

Supplement

to Circular 02/09

For Information

Additional Factors for Council Consideration of Proposals for Merger between Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions

Summary

This supplement provides additional factors for Council consideration of proposals for merger between further education colleges and higher education institutions. These factors should be considered in addition to the seven criteria for provider reorganisations that have been published in *Circular 02/09 Provider Reorganisations*.

January 2003

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Executive Summary

Date: January 2003

Subject: This supplement provides additional factors for Council consideration of proposals for merger between further education colleges and higher education institutions. These factors should be considered in addition to the seven criteria for provider reorganisations that have been published in *Circular 02/09 Provider Reorganisations*.

Intended recipients: Heads of Higher Education Institutions, Principals of Colleges

Status: For information

Additional Factors for Council Consideration of Proposals for Merger between Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions

Introduction

1 The Council through its Infrastructure Committee has agreed that additional factors should apply to its consideration of proposals for merger between further education colleges and higher education institutions. These factors are additional to the seven criteria for provider reorganisations that were endorsed by the Council at its meeting of 7 May 2002 and published in *Circular 02/09 Provider Reorganisations*. These criteria apply to Council consideration of all provider reorganisations.

Additional Factors

2 The additional factors for Council consideration of proposals for merger between further education colleges and higher education institutions are identified below.

a) Mission drift

There is concern that 'mission drift', particularly loss of focus on vocational delivery mechanisms and programmes – that which makes further education unique, may occur at the new institution; this would not be in the best interest of learners.

The new institution should give a balanced commitment to its vocational and academic status and this should be integral to its mission. The institution's strategic plan should ensure there is no mission drift.

b) Local needs of learners

It is suggested that the new institution should give a balanced commitment to the needs of learners and employers, including the local community, through the delivery of its programmes and research undertaken. The Council will particularly wish to see local needs addressed.

c) Progression routes and choice

“Success for All” highlights increasing progression into higher education (the 50% participation target) and widening access as a priority, and “Partnership for Progression” (P4P) is central to this. However, learners at the new institution should have access to impartial information and advice on progression routes that extend outside the institution.

d) Due diligence

Further education colleges and higher education institutions should be aware that there may be legal issues around insurance requirements restricting some higher education institutions from being able to provide education to 14-16 learners arising because of statutory constraints.

Due regard should be given to the operation of the new institution, particularly where amendments to charters and articles of government are proposed. The Council will expect due diligence to be undertaken.

e) Active collaboration

The Council wishes to see increased collaboration between providers. The Council would not be supportive of a proposal where an institution’s higher education status would give an unfair advantage in recruitment to its general further education provision that would lead to an adverse impact on other providers.

f) Effects on participation

The proposal should demonstrate that the perceived status associated with both merger partners and with the new institution would not impact adversely on the recruitment of learners, particularly at entry, foundation and intermediate level provision, basic and adult skills, and programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Equally, the proposal should also demonstrate that there would be no adverse impact on the recruitment of learners at levels 4 and 5.

The Council would also wish to see how the proposed new institution would widen participation in learning, particularly with disadvantaged groups, and take forward social inclusion in the locality.

g) Statutory responsibility

The Council has a statutory responsibility for planning post-16 education and training and to secure proper and reasonable facilities for that education and training.

Before making a proposal to the Secretary of State that would result in assets currently being used to deliver further education being transferred out of the sector, the Council will need to be satisfied that suitable arrangements have been made to secure proper and reasonable facilities ensuring that post-16 education other than higher education will continue to be available in the locality.