

# Responses to Ofsted's consultation 'A good education for all' on further education and skills – FAQs

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## **What are the main differences between the current Common Inspection Framework and the revised framework?**

The revised framework is designed to raise expectations and help to drive improvement. It has been streamlined and has fewer judgements. There will be an Overall effectiveness judgement and three other judgements that contribute to the overall grade as follows: Outcomes for learners; The quality of teaching, learning and assessment; and The effectiveness of leadership and management.

## **Will the two key grades for Outcomes for learners and The quality of teaching, learning and assessment become the new 'limiting' grades? Surely it will be impossible to be judged outstanding?**

The revised framework raises expectations. Providers will only be judged outstanding for Overall effectiveness if The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is judged to be outstanding. We would expect that this high quality teaching, learning and assessment would result in high success rates and very good and sustained progress for learners. However, if Outcomes for learners is not judged to be outstanding, this will not necessarily 'limit' the Overall effectiveness grade.

## **I have heard that the Outcomes for learners judgement is based purely on success rates data and a comparison with national averages. Is this true?**

This is not true. None of the judgements are based on data alone. Although inspectors will look at success rate data they will also look at retention, progress and whether learners go on to do further learning or into sustainable employment. Inspectors will also talk to learners about whether they enjoy their course and whether it is meeting their needs.

## **How will providers be graded by inspectors?**

There will be four grades: outstanding; good; requires improvement; and inadequate. The 'requires improvement' grade is new and replaces the current 'satisfactory' grade.

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## **What will happen if I am graded as requires improvement?**

Providers who are judged to require improvement from September 2012 will be inspected more often – they will usually be re-inspected within 12–18 months.

Those who were graded satisfactory at their last inspection (and in any inspections conducted up to 31 August 2012) will be re-inspected, in most cases, by 31 August 2014. Similarly, those who were graded satisfactory at their previous two or more inspections will, in most cases, be re-inspected by 28 February 2014.

## **Will the new judgement of 'requires improvement' be applied retrospectively to providers who have previously been judged to be satisfactory?**

No. Providers who were previously judged to be satisfactory will keep their previous satisfactory grade until their next inspection. If, at that time, they have not yet made sufficient progress to be judged good, they may be judged as requires improvement again.

## **How much notice will providers get before an inspection?**

Providers will normally receive up to two working days' notice of their inspection.

The consultation proposed that inspections would be conducted without notice to the provider. Overall, more respondents agreed than disagreed with this proposal, but a number of respondents cited a range of practical problems that would need to be overcome. These included staff availability and difficulty arranging visits to employers. We feel that up to two days' notice will provide sufficient time to ensure that the inspection runs smoothly.

## **When will providers see the detailed grade descriptors for each of the new judgements?**

We will publish the *Handbook for inspections of further education and skills* by 15 June 2012. This includes the grade characteristics for each judgement. The handbook will also provide further information on the inspection process.

## **Will Ofsted require a self-assessment report?**

Self-assessment is a useful process for providers to use to evaluate how well they are doing. Providers are able to upload their self-assessment report in whatever format the provider has chosen to use onto the Provider Gateway hosted by the Skills Funding Agency. We will use these to plan inspections. At the point of inspection, we will ask providers to share their latest self-assessment report.

## **I think our provider is due an inspection shortly. Do I need to have a lesson plan for the inspector?**

No. You should do what your provider normally expects you to do when planning lessons or training sessions. One of the greatest advantages of short notice

inspections is that there will be no special preparation for inspection. Whatever you do normally in your provider will prevail.

**Do providers need to have a certain proportion of lessons or training sessions observed during the inspection as outstanding before the provider can be judged outstanding?**

No. Ofsted has not established a required proportion of lessons or training sessions that need to be judged outstanding. Inspectors do not observe all sessions during the inspection and when they do visit, they may only stay for part of the session. Clearly, it would be unusual for an outstanding provider to not have any outstanding lessons or training session observations during an inspection, but it is worth stressing that a wide range of evidence drawn from across the provider is used in conjunction with lesson observations to determine whether the provider is outstanding or not.

**Will providers judged outstanding at their last inspection be inspected again?**

As is the case now, there is still a chance that a provider previously found to be outstanding will be inspected. Most providers that were judged to be outstanding at their last inspection will be exempt from routine inspection unless concerns are raised about their performance. We conduct an annual risk assessment on these providers. We will also visit some outstanding providers as part of our programme of surveys.