

Implementing Rigour and Responsiveness

BIS / DfE brief on progress for FE Governors and Leaders:

March 2015

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Apprenticeships

Our reforms are making apprenticeships more rigorous as well as more responsive to the needs of employers.

Trailblazers, led by large and small employers, are designing new standards and implementing new apprenticeships to meet the changing needs of the economy and to make apprenticeships world class. Over 1,000 employers are involved in over 75 sectors with 73 standards published so far and more than 100 new standards in development. The new apprenticeships are in a broad range of sectors from nuclear to fashion, law, banking and the armed forces.

The first apprentices started on the approved standards in September 2014. Employers continue to develop and submit the draft standards for approval. The 'Guidance for Developers of Apprenticeship Standards and Related Assessment Plans' (link below) sets out the next dates to apply.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-of-apprenticeships-in-england-guidance-for-trailblazers>

Standards and assessment plans that have been produced by employers and agreed by Government are published at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards>. Guidance on the Occupations approved for the development of an apprenticeship standard (link below) shows the standards being developed by employer groups across the Trailblazers. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-standards-in-development/occupations-approved-for-the-development-of-an-apprenticeship-standard>

Giving employers direct control of funding for apprenticeship training and assessment remains a core and non-negotiable part of our apprenticeships funding reforms. We are trialling a new funding model within Trailblazer apprenticeships in the 2014/15 and 2015/16 academic years. This is based on Government contributing £2 for every £1 the employer contributes to the training and assessment costs of the apprentice; with additional incentive payments for small businesses, and relating to the employment of 16-18 year olds and successful completion.

We will be learning from these trials and we will continue to consider all options, including the responses to the recent technical consultation (published 13 January 2015), to ensure that the reforms are a success

Degree Apprenticeships

Degree Apprenticeships are a new type of Higher Apprenticeship at levels 6 or 7, involving employers, universities and professional bodies in partnership co-designing an apprenticeship to meet full occupational competency and a degree (bachelor's or master's), that provides the full programme of training and assessment for the apprenticeship. The apprentice, like any other apprentice, will be working

while they learn and so will earn a wage throughout and will not be required to contribute to the cost of the degree - government and their employer will cover the tuition fees. Degree Apprenticeships will be developed under the current Trailblazer process. As announced on 26 November, the Digital sector is developing the first Degree Apprenticeship with first starts expected in September 2015. The Digital Industries Trailblazer will be submitting the apprenticeship standard and assessment plan to the Government for approval in February.

Link to the Digital Skills Press Release <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-qualifications-launched-to-meet-uk-demand-for-digital-skills>

Traineeships

Traineeships have had an excellent first year with over 10,000 young people participating in 2013/14. Supported by a host of national employers and smaller employers locally the programme is continuing to grow at pace with 5,000 traineeships reported in the first quarter of 2014/15. We hope that providers and employers will offer enough places to double the number of traineeships in the second year, which will mean over 20,000 opportunities for young people in 2014/15.

We have continued to learn from provider and employer experiences in delivering the programme and as a result made a series of improvements for 2014/15 which included removal of the '16 hour' training rule for job seekers; more flexibility for providers and employers to tailor work experience placements; and extension of the funding to 24 year olds.

For 2015/16, having taken account of the positive responses we received to our recent traineeships funding consultation, we are:

- Setting minimum standards for job outcomes and publishing these outcomes at provider level to inform the choices of young people and employers;
- Giving providers of traineeships for 19 to 24 year olds the same flexibility to deliver tailored work preparation as those delivering to 16 to 18 year olds, meaning it can be either accredited or non-accredited.
- Enabling more young people to benefit by extending the learner eligibility from 1 January 2015 so that 19 to 24 year olds qualified to a full level 2 are able to do traineeships, on par with the current offer for 16 to 18 year olds.

To support the growth of quality traineeships we encourage providers to make use of the resources developed through the Education and Training Foundation's *Traineeship Staff Support Programme* – details at <http://www.traineeship-staff-support.co.uk/>. In addition, to support an increase in referrals from Jobcentres, providers are encouraged to inform Jobcentre Plus of any local traineeship

opportunities they may have. The Government will continue to promote traineeships through national marketing and communication activity led by the National Apprenticeships Service, helping to support local efforts by providers.

Skills Funding Letter

The Skills Funding letter 2015-2016 (which replaces the previously issued Skills Funding Statement) was published on 26 February 2015 and sets out the funding priorities and available budget for the further education (FE) and skills sector for the 2015-2016 financial year. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-funding-letter-April-2015-to-March-2016>

Education Funding Agency Letter

On 6 February 2015, the Education Funding Agency published an update on the funding of education and training for young people in the academic year 2015 to 2016.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/401883/EFA_post_16_funding_letter_PM_spring_2015.pdf

Maths and English

In December 2014, the government published the findings from its Call for Evidence on how GCSE delivery could be increased for young people and adult learners and how to ensure that all parts of the sector are ready to deliver against this new ambition. The sector generally welcomed the ambition to increase the take up of English and maths GCSEs by both young people and adults - using stepping stone qualifications where necessary. Where some misconceptions about the policy remain the government is working to improve communications with providers and other stakeholders. Information and resources for FE colleges are available at Study Programme Central (www.aoc.co.uk/study-programme-central) and the Education and Training Foundation has also re-launched its Excellence Gateway for providers (www.excellencegateway.org.uk).

From August 2014, it became a condition of funding that all students on age 16-19 study programmes without a GCSE grade A* to C in English and maths, are required to continue to work towards achieving these qualifications as part of their study programme. From August 2015, the condition of funding will be revised, so all full-time students starting their study programme who have a grade D GCSE or equivalent in maths and/or English must be enrolled on a GCSE or approved IGCSE qualification in maths and/ or English, rather than an approved stepping stone qualification.

GCSE is the central qualification in maths and English and we want more people to achieve it. But not all learners are ready to study GCSEs so it is important that there are other ways for people to improve their literacy and numeracy. People following these routes deserve the very best provision which leads to a qualification employers

recognise and respect. Towards the end of last year, the government commissioned the Education and Training Foundation to carry out a review of the best way to achieve and accredit maths and English outside of GCSEs. The Review will identify the literacy and numeracy that employers need and which are essential for work and life and recommend the best way to achieve this. It will also advise how English and maths qualifications can gain widespread recognition and respect from employers and the public.

The Review has consulted widely with employers, providers and learners. More information can be found at www.pyetait.co.uk/jointheconvo. The Review will report its findings by the end of March 2015.

16-19 Technical and Vocational Education

553 technical and vocational qualifications have met the Government's standards for reporting in school and college performance tables. Approved technical qualifications cover a wide range of occupational sectors, equip students with occupational skills and knowledge and provide the best preparation for an apprenticeship, skilled employment or further study. The approved lists apply to courses starting in September 2015, are updated annually and can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-and-vocational-qualifications-for-14-to-19-year-olds>

From September 2016, larger Technical Baccalaureate programmes will be eligible for a 10% or 20% uplift in funding. The Technical Baccalaureate is a performance table measure which recognises the achievement of students aspiring to a technical career and offers a first-class alternative to more traditional A level routes. Further details are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/16-to-19-funding-large-programme-uplift>

FE Workforce Strategy

The joint BIS/DfE FE Workforce Strategy continues to provide the focus for Government's support in helping to improve professional standards and the capacity and quality of leaders, managers, teachers and other staff in further education. Our priority remains helping to prepare for the new funding conditions for GCSE students.

We continue to look to and provide grant funding for the Education and Training Foundation, as the independent sector-led organisation responsible for standards, so that they can support the sector through their programmes and services. This includes their maths and English enhancement programmes; and other incentives to help providers recruit good quality candidates to teach in FE. Our priorities continue to be raising standards in teaching and learning, especially maths and English, a focus on leadership and governance, improved vocational education including better engagement with employers, and better use of technology.

Our incentives programme to support better teaching of maths and English continues to be available and we have recently published guidance for the 2015/16 initial

teacher training bursary programme:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-initial-teacher-training-bursary-guide-for-academic-year-2015-to-2016>

We will review progress against the strategy in the summer, when we are due to receive an evaluation report and improved data on the take up of programmes and the impact this is making on the sector.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-workforce-strategy>

FE Commissioner Summary Assessments

BIS continues to publish the FE Commissioner's Summary Assessments detailing his findings and conclusions. To date, 17 summaries have been published, which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-commissioner-intervention-summary-assessments>. BIS will continue to publish future FE Commissioner Assessment reports once they have been responded to by the college or institution subject to intervention. Governing bodies and senior executives will be able to learn lessons from the FE Commissioner's range of experiences in intervention cases.

To date, the FE Commissioner and his team have carried out interventions in 23 institutions, including 19 General FE colleges, 3 local authority institutions and one specialist designated institution. City of Liverpool has been successfully removed from intervention, and 3 colleges are undergoing a merger process to enable provision to be maintained in the best interests of learners in the respective local areas.

Intervention Evaluation

BIS has recently completed an evaluation of the FE Commissioner-led intervention process. This has confirmed the positive impact that the FE Commissioner has had not only on Colleges subject to intervention, but on the sector as a whole. Following consultation with a wide range of interested parties, BIS will be taking forward a number of improvements to the process which will ensure that future arrangements remain robust and effective, and a summary of the evaluations findings and recommendations will be published shortly.

FE College Financial Health and Exceptional Financial Support

On 4 December, we published new Exceptional Financial Support policy.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fe-colleges-exceptional-financial-support>

Exceptional financial support loans are intended to help those colleges that are facing severe financial difficulties and which are not expected to repay their re-profiled grants within 12 months – it is not for planned development activity. Requesting exceptional financial support has serious consequences and colleges may be deemed to be financially inadequate and subject to FE Commissioner

intervention which can have far reaching implications. All requests for a loan will trigger intervention action.

Outcome Based Success Measures

We published a government response on new Outcome Based Success Measures in December 2014 (following consultation in August 2014).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/adult-further-education-how-do-we-measure-success> They are designed to measure what is really important in further education: the outcome for the learner. These measures, with the existing success rates (to be re-named “achievement”) will provide a more rounded picture of provider performance which can be used by learners, employers, providers and others to inform choice, provider self-assessment and performance management and inspection.

The measures capture three areas: learner destinations (into sustained learning, and into or within sustained employment, including apprenticeships); learner *Progression* (progression to a higher level qualification); and *Earnings* (following completion of learning). The measures use matched data which is already collected across government.

Also published in December were Estimating Labour Market Returns to Qualifications gained in English Further Education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-comparing-labour-market-economic-benefits-from-qualifications-gained>

and Average earnings after further education: 2010-2013

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/average-earnings-after-further-education-2010-to-2013>

The government response confirmed that we intend to proceed with the new measures as outlined in the consultation. We aim to introduce the measures as part of a new minimum standards framework in 2017. We recognise concerns expressed in the response to the consultation about how this would work in practice. We need to take time to get the detail right and to involve the sector in development. Two workshops with providers and membership bodies were held in February to inform the development and use of the measures. We propose to consult further in late spring/early summer 2015 on what a new accountability system including minimum standards should look like.

Vocational Qualifications

“Getting the job done”, the Government's reform plan for vocational qualifications published in March 2014, highlighted the large number of qualifications which are offered to adults by a wide range of awarding organisations, showing that the system is overly complex, and that learners and employers are often unsure whether a

qualification is of high quality and will lead to employment. Ofqual, the independent regulator of qualifications, is therefore in the process of making changes to the regulatory system for vocational qualifications (following outcomes from its recent public consultation). The main change will be to remove the rules from the Qualification and Credits Framework (QCF) to give better emphasis to what qualifications deliver (rather than whether they conform to technical rules). This will mean qualifications can be better designed around the needs of employers rather than prescriptive rules, and will ensure that they remain robust throughout their operational lives.

We continue to work with the other administrations in the UK to ensure that National Occupational Standards, which underpin many vocational qualifications, are flexible and fit for purpose. We have also put in place a clear set of principles around what and who the government will fund from the Adult Skills Budget. This will lead to a smaller and more relevant funded offer to ensure that it is used with maximum effect. The publicly funded offer has been reduced from around 10,000 qualifications in 2013-14 to 3,100 at the start of 2015-16. These changes mean that the Adult Skills Budget has been re-directed towards the highest quality and most relevant qualifications.

Technology

The Education Technology Action Group issued their report in January at BETT <http://etag.report>. Although this mainly concerned schools, it re-enforced the issues highlighted by the earlier Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (FELTAG), including the need for robust, fast broadband. The Minister was pleased to be able to announce some modest support for faster broadband for FE at BETT and officials are working with Jisc over the coming months to ensure colleges can access this support.

An update on progress with FELTAG was published in February (link below) and provides a snapshot of progress made since the FELTAG report first came out. As stated by the Minister in the foreword to the report, perhaps the most encouraging thing is not the material progress made but the success FELTAG has had in putting technology high on the agenda in debates on further education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-learning-technology-action-group-feltag-recommendations-government-response>

Responding to FELTAG – a new coordinating role for Jisc

In response to the Government's response to FELTAG, Jisc has reshaped its customer services offer, moving from regional support centres to localised and individual account managers for every learning provider. This move is enhancing the relationships with the sector to create a much stronger understanding of the effective use of digital technologies to deliver against their needs and is additional to the work

that Jisc will be undertaking to support colleges identified as needing improvements in how they deploy technology. One key aspect of this work is helping providers to understand how technology can improve learning and business efficiency and deliver savings. Learning providers can get in touch with Jisc's customer contact centre on 0203 006 6077 or customerservices@jisc.ac.uk to be put in touch with their local expert.

Separately, Jisc is undertaking a central role in shaping how the sector takes forward the FELTAG Agenda. This was highlighted in the progress report. The work aims to allow a co-ordinated and coherent set of actions to develop and which the sector as a whole can sign up to and carry out.

National Colleges

Last year we announced our intention to create a new generation of National Colleges. These will be employer-led institutions delivering specialist higher level skills training in key sectors of the economy, to address identified skills gaps. The seven National Colleges are:

- High Speed Rail (based in Birmingham and Doncaster)
- Advanced Manufacturing (based on the High Value Manufacturing Catapult, in various locations including Sheffield and Coventry)
- Wind Energy (based on Humberside)
- Nuclear (location to be confirmed)
- Digital Skills (based in London)
- Onshore Oil and Gas (based in Blackpool)
- Creative and Cultural Industries (based in Purfleet, Essex).

We expect the Colleges to be established and start taking on students over the next two years. By 2020, we expect the Colleges as a whole to have catered for around 10,000 students, and to have had a broader impact on raising standards more widely.

We have also announced a package of £5m for maintenance scholarships to support students who wish to attend National Colleges in the 2016/17 academic year. In the longer term, Government will work towards the introduction of maintenance loans for these students. This recognises students will wish to travel from around the country to attend these institutions.

Special Educational Needs and Disability reforms

It's now six months since the reformed 0-25 special education needs and disability system was launched, with a range of new duties on FE colleges. As the changes

bed in, the governing body, leadership team and all staff within further education providers in England, should be working to not only understand the SEND reforms and comply with the processes, but to support all students with SEN and disabilities, (including those without LDAs or EHC plans) to achieve the best possible outcomes which help them to lead independent and fulfilling adult lives. The [quick guide to the 0-25 SEND Code of Practice for FE](#) is a good place to find out more.

The DfE is keen to hear from colleges about their experiences of the reforms – both good and bad – and to help where issues arise. You can contact Jane Carr, who leads on implementing the reforms in the FE sector at jane.carr@education.gsi.gov.uk

The Prevent Duty

It is a requirement of all FE Institutions to comply with the Prevent Duty in the Counter Terrorism Act 2015. The consultation response from further education providers was constructive and shows colleges and providers to be up for managing the challenge. Ofsted will include monitoring of the Prevent Duty as part of their inspection framework and all FE Institutions should review their Prevent policies, self-assess and undertake a risk analysis. Colleges (including Sixth Form Colleges) and providers will be supported through a range of online training materials which the Education and Training Foundation are developing. In addition, we are looking to increase the number of BIS Prevent co-ordinators and increase their input to the FE Sector. The legislation is currently scheduled to come into effect from 1 July and the new measures will be introduced to align with the new academic year.

Jisc are playing an important role in supporting the sector to deliver the Prevent strategy. Jisc, working with the ETF, are looking at developing a series of webinars for the further education, higher education and skills sectors to provide training on the subject.

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