

Circular 00/09

Quality Improvement

Standards Fund 2000-01 for Non-sector College Providers of Further Education

Summary

This circular sets out the Council's proposed use of the further education standards fund 2000-01 for non-sector college providers of further education. It asks these providers of further education to comment on particular elements of the proposals for the standards fund for 2000-01, and to indicate clearly whether they support the proposals by 10 May 2000. The circular indicates the initiatives that are being proposed within the four categories of funding. These are: institutional improvement; improving teaching and learning; training and development for senior managers with direct responsibility for managing Council-funded provision; and dissemination of good practice. The circular is of interest to: chief education officers of local education authorities; principals of local education authority-maintained external institutions; independent external institutions; independent specialist colleges; higher education institutions in receipt of Council funding; and dance and drama schools in receipt of DfEE awards.

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Standards Fund 2000-01 for Non-sector College Providers of Further Education

Introduction and Background

1 This circular sets out the Council's proposed use of the further education standards fund for 2000-01 for non-sector college providers of further education. These are:

- local education authority-maintained external institutions
- independent external institutions
- independent specialist colleges
- higher education institutions
- dance and drama schools in receipt of DfEE awards.

2 The standards fund demonstrates the government's substantial investment in the sector. The Council has set aside up to £4 million of the standards fund for 2000-01 for non-sector college providers of further education. This should result in a significant improvement in standards. The proposals for the use of the standards fund for 2000-01 are designed to assist these providers to deliver the government's agenda. All providers will be expected to ensure that the actions supported by the standards fund lead to better learning experiences for students and raise the standard of their achievements.

3 The secretary of state introduced the further education standards fund in 1999 to underpin the government's drive to raise standards. Funding for the financial year 1999-2000 amounted to £35 million. Council Circular 99/24, *Use of the Standards Fund* set out the arrangements for its use in sector colleges.

4 In 1999-2000, the standards fund enabled the Council to support sector colleges in improving quality and sharing good practice,

and allowed it to launch initiatives aimed at developing the potential of governors and college staff. The Council is committed to extending the benefits of the standards fund, as far as possible, to non-sector college providers of further education.

5 On 23 November 1999, the secretary of state for education and employment announced the resources to be made available to further education for 2000-01 and 2001-02. In the 2000-01 financial year, an additional £225 million will be available and in 2001-02 a further £365 million will be added to the sector's resources. This includes an increase of £45 million in the further education standards fund to £80 million in 2000-01, rising to £160 million in 2001-02.

6 The additional resources for further education will be provided to achieve three key objectives. These are to:

- raise standards
- widen participation
- meet the skills challenge.

7 In addition, the Council is concerned to improve equality for students and staff. In particular, it is concerned to increase the numbers of black teachers and managers to a level which is more representative of the communities that institutions serve.

Proposals for 2000-01

8 The secretary of state expects all institutions providing further education to look hard and continuously at what they need to do to raise standards. Access to standards fund support is not a substitute for what should be a day-to-day priority. Nevertheless, the government's standards fund does allow specific priorities and development needs to be addressed. The Council proposes that funding for non-sector college providers in 2000-01 will be distributed within four categories:

- institutional improvement
- improving teaching and learning

-
- training and development for senior managers who have direct responsibility for managing Council-funded provision
 - dissemination of good practice.

9 Taken together, the proposals represent a concerted and co-ordinated approach to addressing further education-wide issues, enabling individual institutions to address particular areas of concern, and rewarding and promoting practice which is good. As far as possible, the Council intends to give non-sector college providers access to the standards fund in the same way as sector colleges. Some differences are the result of the Council's different relationship with these providers and their particular characteristics, including the size and scope of their Council-funded provision.

10 Detailed proposals for the standards fund for non-sector college providers of further education in 2000-01 are set out at annex A to this circular. A summary of those institutions eligible for each category of the standards fund is set out at annexes B and C. A parallel consultation circular, Council Circular 00/05, set out proposals for sector colleges. This circular can be accessed on the Council's website (www.fefc.ac.uk).

11 The Council is aware that bidding for funding is time-consuming for institutions. Therefore it intends to make funding available through a combination of:

- formula allocation
- application
- submission of a costed action plan.

12 Much of the funding for 2000-01 will be allocated by formula or made available on application. However, some funds will be allocated on the basis of the Council's agreement with institutions' costed action plans. To help all institutions, the Council intends to give more guidance on the presentation of costed action plans. The guidance will be posted on the Council's website by the end of April 2000. If you do not have access to the Internet and would like a hard copy, please contact Bettina

Bullock in the Council's quality improvement unit, Coventry, tel. 024 7686 3290 or fax 024 7686 3160.

13 The Council will need to ensure that it has adequate information about institutions' 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, institutions 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 improvement. Progress made by institutions receiving support from the standards fund will normally be monitored by the Council's inspectorate, through correspondence or monitoring visits. Reports prepared by institutions and submitted to the Council should be no longer than two pages for each funded initiative. In most cases, reports will be submitted by January 2001. Guidance on the structure of reports will be issued by the Council when funding for 2000-01 has been finalised.

Responses

14 It is the Council's intention to begin implementing its strategy for using the standards fund for non-sector college providers of further education from May 2000. In the meantime, the Council would welcome comments on the proposals outlined in annex A. Early responses would be welcome. Comments, using the form at annex D, should be returned by 10 May 2000 to:

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Use of the Standards Fund 2000-01 for Non-sector College Providers of Further Education

1 The following paragraphs set out proposals, which aim to help non-sector college providers of further education meet government priorities for raising standards. They also support measures in the Council's quality improvement strategy and other Council initiatives designed to support institutions it funds. Institutions should note that the Council will not provide assistance under the standards fund where it is considered that alternative courses of action are more appropriate, including if deemed necessary the cessation of Council funds.

Category 1: Institutional Improvement

2 The purpose of this category of the fund is to help institutions to improve their performance. Financial assistance will be given for post-inspection support to institutions which have been inspected by the Council's inspectorate (see annex C). Local education authority-maintained external institutions are not inspected by the Council's inspectorate and therefore are not eligible for this category of funding. Institutions will receive funding according to the amount of Council-funded provision and their inspection grades, in order to help providers reverse weaknesses and any trends in deteriorating performance. Financial assistance for post-inspection support should enable institutions to achieve improvements in the quality of their work more quickly than would otherwise be possible.

3 It is the Council's hope that all institutions will respond purposefully and constructively if shortcomings in quality are identified. Institutions should note, however, that in order to fulfil its statutory duties, the Council may need to take more direct action if a provider:

- is unwilling or unable to produce an acceptable action plan
- seriously declines in its performance
- still causes concern after its next inspection.

4 During 2000-01, those institutions inspected since September 1997 will be eligible for financial assistance from the standards fund. Those inspected during the teaching year 2000-01 may be eligible for support in the financial year 2001-02.

5 Allocations will be made in response to costed action plans provided by institutions and agreed by the Council. Progress in remedying weaknesses will be monitored by the Council's inspectorate through correspondence and monitoring visits.

Category 2: Improving Teaching and Learning

6 The purpose of this category of the standards fund is to provide targeted funding for institutions to tackle matters of continuing concern in the quality of teaching and learning – the area that impinges most directly on the students' experience. Successive chief inspectors' annual reports have indicated that though the quality of teaching has been maintained since 1993, there are still weaknesses which need to be addressed.

7 The Council is proposing to fund a range of initiatives that are described in the following paragraphs. They are support for:

- phase 2 of the basic skills quality initiative (BSQI)
- information and learning technology (ILT) skills for teachers
- part-time teachers
- retraining of teachers
- professional updating.

8 Institutions will be able to apply for up to a certain amount of funding, in order to help them deliver their own priorities in one of more of the following:

- supporting part-time teachers
- retraining of teachers
- professional updating.

Phase 2 of the BSQI and ILT skills for teachers will be separately funded initiatives.

BSQI

9 The inspectorate's survey of basic skills, published in April 1998, identified the need to improve the quality of basic skills teaching, which is now identified as a key priority. The report of the Moser group, *Improving Literacy and Numeracy: A fresh start*, highlighted the fact that 7 million adults in this country have real problems with literacy and numeracy. Phase 1 of the BSQI, funded from the standards fund in 1999-2000, provided financial assistance for sector colleges and other Council-funded providers of further education to develop materials. The Council is intending to fund a second phase to help institutions 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 working to improve the provision of basic skills.

10 Phase 2, starting April 2000, will involve the recruitment and training of facilitators who will help sector colleges and other Council-funded providers of further education to make the best use of the materials developed during phase 1 of the initiative. Institutions, or where more appropriate a group of institutions, will be allocated a number of days of facilitator time paid for directly from the standards fund. The number of days allocated to each institution or group of institutions will vary according to the amount of their Council-funded provision.

11 Institutions will receive facilitator days according to a formula and in response to an application. Institutions will be expected to submit an action plan for improving the quality of basic skills provision.

12 In addition, the Council intends to make funding available for up to 1,000 basic skills staff to attend a development course. Staff managing or working on Council-funded basic

skills provision will be eligible to attend. The course programme will cover the organisation, management and quality assurance of basic skills provision, as well as aspects of teaching and learning. The training programme may be continued in 2001-02. Following 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.

ILT skills for teachers

13 Inspection reports frequently highlight the need to improve the use of ILT across 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 intends to provide funds to help institutions develop suitable initiatives, including training and development opportunities, for teachers to develop ILT skills. Only initiatives involving teachers working on Council-funded provision will be eligible. Institutions will be expected to demonstrate that the funds are used to enhance teaching skills in ILT in areas where the need is greatest.

14 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. Institutions will, therefore, receive funds according to the amount of their Council-funded provision.

15 Institutions will be expected to prepare a costed action plan. Inspectors will monitor the use to which providers put the funds. Institutions will need to prepare a brief report on the expenditure of their allocation by January 2001.

Supporting teaching and learning

Support for part-time teachers

16 Part-time staff make a valuable contribution to further education provision. However, inspection of lessons taught by staff on fractional or other 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:

- mentoring arrangements
- better access to staff development opportunities.

17 The Council is proposing that the funding it makes available for this initiative will contribute to the cost of putting in place mentoring arrangements for new or inexperienced part-time staff. Such arrangements are likely to include:

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

18 It is also intended that funding will be available as a contribution towards the cost of providing better access to staff development opportunities for part-time staff. Only part-time teachers working on Council-funded provision will be eligible.

19 Institutions will be expected to provide a brief report on their use of funds by January 2001.

Retraining of teachers

20 Teachers are facing considerable curriculum changes, and some teachers may need to develop new skills to cope with these changes. It is proposed that 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. Funds will only be available for teachers working on Council-funded provision.

Professional updating

21 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 that has strong

links with industry. Teachers who are on full-time or on half-time fractional appointments will be eligible for this initiative.

22 Institutions will need to show how the secondments have provided relevant opportunities for teachers from vocational areas within the institution, where teachers lack recent and relevant industrial or commercial experience. Only teachers working on Council-funded provision will be eligible.

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

23 There is a need to enhance management skills across the further education sector. During 2000-01, the Council intends to provide funding for the training programme for senior managers in sector colleges to be adapted and developed for non-sector college providers of further education. The focus of the training will be on managing further education provision. During 2000-01, up to 100 managers with direct responsibility for Council-funded provision will be able to take part in this training and development programme. The programme will also include relevant elements of the good governance programme designed for sector colleges. It is intended that the manager's training programme will meet individuals' personal development needs and will recognise their existing ability and expertise. Although participation in the programme will not automatically lead to a qualification, opportunities for accreditation will be available to successful candidates.

24 Places on the training course will be given on the basis of applications.

Category 4: Dissemination of Good Practice

25 During 2000-01, the Council intends to fund the dissemination of good practice in non-sector college providers of further education. The following institutions will be eligible for funding:

- institutions with outstanding practice and awarded a grade 1 by the Council's inspectorate since September 1997.

26 A separate consultation circular will outline proposals to enable these providers to apply for Council accredited status. The Council intends that any non-sector college institutions newly accredited by the FEFC will also be eligible for funding to disseminate good practice.

27 The Council is keen to support institutions with outstanding practice in areas where inspection has identified a general development need within further education. These include:

- tutorial support and careers advice and guidance
- the identification and provision of learning support
- basic skills provision
- meeting the needs of students with complex learning difficulties
- curriculum leadership
- curriculum areas such as business studies, engineering and construction
- links with employers
- quality assurance and self-assessment
- support for part-time teachers
- use of management information
- setting targets for retention and achievement to help improve students' performance
- improving students' attendance
- raising retention and achievement whilst widening participation
- equal opportunities
- effective arrangements for monitoring the educational performance of the institution.

28 The Council also is particularly concerned to encourage providers across the sector to share good practice in basic skills, construction and engineering. Since September 1997, inspectors have awarded very few outstanding grades for such provision. In the case of basic skills, the Council is supporting phase 2 of the BSQI to help colleges to improve provision. The

Council, therefore, proposes to set up small consultative groups to help it identify good practice in construction and engineering and to develop ways of sharing this practice with providers in the sector.

29 The Council is concerned to improve equality of opportunity for students and staff. It particularly wishes to encourage dissemination of good practice in non-sector college institutions, which have demonstrated:

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

30 Colleges and other Council-funded providers of further education will be encouraged to work in local partnerships, but those receiving funding will be expected to demonstrate that they are sharing their good practice with providers with weaknesses in similar provision. Funding will be allocated after the Council agrees the costed action plans. Institutions will be expected to provide a brief report on their use of funds. Annex B summarises the standards fund proposals outlined above.

Summary of Standards Fund Proposals for Non-sector College Providers of Further Education

<i>Category</i>	<i>Eligibility</i>	<i>Formula/Bid /Application only</i>	<i>Costed action plan required</i>	<i>Monitoring and accountability</i>	<i>Circular 00/09 annex A paragraph reference</i>
1 Institutional Improvement					
Post-inspection support	Inspected since September 1997	Formula	Yes	Link inspector	2–5
2 Improving teaching and learning					
BSQI	All institutions	Formula Application only	No No	Report for link inspector	9–12
ILT skills: teachers supporting learners	All institutions	Formula	Yes	Report for link inspector	13–15
Supporting teaching and learning: Supporting part-time teachers	All institutions	Application	No	Report for link inspector	16–19
Supporting teaching and learning: Retraining of teachers	All institutions	Application	No	Report for link inspector	20
Supporting teaching and learning: Professional updating	All institutions	Application	No	Report for link inspector	21–22

<i>Category</i>	<i>Eligibility</i>	<i>Formula/Bid /Application only</i>	<i>Costed action plan required</i>	<i>Monitoring and accountability</i>	<i>Circular 00/09 annex A paragraph reference</i>
3 Training and development for senior managers with direct responsibility for Council-funded provision					
Training and development for senior managers	All institutions – up to 100 principals or senior managers	Application only	No	Successful participation on course	23–24
4 Dissemination of good practice	Institutions awarded grade 1 by FEFC inspectorate for provision	Bid	Yes	Report for link inspector	25–30

Summary of Non-sector Colleges Eligible for each Category of the Standards Fund

	<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>Local education authority-maintained external institutions</i>
Category 1 Institutional improvement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Category 2 Improving teaching and learning					
– BSQI	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
– 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	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗

Note: All material in the table relates to Council-funded schedule 2 provision. There are over 350 non-sector college institutions. All except LEA-external institutions are subject to FEFC inspection.

Response Form

(Reference Circular 00/09)

Please photocopy, complete and return this form to Bettina Bullock at the Council's Coventry office by 10 May 2000. E-mail contact details appear on the front of this circular. Early responses would be welcomed.

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All paragraph references are to annex A. Please indicate your broad support for each proposal by ticking 'yes'. Space has been left for comments – please keep these brief.

1 Institutional improvement – post-inspection support (paragraphs 2 – 5) Yes No

Comments

2 The basic skills quality initiative (paragraphs 9 – 12) Yes No

Comments

3 ILT for teachers (paragraphs 13 – 15) Yes No

Comments

4 Support for part-time teachers (paragraphs 16 – 19) Yes No

Comments

5 Retraining of teachers (paragraph 20) Yes No

Comments

6 Professional updating of teachers (paragraph 21 – 22)

Yes

No

Comments

7 Training and development for senior managers (paragraphs 23 – 24)

Yes

No

Comments

8 Dissemination of good practice (paragraphs 25 – 30)

Yes

No

Comments

**Published by the
Further Education
Funding Council**

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April 2000

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was 2,900 copies.**

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Reference CIRC/979/00