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# CIRCULAR

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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**Inclusive Learning Quality  
Initiative**

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To

Principals of colleges  
Heads of external institutions  
Chief education officers  
Heads of higher education  
institutions receiving funds from  
the Council  
Heads of specialist colleges outside  
the sector

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Circular type

Information

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Summary

Information on the evaluation of  
the inclusive learning quality  
initiative and on the arrangements  
for the third year of the initiative.

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Reference number: 99/50

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**99/50**

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# Inclusive Learning Quality Initiative

## Introduction

1 This circular provides further information on the programme of evaluation for the inclusive learning quality initiative and on arrangements for the third year of the initiative.

## Background

2 The Council is now supporting two major programmes of staff and organisational development for institutions: the inclusive learning quality initiative (ILQI) and the basic skills quality initiative (BSQI).

3 The ILQI is intended to bring about a whole-institution approach to inclusive learning. The Council has already made £3 million available over the past two years to support the initiative. This has funded the development of a set of staff and organisational development materials and a programme of support for institutions involving work with facilitators and a series of briefing events for college staff. Further information on the ILQI was published in Circular 98/31 and Circular 98/40.

4 The BSQI, which will be funded from the standards fund, is intended to improve the standard and quality of basic skills provision. It will follow the model used during the ILQI, drawing on the good practice in institutions and involving the production of staff development materials for use in institutions, supported by facilitators. Circular 99/44 *Standards Fund Strand 3*, provides more information on the BSQI.

## Inclusive Learning Quality Initiative

### Quality initiative steering group

5 The ILQI is an important sector-wide initiative which will have long-term implications for institutions. Since the model used to allocate funds to and provide support for institutions will be adapted for future initiatives, the Council has established a steering group to oversee and advise on stage 2 and on future developments. Members of the steering group will comment on how the

initiative has worked in practice and advise on any changes which could be made to the process for future years. The membership of the steering group is given at annex A.

## Evaluation

6 The Council is keen to assess and review the impact of the inclusive learning quality initiative and to see evidence of improved retention and achievement rates. The Council has commissioned the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA) to evaluate stage 2 of the initiative. This will concentrate on assessing the impact of the initiative in terms of the extent to which institutions have met the targets in their action plan, and how far the objectives and outcomes of the initiative have been achieved. The intended outcomes of the initiative are described in annex B.

7 The evaluation will use as a starting point institutions' baseline assessments as indicated in their inclusive learning audit and action plans. Wherever possible, evidence will be taken from existing sources; this will be supplemented with questionnaires including a facilitator questionnaire. The surveys are designed to elicit information directly related to the aims and outcomes of the initiative. FEDA will also carry out a number of case studies to gather additional detailed information from institutions.

8 Circular 98/31 set out a suggested timescale for stage 2 which involved institutions making interim reports in September 1999. The steering group's advice was that this timescale would not allow sufficient time for institutions to begin work and then to review and report on the impact of that work. An assessment of institutions' progress against targets could only start to be measured in 2000.

9 In light of the advice of the steering group, the evaluation schedule will be as follows:

- May–Aug 1999 institutions send action plans to the AoC; FEDA uses action plans/issues survey to identify baseline position
- Sept 1999 FEDA reports to the Council on institutions' baseline position
- Oct 1999 FEDA starts collecting evidence of impact and progress towards targets

- Jun 2000 FEDA issues survey to gather additional information on impact and progress
- Aug 2000 FEDA reports on impact, progress towards targets and improved retention and achievement rates.

10 Institutions are not therefore requested to produce interim reports in autumn 1999 and were advised of this in AoC bulletin 3/99. Institutions will be asked to provide interim reports in spring 2000. The revised schedule should allow institutions more time to work on implementing their action plans before any information on improved retention and achievement rates is requested. FEDA will be approaching institutions directly for information.

11 FEDA has carried out an initial data gathering exercise and has produced an initial report on institutions' baseline positions. A summary of the main findings of this report is set out in annex C. Further reports will be provided on institutions' self-assessment of progress towards targets set specifically in relation to retention and achievement rates.

### **Arrangements for 1999 to 2001**

12 The Council recognises that the aim that all institutions should adopt a whole-institution approach to inclusive learning is a major undertaking which may take some time. With this in mind, the Council has agreed a further £2 million to fund a third year of the initiative. This will enable institutions to build on the work undertaken in stage 2 and to continue to work on and refine their inclusive learning action plans. The broad arrangements are outlined below.

13 Allocations will be made on a similar basis to that used in 1998-99, that is, in proportion to the number of staff in an institution. Institutions can expect to receive a similar allocation to last year, assuming that staff numbers have not changed significantly. Receipt of institutions' action plans will release the next year's funds. Institutions that have not yet sent action plans to the AoC should do so as soon as possible. It is anticipated that the funds for the third year of the initiative will be paid to institutions in late 1999 or early 2000. Institutions may carry forward funds from this year and will have until March 2001 to use these funds. Individual institutions will be advised of their allocation later in 1999.

14 Working with a facilitator, institutions may choose the most appropriate way of using the allocation but this must represent some development of the action plan. This might involve:

- concentrating on a particular aspect of the action plan
- working in lifelong learning partnerships
- working nationally or cross-regionally rather than regionally where a common interest in a particular topic may benefit institutions.

15 Institutions will need to refine or revise action plans; revised plans should include specific targets to improve retention and achievement rates. Institutions may also wish to take into account how recent policy developments and government initiatives such as curriculum 2000, basic skills, individual learning accounts, adult advice and guidance services and the development of University for Industry (Ufi) hubs and learning centres might contribute to the development of inclusive learning.

16 Institutions will be asked to advise the Council how the allocation is to be used; this information will be requested after actions plans have been received. Institutions wishing to use funds in another way should seek the Council's agreement to this before beginning work.

17 It will be assumed that only those institutions which are involved in stage 2 of the initiative will wish to be involved in the third year. Any institutions which have not yet confirmed their interest in taking part in the initiative are asked to contact Andrew Lambe at the Council's Coventry office by 14 January 2000. Special arrangements will be made for higher education (HE) institutions which receive Council funding; HE institutions will be contacted about this separately.

18 Figure 1 at annex D illustrates how strands of work across the two years and the evaluation of the first year of stage 2 will run in parallel. There is some overlap in the two years of funding: this is to allow for the fact that institutions will be at different stages in their development.

19 Further evaluation of the initiative will be undertaken following the report from FEDA in August 2000.



# Quality Initiative Steering Group Membership

John Blake	Eastbourne College of Art and Technology
Richard Chambers	Lewisham College
David Croll	Derby Tertiary College, Wilmorton
Geoff Daniels*	FEFC
Sheena Ewing	Blackburn College
Louise Hazel	FEFC
Ursula Howard	Further Education Development Agency
Sid Hughes	Newham VI Form College
Teresa Kelly	Sandwell College
Andrew Lambe	FEFC
Judith Norrington	Association of Colleges
Sue Preece	Bridge College (NATSPEC)
Mari Prichard	Oxfordshire LEA
Merillie Vaughan-Huxley	FEFC

*\*chair*

# Intended Outcomes of the Inclusive Learning Quality Initiative

1 The ILQI will make a significant contribution to the quality improvement agenda. The focus of the initiative is on improving students' experience in institutions, and improvements in retention and achievement rates will be a particular focus of activity.

2 The main outcomes of the initiative should be that institutions will have improved their organisational capacity to match provision to the individual requirements of learners. Specifically, it is intended to lead to:

- improved quality across institutions in teaching and learning, and in organisation and management
- a workforce with the professional skills needed to meet the requirements of a wider range of learners, many of whom find access to and participation in learning difficult
- more institutions with the organisational capacity to be inclusive
- inclusive learning incorporated into institutions' self-assessments
- collaboration, the sharing of expertise and good practice in inclusive learning in local, regional and national partnerships
- a network of individuals and organisations committed to and knowledgeable about inclusive learning, able to provide continuing support to institutions following completion of stage 2 of the initiative.

## Summary of FEDA's Report on Institutions' Baseline Position for Stage 2 of the ILQI

1 The report incorporated information from 219 responses from colleges to a survey distributed in July 1999 and analysis of 143 college action plans undertaken in August and September 1999. External institutions and specialist colleges will be involved in later stages of the evaluation.

2 Most colleges stated that inclusive learning was addressed in strategic and operational documents. In most cases, the reference was indirect but only a small number of institutions did not address inclusive learning at all. Twenty-eight self-assessment reports included specific references to inclusive learning.

3 Survey respondents considered that greatest progress had been made in 'understanding and effectively managing the individual learning process' and 'providing an inclusive learning environment'. Least progress had been made with 'measuring the benefits of inclusive learning to the individual learner and the organisation'.

4 At the start of stage 2 of the initiative, around one-third (30%) of colleges considered that they had made full or good progress towards inclusive learning; 56% had made some progress; 14% had made little or no progress.

5 The range, specificity and measurability of the targets within action plans varied considerably. Some action plans included a large number of wide-ranging targets. Around 17% took retention and achievement as their starting point; the majority described a range of improvement activities which would contribute to inclusive learning. A minority of action plans examined set targets which were specific and measurable.

6 The clearest action plans targeted development activity on specific courses or groups of students identified as having poor levels of retention and achievement.

7 Colleges considered that the following five factors would be the most crucial in promoting inclusive learning:

- staff understanding and commitment to a culture of inclusive learning
- governor and senior management commitment
- staff development
- teaching and learning strategies
- including inclusive learning in targets and policies.

8 Colleges identified a number of potential barriers to the achievement of targets:

- staff resistance and overload
- cost and availability of resources
- lack of staff development time.

# Evaluation Schedule for the ILQI

Figure 1. Evaluation schedule and plans for the third year

	1997-98	1999	2000	2001
<b>Stage 1</b>	96 institutions involved Development and production of materials			
<b>Stage 2 (i)</b>		<p><b>All institutions involved (excluding HE). Development of action plans and work with facilitators (October 98 – March 2000)</b></p> <p>Institutions complete audits and start drawing up action plans</p> <p>AoC scrutinises action plans and feeds back to institutions</p> <p>FEDA carries out evaluation of baseline position based on action plans and survey (by September)</p> <p>FEDA starts collecting evidence on the impact of the initiative (October)</p> <p>Interim report on impact and progress against targets and improved retention and achievement rates</p> <p>FEDA issues survey to gather additional information on impact and progress (June)</p> <p>Final report on impact and progress against targets and improved retention and achievement rates (August)</p>		
<b>Stage 2 (ii)</b>			<p><b>All institutions involved (including HE). Refine and develop work on action plans (October 99 – March 2001)</b></p> <p>Council's receipt of action plan releases funds for stage 2 (ii) (September – December)</p> <p>Institutions advise Council how funds are to be used (January)</p>	

