

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Review

Final Report

Introduction

1 The Further Education Funding Council (the Council) has undertaken a review of the position of English as foreign language (EFL) qualifications for the college year 2000-01 and beyond. This final report presents the findings of the review and its recommendations for the funding of EFL.

Background

2 In 1998-99, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) excluded EFL qualifications other than NVQ language units from the schedule 2(a) list of qualifications approved by the secretary of state and funded in colleges by the Council. Definitions of key terms referred to by the review, including relevant parts of schedule 2, are set out at appendix 1.

3 In order not to disrupt college provision, the Council agreed for 1998-99 to place EFL qualifications temporarily within schedule 2(f), English for students where English is not the language spoken at home. This was subsequently extended to include the college year 1999-2000, to allow enough time for a review of the funding of these qualifications and give at least 12 months' notice of any potential changes to colleges. Any change would be implemented from August 2000. In the light of the post-16 review and *Learning to Succeed*, the EFL review should be mindful of the potential impact of its conclusions and recommendations for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), after 2001.

4 The review of the funding of EFL arose following the DfEE decision to exclude EFL from schedule 2 (a). The review considered two routes for future funding decisions:

- to exclude all EFL courses from Council funding
- to allow some students to access Council-funded EFL qualifications.

5 EFL programmes are not the same as adult basic education. For this reason, the Council has distinguished between EFL and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses in terms of eligibility for tuition fee remission, childcare support and the value of entry units. For example, where EFL qualifications are studied in institutions funded by the Council, students are required to study towards a recognised externally accredited qualification. For ESOL courses there is no requirement for students to study for an externally accredited qualification.

6 In order to claim Council funding for students on EFL courses, the students should meet the criteria for eligibility. Visitors to England who will be returning to their own countries once their stay is completed (for example, students on EFL vacation courses or holidaymakers) are not eligible for Council funding. Migrant workers from the European Economic Area (EEA) and people from the EU resident in England may enrol as Council-funded EFL students.

7 European law does enable students living in the European Union (EU) to access vocational training in England funded by the Council. An EFL qualification is not 'vocational' under the definition of vocational training as defined by the European Court of Justice (and see appendix 1).

Qualifications

8 The review considered several qualifications in particular, in terms of their uptake. These were all qualifications accredited by UCLES (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate), as these had more enrolments than any other group of awards. The UCLES qualifications are the First Certificate in English (FCE), the Certificate in Advanced English (CAE), the Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) and the Preliminary English Test (PET). It was noted by the review that other awarding bodies accredit EFL qualifications. The review observed in particular that the content of the Pitmans ESOL qualification appeared to address the needs of EFL students but was more commonly used for ESOL students.

Evidence

9 Various parties, including an examining board which accredits many EFL qualifications, provided evidence. A group of college practitioners was convened as a task group for the review. The membership of the task group is set out at appendix 2.

10 The college practitioners provided examples of their approach to the provision of EFL programmes. In addition, they provided examples of programmes or types of students which were unlikely to meet the criteria for eligibility, such as:

- summer schools, for visitors to England on the basis of full-cost recovery
- students recruited through agents outside the UK
- a summer school which did not have an externally accredited qualification
- students who wished to study for part of a programme and who did not wish to take an examination
- students applying from an address outside the UK were not regarded as fundable.

11 It was recognised by the review that some students wish to study in the private sector. These students include people resident in England as well as others from the EU or further afield. Some of these students will not wish to study for an accredited qualification. Their needs can be met by the private sector, although there has been some concern expressed by a number of private language schools that they are not always able to compete on price with colleges which have access to public subsidy.

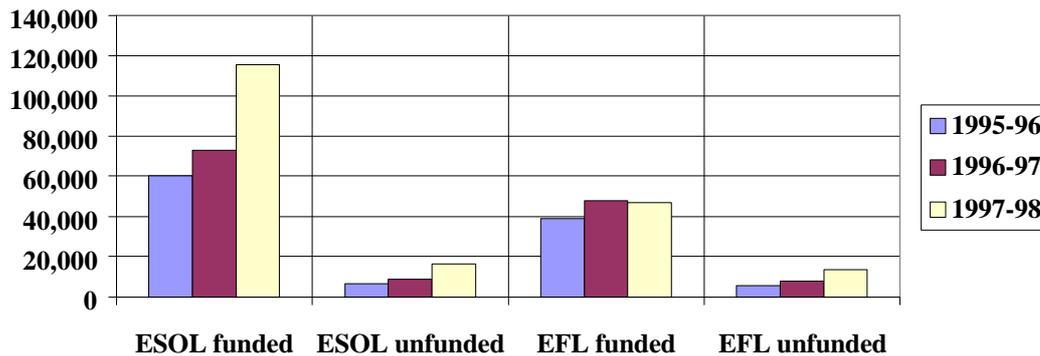
12 Case studies were considered including one which used a model of 'pathways' for deciding whether students should pursue an EFL or an ESOL qualification, each pathway relating to the individual characteristics of the student. For example, a student requiring a language qualification to progress into HE or work and who was fully literate in their first language was more likely to use the EFL pathway.

13 UCLES produced a support document which demonstrated the number and availability of their qualifications, as well as the vocational intent of these students. The review considered evidence that many of those taking the UCLES EFL qualifications were living and working in England and needed English language training in order to help them, both in the workplace, and also with vocational and academic university and further education courses.

Student Numbers

14 The overall number of Council-funded EFL and ESOL student enrolments has increased by 88% over the years from 1995-96 and 1997-98. Data provided by the Council from the individualised student record (ISR) demonstrated that the number of students on Council Funded ESOL programmes increased considerably over three years, from 26,001 in 1995-96 to 75,037 in 1997-98. This was an increase of 188%. It is likely that the year-on-year changes have been exaggerated by the reduction in the use of generic ISR codes, particularly in 1997-98.

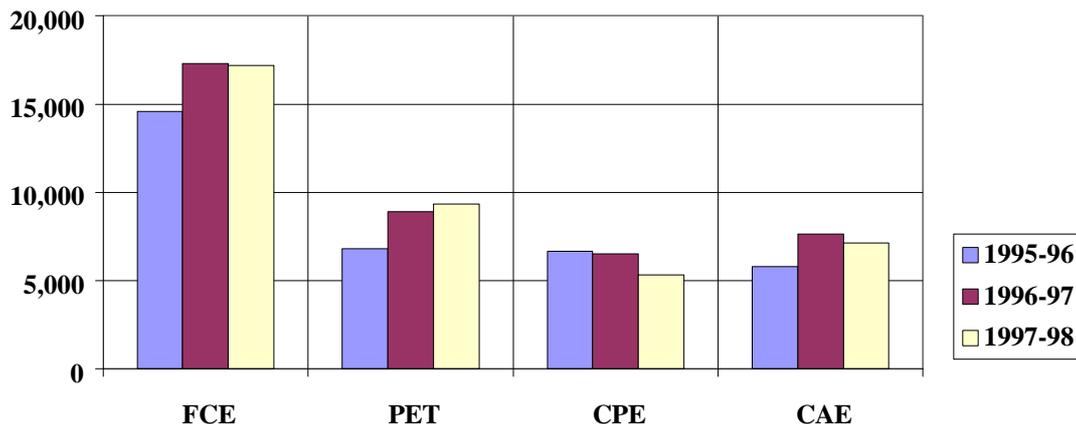
Figure 1. Growth in ESOL and EFL enrolments, 1995-96 to 1997-98



15 Institutions have increased the volume of EFL work but mainly for non-Council-funded enrolments on qualifications. There was a 21% increase in numbers of student enrolments funded by the Council between 1995-96 and 1997-98 but in the case of non-funded students a 151% increase in enrolments. It is an explicit government strategy to attract more full-fee-paying international students to the UK, with a target of a 100% increase in full-time international students into FE by 2005. The increase in enrolments in an area of activity directly related to helping students to obtain university places provides some reassurance that this key government target might be met, and that there is not necessarily an associated cost to the public purse in England.

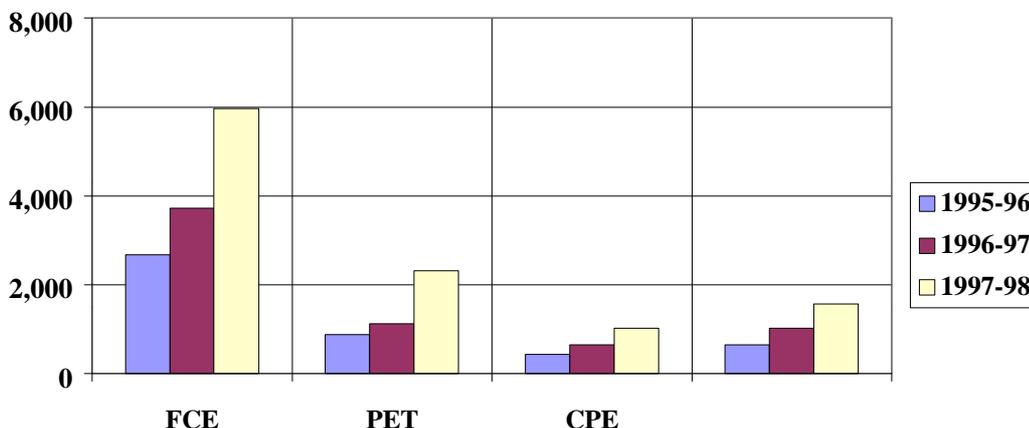
16 Of 231 qualifications for EFL and ESOL recorded on the ISR by 1997-98, 14% represented EFL qualifications. There were 197 ESOL qualifications listed on the ISR with the majority of the qualifications accredited through the Open College Network for individual institutions.

Figure 2. Growth in Council-funded enrolments in the four most common EFL qualifications, 1995-96 to 1997-98



17 An analysis of individual qualifications reveals that in 1995-96 there were 14,595 Council funded students, 37% of all EFL qualifications, following the UCLES First Certificate in English (FCE). In 1997-98 there were 17,179 students on this course, again representing 37% of all EFL Council funded students.

Figure 3. Uptake of EFL main qualifications 1995-96 to 1997-98



18 Most growth in non-funded EFL student numbers has been in the UCLES CAE and the CPE with 137% and 135% growth respectively from 1995-96 to 1997-98.

Definitions and Interpretation

19 Previous definitions described EFL programmes as designed for visitors to England who will be returning to their countries once their stay is complete. ESOL courses are described as courses in English for speakers of other languages, usually for those are considered to be ‘home’ students.

20 The current characteristics of the qualifications and those who study them are:

EFL

- cost-weighting factor A
- no automatic fee remission
- no automatic childcare support
- standard entry units
- must be an accredited qualification
- additional support available
- widening participation factor applies

ESOL

- cost-weighting factor C
- full fee remission
- automatic childcare support available
- higher value entry units
- can be in-house accredited, but not required
- additional support available
- widening participation factor applies

21 Some students have progressed from ESOL to EFL courses and there was evidence from college practitioners that some students who would qualify as students on ESOL courses are more appropriately placed on EFL courses.

22 Definitions require revision to reflect the need to distinguish between eligible and ineligible EFL students. ESOL definitions also need revision to reflect the different focus of the programmes

and needs of the students. These definitions should reflect the mode of attendance and any other distinctive factors.

23 Definitions of UK residence may also require clarification as they have broader ramifications, beyond the scope of this review. The Council has requested that definitions of residence are included in the post-16 review.

Conclusions

24 The review proposed that, in line with Council policy, funding should follow the student whether on an EFL or ESOL programme. The student would be eligible to follow a particular programme pathway.

25 Students with literacy needs would be eligible for ESOL programmes which attract enhanced funding and support. It is recognised that these students may have literacy or additional support needs and/or may benefit from a widening participation factor funding uplift. These students may be refugees or asylum seekers.

26 Some students would be eligible for Council-funded EFL programmes. These would be home students who are resident in England and in employment. Unemployed students in receipt of a means-tested benefit who meet the residence requirements and whose academic requirements would be better met by EFL courses would be eligible for funding. In some cases, EFL support for unemployed students would be provided as part of another course or programme.

27 Any other students following EFL courses would be ineligible for funding, for example, students:

- from overseas
- from EU visiting England with the sole intention of learning English
- recruited directly from EU or through an agency
- on short, holiday or summer courses.

28 It was proposed that for the purposes of the review of EFL that 'short courses' should be defined as up to 6 weeks in length, where up to 30 hours a week were spent in guided learning.

Recommendations

29 In summary, the review recommended that from August 2000:

- all ESOL courses (as listed on the ISR database) will be eligible for funding
- students from the EU who are resident in England should be eligible for Council funded externally accredited EFL qualifications or ESOL courses if required
- students from overseas or EU students visiting England with the sole intention of learning English would continue to be ineligible for funding for EFL courses.

Defintions of Key Features of the EFL Review

English as a foreign language

1. EFL courses are defined in the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* as courses for teaching English to students where English is not the language spoken at home. The courses are designed to improve the level of spoken or written language and to lead to a nationally accredited qualification.
2. Where EFL qualifications are studied in institutions funded by the Council, the EFL qualification receives cost-weighting factor A. Students are required to study towards a recognised externally accredited qualification and are expected to pay tuition fees as a contribution to the cost of the course, unless they meet the criteria for fee remission.

English for speakers of other languages

3. ESOL courses are defined as courses for teaching English to students where English is not the language spoken at home. For ESOL courses studied in institutions funded by the Council, there is no requirement for students to study for an externally accredited qualification.

Schedule 2 (f)

4. Schedule 2 (f) of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* defines courses as fundable “which are to improve the knowledge of English of those for whom English is not the language spoken at home”. Currently all ESOL and, as a temporary measure, some EFL qualifications are funded under this section. There are also NVQ language units available, which fall within schedule 2(a), vocational qualifications approved by the secretary of state.

‘Vocational’

5. ‘Vocational’ training has been defined by the European Court of Justice, for example, in the Maastricht Treaty article 127, as:

‘Any form of education which prepares for a qualification for a particular profession, trade or employment or which provides the necessary training and skills for such a profession, trade or employment whatever the age and the level of training of the pupils or students, and even if the training programme includes an element of general education.’

EFL Review Group

Membership

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|-----|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. | Janet Bristow | Milton Keynes College |
| 2. | Jenny Burnette | FEFC |
| 3. | Deirdre Kimbell | FEFC |
| 4. | Stanley King | DfEE |
| 5. | Liz Lawson | FEDA |
| 6. | Suzanne Leaman | Liverpool Community College |
| 7. | Alastair Pearson | Hammersmith & West London College |
| 8. | Linda Roberts | Westminster College |
| 9. | Pauline Swanton | Leicester Adult College |
| 10. | Anne Thompson | Waltham Forest College |
| 11. | Tricia Wormald | FEFC |
| 12. | Sue Yeomans | FEFC |