

Dear Colleague

**Consultation on the draft *Common Inspection Framework* for inspecting post-16 non-higher education and training**

Enclosed with this letter is the draft *Common Inspection Framework* for the inspection of post-16 non-higher education and training to come into effect from 1 April 2001.

The Framework will be used by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) for inspections under Part III of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000*. Although the provisions in the *School Inspections Act 1996* will continue to apply to schools, the inspection of school sixth forms and colleges will be harmonised as closely as possible. This will mean, for schools, a stronger inspection focus on their sixth forms.

The Framework focuses on the principles of inspection, and what is evaluated when individual providers are inspected. It puts learners and their achievements, and the quality of their education and training, at the heart of what is inspected.

We are grateful for your response to the informal consultation in April. Support for the principles and the evaluation requirements in the Framework was very strong. Respondents understandably wanted more details of how the Framework will apply in different circumstances. This detail will be published later.

A significant number of respondents felt that the Framework in the earlier consultation did not give sufficient emphasis to how the provider 'adds value', taking account of its context. We have revised the Framework in response to this concern. We have also included a brief explanation of some of the collective terms used in the Framework to ensure that it is readily seen to apply to all education and training contexts.

The earlier consultation document sought your views on a number of issues that surround the Framework, such as grading and the way in which inspection teams link with the provider through a nominee. Most preferred the 5-point scale to the 7-point scale used by OFSTED. We are exploring ways of maximising the benefits of both scales by, for example, using the 7-point scale for observations and the 5-point scale for published aggregate summary judgements. We are working to develop agreed grade descriptions.

The need for inspection to be open and transparent is without question. The 'provider's nominee' plays an important part in ensuring a close link between the inspection team and the provider, enabling the inspection to proceed smoothly, ensuring that the team has the information it needs, and keeping the provider abreast of emerging findings. However, we are agreed that the inspection team needs some time to talk on its own, particularly when final decisions are being formulated about judgements and grades. The nominee would be at the meeting where judgements are presented and explained. Further guidance on the role of the nominee will be included in inspection handbooks.

We welcome your comments on the enclosed Framework. A final version will be published along with guidance documents for providers and inspection handbooks.

Yours sincerely,

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Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools

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Chief Inspector of Adult Learning

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**The**  
**COMMON INSPECTION FRAMEWORK**  
**for**  
**Inspecting Post-16 Education and Training**

**September 2000**

**The Office for  
Standards in Education**

**Adult Learning  
Inspectorate**

## TERMS USED IN THE FRAMEWORK

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The Framework applies to the inspection of education and training in a wide range of settings. Terminology is not always common. Where possible, the Framework uses a single term to cover a number that are context specific, to avoid complication. In inspection reports, inspectors will use terms that are most appropriate to the circumstances.

Examples of these single terms include:

Provider	Any organisation involved in providing education and training, including colleges, training providers and Local Education Authorities (LEAs).
Learner	A person receiving education or training, including student, trainee, apprentice, client and participant.
Teacher/trainer	Someone responsible for teaching or training. As well as those specifically referred to as teachers or trainers, the term includes lecturers, tutors, instructors, supervisors, technicians and assessors when they have a teaching or training function, and others involved in providing learning support.
Learning goals	These can take a variety of forms including single qualifications, groups, modules or units of qualifications, greater knowledge, competence and skills, milestones towards qualifications or employment, or securing employment, or a place in higher or further education.
Personal and learning skills	These include communication, presentation and teamwork skills, independent study, research and analytical skills.

# INTRODUCTION

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This *Common Inspection Framework* (the Framework) is effective from 1 April 2001 and meets the requirements of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* (the Act). It sets out principles applicable to the inspections of post-16 non-higher education and training carried out under Part III of the Act. Inspections are carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).

The Framework also includes the more specific evaluation requirements that apply to the inspection of individual providers of education and training. The requirements reflect the principles and the general requirements of the Act for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) and the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning to keep the Secretary of State informed about:

- the quality of education and training
- the standards achieved by those receiving that education and training
- whether financial resources made available to those providing that education and training are managed efficiently and used in a way which provides value for money.

The specific requirements for other types of inspections will be guided by the principles in the Framework in so far as they are appropriate.

# **THE PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES OF INSPECTION**

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## **PURPOSES**

The main purposes of inspection are to:

- give an independent public account of the quality of education and training, the standards achieved and the efficiency with which resources are managed
- help bring about improvement by identifying strengths and weaknesses and highlighting good and poor practice
- keep the Secretary of State, the Learning and Skills Council for England and the Employment Service informed about the quality and standards of education and training.

## **PRINCIPLES OF INSPECTION**

All inspections carried out under Part III of the Act will take account of a set of principles. These are concerned with:

- what is evaluated and reported
- how inspections are carried out.

## **WHAT IS EVALUATED AND REPORTED**

## **INSPECTIONS WILL FOCUS PRIMARILY ON THE EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL LEARNERS THROUGH THE EVALUATION, AS APPLICABLE, OF:**

- what is achieved - the standards reached and learners' achievements, taking account of their prior attainment
- the quality of teaching, training and learning
- other aspects of provision that contribute to the standards achieved, such as the range, planning and content of courses or programmes, resources, and the support for individual learners
- the effectiveness with which the provision is managed, its quality assured and improved, and how efficiently resources are used to ensure that the provision gives value for money
- the extent to which provision is educationally and socially inclusive, and promotes equality of access to education and training, including provision for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities.

To summarise judgements, OFSTED and the ALI will use an agreed common grading scale and grade descriptions.

## **HOW INSPECTIONS ARE CARRIED OUT**

### **Inspectors**

Inspectors accredited by OFSTED or the ALI will have been trained in the use of the Framework and will be competent to inspect. In most cases, inspectors will work as part of a team led by an inspector who is responsible for planning and managing the inspection and its reporting. Collectively, members of an inspection team will have the expertise and experience to inspect effectively all aspects of the provision covered by the inspection.

### **The process of inspection**

Inspections will be carried out in a way that secures the co-operation and confidence of those being inspected. A climate should be created in which the inspection makes a valuable contribution to improvement. This requires that:

- inspectors are well prepared for the inspections they undertake
- before inspection, providers are briefed so that the inspection process and their involvement in it are fully understood
- the inspection should be conducted in a way that engages the provider's staff, and keeps them informed of emerging issues and findings.

OFSTED and the ALI will keep to a realistic minimum the demands for information and other materials that they make of providers.

Inspectors will ensure that the views of learners about their education and training, and about the support and guidance they receive, are sought and considered as part of the evidence of inspection.

### **The conduct of inspectors**

Inspectors will uphold high professional standards in their work. They must:

- be impartial and objective; this requires that they have no connection with the provider that could undermine their objectivity
- report honestly and fairly
- be open and transparent in the way they work, providing as much feedback as possible on the inspection
- carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy and sensitivity
- act with the best interests of learners as a priority.

## **The quality of inspection**

Inspections should be conducted in such a way that:

- the evidence gathered from observations, from learners, from staff and others, and from documentation is sufficient to sustain secure judgements
- judgements are consistent with the inspection evidence, and overall findings reflect the balance of evidence and the collective view of the inspection team
- the communication of findings, orally and in writing, is clear, well-argued and based convincingly on evidence gathered before and during the inspection.

## **The follow-up to inspections**

Following inspections, there will be an opportunity for full and open feedback of the inspection findings from the lead inspector, and discussion of them. The composition of the feedback meeting will vary from inspection to inspection but in most circumstances it will include the senior managers responsible for the provision, including governing bodies where appropriate. Inspectors will welcome providers' views about their inspection.

The report following any inspection must be factually accurate. Providers will be offered the opportunity to check the factual accuracy of an inspection report before it is published.

## **Post-inspection action plans**

Inspections will identify issues for improvement that will form the basis of action plans, prepared by providers or others responsible for the provision, to address weaknesses and build on strengths.

## **COMPLAINTS**

Providers will have recourse to a published complaints procedure that will be made known to them in advance of their inspections.



# **THE INSPECTION OF INDIVIDUAL PROVIDERS**

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This part of the Framework sets out the evaluation requirements that apply to the inspection of an individual provider. They are based on the principles set out earlier in the Framework.

The evaluation requirements apply to the provider as a whole and, wherever applicable, to parts of its work such as that in different programme and occupational areas.

Inspection should answer the questions:

**How effective and efficient is the provision of education and training in meeting the needs of learners, and why?**

The following key questions, set out under three broad headings, will guide inspection:

*Achievement and standards*

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

*The quality of education and training*

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

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

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

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

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

*Leadership and management*

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

The written inspection report on each provider will include a judgement about the adequacy of the provision inspected.

## **ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS**

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

**To answer this question, evaluate:**

- success in achieving challenging targets, including qualifications and learning goals
- the standards of learners' work in relation to their learning goals
- learners' progress relative to their prior attainment and potential
- the development of personal and learning skills.

***In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which:***

- *results and retention rates compare well with local and national averages*
- *trends in performance over time show continuous improvement or the maintenance of very high standards*
- *analysis of added value indicates that learners make at least the progress expected of them*
- *standards are consistently high across the provider's work*
- *challenging learning goals and targets are achieved.*

***and learners:***

- *make significant progress towards fulfilling their goals and their potential*
- *are prepared for effective participation in the workplace and in the community*
- *progress to relevant programmes, courses or employment*
- *reach appropriate levels in key skills*
- *develop the skills of critical evaluation, research and analysis*
- *develop the attitudes and skills necessary to maintain lifelong learning, including the capacity to work independently*
- *attend regularly and are punctual.*

## **THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

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

**To answer this question, evaluate:**

- how well teaching and training meet individuals' needs and course or programme requirements
- how well learners learn and make progress.

***In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which teachers and trainers:***

- *show knowledge, technical competence and up-to-date expertise, at a level consistent with effective teaching and assessment of the course or programme*
- *plan effectively with clear objectives that all learners understand*
- *use methods and styles of teaching and training consistent with the aims of their programmes and learners' personal objectives*
- *challenge and inspire learners*
- *set, use and mark assignments in a way that helps learners to progress*
- *with learners, develop individual learning plans, informed by initial assessment, that are reviewed and updated regularly*
- *promote good working relationships that foster learning*
- *present material in a way that is sensitive to issues of equal opportunity.*

***and the extent to which learners:***

- *acquire new knowledge and skills, develop ideas and increase their understanding*
- *understand what they are doing, how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve*
- *apply effort to succeed with their work, work productively and make effective use of their time.*

## **THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

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

**To answer this question, evaluate:**

- the adequacy and suitability of staff
- the adequacy, suitability and use of specialist equipment, learning resources and accommodation.

***In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which:***

- *there are enough qualified and experienced teaching, training and support staff matching the demands of programmes and the range of learners*
- *the professional development of staff contributes to their effectiveness*
- *specialist equipment and materials are used, including facilities which are relevant to the workplace and which meet current industrial standards*
- *accommodation provides a suitable setting for good teaching, training and learning and support for learners*
- *learners have access to learning resources that are appropriate for effective independent study*
- *learners work in a safe environment*
- *resources are used to best effect in promoting learning*
- *learning resources and accommodation allow learners with learning difficulties or disabilities to participate fully.*

## **THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

### **4. How effective are the assessment and monitoring of learners' progress?**

**To answer this question, evaluate:**

- the suitability and rigour of assessment
- the uses of assessment in planning learning and monitoring progress.

***In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which:***

- *forms of assessment and recording are suitable for the courses and programmes being followed*
- *assessment is fair, accurate and carried out regularly*
- *initial assessment provides an accurate basis on which to plan an appropriate programme of work*
- *assessment is used to monitor progress and inform individual learners about how they are performing and how they might develop further*
- *achievements towards learning goals and qualifications are recorded and accredited*
- *assessment information is used to guide course and programme development*
- *assessment, verification and moderation procedures follow regulatory body requirements*
- *those with a legitimate interest, such as employers or parents, are clearly and regularly informed about learners' progress.*

## **THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

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

**To answer this question, evaluate:**

- the extent to which courses or programmes match learners' aspirations and potential, building on prior attainment and experience
- how far programmes or the curriculum meet external requirements, and are responsive to local circumstances.

***In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which:***

- *learners have the opportunity to study an appropriate range of courses or programmes, and, where appropriate, achieve suitable qualifications*
- *the curriculum or an individual programme of work is planned and managed effectively to provide coherence and progression*
- *the curriculum or programmes of work are socially inclusive, ensuring equality of access and opportunities for learners*
- *learners have the opportunity to broaden their experience through a suitable variety of enrichment activities*
- *programmes of work take account of community and employer needs*
- *legal requirements in relation to religious education and collective worship are fulfilled where they apply*
- *multi-site provision and resources are effectively integrated to give a coherent programme of learning.*

## **THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

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

**To answer this question, evaluate:**

- the quality of information, advice and guidance to learners in relation to the courses and programmes they are following and their career progression
- the diagnosis of, and provision for, individual learning needs
- the access learners have to relevant, effective support on personal issues.

***In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which:***

- *support arrangements are planned and managed coherently*
- *impartial guidance enables learners to choose the course or programme which is right for them*
- *careers education and guidance are effective in guiding learners towards opportunities available to them when they have completed their studies or training*
- *procedures are in place for recognising poor punctuality, non-attendance and poor performance early and for taking appropriate action*
- *induction programmes enable learners to settle into work quickly, to understand their rights and responsibilities and the demands of the course or programme*
- *individual learning needs are accurately diagnosed and learners receive effective additional support throughout their studies or training*
- *learners have effective personal support to help them to complete their course or programme, including access to specialist support services.*

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

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

**To answer this question, evaluate:**

- ❑ how well leaders and managers set a clear direction leading to high quality education and training
- ❑ how effectively, through quality assurance and self assessment, performance is monitored and evaluated and steps taken to secure improvement
- ❑ how well equality of opportunity is promoted so that all learners achieve their potential
- ❑ where relevant, the extent to which governors or other supervisory boards meet their responsibilities
- ❑ how effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money.

***In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which:***

- *clear direction is given through strategic objectives, targets and values that are fully understood by staff, including subcontractors and work placement providers*
- *demanding targets for retention, achievement, progression and employment are set and met*
- *the quality assurance arrangements are systematic and informed by the views of all interested parties*
- *rigorous self-assessment leads to identified priorities and challenging targets for improvement*
- *priorities are supported through responsible financial management*
- *staff understand and are fully involved in the organisation's quality assurance arrangements*
- *the information needs of managers and other staff are met and management information is used effectively to the benefit of learners*
- *staff appraisal or review is effective in improving the quality of provision*



- *there are explicit aims and values on equality for all that are reflected in the provider's work*
- *there are effective measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour, including all forms of harassment*
- *there are effective procedures for dealing with appeals and complaints*
- *governors or other supervisory boards effectively oversee the provider's strategic direction, and regularly monitor the quality of provision and their own performance*
- *the 'best value' principles of comparison, challenge, consultation and competition are applied in securing resources and services*
- *efficient and effective use is made of resources.*



**Q2** The *Framework* also sets out the evaluation requirements for the inspection of individual providers. Do you agree that these focus on the things that matter to judge the effectiveness of the provider, and are supported by criteria that are helpful in making reliable judgements?

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Comments

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**Thank you for your response. Please use additional sheets if this form does not provide enough space.**

***Please return this form, by 5 January 2001, to:***

***CIF Response  
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**An early response would be appreciated.**