

Centres of Vocational Excellence

Update for Further Education Colleges

Summary

This circular provides updated guidance to Further Education, Tertiary and Specialist Colleges of Agriculture, Horticulture, Art and Design, Performing Arts, Sixth Form Colleges, Designated Institutions and Higher Education Institutions on the Learning and Skills Council's implementation of the Centres of Vocational Excellence Programme.

It should be read in conjunction with *Centres of Vocational Excellence in Further Education: The Way Ahead* published jointly by the Learning and Skills Council and Department for Education and Skills in July 2001.

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**Available for download from LSC website www.lscdata.gov.uk/cove*

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Further information

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Executive Summary

Date: September 2002

Subject: Describes the background and policies of the CoVE programme for further education colleges funded by the Learning and Skills Council. Outlines the role of the Learning and Skills Council, the local Learning and Skills Councils, the Learning and Skills Development Agency and other key organisations. Summarises the objectives of the programme, its criteria and funding. Describes the processes involved in moderating a CoVE proposal.

Intended recipients: Heads of Further Education, Tertiary and Specialist Colleges of Agriculture, Horticulture, Art and Design, Performing Arts, Sixth Form Colleges, Designated Institutions and Higher Education Institutions. Executive Directors of local Learning and Skills Councils, and Heads of other key organisations.

Status: For information.

Update for Further Education Colleges

Summary

- 1 This circular provides information on:
- the background, policy and operational objectives of the CoVE programme;
 - the role of the Learning and Skills Council (the LSC);
 - the role of the local Learning and Skills Councils (local LSCs);
 - funding arrangements;
 - arrangements for further education (FE) colleges to make proposals to join the CoVE programme;
 - the role of the Learning and Skills Development Agency (the LSDA);
 - the process for monitoring and the evaluation of the programme;
 - key dates;
 - contact details; and
 - skills needs priorities.

Introduction

2 This circular updates the arrangements whereby FE colleges may put forward proposals to join the Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) programme, including details of how they may apply for financial support towards costs incurred in developing their CoVEs. The original arrangements were published in Circular 01/14 *Centres of Vocational Excellence* in October 2001.

Background

3 In the statement *Colleges for Excellence and Innovation*¹ published in November 2000 the then Secretary of State set out an ambitious agenda to “rebuild the technical instruction that once symbolised the very best of our industrial training system”. The statement called for a “modern further education sector” contributing fully to the nation’s vocational skills and the drive to boost productivity levels.

4 The CoVE programme which emerged from this statement and other policy developments follows from the recommendations of the National Skills Task Force and its final report *Skills for All: Proposals for a National Skills Agenda (2000)*. In particular, the CoVE programme is designed to promote:

- lifelong learning and, in particular, increasing adult participation in vocational provision, whether through new learners or upskilling the existing workforce;
- growth in level 3 technical and vocational specialism;
- progression from Level 3 vocational education into employment;
- a supply network that is proactive in meeting the needs of employers; and
- the development of excellence and the sharing of and transformation of best practice.

The whole strategy is underpinned by the aim of providing high and improving standards for all learners.

¹*Colleges for Excellence and Innovation, Statement by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment on the Future of Further Education in England, 21 November 2000.*

²*Centres of Vocational Excellence: Heralding a new era for Further Education, A Paper for Consultation, March 2001.*

5 The CoVE programme was announced in the statement *Colleges for Excellence and Innovation (2000)*. The aims and objectives of the programme were subject to consultation² in March 2001. The consultation indicated wide support for the extension of the programme to other providers funded by the LSC. The programme was extended to include Sixth Form Colleges in October 2002 and an extension programme, for other providers funded by the LSC, commenced in May 2002 to run in parallel with the college programme³. The overall aims and objectives of the CoVE programme were set out in a prospectus⁴ published in July 2001.

6 CoVEs will develop new, and enhance existing, specialist vocational provision that will be focused on meeting the skills needs of employers, locally, regionally, nationally and sectorally. They will seek to give a greater number of individuals access to the high quality vocational training that they need to succeed in a modern economy. In addition, they will reflect the LSC's commitment to equality and diversity.

CoVE Objectives

7 The programme addresses four operational and policy objectives:

- to create a strategic network of high-quality centres by ensuring that at least half of all FE colleges and 50 other providers funded by the LSC have at least one CoVE by 2003/04, taking account of local, regional, sectoral and national skills needs;
- to encourage collaboration amongst all types of providers and promote the development of excellence in economically important vocational specialisms;
- to help secure enhanced vocational learning opportunities for all learners in post-16 education and training,

working particularly with post-19 learners and supporting employee upskilling and workforce development at level 3; and

- to increase proactive employer/college engagement to underpin, develop and strengthen innovative and flexible approaches to meeting the nation's current and future skills needs.

8 CoVEs should focus on developing the skills and careers of those already in work, enhancing the employability of new entrants to the labour market and the employment prospects of those seeking work (including self employment). CoVEs should develop, deliver and maintain high-quality, specialist provision across a range of new and traditional occupations. They will be innovative in delivering learning that develops both specialist and related general skills.

9 CoVEs will work closely with business and industry. They will extend and strengthen established relationships with employers and will play an important role in assisting Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) in the implementation of the developing *Frameworks for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESAs)*⁵. FRESAs will provide regional intelligence to allow forward planning of future CoVE proposals, ensuring that demand-led, and not supply-driven, needs are addressed. The dynamic partnership between CoVEs, employers, RDAs and other key organisations will support:

- a clear and mutual understanding of current and future skills needs and a joint commitment to investing in workforce development;
- creative approaches to tackling skills issues that embed a culture of innovation and technical excellence;
- the development of excellent quality provision;

³Circular 02/08: *Centres of Vocational Excellence: CoVE Extension Programme*, June 2002.

⁴*Centres of Vocational Excellence in Further Education: The Way Ahead*, July 2001.

⁵*The first FRESAs should come on stream from October 2002 and they will aim to promote in each region a healthy labour market in which employers and individuals can obtain effective help in meeting employer and skills needs.*

- learning opportunities that identify and meet learners' and employers' needs in terms of delivery, time/location of delivery and learning outcomes and that have the right balance between on-job and off-job training;
- opportunities for new entrants or returners to a specialist labour market to prepare for the world of work (including work experience) and for those already employed in that labour market to upgrade their skills;
- provision which is directly related to the current and future needs of work and fully up to date in terms of specialised content;
- strategies to promote access and participation of groups traditionally excluded from learning or disadvantaged in the labour market; and
- teaching staff having up-to-date sectoral knowledge and skills.

10 Annex A provides information on the evaluation of the CoVE pathfinders commissioned by the LSC in early 2002. It also gives an indication of the features of the proposals that have been successful in the first two main proposal rounds. These features have already been shared through nine regional dissemination conferences held by the LSC and the LSDA between May and July 2002.

Role of local Learning and Skills Councils

11 Active guidance and support from local LSCs is an essential element for the development of CoVEs, both at the proposal and the development stage. No CoVE proposal will progress without the support of the local LSC(s) involved. Colleges should ensure that their local LSC is kept fully informed about the progress of their CoVE. Each local LSC has staff with dedicated responsibility for supporting the development and monitoring the progress of CoVEs (Annex B).

12 Local LSCs will support CoVE proposals by:

- providing advice and guidance on programme policy;
- providing advice and guidance on local and regional skills needs and priorities;
- moderating proposals at local and regional level;
- facilitating links and partnerships, where necessary, with other providers in its area which might enhance the success of a CoVE proposal;
- supporting CoVEs during the twelve-month development period; and
- ensuring a balanced level of vocational provision and a sensible geographical spread by LSC area and region.

13 Local LSCs, in working with all their providers to develop proposals, will need to ensure that the proposed activities are consistent with skills needs identified in the RDAs' skills action plans. RDAs will be strongly involved in determining the overview on regional skills priorities which will help inform regional decision making (see paragraph 41).

14 CoVE proposals will also need to demonstrate the involvement of key organisations such as employers (and employer organisations), Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), RDAs, the Small Business Service (SBS), trade unions, learning partnerships, the Connexions Service and local education authorities (LEAs).

Duration of CoVE Status

15 Each CoVE will be expected to achieve agreed targets and performance indicators laid down in a costed audit and development plan (the Form B development plan) covering the first twelve months of its operation. Upon successful completion of this development plan, the CoVE will be awarded full status. It is expected that formal status will be held for a period not exceeding three years, subject to the CoVE continuing to meet the criteria and

performance targets. Local LSCs will be responsible for monitoring the CoVE against the performance criteria (Annex C). Arrangements for formal recognition of full CoVE status following the development phase will be announced in autumn 2002.

16 Where a CoVE fails to achieve the targets set out in its development plan or there are other significant concerns about aspects of its performance, the local LSC may decide to suspend formal confirmation of CoVE status, pending work to raise standards. If it is felt that the required standards are unlikely to be attained within a reasonable period, CoVE status may be suspended or withdrawn permanently.

17 Formal CoVE status may be withdrawn at any time after completion of the development plan if the quality of provision subsequently fails to meet key objectives of the CoVE programme, or if other reasons for significant concerns arise. The formal suspension/ withdrawal process will be managed by local LSCs, together with the LSC's national CoVE team.

Funding

18 The DfES announced in March 2001 that up to £100 million of capital and revenue funding would be available for the FE CoVE programme for the period to 2003/04. In April 2002, because of the initial success of the programme, a further £25 million capital allocation was confirmed.

19 Each CoVE will be eligible to receive up to £300,000 in the first year, depending on the scale and scope of its work. Up to £100,000 will be available for activity in the second and third year of the programme depending on the availability of funds. While it is expected that funding will currently be subject to a 70-30 ratio between capital and revenue this may need to be varied depending on how funding streams are allocated to the programme by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Local LSC CoVE contacts will ensure that colleges currently making proposals have the latest information. Any colleges developing a

proposal in the future are advised to contact their local LSC to get up to date information before they begin work on their proposal.

20 Circular 01/02 *Quality Improvement, Standards Fund* confirms that Standards Fund monies may be available to support the development of individual CoVE proposals or those made as a partnership. Standards Fund monies may also be used to help support CoVEs that require more than twelve months for the developmental phase. Colleges will need to discuss the possibility of Standards Fund support with their local LSC.

21 If a capital project proposal would enable a provider to establish or further develop a CoVE, it can apply to the Council for additional capital grant support as detailed in Circular 06/01 '*Capital Project Grant Support Transitional and Interim Arrangements 2001/02*' and subsequent capital circulars.

22 The twelve-month development phase of each CoVE will be based on the development plan which will show how the CoVE will operate in its first year and achieve its planned objectives. Costs in the development plan should include those relating to:

- additional staffing costs related exclusively to developing or maintaining the CoVE, e.g. replacement staffing to enable teaching staff to directly engage with employers to promote the CoVE;
- market research for the purpose of determining employer needs;
- development or purchase of learning materials;
- general research and networking with other CoVEs, (e.g. participation in activities that exchange good practice at local, regional, sectoral and national level);
- quality improvement;
- related consultancy costs;
- support for staff development and training internally and for partner organisations; and

- capital items including minor works, premises modernisation, conversion and adaptation, equipment replacement and upgrades.

23 In producing their development plans colleges should be aware that the revenue funding allocations, which are currently 30% or 40% of the total allocation, will not exceed this in any year, and depending on future allocation profiles, may be less than this (see paragraph 19). It is expected that colleges will spend a minimum of 50% of revenue funding for years 2 and 3 on the sharing of good practice. All CoVEs are expected to participate fully in the specialist development groups organised on behalf of the LSC by the LSDA.

24 Many proposals in rounds 1 and 2 have focused on senior staffing commitments in their development plans. Where colleges establish such posts for their CoVEs they should realise that the ongoing costs of these posts will not be sustainable from CoVE revenue funding. Many colleges have been asked to re-consider such appointments prior to formal approval of their proposals.

25 Consideration will be given to necessary expenditure not listed above and, in exceptional cases, alternative capital to revenue ratios to the ratios as described at paragraphs 19 and 23 may be considered. Once allocated, funds cannot be vired between capital and revenue elements of the budget.

26 Once a proposal has been approved to join the CoVE programme, the LSC will pay in advance 50% of the individual funding allocation for each year, normally with the balance paid in three equal instalments phased across the year.

27 In presenting proposals, colleges should ensure that the proposed activities are not already supported by other LSC funding. For example, CoVE claims for staff development should not already have received Standards Fund support. Similarly, capital expenditure proposals should not already be included in an application to the LSC for capital grant support

or to have previously received capital project grant support from the LSC.

Proposal Arrangements

28 The prospectus⁶ published in July 2001 outlined the type of activities that a CoVE would be expected to undertake and also included the criteria against which the performance of each CoVE will be measured (Annex C).

29 Colleges that meet the qualifying conditions may make an initial CoVE proposal using the Form A which is available on the CoVE website at (www.lscdata.gov.uk/cove).

30 Proposals that have not been developed with the support of the relevant local LSC(s) will not be considered for entry to the programme.

31 Before making their proposal colleges will need to have:

- agreed with the local LSC the vocational skills need which the proposed CoVE will address at local, regional, national and/or sectoral level;
- considered the possibility of joint proposals (e.g. partnerships) with other local, regional, sectoral or national partners;
- discussed the proposed CoVE with other key organisations including, as appropriate, the RDA and the appropriate SSC; and
- identified their capacity to disseminate good practice and help other providers to raise standards in specialist vocational provision.

32 Proposals that are likely to be successful will demonstrate that the CoVE can meet the performance criteria and will demonstrate providers' abilities to:

⁶Centres of Vocational Excellence in Further Education: The Way Ahead, July 2001.

- demonstrate and/or develop provision with the characteristics of vocational excellence for the CoVE;
- deliver the recommended minimum number of learners, with a strong focus on working with and increasing the participation of adults, who then undertake vocational programmes funded by the LSC at level 3;
- increase the volume of vocational training at level 3 for those in employment;
- prepare an analysis identifying potential learners not currently participating in education and training, the vocational needs of new entrants to education and training and the upskilling needs of those in employment;
- develop strategies for strengthening areas of weakness and for building on areas of comparative strength, including innovative approaches to meeting current and future skills needs, and establishing/developing relationships with key organisations;
- ensure that staff development and consultancy activities are made available to CoVEs with related skills specialisms, inside and outside partnership arrangements;
- establish partnerships with other CoVEs and other providers including those offering mainly level 1 or 2 provision in order to disseminate good practice and lessons learnt from the CoVE locally, regionally, nationally and by sector;
- extend, where relevant, good practice from the CoVE to other curriculum and operational areas across the organisation and beyond this into other providers;
- monitor progress towards the CoVE targets and objectives in conjunction with the local LSC; and
- ensure that there is a planned exit strategy that will enable the work of the CoVE to be sustained financially and operationally once dedicated funding ends.

The Moderation Process - Overview

33 The process for dealing with CoVE proposals involves moderation at local, regional, sectoral and national level. Successful initial proposals (Form A) will progress to regional moderation, where local LSCs will consider the proposal to ensure levels and mix of CoVE provision are balanced across the region. Proposals approved at regional level will progress to national moderation. Proposals approved at national moderation will progress to Form B development plan. Final decisions on CoVE approval will rest with the National Policy and Selection Panel (the Panel).

The Moderation Tool

34 The moderation tool used in local, regional and national moderation is attached at Annex D for information. This indicates the weightings given to sections of the CoVE proposal. Its prime purpose is to provide accuracy and consistency in the moderation process. The weightings reflect the key requirements of an effective proposal.

The National Policy and Selection Panel

35 The National Policy and Selection Panel (the Panel) oversees the moderation process to ensure that skills needs are addressed effectively in terms of local, regional, national and sectoral priorities and to ensure a sound geographical spread in the CoVE network.

Membership includes national LSC members, local LSC chairs a principal of an FE pathfinder college and a DfES observer.

36 The Panel may, following the national moderation process, defer or reject proposals supported by local LSCs. This may be because the proposal:

- does not reach the national moderation scoring threshold;
- does not address a skills priority because there is local or regional over-provision in particular skills areas;
- is incomplete and requires further development; or
- has been submitted as meeting national skills needs but does not meet the criteria shown at paragraph 39 below.

Role of the Learning and Skills Development Agency (the LSDA)

37 The LSDA has been commissioned by the LSC to support and co-ordinate implementation of the CoVE programme by:

- offering telephone and e-mail advice to providers and local LSCs;
- providing support for the preparation of Form A initial proposals where this can be supported through the Standards Fund;
- providing consultancy support for the preparation of Form B development plans;
- liaising with external organisations such as SSCs, RDAs and other bodies in partnership with the LSC and the DfES;
- establishing and supporting specialist development groups for CoVEs in vocational specialist areas;

- organising a range of dissemination events to assist in the dissemination of good practices in the delivery of level 3 vocational provision;
- supporting good practice in the monitoring and evaluation of Form B development plans; and
- contributing to policy debate, research and the development of the CoVE programme.

38 The LSDA is also responsible for assisting in the moderation of proposals. Further information on LSDA support for the CoVE programme can be obtained from its website (www.lsdasda.org.uk/curriculum/cove).

CoVEs Which Meet National and Regional Skills Needs

39 CoVEs that meet national and regional skills needs are defined by the following characteristics:

- have low volume employment outlets (e.g. marine safety);
- draw their learners from across the country; and
- are collaborating across regional boundaries.

40 CoVEs that meet national skills needs need to have the support of all the local LSCs involved. They will also require support from the regional moderation process to confirm that there will be no over provision regionally. The final approval of this type of proposal will rest with the Panel. The Panel expects that only a very few CoVEs will qualify as national CoVEs.

41 CoVES that meet regional skills needs will require input from RDAs to ensure appropriate fit with regional strategies, and to encourage geographic and sectoral balance, as well as addressing the skills needs themselves.

Skills Needs Priorities

42 The Panel will draw information on skills priorities from key organisations including the DfES, RDAs, local LSCs and SSCs. Each local LSC will be aware of these priorities and should make local decisions within this context. The Panel has the final responsibility for determining the shape of the CoVE network and it will seek to ensure that any geographical and skills gaps identified at each stage of the programme are addressed (Annex F details the skills priorities the Panel identified for proposal round 2. These will be reviewed before each proposal round).

Skills Priorities Group

43 The LSC has established a skills priority group that includes input from local LSCs, RDAs, the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA), the DfES and other key bodies. The group will ensure that skill priorities laid down for successive rounds of the CoVE programme continue to be based on the most up-to-date and relevant information, and are those which will most effectively address skills needs at local, regional, national and sectoral levels.

Multiple Proposals

44 The Panel has agreed that a college may have only one CoVE proposal approved in each round. This is to ensure that the management team are focused on the development of the CoVE. Where additionally colleges are involved in collaborative proposals in the same proposal round these will be considered on an individual basis. It is expected only a minority of colleges will have more than one CoVE.

Stage 1 – Initial Proposals on Form A

45 The process for dealing with CoVE proposals involves moderation at local, regional and national level. Successful initial proposals (Form A) will progress to regional

moderation, where local LSCs will consider the proposal in regional terms to ensure levels and mix of CoVE provision are balanced across the region. Proposals approved at regional level will progress to national moderation. Proposals approved at this level will progress to Form B development plan.

46 The first stage of the proposal process will see colleges and the local LSCs working together with other partners to develop initial proposals on Form A. All completed CoVE proposals on Form A should be submitted in the first instance to local LSCs with copies to the LSC national office and the LSDA. This will build up a picture of the range of potential CoVEs and highlight any gaps that are emerging in terms of vocational skills priorities and geographical spread. Local LSCs will determine whether the initial proposal will be:

- progressed to regional and national moderation;
- returned to the college for minor adjustment;
- returned to the college for major changes; and
- deferred to the next proposal round, or rejected.

47 Local LSCs, through the CoVE regional groups, will ensure that liaison takes place between neighbouring local LSCs to ensure there is no unnecessary duplication or large geographical gaps at regional level.

48 Proposals supported by local LSCs will be moderated by regional colleagues. Regional meetings will then prioritise those proposals which are to progress to national moderation.

49 The Panel will make decisions on which proposals will progress to the Form B development plan.

Stage 2 – Development Plan on Form B

50 The second stage will see successful initial proposals for CoVE status being developed on Form B (available on website (www.lscdata.gov.uk/cove)). LSDA consultancy support is available to colleges in preparing their Form B proposal. The key part of the Form B is the development plan showing how the CoVE will progress in its first year, with full details of costs and planned objectives. Copies of the Form B should be sent to the local LSC, the LSC national CoVE team and the LSDA. Local LSCs will consider Form B proposals against the CoVE criteria (Annex C) and look at its costs and objectives.

51 CoVE proposals which successfully address skills needs priorities and which can meet the performance criteria listed at Annex C will receive initial approval from the local LSC and go forward for national moderation by the Panel.

52 Amendments to the Form B development plan may be required by either the local LSC or the Panel. Where there are serious concerns with the development plan at either local or national level, a proposal may be deferred or rejected.

Formal Approval of CoVE Status

53 Once the proposal has been approved by national moderation at the Form B stage, the provider will work with the relevant local LSC and the LSDA, through the specialist development groups, to implement the Form B development plan for the first year of the CoVE. The local LSC will keep the national CoVE team and LSDA informed about the progress of development plans. The developmental phase for each CoVE will normally last for about twelve months, at the end of which the CoVE will receive formal recognition.

Monitoring of CoVE Performance

54 There will be no fixed date on which colleges will automatically receive full CoVE status, although it is usually expected that the development plan will be completed successfully during a twelve-month period. Ideally, colleges and the local LSC will agree the timescale necessary to fully develop the CoVE. Local LSCs will continue to monitor the progress of fully approved CoVEs and they will be inspected as part of the regular arrangements for post-16 provision.

Equal Opportunities

55 The LSC has a statutory duty (section 14, *Learning and Skills Act 2000*) to promote equality of opportunity for men and women, people from different racial groups and people with disabilities. The LSC has drawn up a national strategy on equality and diversity to enable it to meet those statutory obligations. In embedding equality and diversity into all its policies, programmes and actions, the LSC is committed to “work with providers and employers to help them adopt relevant standards, promote equality of opportunity and take systematic steps, including positive action, to participate in, and benefit from, LSC programmes and initiatives.”

56 *The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000* places duties on the LSC to promote race equality. The LSC will ensure that those in receipt of LSC funding are acting in a way that ensures that the LSC’s duties are being met. For FE colleges this will mean compliance with the duties placed on them under the Act.

57 All colleges should be aware of, and responsive to, the duties placed on them by the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995* and the *Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001*.

Contacts

LSC national office contact details:

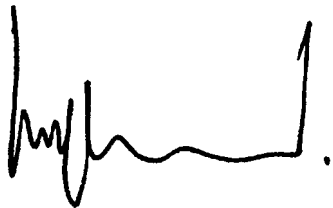
Website: (www.lscdata.gov.uk/cove)

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LSDA contact details:

LSDA website:
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Judith Greenwood CoVE Administrator
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Harwood', with a period at the end.

John Harwood, Chief Executive

Annex A: Messages from the Evaluation of CoVE Pathfinders and Good Practice Identified from Successful Proposals in Rounds 1 and 2

1. Introduction

This Annex summarises the initial messages from the first stage of the LSC's evaluation of the CoVE programme. The evaluation focused on the pathfinder colleges and, together with good practice identified, will inform the roll out of the main programme and the longer-term approach to evaluating the impact of the CoVE programme.

2. Background

The evaluation examined how Pathfinders were:

- working with employers to meet their skills needs;
- developing innovative approaches to staffing, curriculum development and stakeholder feedback;
- supporting the implementation of the CoVE programme nationally;
- helping to transfer good practice within the college and to other colleges and providers;
- impacting on the non-CoVE area of their colleges and on providers in their geographical area and/or vocational specialist areas; and
- impacting on learners, employers and other relevant stakeholders (local and national) and the effectiveness of their vocational provision.

The evaluation also included collecting:

- feedback on the processes for CoVE identification, assessment, support and selection; and
- feedback on performance criteria for CoVE status.

A key outcome of the work with the Pathfinders will be a proposed framework and methodology for evaluating the impact of the CoVE programme over the next few years. This will involve the identification and development of appropriate performance indicator (PIs) and other qualitative measures.

3. Progress and messages so far

A number of features in the delivery of CoVE have been identified, over and above the usual management and quality assurance standards expected of a college. These are detailed below:

Leadership and management

- Effective employer partnerships supported by a good reputation in the vocational area;
- Systematic identification of current and future skills needs;
- Careful targeting of provision to meet skills gaps or shortages;
- A clear strategic vision for the college and each vocational area;

- Strong quality systems throughout the organisation that include a focus on responsiveness to employers and standards of vocational excellence;
- Robust information systems which are used for planning and quality improvement in the vocational area;
- Management of the CoVE so that it brings benefits more widely to staff and learners across the college;
- The capacity to establish vocational learning specialisms with a strong sense of identity and purpose;
- Best practice in learner health and safety;
- Best practice in equality and diversity and widening participation; and
- Skills and experience of sharing good practice within and beyond the vocational specialism.

The range and quality of education and training

- Substantial level 3 provision in the vocational area, and plans to expand it;
- High quality, highly-trained, specialist staff;
- Access to industry-standard resources.
- Extensive staff involvement in the development and improvement of the vocational specialist provision;
- A strong focus on staff development that ensures staff have cutting-edge expertise both in their vocational subject and in teaching methods; and
- A sense of vocational identity among staff and learners.

Achievement and standards

- A focus on learners gaining vocational skills and employability;

- Clear paths of progression into employment, as well as to higher education; and
- High levels of retention and achievement in the vocational area.

4. Successful CoVE proposals (good practice)

In future rounds of the CoVE programme, the most effective proposals should embody the following criteria:

- working with employed adults;
- level 3 progression into employment rather than higher education;
- the direct involvement of employers in supporting and designing provision;
- the provision of vocational qualifications at level 3 rather than AVC, A level or A/S provision; and
- joint proposals based on established collaborative practice.

5. Characteristics of successful proposals

Experience of rounds 1 and 2 identified a number of characteristics that may help providers to present strong proposals in the future. These characteristics have:

- reflected level 3 priority needs rather than a reliance on curriculum areas with the best inspection grades;
- focused on a specialism within a curriculum area;
- explained the nature and extent of links with employers;
- fully explained the nature of training for those in work, including full-cost training that would indicate responsiveness to employers' needs;
- showed clear progression into employment and include this as one of the main aims of the CoVE;

- given priority to making provision for adults in employment, rather than provision for the 16-18 age group; and
- concentrated revenue plans on upskilling staff working in the CoVE, rather than on project management.

6. Next steps

The consultants have presented their ideas for a CoVE evaluation framework and this is being considered and the views of colleagues sought on the way forward. The evaluation carried out so far will enhance the development of detailed arrangements for monitoring, confirmation of CoVE status and inspection.

Annex B: Local LSC CoVE Contacts

LSC	CoVE Contact	Telephone
Bedfordshire and Luton	Graham Moores	01234 420085
Berkshire	James Douglas	0118 9082169
Birmingham and Solihull	Iris Flaum	0121 3454562
Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole	Vikki Maher John Bradford	01202 652607 01202 652638
Cambridgeshire	Tom Cunningham Lesley Burgess	01733 895255 01733 895270
Cheshire and Warrington	Ian Ruff	01606 320067
County Durham	Julian Chambers	01325 372332
Coventry and Warwickshire	Sheila Fleming	02476 446033
Cumbria	Jacqui Raw	01900 733374
Derbyshire	Edwina Donelan Karen McGee	01332 86 8340 01332 868322
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Annex C: CoVE Performance Criteria

Performance Criteria	Process	Outcome
<p>Meeting skills needs and expanding vocational provision</p>	<p>1.1 Actively promoting participation by employers in the development and delivery of the specialist curriculum.</p> <p>1.2 Concentrating on the needs of learners, including those from disadvantaged groups, with a key focus on employability and career progression.</p>	<p>1.3 Meeting of local, regional and/or national skills needs identified by the Learning and Skills Council, National Training Organisations, Sector Skills Councils, Regional Development Agencies.</p> <p>1.4 Reflect employer/industry needs in the design and delivery of the curriculum.</p> <p>1.5 Have a good reputation among employers, nationally, locally or in the specialist sector.</p> <p>1.6 Consistently strong levels of recruitment to the specialist area of work <i>and increasing levels of participation</i>.</p> <p>1.7 Normally have a minimum volume of 50 full time equivalent learner enrolments at level 3 in the particular vocational specialism.</p>
<p>Providing high quality learning</p>	<p>2.1 Be designing courses on the basis of dialogue with employers and National Training Organisations, Sector Skills Councils, and on the basis of skills forecasts and labour market information.</p> <p>2.2 Be providing specialist areas of work alongside breadth of study.</p> <p>2.3 Giving good support to learners to enable them to succeed.</p> <p>2.4 <i>Being creative and innovative in developing good quality provision.</i></p>	<p>2.5 Show consistently high retention and achievement rates.</p> <p>2.6 Demonstrate consistently good or excellent quality teaching.</p> <p>2.7 Have an appropriate range of courses and qualifications in the specialist area.</p> <p>2.8 <i>Demonstrate new ways of working with learners to improve their vocational specialist knowledge and skills and quality of CoVE provision.</i></p> <p>2.9 <i>High levels of learner and employer satisfaction with the quality of CoVE provision.</i></p>

Performance Criteria	Process	Outcome
Resources for learning	<p>3.1 Recruiting and training well-qualified staff and a staff profile which includes experts in the specialist area.</p> <p>3.2 Securing industry standard resources and equipment which may be owned by the provider or accessed through other means.</p> <p>3.3 <i>Effective securing of specialist resources.</i></p>	<p>3.4 Have effective, and adequately funded, staff development programmes to update systematically the pedagogical and subject specialist skills of teaching/training staff.</p> <p>3.5 Have well-qualified and expert staff who maintain a close working relationship with the industry concerned.</p>
Progression and partnership working	<p>4.1 <i>Working in close partnership with relevant organisations.</i></p> <p>4.2 <i>Sharing of good practice.</i></p> <p>4.3 <i>Ensuring partnership arrangements that enable progression into and from the CoVE.</i></p>	<p>4.4 Strong evidence of progression to employment from level 3 provision, as well as supporting upskilling and promotion within employment and the opportunity to progress to higher education.</p> <p>4.5 Demonstrates a commitment to collaborative and partnership working, with schools, other providers, employers, National Training Organisations, Sector Skills Councils, colleges, guidance agencies and Higher Education.</p> <p>4.6 <i>Demonstrates beneficial impact as a result of dissemination of good practice, including expansion of level 3 provision and improved quality of this provision.</i></p> <p>4.7 <i>Has staff with proven expertise in helping others develop and embed good practice in the vocational specialist area.</i></p> <p>4.8 <i>Clear progression routes.</i></p>
Mission and management	<p>5.1 Being committed to equality of opportunity and support for non-traditional entrants to the vocational areas of work.</p> <p>5.2 Demonstrating a commitment by management and staff to vocational excellence.</p>	<p>5.5 <i>Has robust policies and procedures to promote equality and diversity, regularly assess performance and takes action to address weaknesses.</i></p> <p>5.6 Have a focused mission and strategy which addresses the current and future needs of the economy.</p>

Performance Criteria	Process	Outcome
<p>Mission and management</p>	<p>5.3 Displaying sound financial management including in the specialist area.</p> <p>5.4 Being prepared and having plans to develop further capacity in the specialist area.</p>	<p>5.7 Have the capacity and commitment to sharing their experiences across their own organisation and with other providers, locally, regionally or nationally as appropriate, and with other agencies (e.g. Learning and Skills Council, National Training Organisations, Sector Skills Councils and employers).</p> <p>5.8 <i>Have effective quality assurance arrangements, that include a focus on responsiveness to employers and vocational excellence.</i></p> <p>5.9 <i>Have robust information systems which are used for planning and quality improvement in the vocational area.</i></p> <p>5.10 <i>Best practice in learner health and safety.</i></p>

Note: The CoVE criteria outlined in the prospectus and in Circular 01/14 remain current, but following feedback received from providers and other organisations the descriptions have, where appropriate, been updated and enhanced. The text in *italics* is additional to that included in earlier publications.

Annex D: Moderation Tool

CV004 (revised July 2002)

CENTRES OF VOCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

ASSESSMENT SHEET for CoVE Round 2 Form A - Initial Proposals. The capacity of the provider to meet the CoVE quality criteria within the 12-month development phase underpins all sections of this assessment

Local LSC:

Provider Name:

For collaborative proposals please enter all partner details at the end of the form and the name of the lead provider above

Scoring:

- 0-3 little or no evidence to support this
- 4-6 some evidence but not fully substantiated
- 7-9 convincing case put forward, well supported by evidence
- 10 an excellent, fully evidenced case

Title of proposed CoVE:

Tick if proposal is for a CoVE meeting a national skills need

Note: Questions are weighted. Local Councils must ensure that proposals which are supported have a minimum of 4 points in each section under column C (applies only to sections with more than x 1 weighting).

A. Proposal form question	Questions to consider These are suggested for guidance. Local Councils may wish to add additional items	C. Score	D. Weighting	E. Weighted score (C x D)	F. Rationale and evidence for decision
2. Title and brief description of proposed CoVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the title make clear what the specialism is? • Is this a focussed proposal? 		x 0.5		
3. Evidence of need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does this specialism meet an identified local, regional or national skills need? • Is this a priority skill in this phase of the CoVE roll out? • Have target groups of learners been identified? • Are you satisfied there will not be any over provision if this is approved? 		i) x 3.0		
i) skills			ii) x 0.5		
ii) learners					

A. Proposal form question	Questions to consider <i>These are suggested for guidance. Local Councils may wish to add additional items</i>	C. Score	D. Weighting	E. Weighted score (C x D)	F. Rationale and evidence for decision
<p>4. Relationship to other provision by in the organisation delivered by or with other providers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you confident that there is robust progression data available? • Do learners progress from NVQ level 3 into employment or HE? • Will the establishment of a COVE improve other provision in the organisation? • Are you clear that the CoVE will be able and willing to make effective links with other providers offering this specialism but who will not have CoVE status? • Are there effective progression routes into level 3 provision from other providers (including schools) or from within the organisation? 		x1		
<p>5. Background and rationale for the development of the CoVE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the provider have a background of delivering quality in this area <i>AND</i> a history of developing new, innovative provision? • Is the provider's management committed to vocational specialist provision in this area? 		x1		

A. Proposal form question	Questions to consider <i>These are suggested for guidance. Local Councils may wish to add additional items</i>	C. Score	D. Weighting	E. Weighted score (C x D)	F. Rationale and evidence for decision
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there a history of investment on the part of the provider in the specialist area? Is the provider financially sound? Does the specialist provision have a good reputation with employers? 				
<p>6. Current capacity</p> <p>6.1 Volume and range of provision - sufficient volume of provision to ensure employer credibility or the capacity to achieve this by the end of the development period</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the information provided here give you confidence that a full proposal would be accepted? Normally 50+ FTE learners enrolled on NVQ level 3 provision in the CoVE specialism? Does the CoVE provide training for those in work? Do employers support full cost training at the centre? Is there a range of qualification outcomes? 		<p>x 0.1</p> <p>x 2.0</p>		
6.2 Profile of teaching staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are staff qualified in the specialist area? Have both FT and PT staff undergone regular updating and industry placements? 		x1		

A. Proposal form question	Questions to consider <i>These are suggested for guidance. Local Councils may wish to add additional items</i>	C. Score	D. Weighting	E. Weighted score (C x D)	F. Rationale and evidence for decision
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there any shared teaching with employer's staff? What is the extent and role of part-time staff in the CoVE? 				
6.3 Resources and accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there up to date industry standard equipment? Has the provider regularly invested in this area? Is the accommodation such that it would inspire employer confidence? 		x 0.5		
6.4 Employer links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do employers engage with the delivery of provision? This might be a mixture of designing materials, offering staff expertise, regular placement opportunities etc. Does the CoVE have a good reputation with employers locally, regionally and/or nationally? 		x 2		
6.5 Learner support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the CoVE encourage non-traditional learners into level 3 provision? Does the provider have good student support systems and are these used within the specialist area? 		x 0.3		

A. Proposal form question	Questions to consider <i>These are suggested for guidance. Local Councils may wish to add additional items</i>	C. Score	D. Weighting	E. Weighted score (C x D)	F. Rationale and evidence for decision
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is a commitment to equality of opportunity and diversity demonstrated? 				
6.6 Link to provider strategic plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is this proposal in the latest strategic plan? Does the provider have a mission and curriculum offer that emphasises economic needs? Is the provider committed to complying with legislative requirements e.g. health and safety? 		x 0.3		
6.7 Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the CoVE have effective links with other providers whose students will progress into the CoVE specialism? Do learners from the centre progress into level 4 training? Is equality of opportunity a key driver for progression? Do learners progress into employment? 		x 0.3		
			x 0.5		

A. Proposal form question	Questions to consider <i>These are suggested for guidance. Local Councils may wish to add additional items</i>	C. Score	D. Weighting	E. Weighted score (C x D)	F. Rationale and evidence for decision
6.8 Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the CoVE regularly review its curriculum offer and adapt it to meet industry needs? Are you convinced the provider will be prepared to share its expertise and not use CoVE for competitive advantage? <p>For collaborative proposals only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there evidence that all the collaborative partners can meet the CoVE criteria especially with regard to level 3, employer involvement and training for those in work? 		<p>x 1</p> <p>x 0.3</p> <p>x 0.5</p>		
6.9 Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has there been a pattern of high recruitment to the area for a number of years OR is there evidence of a high demand for this provision? What is the financial position and what is the likelihood of sustaining performance when CoVE funding ceases? 		<p>x 0.5</p>		

A. Proposal form question	Questions to consider <i>These are suggested for guidance. Local Councils may wish to add additional items</i>	C. Score	D. Weighting	E. Weighted score (C x D)	F. Rationale and evidence for decision
7. Quality Development needed to fully meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do the proposed developments focus specifically on the CoVE? What does the intelligence drawn from performance review indicate? Are rigorous quality improvement activities in place e.g. self assessment, post-inspection development plans and other activities to drive continuous improvement? Is there evidence of good/excellent practice and the ability to transfer excellence to other providers? 		x 1		
8. Indicative timescale and development costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the timescales and costings in line with the Circular and guidance notes? Are the costs eligible? Do the costings relate to the development proposals in section 7? Is the proposed expenditure sustainable after initial funding? 		x 1		
Signatories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the Principal/Managing Director signed the proposal? 		x 0.1		
TOTAL SCORE FOR THIS PROPOSAL					(maximum 174)

For collaborative proposals please give details of all providers involved and their local Learning and Skills Council(s): Please ensure the proposal is clear about how all partners are involved in the sections above.

Provider Names	Local LSC
<p>Decision <i>(please tick)</i></p> <p>Support – proceed to full proposal Form B <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Support – return for minor amendments <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Defer – return for major amendments <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Defer – not a priority at this stage <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Reject – not appropriate <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Comment</p> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 10px;"/> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>

Signed
Title
Date / /

Annex E: Key Dates

CoVE proposal round 3	
Proposal Form A to local LSC, LSC and LSDA by	Friday 29 November 2002
Regional moderation	December
Local LSC decisions to LSC/LSDA by	Friday 20 December
National Moderation meetings on	Monday/Tuesday 13/14 January 2003
National Council Panel	Wednesday 29 January
Decisions from LSC to local LSCs by	Friday 7 February
Decisions to colleges after	Friday 21 February
Form B in to local LSCs by	Wednesday 16 April
Local LSC decisions to LSC/LSDA by	Wednesday 30 April
Form B National Moderation	Thursday 8 May
Approval before	Monday 2 June

CoVE proposal round 4	
Proposal Form A to local LSC, LSC and LSDA by	Friday 14 March 2003
Regional moderation	March/April
Local LSC decisions to LSC/LSDA by	Wednesday 9 April
National Moderation meetings on	Tuesday/Wednesday 29/30 April
National Council Panel	Wednesday 14 May
Decisions from LSC to local LSCs by	Friday 23 May
Decisions to colleges after	Thursday 29 May
Form B in to local LSCs by	Friday 11 July
Local LSC decisions to LSC/LSDA by	after 22 July
Form B National Moderation	August
Approval before	Monday 1 September

Annex F: Skills Needs Priorities (for information)

These are the main areas of skills needs priorities for the programme as established by the Panel for round 2 of the programme. When establishing these priorities the Panel agreed that proposal Round 3 would enable local LSCs to identify particular local skills needs which, subject to the support of regional moderation, would be considered in addition to any nationally agreed skills priorities.

- business and management;
- care, with a focus on health and residential care for the elderly as well as other care focussed proposals;
- catering and hospitality;
- chemical, pharmaceutical and biotechnology;
- construction (particularly electrical installation, plumbing, etc.) to a maximum of two construction CoVEs per region at the end of round 2, unless there is a clear and demonstrable need for more than this number in any region;
- food technology;
- gas installation;
- ICT to a maximum of two CoVEs per region at the end of round 2, unless there is a clear and demonstrable need for more than this number in any region;
- logistics/transportation;
- specialist engineering and manufacturing; and
- tourism, where the local/regional economy has a strong dependency on tourism.

Notes

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