

Ofsted inspections – clarification for further education and skills providers

The purpose of this document is to confirm facts about Ofsted's approach to inspection and to dispel myths that can result in unnecessary work for providers. It should be read alongside the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills from September 2012*, which can be found here:

www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120061.

It's all about data and national benchmarks

- None of the judgements on outcomes for learners are based on data alone. Although inspectors look at data on success rates, value added and (where applicable) retention and attendance, they look at a much wider range of evidence to make judgements on the impact of the provision for all learners.
- Ofsted does not use or apply qualification success rate benchmarks or threshold values. When considering qualification success rates, inspectors use the appropriate 'all provider' national success rate as a starting point, but will take into account a range of other factors.
- Inspectors take account of any in-year data or any other data collected and analysed by the provider. However, these data are used as supportive evidence as they have not been validated externally.
- When making judgements about outcomes for learners, inspectors talk to learners about the extent to which their course is helping them develop the skills they need for their future career plans. They also look at learners' completed work and records of their progress and achievements, or observe them carrying out practical tasks and other activities to make judgements about their progress.

Data have to be presented in a certain way on inspection

- Ofsted does not expect performance data to be presented in a particular format. Such data should be provided to inspectors in the format that the provider normally uses.
- Inspectors will not ask providers to produce different aggregations of success rate data, such as combinations of course level data.



Ofsted has a prescribed method of teaching, learning and assessment

- Ofsted has no preferred teaching style. Inspectors use a wide variety of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This includes: direct observation of learning sessions and assessments; reviews of teaching and learning resources and learners' work; and discussions with learners, teaching staff and employers.
- Inspectors do not inspect or grade teachers. They inspect and grade the impact of teaching, learning and assessment activities on learners' development of skills, knowledge and understanding. However, inspectors do currently award an overall grade for 'teaching, learning and assessment' after observing a learning session, where they have sufficient evidence to do so.
- Ofsted does not expect providers to use the Ofsted evaluation schedule to grade teaching or individual lessons. Similarly, Ofsted does not require providers to undertake a specified amount of lesson observations. Ofsted expects providers to use a variety of approaches to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that they can identify good practice and areas for improvement.

Ofsted expects detailed lesson plans on inspection

- Ofsted does not require providers to provide individual lesson plans to inspectors.
- Teaching staff should continue using their usual approach to planning lessons. Ofsted does not specify how lesson plans should be set out, the length of time they should take or the amount of detail they should contain.

Ofsted expects provision to mirror local enterprise partnership priorities exactly

- Ofsted does not expect provision to mirror local enterprise partnership (LEP) priorities. However, it does expect providers to work with local partners, including LEPs, chambers of commerce or other employer networks, to ensure that the curriculum it offers prepares learners well for further training, higher education and employment opportunities available locally and nationally.

Inspectors have made their minds up before they get there

- Inspectors use the inspection handbook as they gather first-hand evidence to enable them to form their judgements about the provision. In advance of the inspection, the lead inspector uses the latest published performance data, feedback from learners and employers, the provider's self-assessment report, where available and a range of other sources to identify a number of themes to contextualise the inspection activities.

- The inspector's code of conduct makes it clear that inspectors will base all evaluations on clear and rigorous evidence and evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour.

Ofsted expects every provider to produce a self-assessment report and it should be in the same format as an inspection report

- There is no contractual requirement for further education and skills providers to complete a self-assessment report. However, there is an expectation that providers will rigorously evaluate the quality of their provision so that they can make continuous improvements.
- Ofsted does not require a self-assessment report to be provided in a specific format.
- If a provider chooses to upload their self-assessment to the Learning and Skills Gateway, inspectors will look at this before the inspection. It will help the lead inspector to select an appropriate team of specialist inspectors to give a balanced view of the provision offered.

Ofsted expects providers to prepare files of evidence especially for the inspection

- Ofsted does not expect providers to provide evidence for inspection beyond that suggested in the inspection handbook.
- Ofsted does not require teachers and trainers to undertake additional work or to ask learners to undertake work specifically for the inspection.