September 2000. Other providers wishing to disseminate good practice in provision awarded a grade 1, should send their costed action plans within two months of receiving notification that they have been awarded funding.

16 The timetable for allocating funds to providers achieving FEFC-accredited status will inevitably be determined by the timing of announcements. In general terms, however, these providers will be expected to inform the Council about how they intend to use their funding to disseminate good practice within six weeks of the announcement of their awards.

Support for Providers

17 The Further Education Development Agency (FEDA) will be able to offer some help to providers seeking funding from the standards fund. Information about the support available will be sent to principals of institutions by FEDA during summer 2000. Support for independent specialist colleges will be built into the training programme for senior managers.

18 The Council is also providing additional support for institutions seeking to benefit from the good practice which exists in the sector. There is now a searchable database on the Council's website, located in the quality improvement unit's pages, which includes information about dissemination activities for which colleges have received standards funding. The colleges concerned have provided information on their activities.

Monitoring and Evaluation

19 The Council will need to ensure that it has adequate information about providers' use of standards fund allocations. This will enable the Council to assess the impact of the standards fund, both at local and national levels. In general, providers should always make sure they have adequate information about their use of funding from the standards fund to allow them to monitor their expenditure and to evaluate the impact of their activities on institutional improvement and student performance. Progress made by providers receiving support from the standards fund will normally be monitored through reports prepared by the

* The term 'Council-funded' students is used in a generic sense to cover dance and drama schools in receipt of DfEE bursaries which the FEFC inspects.

institution, supplemented where appropriate by visits from an inspector. Monitoring reports should be submitted to the quality improvement unit by 16 February 2001. Reports should be no longer than two pages for each funded initiative.

David Melville

Responses to Consultation

Introduction

1 There were 117 responses to Council Circular 00/09, 69% of which were from non-sector college providers, as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Responses to Circular 00/09 by college type

<i>College type</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%*</i>
General further education	18	15
Sixth form	7	6
Tertiary	7	6
Specialist	4	3
LEA-maintained external institutions	47	40
Independent external institutions	6	5
Independent specialist colleges	13	11
HE institutions	10	9
Dance and drama schools	5	4
Total	117	

**percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number*

2 Respondents were asked to comment under eight headings on the proposals contained in Circular 00/09 and to indicate the extent to which they supported them.

Summary

3 As table 2 shows, five of the eight proposals outlined in Circular 00/09 received support from 93% or more of the respondents. The remaining three proposals received support from between 83% and 89% of respondents.

4 Table 3 provides details of the responses received from non-sector college providers of further education. It shows the strong support for proposals to extend the standards fund to non-sector college providers. LEA-maintained external institutions are less supportive for two categories, with 35% not agreeing. These providers are not inspected by the FEFC inspectorate.

Table 2. Responses to Circular 00/09 by proposal

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Responses No.</i>	<i>Support %</i>	<i>Do not support %</i>	<i>No preference %</i>
Post-inspection support	97	83	3	14
BSQI	111	95	2	3
Information and learning technology (ILT) for teachers	114	97	2	1
Support for part-time teachers	114	97	1	2
Retraining of teachers	109	93	3	4
Professional updating of teachers	104	89	7	4
Training and development for senior managers	111	95	2	3
Dissemination of good practice	97	83	3	14

Table 3. Responses to Circular 00/09 by proposal from non-sector college providers of FE

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>LEA – maintained external institutions</i>	<i>Independent external institutions</i>	<i>Independent specialist colleges</i>	<i>HE institutions</i>	<i>Dance and drama schools</i>
	Support %	Support %	Support %	Support %	Support %
Post-inspection support	64	100	100	90	80
BSQI	96	83	100	80	100
ILT for teachers	98	100	100	90	100
Support for part-time teachers	98	100	92	90	100
Retraining of teachers	89	83	100	80	100
Professional updating of teachers	87	83	92	90	80
Training and development for senior managers	96	100	100	90	100
Dissemination of good practice	66	100	100	90	80

5 The following paragraphs provide further details of responses to each of the proposals in the circular.

Institutional improvement – Post-inspection support

6 Some 83% of all respondents supported this proposal to help institutions to improve their performance, with nearly 35% specifically commenting that the plans would be welcomed. Establishing a 'link inspector' for external institutions was particularly welcomed. Concerns were raised by 32% of respondents, including those on the availability of funds for providers who will be inspected in late 2000; how the level of funding relates to identified weaknesses for providers receiving a single inspection grade; and whether LEA-maintained external institutions will be eligible for funding when the LSC is formed.

Basic skills quality initiative

7 This proposal was supported by 95% of respondents, with 49% emphasising how much they welcomed this initiative and 16% appreciating the use they will be able to make of

facilitators. Issues raised included the problems of involving part-time staff in the initiative and the relationship of the initiative to the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

ILT for teachers

8 This proposal was well-supported, with 97% giving their full support to the development of IT skills, and 37% commenting upon the importance of this initiative within their own curriculum areas and its value to these staff. Concerns were raised by 28% of the respondents who wished to stress the number of part-time staff currently employed and their eligibility for this training, the lack of hardware and software in some institutions and the availability of the initiative for all members of staff.

Support for part-time teachers

9 Respondents were again supportive (97%), with 30% commenting on the additional costs or issues to consider when supporting part-time staff, such as childcare arrangements, the availability of part-time staff for training, and arrangements for staff cover.

Retraining of teachers

10 This was supported by 93% of all respondents, with 62% commenting on the importance of this proposal and 19% requesting that support should be available for full- and part-time teachers. Some 35% explained their need for this support in the light of curriculum changes, particularly in key skills and IT, but there would be cost implications for releasing staff for training especially among smaller providers.

Professional updating of teachers

11 This proposal was supported by 89% of respondents with 36% explaining how staff will benefit from updating their commercial experience and the strengthened links with industry that should take place as a result. Three providers were concerned that insufficient money would be available and whether the funding received would vary according to the amount of Council-funded provision.

Training and development for senior managers

12 This proposal was supported by 95% of respondents, with 41% commenting upon its relevance and importance to their own institution as well as LSC developments. Four non-sector colleges were keen to stress that any training programme should take into account its client group who may not be from a sector college background.

Dissemination of good practice

13 Some 83% of respondents supported this proposal, and 33% of LEA-maintained external institutions commented that limiting funding to only those with outstanding practice identified by the Council's inspectorate could exclude excellent practice elsewhere. External institutions not involved in FEFC inspection would not be able to participate in this initiative. A further 17% of providers commented that outstanding practice could be missed if funding is restricted to grade 1 providers as there may be specific areas of excellence within some grade 2 providers.

Four Categories of the Standards Fund

1 In the 2000-01 financial year, the Council will fund activities under four categories. These will support measures outlined in the Council's quality improvement strategy and the government's priority to drive up standards. The Council will not provide support under the standards fund where it is considered by the Council that another course of action is more appropriate, including if deemed necessary, the cessation of Council funds. The following paragraphs detail, for each category of available funding, providers' eligibility for funding and the funding arrangements.

Category 1: Institutional Improvement

2 The purpose of this category is to provide post-inspection support, following inspections in the current round (beginning September 1997), so that all providers are able to achieve improvements in the quality of their work more quickly than would otherwise be possible. Local education authority-maintained external institutions are not inspected by the Council's inspectorate and therefore are not eligible for this category of funding. Whilst the Council wishes to encourage collaborative work to achieve improvements in quality, providers should ensure that double funding does not occur. This possibility could arise when one provider has received funding to buy in support under category 1 whilst another provider has been funded to disseminate good practice and provide support under category 4. In this instance, the sector colleges and other providers concerned should make sure that activities are not funded through both categories of the fund.

Eligibility

3 Providers will be entitled to receive funding on receipt of a costed action plan agreed by the Council. Those providers inspected between September 1997 and October 2000 will be eligible for funding during the 2000-01 financial year. Those providers due for inspection during the remainder of the teaching year 2000-01 should be eligible for support in the financial year 2001-02, following their inspection. Only those providers that have Council-funded students enrolled on programmes during the current

year, 2000-01, and also had some students enrolled in the previous year, 1999-2000, will be eligible for standards funding.

Funding arrangements

4 The Council wants providers to be able to predict the level of funding available to them so that actions can be planned and costed at the earliest opportunity. It has therefore developed a simple and transparent method of allocating funds based on the amount of the institution's Council funded provision and inspection outcomes. This provides a basic level of funding according to size (determined by the number of full-time equivalent students) with an enhancement to enable providers to tackle weaknesses in provision as identified by inspection grades. Table 1 shows how funding will be allocated. A formula developed for independent specialist colleges for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities takes into account the Council's arrangements to place students with particularly complex support needs. It gives some additional weighting to students in these institutions. This may mean that, in a few cases, these colleges receive funding at a higher band. Each institution will be informed of the amount of their allocation in a letter to the principal.

5 Providers will only be eligible for post-inspection support if they had Council-funded students enrolled on programmes in 1999-2000, and also in 2000-01.

6 Annex C describes procedures for notifying providers about the funding available to them and for administering applications for funding.

Monitoring and evaluation

7 Providers will be expected to provide a brief report on their use of funds by 16 February 2001 which includes an assessment of the impact of actions carried out to address weaknesses.

Category 2: Improving Teaching and Learning

8 The purpose of this category is to provide targeted funding for providers to tackle matters of continuing concern in the quality of teaching and learning – the area which impinges most directly on the students' experience. Successive chief inspectors' annual reports have indicated that although the quality of teaching has generally improved since

Table 1. Distribution of funds for providers applying for funding for post-inspection support

<i>Size of Council-funded provision*</i>	<i>Provision graded 1 or 2</i>	<i>Provision graded 3</i>	<i>Provision graded 4 or 5</i>
Up to 10 full-time equivalent students (ftes)	£1,000	£2,000	£3,000
10 to 49 ftes	£2,000	£4,000	£6,000
50 to 99 ftes	£3,000	£6,000	£9,000
100 to 249 ftes	£5,000	£9,000	£12,000
250 to 499 ftes	£7,000	£12,000	£19,000
500 to 999 ftes	£12,000	£19,000	£26,000
1000 and over	£19,000	£26,000	£33,000

**measured in FTEs funded by the Council in total during 1998-99. In the case of dance and drama schools where provision in 2000-01 is likely to be very different from their first year of operating DjEE bursaries in 1999-2000, data for 2000-01 will be used wherever possible. All figures are up to a maximum of the amount shown.*

inspection commenced in 1993, there are still weaknesses which need to be addressed.

9 The Council will fund a range of initiatives which are described in the following paragraphs. They are support for:

- the second phase of the basic skills quality initiative
- information and learning technology (ILT) skills for teachers
- part-time teachers
- retraining of teachers
- professional updating of teachers.

10 Providers will be allocated a lump sum to cover supporting part-time teachers, retraining teachers and professional updating for teachers in order for each provider to deliver their own priorities. A provider may choose to use their allocation for any combination of these three sub-categories.

The basic skills quality initiative

11 The inspectorate's survey of basic education, published in April 1998, identified the need to improve the quality of basic skills teaching. This is now a key government priority. The report of the Moser group, *Improving Literacy and Numeracy: A fresh start*, highlighted the fact that 7 million adults in the country have real problems with literacy and numeracy. Phase 1 of the basic skills quality initiative, funded from the standards fund in 1999-2000, provided financial assistance for colleges and other Council-funded providers of further education

to develop materials. In 2000-01, the Council will fund a second phase to help providers to improve the quality of their basic skills provision. The Council's work in this field is intended to complement the work of other agencies to improve the provision of basic skills.

12 Phase 2, which started in April 2000, involves the recruitment and training of basic skills facilitators who will help providers to improve quality and examine how the materials developed during phase 1 of the initiative can support developments. Institutions, or where more appropriate, groups of institutions, will be allocated a number of facilitator days paid for directly from the standards fund. The number of days allocated to each provider will vary according to the amount of Council-funded provision. Providers will be informed about their allocation in summer 2000.

13 In addition, the Council will make funding available for up to 1,000 basic skills staff to attend a development course. Before attendance on the course, institutions will be invited to undertake an audit of the scope and quality of their basic skills provision, and to develop an action plan which will help them improve provision. The course programme will cover the organisation, management, and quality assurance of basic skills provision, as well as aspects of teaching and learning. Only teachers working on Council-funded provision will be eligible to attend the training programme. The training programme is likely to be continued in 2001-02.

Information and learning technology skills (ILT) for teachers

14 Inspection reports highlight frequently the need to improve the use of ILT skills for teachers in curriculum areas. For some teachers, their own lack of skills is a drawback to their understanding of how ILT can enhance teaching and learning in their subject areas. The Council will provide funds to help providers offer suitable training and development opportunities for teachers to develop ILT skills. Providers will be expected to demonstrate that the funds are used in accordance with the list of items eligible for expenditure as outlined in Annex E in order to enhance teaching skills in ILT in Council-funded areas.

15 Providers will be expected to use standards funding in a manner consistent with Council Circular 99/45, *ILT Implementation Plan*, which outlines the implementation plan for the ILT development with the sector from 1999-2002. In addition, the Council is working with the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) to develop standards in ILT. It is anticipated that the draft standards will inform training programmes and activities that are developed by providers from autumn 2000.

Funding arrangements

16 The Council intends that its approach to funding this initiative will enable it to meet its responsibilities for consistent use of funds, yet reflect local needs. Providers will, therefore, receive funds according to the amount of Council-funded provision as represented by full-time equivalent student numbers.

Monitoring and evaluation

17 Providers will be expected to provide a brief report on their use of funds by 16 February 2001 which includes details of the number of teachers who have benefited from ILT training and development initiatives.

Other support for teachers

18 Providers can select to use standards funding for: support for part-time teachers; retraining; and/or professional updating for teachers. Providers will select a combination appropriate for their context, and in order to suit their own priorities. Only teachers working on Council-funded provision

are eligible. The Council will fund in a way that gives consistent use of funds, yet reflects local needs. Providers will, therefore, receive funding according to the amount of Council-funded provision as represented by full-time equivalent student numbers.

Part-time teachers

19 The Council will provide financial assistance to put in place arrangements to support part-time teachers. Part-time staff make a valuable contribution to further education provision. However, inspection of lessons taught by staff on part-time contracts suggests that, in general, such teachers need more help to bring their work up to the standard achieved by their full-time colleagues. In 2000-01, funding will be provided for new or inexperienced part-time teachers to have:

- mentoring arrangements
- better access to staff development opportunities.

20 Such arrangements are likely to include:

- induction
- observation of teaching
- advice on marking work
- moderation of assessments.

21 Funding may also be used towards the cost of providing better access to staff development opportunities for part-time teachers. Only part-time teachers delivering Council-funded provision are eligible for funding.

Monitoring and evaluation

22 Providers will be expected to provide a brief report on their use of funds by 16 February 2001 indicating the number of days of mentoring support provided and the staff development undertaken by part-time teachers.

Retraining of teachers

23 Teachers are facing considerable curriculum changes, and some may need to develop new skills to cope with these changes. Funds will be made available to allow teachers to retrain or develop new skills. For example, a teacher in a vocational area may need to undertake an element of retraining so that they are better able to teach elements of key skills, or a teacher may need to retrain to teach students with more complex learning difficulties

and/or disabilities. Only teachers working on Council-funded provision are eligible for funding.

Monitoring and evaluation

24 Providers will be expected to demonstrate that the retraining provided enables teachers to meet the demands of curriculum change and provide a brief report on their use of funds by 16 February 2001. This report should include details of the number of teachers undertaking retraining and the number of training days.

Professional updating for teachers

25 Teachers in some vocational areas lack recent and relevant industrial or commercial experience that they can draw on to enhance the teaching of their subject. The purpose of this initiative is to fund short-term secondments to industry, commerce or to sector colleges with good-quality vocational provision which have strong links with industry. In the case of independent specialist colleges, secondments for teachers to care establishments may be also be considered. Teachers who are on full-time or on half-time fractional appointments and who deliver Council-funded provision are eligible for this initiative.

Monitoring and evaluation

26 Providers will need to show how the secondments have provided relevant opportunities for teachers from vocational areas, where teachers lack recent and relevant industrial or commercial experience. Providers will be expected to provide a brief report on their use of funds by 16 February 2001 indicating the number of secondment days arranged and used.

Category 3: Training and Development for Senior Managers with Direct Responsibility for Managing Council-funded Provision

27 There is a continuing need to enhance management skills across further education. During 2000-01, the Council will provide funding for the training programme designed for principals and senior managers in sector colleges to be adapted and developed for other providers of further education. It will also include relevant elements of the good governance programme

designed for sector colleges. The focus of the training programme will be on managing further education provision. During 2000-01, up to 100 managers in non-sector college providers of further education with direct responsibility for Council-funded provision will be able to take part in the programme.

28 It is intended that the managers' training programme will meet individuals' personal development needs and recognise their existing ability and expertise. Although participation in the programme will not automatically lead to a qualification, opportunities for accreditation may be available to successful candidates. The course will provide senior managers with the opportunity to prepare an individual development plan, which should address ongoing professional needs as well as matters relating to institutional improvement.

29 The managers' training programme will take into account the context of different non-sector college providers of further education. In view of the Council's arrangements for placing students with complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities in independent specialist colleges, there will be a managers' training programme specifically for these institutions. It will cover curriculum development and planning, as well as aspects of leadership, managing change and personal development. This programme will be offered in autumn 2000, and it will include a module on applying for and using other categories of the standards fund.

30 The training programme for other non-sector college providers of further education will include leadership, managing change and personal development. It will be designed to take into account the diversity of the different providers taking part. This programme will be offered in early spring 2001.

31 In the light of the low levels of representation of black staff at principal and senior management level across the sector, the Council will also allocate specific funding for a number of black staff to have places on the management training programmes.

Application and funding arrangements

32 Further details of the programme and how to apply for funding will be sent to providers in autumn 2000. Senior managers attending a course will have their fees paid directly from the standards fund.

Tendering arrangements

33 Two small consultative groups will be set up to help develop priorities for each of the training and development programmes for senior managers. Once outline course specifications are agreed, the Council will invite organisations to tender for contracts to design, develop and deliver the training and development programmes for senior managers.

Category 4: Dissemination of Good Practice

34 During 2000-01, the Council will fund the dissemination of good practice for the benefit of Council-funded students. Whilst the Council wishes to encourage collaborative work to achieve improvements in quality, providers should ensure that double funding does not occur. This possibility could arise when one college or other provider has received funding from the Council to buy in support under category 1 whilst another college or other provider has been funded to provide support under category 4. In this instance, the colleges and other providers concerned should make sure that activities are not funded through both categories of the fund.

Eligibility

35 The following providers will be eligible for funding under category 4:

- those with outstanding practice and awarded a grade 1 by the Council's inspectorate since September 1997. Funding will be made available in relation to provision which has been judged as outstanding
- FEFC-accredited providers. The Council's Consultation Circular 00/12 outlined proposals to enable non-sector college providers of further education to apply for Council accredited status. Providers that become accredited by the FEFC will be eligible for funding to disseminate their good practice.

36 The Council is keen to encourage providers to apply for this category of funding to share their good practice to help others. Providers should aim to use a range of methods in disseminating good practice and to avoid duplication. They should indicate clearly whether their activities in disseminating good practice promote, for example:

- awareness – which might include: the distribution of materials; publicity; publications; conferences; websites; demonstration workshops
- understanding and skills development – which is more likely to include: consultancy; workshops or secondments which actively engage participants and include specific activities which can be replicated elsewhere.

Examples of dissemination activities funded in sector colleges are listed on the quality improvement unit's web pages on the Council's website.

37 The key consideration for each provider in applying for funding should be whether:

- a. the dissemination of its experience and skills will be helpful to colleges and other Council-funded providers and lead to the achievement of higher standards of work;
- b. it has the capacity and skills to manage an effective dissemination programme, either independently or in partnership with another organisation.

Priorities for action

38 The Council is also keen to support providers with outstanding practice in areas where inspection has identified a general development need. These include:

For independent specialist colleges for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

- curriculum development and leadership
- meeting the needs of students with complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities

For dance and drama schools

- curriculum development and leadership
- tutorial support and careers guidance

For all non-sector college providers of further education

- the identification and provision of learning support
- tutorial support and careers advice and guidance
- basic skills provision

- improving equality of opportunity for staff and/or students
- curriculum areas with a small percentage of outstanding grades such as business studies, engineering or construction
- links with employers
- quality assurance and self-assessment
- support for part-time teachers
- use of management information
- improving student attendance
- setting targets for retention and achievement to help improve students' performance
- raising rates of attendance, retention and achievement whilst widening participation
- effective arrangements for monitoring the educational performance of the institution.

39 The above list should not be considered as exhaustive. The Council recognises that providers demonstrate a variety of strengths which make them effective institutions in supporting learning and the achievements of students.

40 The Council is particularly concerned to encourage the sector to share good practice in construction and engineering. A few non-sector colleges have provision in these areas. Since September 1997, inspectors have awarded very few outstanding grades for such provision. The Council will, therefore, set up consultative groups to help it to identify good practice in construction and engineering and to develop ways of sharing this practice with colleges and other providers in the sector.

41 The Council is keen to improve the quality of provision for students involved in New Deal and will set up a consultative group to help it to identify good practice and how it might be shared, before it funds dissemination of good practice in this area.

42 The Council is concerned to improve equality of opportunity for students and staff. It particularly wishes to encourage dissemination of good practice by providers which have demonstrated:

- effective equal opportunities practice for students and staff, including improvement strategies, target-setting, and evaluation
- that they have increased the numbers of black staff, particularly in full-time teaching and management posts.

43 Those receiving funding will be expected to demonstrate that they are sharing their good practice with colleges and/or other Council-funded providers with weaknesses in similar areas. Funding will be allocated after agreement by the Council of providers' costed action plans.

Funding arrangements

44 Providers awarded accredited status by the FEFC will be eligible for up to £50,000 to support the dissemination of their good practice. Funding will be made available on the receipt by the Council of a costed action plan.

45 Providers which have received a grade 1 for provision inspected since September 1997 will be also eligible to apply for funding to disseminate good practice. This may be additional to any other funding received under the standards fund. The level of funding available for each project will depend on the activity proposed but is up to a maximum of £50,000. Should this funding category become over-subscribed, the Council will give preference to those initiatives which reflect the priorities listed in paragraph 38 above.

46 The Council wishes in particular to encourage non-sector college providers of further education to collaborate with each other and with sector colleges, but it does not wish to receive multiple applications to fund the same project. Providers wishing to collaborate are therefore asked to nominate a lead institution to make the application for funding and receive payments from the Council. The lead institution will be responsible for ensuring that funding is used appropriately by collaborating providers and that funded activities lead to the projected outcomes. Providers may wish to consider using lifelong learning partnerships, local learning and skills council boundaries or other existing initiatives as the basis for collaborative working arrangements.

47 Annex C describes procedures for notifying colleges about the funding available to them and administering applications for funding. The application form is at annex G.

Monitoring and evaluation

48 Providers will be expected to provide a brief report on their use of funds by 16 February 2001.

Administration Procedures

1 The following paragraphs describe notification procedures, the format of action plans, how action plans will be assessed and how providers' progress in completing their action plans will be monitored.

Notifying Providers

2 Each provider eligible for funding under category 1 will be notified of the maximum funding available in a letter to the principal from the quality improvement unit. Where appropriate, providers will also be notified of their eligibility to apply for funding under category 4. Providers awarded accredited status by the Council will be notified by the Council's chief executive.

Action Plans

3 The Council wishes to receive a costed action plan covering all the activities for which funding is sought for categories 1 and 4, including those relating to the award of accredited status. Action plans should be brief but clear, comprising no more than four pages. Action plans should identify:

- a. the standards fund category from which funding is sought;
- b. the actions proposed and, where appropriate, their priority;
- c. estimated costs for each action;
- d. measurable outcomes resulting from funded activities, including the number of students and/or staff that will benefit from dissemination activities where appropriate;
- e. timescales for achieving the measurable outcomes;
- f. ways in which progress in making improvements will be monitored and evaluated by the provider.

4 Providers seeking funds under category 4 are asked to include a brief statement (no more than one page) about their experience to date in managing or participating in the dissemination of good practice. In this context, it should be noted that lack of experience of dissemination will not preclude funding under category 4. The Council is keen to promote dissemination of good practice and for

more providers to be involved in activity. Action plans covering collaborative initiatives should make the contribution of each participating provider clear.

5 Some providers may already have in place post-inspection and other action plans to address weakness which have been agreed by the Council. These providers are advised to review their action plans after considering how funding from category 1 of the standards fund can be used to extend the range of issues being addressed or accelerate action to raise standards.

Timetable

6 Action plans should be accompanied by a completed application form (see annexes F and G) and should be forwarded to the quality improvement unit for category 1 and/or 4 by:

Category 1:

- the end of September 2000 for all providers apart from independent specialist colleges, inspected between September 1997 and April 2000
- the beginning of November 2000 for independent specialist colleges for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities inspected between September 1997 and April 2000
- two months after notification of funding within category 1

Category 4:

- the end of September 2000 for all providers inspected between September 1997 and April 2000
- two months after notification of funding within category 4
- six weeks after announcements of the achievement of accredited status.

7 In exceptional cases where urgent action is required to remedy poor provision, the Council may require action plans in a shorter timescale.

Assessment

8 The adequacy of costed action plans received from providers will be assessed by the Council before funding is agreed. The assessment will consider whether:

For activities under category 1

- the proposed actions effectively address weaknesses as identified by the Council's inspectorate
- the priorities for action are clear
- the timescale for making improvements is realistic and achievable.

For activities under category 4

- the proposed actions are clearly founded on the strengths identified by the Council's inspectorate, and where applicable the accreditation process
- activities are in addition to any other initiatives funded by the Council.

For all activities

- the plans have been costed in a prudent way and appear to offer good value for money
- the provider has identified appropriate measurable factors to indicate success
- the proposals for evaluating progress appear suitable.

9 The Council's inspectorate may visit a provider if further evidence is needed to help assess the action plans submitted.

10 The Council undertakes to respond to all action plans received within five working weeks. Once an action plan is approved, a provider will receive a letter outlining arrangements for payment, support and monitoring. If the plan is not approved, the provider will be expected to resubmit its plan before it receives initial funding.

11 The Council has posted guidance on action planning, and a suggested template for costed action plans is on the quality improvement unit's pages of the Council's website.

Monitoring Progress

12 Action plans accompanying applications for funding should indicate the intended measurable outcomes of funded activities and how progress will be monitored and evaluated by the provider. This information will enable the Council to plan its own monitoring and reporting activities aimed at assessing the impact of the standards fund, both at a local and national level.

13 Progress made by providers receiving support from the standards fund will be monitored through monitoring reports. Institutions will submit a monitoring report to the quality improvement unit for each category of the standards fund they have received, by 16 February 2001. If appropriate, inspectors may visit a provider to monitor progress.

14 In general, providers should always ensure that they have adequate information about their use of funding from the standards fund to allow them to monitor their expenditure and to evaluate the impact of their activities on institutional improvement.

Reinspection

15 All areas of provision which have been awarded grade 4 or 5 during inspection will be reinspected within one year, in line with the Council's quality improvement strategy.

16 The responsibility for improving quality lies primarily with the provider and the Council requires providers to respond purposefully and constructively to weaknesses identified by the inspectorate. Providers should note, however, that in order to fulfil its statutory duties, the Council will consider what additional steps it requires to take if a provider:

- is unwilling or unable to produce an acceptable action plan
- shows no improvement or seriously declines during the planned recovery period
- still causes concern after further inspection.

If deemed appropriate, the Council may cease to fund provision in an institution.

Administration of Funds

1 Whenever possible, funds will be allocated to providers, rather than paying claims for expenditure from providers in retrospect. Funding will only be for additional expenditure incurred by the institution and must not be substituted for any expenditure already planned or normally incurred by a provider. Funding should be used to ensure that improvements are made more quickly than would otherwise be possible.

Eligibility of Expenditure

2 Annex E provides a list of those items of expenditure which are considered eligible for funding. Where an item of expenditure is not on this list, the Council's quality improvement unit should be consulted before incurring any costs.

Tendering and Procurement

3 Providers should comply with all statutory and other legal requirements as may apply to the implementation of their action plans and use of funding and apply good practice to any procurement and tendering. Providers may find useful the joint FEFC/NAO good practice guide: *Procurement* (TSO, 1997).

Payment Procedures

4 Application forms for funding must be submitted and signed by the principal of the institution.

5 Where action plans are not completed or funding is not used fully for the purposes for which it was allocated the Council reserves the right to reclaim funds.

VAT

6 Providers should consult their financial advisers and, if necessary, their local HM Customs and Excise Office to ascertain what aspects of expenditure will incur VAT.

Health and Safety and Equal Opportunities

7 Successful action plans must demonstrate proper consideration of relevant health and safety and equal opportunities statutory requirements.

Evidence for Audit Purposes and Accounting Procedures

8 Providers will be expected to keep copies of all invoices and other appropriate costs records (correctly processed and certified) as evidence of expenditure for audit purposes. Providers should account separately for the receipt and use of standards fund allocations.

Publication of Outcomes

9 The Council will wish to publish and disseminate information supported under the fund.

Eligible Items of Expenditure

1 Before incurring costs, providers should refer to the following illustrative list of eligible items of expenditure. Should expenditure be planned for items not on this list, providers should contact the quality improvement unit for further guidance. Any expenditure incurred on items not on this list are at providers' own risk without Council approval. Expenditure should be directed to support Council-funded provision. Care should be taken to ensure that expenditure is in addition to that which would have been incurred had funding not been available and that appropriate procedures apply to the selection of consultants and contractors. All providers receiving funding under the standards fund must ensure that their activities are not being double-funded. The guiding principle in determining eligibility of expenditure should, in all cases, be that of reasonableness.

2 The following list of items is not intended to be exhaustive, but gives providers guidance on appropriate activities:

- staff time and/or replacement costs
- rental of equipment
- hire of facilities to undertake study
- independent consultants' fees and expenses
- purchase of materials
- purchase of equipment
- installation of and work associated with new management information systems and software
- staff training and development costs.

3 Institutions should not profit or make a loss from any exchange of staff resulting from work relating to the standards fund.

Application Form

Category 1: Institutional Improvement

(Reference Circular 00/19)

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

Please return the completed form to the quality improvement unit,
FEFC, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT
together with a copy of your action plan.

Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 024 7686 3000
Fax 024 7686 3160

Section 1. Provider's details

1 Provider name _____

2 Provider contact person (*please print*) _____

3 Telephone no. _____ Fax no. _____

4 E-mail address _____

5 Council code number, where available _____

Section 2. Summary of funding applied for	<i>Category of funding</i>	<i>Amount of funding applied for</i>
	Category 1 – post-inspection action plans	£ _____

Section 3. Declaration For completion by principal

As principal of _____ (name of institution)

I confirm:

- a. that the institution had Council-funded students enrolled on programmes in 1999-2000, and also in 2000-01;
- b. that funding will be directed to support Council-funded provision;
- c. that the funds will be subject to the institution's accounting and auditing arrangements;
- d. that the books and records of the institution in respect of funds will be open to inspection by the Council;
- e. that the funds will be repaid if a provider underspends, or spends on purposes ineligible for support from the standards fund, if so required by the Council;
- f. that the funds will be repaid if so required by the Council;
- g. that the funds will be used for expenditure additional to that which would have been incurred had funding not been available;
- h. that the institution will put in place arrangements for evaluating the use of the funding;
- i. that the Council may publish and disseminate information on the use by providers of the standards fund.

Signature

Name (*please print*)

Date ____ / ____ / ____

Application Form

Category 4: Dissemination of Good Practice

(Reference Circular 00/19)

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

Please return the completed form to the quality improvement unit,
FEFC, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT
together with a copy of your action plan.

Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT

Telephone 024 7686 3000
Fax 024 7686 3160

Section 1. Provider's details

1 Provider name _____

2 Provider contact person (*please print*) _____

3 Telephone no. _____ Fax no. _____

4 E-mail address _____

5 Council code number, where available _____

Section 2. Summary of funding applied for

<i>Category of funding</i>	<i>Amount of funding applied for</i>
Category 4 – dissemination of good practice:	
- as an accredited provider	£ _____
- as a provider awarded grade 1 (please specify if a certain curriculum or cross-college area(s) are graded 1)	£ _____

Section 3. Declaration

For completion by principal

As principal of _____ (name of institution)

I confirm:

- that the institution had Council-funded students enrolled on programmes in 1999-2000, and in 2000-01;
- that funding will be directed to support Council-funded provision;
- that the funds will be subject to the institution's accounting and auditing arrangements;
- that the books and records of the institution in respect of funds will be open to inspection by the Council;
- that the funds will be repaid if a provider underspends, or spends on purposes ineligible for support from the standards fund, if so required by the Council;
- that the funds will be used for expenditure additional to that which would have been incurred had funding not been available;
- that the institution will fulfil its responsibilities as a lead provider for any collaborative project for which funding is sought;
- that the institution will put in place arrangements for evaluating the use of the funding;

- i. that the Council may publish and disseminate information on the use by providers of the standards fund.

Signature

Name (*please print*)

Date ___ / ___ / ___

Collaborative Arrangements to Disseminate Good Practice

For completion by partner colleges or providers

College/provider 1

College/provider _____

Name of principal (*please print*) _____

Signed _____

Date _____

College/provider 2

College/provider _____

Name of principal (*please print*) _____

Signed _____

Date _____

College/provider 3

College/provider _____

Name of principal (*please print*) _____

Signed _____

Date _____

College/provider 4

College/provider _____

Name of principal (*please print*) _____

Signed _____

Date _____

Eligibility Summary

	<i>Independent specialist colleges*</i>	<i>Independent external institutions*</i>	<i>Dance and drama schools in receipt of DfEE awards*</i>	<i>Higher education institutions*</i>	<i>LEA maintained external institutions*</i>
Category 1					
Institutional improvement	✓	✓	✓	✓	×
Category 2					
Improving teaching and learning					
– the basic skills quality initiative	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
– ILT skills for teachers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
– support for part-time teachers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
– retraining of teachers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
– professional updating	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Category 3					
Training and development for principals and senior managers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Category 4					
Dissemination of good practice	✓	✓	✓	✓	×

**In relation to Council-funded provision*

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