

Circular 00/11

Funding

New Arrangements for Adult Learners

Summary

This circular provides guidance to institutions on new funding arrangements for adult learners, some starting from 1 May and others from 1 August 2000. It includes details of the funding arrangements for new 3 and 6 guided learning hour (glh) courses in basic skills, ICT, courses for which the primary objective is progression to further education, training or employment skills, and non-schedule 2 pilots. The circular is of interest to college principals, chief education officers, heads of external institutions and heads of higher education institutions receiving Council funding. Guidance on the tariff for other Council-funded courses in 2000-01 is outlined in *Tariff 2000-01*.

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New Funding Arrangements for Adult Learners

Introduction and Background

1 This circular provides institutions with information about the extension of eligibility for Council funding of provision and courses for adults. Some will be eligible for funding from 1 May 2000. All the provision will be eligible from 1 August 2000.

2 The intention to extend the eligibility of provision for adults was announced at the Council's annual conference on 16 February 2000. It is intended that some of the new provision will be developed through local learning partnerships to targeted groups of adult students as part of local plans to widen participation. The establishment of learning pathways will enable individuals to acquire new skills for the future.

Proposals to extend the eligibility of provision

3 In response to the learning pathways agenda set by the widening participation committee chaired by Helena Kennedy, and in the light of related salient developments such as the establishment of University for Industry (Ufi) learndirect centres, information and communications technology (ICT) centres, family and community learning, the Council is extending eligibility for funding to embrace the following:

- shorter courses of 3 guided learning hours (glh) for basic skills
- introductory courses of 3 guided learning hours ICT
- 6 glh courses for adult learning and employment skills, including courses for family learning

- the extension of the unitisation pilot to enable all institutions to offer programmes made up of units of qualifications
- the extension of non-schedule 2 pilot projects
- measures to increase the availability of access to further education and return to learn courses.

4 Details of the extended eligibility of provision are available in annex A to this circular. The general guidelines for all courses and students eligible for funding by the Council are described in Circular 99/01, Circular 99/43, and *Tariff 2000-01* which should be read with this circular. Unless specifically stated in this circular, institutions and their external auditors should assume that the general guidance applies to these new arrangements.

Funding Framework

Local learning partnerships

5 The Council wishes to encourage institutions to work in local partnerships to deliver the new range of short courses. It is anticipated that this way of working will enhance existing or recently developed links with other initiatives, particularly basic skills summer schools, workplace basic skills and Ufi learning hubs. Plans to work in new partnerships with other providers, including employers and community groups are particularly encouraged. These arrangements may include local franchise partners where this type of relationship is seen to add value to the programme and courses to be delivered, and is appropriate to the needs of the students.

6 Working in partnership will also promote self-regulation and avoid unseemly competition. It also mirrors the likely pattern of relationships within a local Learning and Skills Council (LLSC) area when the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is established.

Types of programmes and projects

7 Partnerships are encouraged to develop programmes of new courses, which particularly target adults, aged 19 and over, who may not previously have had access to Council-funded provision. These will include adults whose backgrounds have disadvantaged them and who may lack qualifications and/or successful educational experience, and need short courses as an essential precursor to schedule 2 provision.

8 There is another group of students, however, which may include members of the above group, but which may have more general applicability to the wider population. These are the adults who are 'technologically disadvantaged'. It may be that they do not have access to the information and technology hardware and software required to develop ICT skills, or it may be that they simply have not had the opportunity to develop ICT and related skills which are so essential in a technological age.

9 Additionally, there are parts of the country where colleges and their partners may wish to come together to offer a programme of courses to enable adults to acquire new employment skills to enable them to move into new areas of employment. These will include areas such as the former coalfields taskforce areas, or areas in which the traditional manufacturing industry is declining such as in the Midlands and parts of the North.

10 The extension of eligibility to the courses described below is not available for students aged between 16 and 18, who require the broader curriculum of national qualifications described in Circular 99/54. The minimum length of course eligible for Council funding remains at 9 glh for students aged 16-18, whether full or part-time.

Progression opportunities

11 The features of programmes and courses that enable adults to progress should include transition and progression planning and the identification of progression pathways for the learner. Opportunities should be given for the learner to contribute to the evaluation of the programme.

12 Partnerships may also wish to refer to *How to Widen Participation: A guide to good practice* (FEFC, Coventry, 1997).

Timescales

13 The short courses in basic skills, ICT, adult learning and employment skills described in annex A will be eligible for funding from 1 May 2000 in order to enable institutions to pilot the new courses, identify target groups and plan for a more focused delivery pattern from 1 August 2000. All aspects of new provision will be eligible from 1 August 2000.

14 Institutions are requested to provide details of their plans to deliver the new provision as part of their strategic plan update to be received by the regional director by 31 July 2000. This should include, separately, details of the new courses to be delivered, including the numbers of students and the units to be claimed for this new provision, and the partners involved in planning and delivery. It is suggested that each member of the partnership be provided with a copy of each institution's plans for the delivery of the new programmes to ensure that resources are maximized and that duplication in the same partnership area does not occur.

15 The Council will identify a representative sample of institutions and partnerships to visit in order to evaluate the impact of the extension of eligibility in widening participation. Regional office details are attached at annex C.

Quality assurance

16 Institutions and their partners are requested to be mindful of quality assurance issues. It is not expected that institutions will offer provision in curriculum area(s), which have received inspection grades of 4 or 5. Colleges are reminded that Circular 99/37 (page 5, paragraph 16) states that 'a college awarded a grade 4 or 5 in governance, management or quality assurance should not enter into any new franchising contracts (including any replacement of existing franchise provision). This restriction will take effect from the date of oral notification of the inspection grades to the college governors. The restriction will be lifted when the senior inspector confirms to college that reinspection has resulted in at least a grade 3 being awarded for governance, management or quality assurance.'

Risk assessment and audit

17 In general this extension of eligibility to a wider range of provision should not carry high risk as defined in paragraphs 13 to 35, and in annex B of supplement B of Circular 99/43 *Audit of 1998-99 Final Funding Unit Claim and the Individualised Student Record*. Indeed, the ability to claim Council funding for courses of 6 glh will legitimise one-day provision where the awarding body recognises this as the minimum length of course for accreditation purposes. It may also enable the Council to remove this category of provision from the list of risk factors described in Circular 99/43 with effect from 1 August 2000.

18 However, there is a continued risk where some provision is delivered through franchise partners or through other forms of new partnership arrangements such as those supporting some information technology (IT) centres. Circular 99/37, *Franchising and Fees* (page 5 paragraph 17) describes the checks that should be undertaken when entering into new partnership arrangements. Circular 99/14, *College Companies, Joint Ventures and Overseas Operations* should be consulted where the partnership arrangement involve the use of

college companies and/or joint ventures.

The Council should be consulted in advance of delivery of provision where new and/or contentious arrangements are considered with third party companies. Examples of the type of partnership which may be considered new and/or possibly contentious are provided at paragraph 4 of *Tariff 2000-01*. Institutions wishing further advice about existing or planned forms of partnership are invited to contact the regional director in the first instance.

Audit of the provision

19 Circular 99/43 describes the in-year checks for external auditors to undertake on the provision made by an institution. External auditors will be asked to confirm that the new courses are delivered locally as well as undertaking the usual checks on the ISR and, where applicable, that franchise or other partnership arrangements meet the Council's guidelines for funding.

20 The Council intends to undertake an initial survey of the effectiveness of this approach on widening participation and increasing student numbers during 2000-01. In planning this provision, institutions and their partnerships are asked to put in place measures to monitor individual progression to other courses and qualifications. The Council will be evaluating the impact of the new provision and visits may be made to a sample of institutions during 2000-01 by Council staff and consultants contracted by the Council. Institutions in the sample will be asked to complete a feedback form for evaluation purposes. Initial proposals for an evaluative framework are attached at annex B. Comments on the proposed framework are welcome. Please provide these to Kully Jones at the Council's Coventry office.

Funding Available

1999-2000

21 Institutions which wish to offer the new courses from 1 May 2000 to the end of July 2000 are requested to confirm whether they are able to provide for new adult student numbers from within their existing allocations or whether additional funding would be required. With the exception of short basic skills courses for summer schools the Council cannot guarantee that additional funding will be available. Please contact the Council's support desk on 024 7686 3224 if you have any queries.

22 For additional funding for the basic skills summer courses, the ceiling for the additional allocation for each institution will be the same cash amount as for its basic skills summer school in 1999. Institutions which did not take up their 1999 basic skills summer school allocation may also respond to the initiative.

2000-01

23 It is expected that for 2000-01, institutions will plan the new courses within their existing allocation, except in the case of non-schedule 2 pilots where further funding may be available.

Funding for non-schedule 2 pilots

24 The secretary of state asked the Council to set aside £10 million for 2000-01 for non-schedule 2 pilots for 2000-01. From this, £5 million will be ring-fenced for current projects to continue, with a further £5 million for potential applications.

25 It is proposed that those projects which have delivered their expected student numbers in 1999-2000 should have the opportunity to receive an allocation based on 50% of the cash value of their 1999-2000 allocation as a carry-forward. This funding should be used to sustain and carry forward activity begun in 1999-2000 for new enrolments for disadvantaged adults.

26 The total amount of funding available in 2000-01 is the same as that available for current projects and, as in 1999-2000, projects will be invited to enhance this funding with other resources, in cash or in kind, from other partners.

27 Representatives from learning partnerships interested in bidding for these projects will be invited to regional seminars to be held in late May 2000. These will provide information on the progress of current projects, and give further details of the procedure for allocations for 2000-01. The invitations will be sent by regional offices to the learning partnership representatives by the end of April.

28 New applicants will be assessed against the criteria published in Circular 99/16 *Applications for Funding for Non-schedule 2 Pilot Projects*. In addition, where the evaluation activities show that a particular programme area, geographic area or client group is under-represented, new or existing partnerships may be invited to address the under-representation.

Further information

29 Enquiries regarding the contents of this circular should be addressed to Claire Egan at the Council's Coventry office on 024 7686 3205.



Extension of Course Eligibility for Council Funding

Introduction

1 This annex describes the extension of eligibility of courses for Council funding. The short courses for adults in basic skills, ICT and other short courses will be eligible from 1 May 2000. All provision will be eligible from 1 August 2000.

Funding Guidelines

2 The Council's general guidelines for funding are described in Circular 99/01 (for provision between May and the end of July 2000) and *Tariff 2000-01* (for provision delivered from 1 August 2000-01). Circular 99/43 provides information on the guidelines for the audit of provision. These circulars should be read in conjunction with this annex.

Enrolments

3 Students should be enrolled by the institution and the details recorded on the individualised student record (ISR). Guidance on student eligibility is provided at Part B of *Tariff 2000-01*. Funding should be claimed through the Council's funding methodology. All aspects of the tariff will apply to the provision, except where specifically excluded in the following guidelines.

Entry element

4 Entry units may be claimed in accordance with the guidance at paragraphs 20 to 36 of Circular 99/01, and for 2000-01, in paragraphs 225 to 239 of *Tariff 2000-01*. Institutions are entitled to 0.5 entry units for courses of 3 and 6 glh.

5 Each student will attract a single entry element for this programme of new short courses. Where a student re-enrols for further 3 or 6 glh short courses, no additional entry units should be claimed. However, if a student subsequently enrolls in the same 12-month period for a longer period of study, or a Ufl course, then entry units for this progression course may be claimed.

6 Entry units should not be claimed where a student has no real choice in the programme followed, for example, where an employer determines the course of study.

7 The new short courses are intended to enable institutions and their partners to provide specific introductory programmes for adults, primarily for new learners, to widen participation and to enable them to develop new skills. The courses are not intended to replace the longer courses students traditionally follow. Consequently, institutions should not seek to divide a student's programmes artificially into a series of short courses to maximize funding. It is not expected that a student's entire learning programme should consist of a series of very short courses.

8 The extension of eligibility to 3 glh and 6 glh does not apply to students aged 16-18, who require the broader curriculum of national qualifications described in Circular 99/54. For these students, full and part time, the minimum length of course eligible for Council funding remains at 9 glh.

On-programme Element

Minimum course length

9 The new minimum course length for adults aged 19 and over at the start of their course will enable institutions to provide short taster courses, intensive tuition in basic skills or ICT and one-day courses to meet specific employment needs. It is intended that institutions will make flexible provision for adult learners, for example, Saturday family learning sessions of one- or two-hour sessions over six or three weeks.

10 The new 3 glh basic skills and ICT courses are available from 1 May 2000. The new 6 glh courses for adult learning and employment skills may be offered to students aged 19 and over from 1 May 2000 where the course of study falls within schedule 2 to the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* (the Act). The requirements of schedule 2 are explained in detail in Circular 99/10, *Schedule 2*. Institutions should ensure that the awarding body requirements are also satisfied by this new flexibility; some for instance still require a minimum of 9 glh or longer and will remain unsuited to one-day course delivery.

11 From 1 August 2000, it is proposed to widen the categories of courses for adults eligible to be funded by the Council at a new minimum of 6 glh. Further details are described below at paragraph 42 and in annex B to this circular. This minimum length of course will include courses provided through the non-schedule 2 pilots. It is also the minimum length of unit eligible for funding in the extension of the unitisation pilot.

12 Further information about the non-schedule 2 pilots is provided at paragraph 51.

13 Institutions wishing to offer students a programme made up of units of qualifications should ensure that this consists of at least two linked units which form a coherent offer to meet individual needs. Further guidance on the requirements for unitisation projects is provided at paragraph 46.

14 During 2000-01 the Council will develop further guidance on the criteria for non-qualification short courses for adults. Initial draft guidance on course development for institutions wishing to offer these types of courses for the 3 glh courses from 1 May 2000 is provided at annex B to this circular. This annex also includes proposals for an evaluation framework for the new provision. Institutions are invited to contact Kully Jones at the Council's Coventry office on 024 7686 3038 with comments on these draft guidelines and the proposed evaluation framework.

Value of on-programme units

15 The value of on-programme units available for all programmes has two elements:

- a value of basic on-programme units
- a cost-weighting factor.

16 The value of basic on-programme units is intended to represent the volume of on-programme activities required to deliver a learning programme to the point of completion. The cost-weighting factor is intended to reflect the relative intrinsic costs of programmes including staffing, consumable, space occupancy costs, capital equipment and building costs. The cost-weighting factors described in paragraph 244 of *Tariff 2000-01* apply to the new short courses. The new short courses for basic skills will therefore be cost-weighting factor C; the courses in ICT will be cost-weighting factor B; the 6 glh courses will take the cost-weighting factor assigned to the programme in question.

17 The tariff advisory committee (TAC) recommended that the value of the on-programme element of the 3 glh courses is set at 1 basic on-programme unit (bopu). The value of the on-programme element for the 6 glh course is set at 1.5 bopu. These values are agreed from 1 May 2000 to the end of July 2001.

18 The values of on-programme units exclude the widening participation factor, tuition fee remission, childcare and additional support. Additional units may be earned for tuition fee remission and additional support as set out in Circular 99/01 and *Tariff 2000-01*. Students enrolled on one of the new types of course detailed in this circular will also be eligible for learner support funds (childcare, etc.) provided they qualify under the terms and conditions outlined in a forthcoming circular, *Learner Support Funds 2000-01*.

Achievement element

19 Achievement units may not be claimed for the short courses of 3 glh. All students will be expected to be successful in such a short period of learning. Achievement units may be claimed for the courses of 6 glh where the student achieves the primary learning goal identified in the learning agreement.

New short courses offered by distance learning

20 For this developmental phase to the end of July 2001, it is expected that the new 3 glh or 6 glh courses will require direct face-to-face student /tutor contact and will not be offered by distance learning or online through the Internet except in exceptional circumstances. Institutions which exceptionally wish to offer the 3 glh or 6 glh courses by distance learning or online through the Internet are expected to contact the Council in advance of delivery to discuss the appropriate level of funding. Where institutions fail to do this, the Council will decline to fund the courses.

Franchised provision

21 The new categories of courses should only be franchised to local institutions where this clearly adds value to the provision and meets the particular needs of the students. Institutions wishing to franchise courses from the new categories of provision should ensure that the model contract provided in Circular 99/37, *Franchising and Fees*, is in place and that they can demonstrate that the control criteria are fully met. The checks to be undertaken on this provision are described in Circular 99/37 and in Circular 99/43. Institutions should also ensure that franchise partners are identified in the ADDCP and partner register returned to the Council.

ISR

22 The individualised student record (ISR) should be completed as described in the ISR manual for the particular year. For provision delivered in 1999-2000, institutions will have to make a manual adjustment in order to claim the units for funding. For 2000-01 the funding program will be developed to recognise the programmes for funding.

23 Further guidance will be provided on the qualification aim codes for the provision. Each type of course and unit module will require a separate code in order to track student progression and assist in the evaluation of the provision.

Short courses for basic skills

24 The Council has responded to the Moser report *Improving Literacy and Numeracy* with a series of measures on quality improvement, planning and funding. In particular the Council has been actively involved in the development of the new national standards for literacy and numeracy through its membership of the technical implementation group (TIG) of the Moser group.

25 In 1998-99, the Council allocated £9 million to basic skills summer schools in institutions. These attracted more than 23,000 students and followed a successful summer schools programme in 1997-98. Institutions that offered summer schools noted that specific learning outcomes could be achieved in very short, intensive modules and that this success acted as a significant motivator for students to progress. Evidence from the basic skills summer schools was that the short 'taster' approach is effective in engaging potential basic skills learners who might otherwise be deterred by a more substantial commitment.

26 In order to build on these lessons, institutions will be able to claim funding for very short basic skills programmes of 3 glh.

27 These courses of 3 glh may take the form of short taster courses, or may be specific intensive programmes of tuition to improve particular aspects of literacy, or numeracy. It may also include the provision of diagnostic assessment services for employers in order to identify the basic skills needs of employees. In addition, the funding may enable institutions to provide an extended period of diagnostic assessment for individuals with basic skills needs and learning difficulties, including dyslexia.

28 The tariff values of the 3 glh short basic skills courses is set at 1 bopu.

29 Achievement units may not be claimed for the short courses of 3 glh for basic skills. All students would be expected to be successful in such a short period of learning. Where the period is used for diagnostic assessment it would also not be appropriate to claim achievement units. Achievement units may be claimed for the courses of 6 glh where the student achieves the primary learning goal identified in the learning agreement.

Audit evidence

30 In order to claim the short basic skills courses for Council funding, institutions will need to demonstrate that students' primary learning goals are set within, or working towards the national standards for literacy and numeracy. These are currently being developed as part of the response to Moser by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Evidence of the specific literacy/numeracy target should be identified and included as part of a student's learning agreement.

31 In the case of basic skills diagnostic assessment, institutions should retain evidence that the assessment has taken place. This will include a register of attendance and a signed learning agreement identifying assessment of literacy, numeracy or language as the primary learning goal. It is not expected that the assessment reports will be provided to the auditors for reasons of student confidentiality. Institutions should retain evidence of student progression from diagnostic assessment to

further education or training to assist the Council in the evaluation of the success of this approach.

32 It is not expected that institutions will claim funding through the new basic skills short course programme for students on mainstream programme who require additional assessment. This type of assessment is most appropriately provided through the additional support mechanism.

Short courses for ICT

33 The government has recently announced its intention to make access to computerised technology available to every citizen by 2002. A number of initiatives support this intention, including the establishment of the University for Industry (Ufi) and the establishment of new ICT centres within the community.

34 The Ufi will be officially launched in September 2000. In 1999-2000, the Council allocated £4 million for development activity of the Ufi. It will allocate £20.25 million for Ufi learners in 2000-01. The Ufi anticipates that some 1,000 centres under its learndirect brand will be open by September 2000.

35 Colleges and community organisations have recently been invited to bid for capital funding for the new ICT centres through the community access to lifelong learning programme from the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). Some £155 million has been allocated in England to establish ICT learning centres or to establish community grids for lifelong learning. In addition, a further £100 million has been allocated to library authorities to create the People's Network of ICT learning centres in public libraries. The closing date for first round applications is 5 May 2000 for centres to open in November 2000.

36 These initiatives argue for the provision of introductory courses and 'taster' opportunities which need not necessarily lead to a qualification. New courses in basic computer literacy and related IT courses of 3 glh will be available from 1 May 2000. It is expected that institutions with Ufi learning centres and/or IT

centres are well placed to respond flexibly to this initiative so that they may reach a larger number of new students.

37 The tariff for the 3 glh courses in basic ICT is set at 1 bopu.

38 In planning non-qualification short courses in ICT, institutions will wish to ensure that these link to the Ufi learndirect centres and/or the new ICT learning centres or to mainstream ICT courses. It is suggested that the Ufi should be included in the planning of ICT courses wherever possible.

39 The programme of work should be based on identified standards for ICT and the specific ICT target be identified in the student's learning agreement. Successful completion will be against criteria documented by the college. Further initial draft guidance on course development for institutions wishing to offer these types of courses from 1 May 2000 is provided at annex B to this circular.

Audit evidence

40 In order to claim Council-funding for short basic ICT skills courses, institutions will need to demonstrate that students' primary learning goals are set within, or working towards, the national standards for ICT courses and that the courses link into the Ufi learndirect or ICT centres. Evidence of the specific ICT target should be identified and included as part of a student's learning agreement.

41 Institutions should monitor student progression and retain this as audit evidence and to inform the Council's evaluation of the programme's success.

New short courses for adults

42 The new courses of 6 glh should fall within schedule 2 to the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* (the Act) for the period 1 May 2000 to 31 July 2000. In addition, from 1 August 2000, a wider range of courses may be funded. In all cases, the primary course objective should be progression to further education, training or for employment skills. Institutions are particularly

encouraged to develop courses for family learning in partnership with schools, family centres and employers.

43 The tariff value of the new 6 glh course is set at 1.5 bopu.

Audit evidence

44 In order to claim Council funding for the 6 glh courses, institutions will need to demonstrate that students' primary learning goals are set within, or working towards the requirements of schedule 2 to the Act. Evidence of the specific programme target should be identified and included as part of a student's learning agreement.

45 Institutions should monitor student progression and retain this as audit evidence and to inform the Council's evaluation of the programme's success.

Proposals for Increasing Access to Learning

Unitisation

46 Currently, Council funding is available for whole qualifications only. Some 40 institutions have joined a second stage unitisation funding pilot running during the spring and summer 2000 made up of units of qualifications. The second stage pilot is a joint project between the Council and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Evaluation is being undertaken in spring 2000 that will inform the QCA's advice to ministers. The minimum number of units in each programme is 2 and the minimum length of programme is 9 glh. From 1 August 2000, the length of unit eligible for funding is reduced to 6 glh.

47 The Council intends to extend the second stage pilots to enable institutions to target particular groups of adult learners who may only need part of a qualification for employability or who wish to undertake qualifications through small steps. The initiative will follow the same principles as the existing pilots including the emphasis on basic and key skills.

48 Institutions that are able to offer a unit-based programme, or programmes, including those which have not previously participated in the second stage pilot are invited to run unit-based programmes in 2000-01. The rationale for programmes should be similar to the principles outlined in David Melville's letter of 22 October 1999 to heads of Council-funded institutions. The key points are:

- i. Proposed programmes should be designed for a body of students with predominantly common provision for all students in the group but with limited flexibility for creating individual programmes for students
- ii. The principles for producing a coherent group of units should:
 - better enable progression to further training, learning or employment
 - include units of IT and basic/key skills, as appropriate to learners' needs
 - meet the rationale for offering the particular group of units
- iii. In addition, the units can be:
 - those offered by a range of awarding bodies
 - at different levels of the national framework.

Further information is available from Kully Jones on 024 7686 3038.

Audit evidence

49 Institutions should retain details of the courses, the links to other qualifications and the rationale for the design of the programme for the specific student group. External auditors are requested to confirm that the provision took place as intended. External auditors are not expected to make educational judgements as to the suitability of the course for the individual or group.

50 In addition, the Council intends to visit a sample of institutions during 2000-01 as described in paragraph 20 to evaluate the success of this initiative and to provide further information to the QCA.

Non-schedule 2

51 The Council is inviting growth applications for non-schedule 2 programmes in 2000-01 which build on the 1999-2000 non-schedule 2 pilot projects. The secretary of state asked the Council to fund non-schedule 2 projects worth £10 million to meet the needs of disadvantaged adults. Background information about the type of non-schedule 2 pilot projects running in 1999-2000 is set out in Circular 99/16 *Applications for Funding Non-schedule 2 Pilot Projects*.

52 An evaluation of the current pilot projects is being undertaken by FEDA and NIACE to inform the development of projects in 2000-01. An important feature of the 1999-2000 projects has been the development and delivery of programmes through partners in the learning partnerships. The Council wishes to encourage this approach for the wider extension of the funding of non-schedule 2 programmes in 2000-01.

53 The minimum length of non-schedule 2 programmes for Council funding is 6 glh from 1 August 2000. These programmes will be loadbanded.

Access to further education courses

54 In the longer term, it is proposed to encourage the development of longer flexible access to further education (FE) and return to learn courses. This should encourage growth in student numbers on access to FE programmes by providing flexibility on eligibility for funding whilst at the same time ensuring quality through the introduction of a new mechanism for regulation.

55 Currently, access to FE programmes falls under schedule 2(d) and the criteria for eligibility are that the qualification is externally accredited and that it leads to progression to a vocational or academic qualification.

56 Under the proposed legislation for the LSC, schedule 2 will disappear and both vocational and leisure and recreational provision are likely to become eligible for public funding. It is proposed that:

- the existing requirements for eligibility under schedule 2(d) should be removed or relaxed
- there should be a quality assurance system which could be similar, for example, to the Quality Assurance Agency's regulatory system for Access to HE (schedule 2(c) courses)
- during 2000-01 there should be testing of a new approach to regulate and quality assure provision which has no external accreditation.

57 It is anticipated that this approach should encourage more student enrolments on access to FE and return to learn programmes by removing the requirements for external accreditation and for demonstrating direct progression.

58 This is a longer term proposal, which would need to be developed by the Council's education policy team from spring 2000 for testing during 2001-02. A steering group would be established to oversee the testing and there may be a need for an approvals panel to monitor activity and test the eligibility criteria which are developed.

Further information

59 Further guidance on the funding available for the new categories of provision, or any aspect of this annex is available from Claire Egan on 024 7686 3205.

Guidance on Short Courses

Introduction

1 This annex provides initial draft guidance to institutions that wish to offer short courses which do not lead to a qualification. This draft guidance will be developed further during 2000-01.

2 The initial guidance is intended to contribute both to the stimulation of short basic skills, and basic ICT courses in summer 2000 and to a wider range of adult learning courses from 1 August 2000 and to the subsequent framework for evaluation. It is not intended to be prescriptive and will not form part of the audit evidence required at this early stage of development. Colleges should, however, develop courses and claim funding according to the funding guidelines in annex A to this circular and that in Circular 99/01 for summer term provision and in a forthcoming circular on provision made from 1 August 2000.

3 Colleges are encouraged to develop new short courses, especially in basic ICT skills and for adult learning and employment skills, not primarily to replace student numbers lost by the closing of franchise operations, but to make important contributions to meeting the needs of students who wish to improve basic skills, be introduced to the use of ICT or who wish to develop skills for further learning or employment. Colleges may consider developing courses in basic skills which also develop skills in ICT.

4 Courses may be focused towards:

- improving employability
- contributing to social inclusion
- bridging the gap between those in society who are IT literate and those who are not
- supporting lifelong learning.

Short 3 glh ICT courses

5 In planning non-qualification short courses in ICT, these will be expected to link primarily into the Ufi learndirect centres and/or the new ICT learning centres. It is suggested that the Ufi should be included where a course is based on learning materials delivered online.

6 The programme of work should be based on identified standards for ICT and the specific ICT target be identified on the student's learning agreement. Successful completion will be against criteria documented by the college.

Short 3 glh basic skills courses

7 The short courses in basic skills should have a programme of work based on, or working towards, the national standards for literacy and numeracy and offer opportunities for progression. The specific literacy or numeracy target should be identified in the learning agreement and successful completion monitored against criteria documented by the college.

6 glh courses

8 These may have a varied course content, or be specifically for basic skills or for the development of ICT skills. The college should document evidence of:

- employer need (where appropriate)
- the qualification or unit of qualification; or:
- the programme of work related to the qualification
- the opportunities for certification and/or
- progression towards a qualification.

Minimum standards for all new short courses

9 In developing new short courses institutions should ensure that:

- appropriate hardware and software is available, for instance, if the course is about the Internet there should be sufficient computers with connections; if it is about word-processing there must be common software
- student support is adequate; that is, tutors should be suitably qualified and the student: staff ratio appropriate for the student group and the learning opportunity
- appropriate technical support is available for ICT courses
- it is clear to the students what the course is about, including its link to relevant certificated courses and (where appropriate) its currency in the job market.

10 Benchmarking the course content will require different approaches for:

- taught and tutored courses
- courses mainly based on learning packages.

11 Where a course is taught or tutored, the college staff should compare its content with relevant parts of a certificated course, for instance, CLAIT, City and Guilds 7261, the European Computer Driving Licence, or an Access course. If no external benchmark is suitable, justification for not having one should be documented.

12 Where a course is based on on-line learning materials, as a benchmark of quality, the materials should be and/or:

- commissioned or endorsed by the Ufi
- produced by a Ufi qualified supplier (listed on the Ufi website at www.ufild.co.uk)
- able to meet Ufi selection criteria (also on the Ufi website).

Other materials may be used but the reasons for using them should be documented.

13 Self-evaluation should be a feature of the course development. This will involve:

- routine collection of data and its analysis
- feedback from learners
- internal evaluation on behalf of the college management team.

14 The individualised student record (ISR) should be a main source of data but routine collection and analysis of other data should be undertaken and the results documented to inform future development.

15 In order to judge the overall effectiveness of the approach to non-qualification ICT and basic skills short courses, records should be maintained of:

- the courses offered in terms of
 - type of content
 - length
 - location, including outreach centres
- students in terms of:
 - course studied
 - reasons for attending
 - age-group and sex
 - success
 - intentions for further study at end of course
 - actual progression to further study at the end of the course (where available).

Framework for external evaluation

16 The Council intends to consult the sector on the formal framework for the evaluation of non-qualification short basic skills and ICT courses during 2000-01. This will enable colleges to experiment with course content and to gather sufficient information to inform further development. The Council is considering establishing a 'live' website to enable colleges and their partners to contribute examples of best practice, and also to share information on courses and ideas that do not work.

17 Comments on these initial guidelines are invited and should be provided to Kully Jones, at the Council's Coventry office.

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