

The  
**COMMON  
INSPECTION  
FRAMEWORK**

for Inspecting Post-16  
Education and Training

FEBRUARY 2001



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS  
IN EDUCATION

## TERMS USED IN THE FRAMEWORK

The Framework applies to the inspection of education and training in a wide range of settings. Terminology is not always common. Where possible, the Framework uses a single term to cover a number that are context specific, to avoid complication. In inspection reports, inspectors will use terms that are most appropriate to the circumstances.

Examples of these single terms include:

Provider	Any organisation involved in providing education and/or training, including colleges, training providers and Local Education Authorities (LEAs).
Learner	A person receiving education or training, including student, trainee, apprentice, client and participant.
Teacher/trainer	Someone responsible for teaching or training. As well as those specifically referred to as teachers or trainers, the term includes lecturers, tutors, instructors, supervisors, technicians and assessors when they have a teaching or training function, and others involved in providing learning support.
Learning goals	These can take a variety of forms including single qualifications, groups, modules or units of qualifications, greater knowledge, understanding and skills, occupational competence, milestones towards qualifications or employment, or securing employment, or a place in higher or further education.
Personal and learning skills	These include communication, presentation and teamwork skills, independent study, research and analytical skills.

# Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
THE PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES OF INSPECTION	3
HOW INSPECTIONS ARE CARRIED OUT	4
THE INSPECTION OF INDIVIDUAL PROVIDERS	6

# INTRODUCTION

This *Common Inspection Framework* (the Framework) is effective from 1 April 2001 and meets the requirements of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 (the Act). It sets out principles applicable to the inspections of post-16 non-higher education and training carried out under Part III of the Act. Inspections are carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).

The Framework also includes the more specific evaluation requirements that apply to the inspection of individual providers of education and training. The requirements reflect the principles and the general requirements of the Act for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) and the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning to keep the Secretary of State informed about:

- the quality of education and training
- the standards achieved by those receiving that education and training
- whether financial resources made available to those providing that education and training are managed efficiently and used in a way which provides value for money.

The specific requirements for other types of inspections will be guided by the principles in the Framework insofar as they are appropriate.

# THE PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES OF INSPECTION

The main purposes of inspection are to:

- give an independent public account of the quality of education and training, the standards achieved and the efficiency with which resources are managed
- help bring about improvement by identifying strengths and weaknesses and highlighting good practice
- keep the Secretary of State, the Learning and Skills Council for England and the Employment Service informed about the quality and standards of education and training
- promote a culture of self-assessment among providers, leading to continuous improvement or maintenance of very high quality and standards.

## PRINCIPLES OF INSPECTION

All inspections carried out under Part III of the Act will take account of a set of principles. These are concerned with:

- what is evaluated and reported
- how inspections are carried out.

## WHAT IS EVALUATED AND REPORTED

Inspections will focus primarily on the experiences and expectations of individual learners through the evaluation, as applicable, of:

- what is achieved – the standards reached and learners' achievements, taking account of their prior attainment and intended learning goals
- the quality of teaching, training, assessment and learning
- other aspects of provision that contribute to the standards achieved, such as the range, planning and content of courses or programmes, resources, and the support for individual learners
- the effectiveness with which the provision is managed, its quality assured and improved, and how efficiently resources are used to ensure that the provision gives value for money
- the extent to which provision is educationally and socially inclusive, and promotes equality of access to education and training, including provision for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities.

To summarise judgements, OFSTED and the ALI will use an agreed common grading scale and grade descriptions.

## HOW INSPECTIONS ARE CARRIED OUT

### Inspectors

Inspectors accredited by OFSTED or the ALI will have been trained in the use of the Framework and will be competent to inspect. In most cases, inspectors will work as part of a team led by an inspector who is responsible for planning and managing the inspection and its reporting. Collectively, members of an inspection team will have the expertise and experience to inspect effectively all aspects of the provision covered by the inspection<sup>1</sup>.

### The process of inspection

Inspections will be carried out in a way that secures the co-operation and confidence of those being inspected. A climate should be created in which the inspection makes a valuable contribution to improvement. This requires that:

- inspectors are well prepared for the inspections they undertake
- before inspection, providers are briefed so that the inspection process and their involvement in it are fully understood
- the inspection should be conducted in a way that engages the provider's staff, and keeps them informed of emerging issues and findings.

OFSTED and the ALI will keep to a realistic minimum the demands for information and other materials that they make of providers.

Inspectors will ensure that the views of learners about their education and training, and about the support and guidance they receive, are sought and considered as part of the evidence of inspection.

### The conduct of inspectors

Inspectors will uphold high professional standards in their work. They must:

- be impartial and objective; this requires that they have no connection with the provider that could undermine their objectivity
- report honestly and fairly
- be open and transparent in the way they work, providing as much feedback as possible on the inspection
- carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy and sensitivity, and reflecting the principles of equality of opportunity in all they do
- act with the best interests of learners as a priority.

Providers should be courteous and helpful to inspectors.

---

<sup>1</sup> In the inspection of sixth form colleges of voluntary origin, the inspection team will include a member recognised by the appropriate church authority as being competent to inspect the denominational education and collective worship provided by the college, in accordance with agreed protocols.

## **The quality of inspection**

Inspections should be conducted in such a way that:

- the evidence gathered from observations, from learners, from staff and others, and from documentation is sufficient to sustain secure judgements
- judgements are consistent with the inspection evidence, and overall findings reflect the balance of evidence and the collective view of the inspection team
- the communication of findings, orally and in writing, is clear, well-argued and based convincingly on evidence gathered before and during the inspection.

## **The follow-up to inspections**

Following inspections, there will be an opportunity for full and open feedback of the inspection findings from the lead inspector, and discussion of them. The composition of the feedback meeting will vary from inspection to inspection but in most circumstances it will include the senior managers responsible for the provision, including governing bodies where appropriate. Inspectors will welcome providers' views about their inspection.

The report following any inspection must be factually accurate. Providers will be offered the opportunity to check the factual accuracy of an inspection report before it is published.

## **Post-inspection action plans**

Inspections will identify issues for improvement that will form the basis of action plans, prepared by providers or others responsible for the provision, to address weaknesses and build on strengths.

## **Complaints**

Providers will have recourse to a published complaints procedure that will be made known to them in advance of their inspections.

# THE INSPECTION OF INDIVIDUAL PROVIDERS

This part of the Framework sets out the evaluation requirements that apply to the inspection of an individual provider. They are based on the principles set out earlier in the Framework.

The evaluation requirements apply to the provider as a whole and, wherever applicable, to parts of its work such as that in different programmes and occupational areas.

Inspection should answer the question:

**How effective and efficient is the provision of education and training in meeting the needs of learners, and why?**

The following key questions, set out under three broad headings, will guide inspection:

## ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

**1. How well do learners achieve?**

## THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**2. How effective are teaching, training and learning?**

**3. How are achievement and learning affected by resources?**

**4. How effective are the assessment and monitoring of learning?**

**5. How well do the programmes and courses meet the needs and interests of learners?**

**6. How well are learners guided and supported?**

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**7. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?**

The written inspection report on each provider will include a judgement about the adequacy of the provision inspected.

**The evaluation requirements apply in relation to all learners irrespective of, for example, their age, ability, gender, ethnicity, learning difficulty or disability.**



## ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

### 1. How well do learners achieve?

To answer this question, evaluate:

- success in achieving challenging targets, including qualifications and learning goals, and trends over time
- the standards of learners' work in relation to their learning goals
- learners' progress relative to their prior attainment and potential
- the development of personal and learning skills.

*In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which:*

- *results and retention rates compare well with local and national averages*
- *trends in performance over time show continuous improvement or the maintenance of very high standards*
- *analysis of added value indicates that learners make at least the progress expected of them*
- *standards are consistently high across the provider's work*
- *challenging learning goals and targets are achieved;*

*and learners:*

- *make significant progress towards fulfilling their goals and their potential*
- *are prepared for effective participation in the workplace and in the community*
- *progress to relevant further or higher education, training or employment*
- *reach appropriate levels in key skills consistent with their main programme of study or training*
- *develop the skills of critical evaluation, research and analysis*
- *develop the attitudes and skills necessary to maintain lifelong learning, including the capacity to work independently and collaboratively*
- *attend regularly and are punctual.*

## THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### 2. How effective are teaching, training and learning?

To answer this question, evaluate:

- how well teaching and training meet individuals' needs and course or programme requirements
- how well learners learn and make progress.

*In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which teachers and trainers:*

- *show knowledge, technical competence and up-to-date expertise, at a level consistent with effective teaching, training and assessment of the course or programme*
- *plan effectively with clear objectives that all learners understand*
- *use methods and styles of teaching and training consistent with the aims of their programmes and learners' personal objectives*
- *challenge and inspire learners*
- *set, use and mark assignments and other tasks in a way that helps learners to progress*
- *with learners, develop individual learning plans, informed by initial assessment, that are reviewed and updated regularly*
- *promote good working relationships that foster learning*
- *use materials and teaching methods that promote equality of opportunity;*

*and the extent to which all learners:*

- *acquire new knowledge and skills, develop ideas and increase their understanding*
- *understand and are confident in what they are doing, how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve*
- *apply effort to succeed with their work, work productively and make effective use of their time*
- *are stimulated and show interest in their work.*

### 3. How are achievement and learning affected by resources?

To answer this question, evaluate:

- the adequacy and suitability of staff
- the adequacy, suitability and use of specialist equipment, learning resources and accommodation.

*In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which:*

- *there are enough qualified and experienced teaching, training and support staff matching the demands of programmes and the range of learners*
- *the professional development of staff contributes to their effectiveness*
- *specialist equipment and materials are used, including facilities which are relevant to the workplace and which meet current industrial standards*
- *accommodation provides a suitable setting for good teaching, training and learning and support for learners*
- *learners have access to learning resources that are appropriate for effective independent study*
- *learners work in a safe and healthy environment*
- *resources are used to best effect in promoting learning*
- *learning resources and accommodation allow all learners to participate fully.*

#### 4. How effective are the assessment and monitoring of learners' progress?

To answer this question, evaluate:

- the suitability and rigour of assessment
- the uses of assessment in planning learning and monitoring learners' progress.

*In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which, for all learners:*

- *forms of assessment and recording are suitable for the courses and programmes being followed*
- *assessment is fair, accurate and carried out regularly*
- *initial assessment provides an accurate basis on which to plan an appropriate programme of work*
- *assessment is used to monitor progress and inform individual learners about how they are performing and how they might develop further*
- *achievements towards learning goals and qualifications are recorded and accredited*
- *assessment information, including the analysis of performance of different groups of learners, is used to guide course and programme development*
- *assessment, verification and moderation procedures follow regulatory body requirements*
- *those with a legitimate interest, such as employers or parents, are clearly and regularly informed about learners' progress.*

**5. How well do the programmes and courses meet the needs and interests of learners?**

To answer this question, evaluate:

- the extent to which courses or programmes match learners' aspirations and potential, building on prior attainment and experience
- how far programmes or the curriculum meet external requirements, and are responsive to local circumstances.

*In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which:*

- *learners have access to an appropriate range of courses or programmes, and, where appropriate, achieve suitable qualifications*
- *the curriculum or an individual programme of work is planned and managed effectively to provide coherence and progression*
- *the curriculum or programmes of work are socially inclusive, ensuring equality of access and opportunities for learners*
- *learners have the opportunity to broaden their experience and enhance their personal development through a suitable variety of enrichment activities*
- *programmes of work take account of community and employer needs*
- *legal requirements in relation to religious education and collective worship are fulfilled where they apply*
- *multi-site provision and resources are effectively integrated to give a coherent programme of learning.*

## 6. How well are learners guided and supported?

To answer this question, evaluate:

- the quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance to learners in relation to courses and programmes and career progression
- the diagnosis of, and provision for, individual learning needs
- the access learners have to relevant, effective support on personal issues.

*In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which:*

- *support arrangements are planned and managed coherently*
- *impartial guidance enables learners to choose the course or programme which is right for them*
- *careers education and guidance are effective in guiding learners towards the opportunities available to them when they have completed their studies or training*
- *procedures are in place for recognising poor punctuality, non-attendance and poor performance early and for taking appropriate action*
- *induction programmes enable learners to settle into their programmes quickly, to understand their rights and responsibilities and the demands of the course or programme*
- *individual learning needs are accurately diagnosed and learners receive effective additional support throughout their studies or training*
- *learners have effective personal support to help them to complete their course or programme, including access to specialist support services*
- *guidance and support are sensitive to equality of opportunity*
- *partnerships with other providers and relevant agencies involved in advice and guidance are effective.*

## 7. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

To answer this question, evaluate:

- how well leaders and managers set a clear direction leading to high quality education and training
- how effectively, through quality assurance and self assessment, performance is monitored and evaluated and steps taken to secure improvement
- how well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve their potential
- where relevant, the extent to which governors or other supervisory boards meet their responsibilities
- how effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money.

*In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which:*

- *clear direction is given through strategic objectives, targets and values that are fully understood by staff, including subcontractors and work placement providers*
- *demanding targets for retention, achievement, progression and employment are set and met*
- *the quality assurance arrangements are systematic and informed by the views of all interested parties*
- *rigorous self-assessment leads to identified priorities and challenging targets for improvement*
- *priorities are supported through responsible financial management*
- *staff understand and are fully involved in the organisation's quality assurance arrangements*
- *the information needs of managers and other staff are met and management information is used effectively to the benefit of learners*
- *performance management, staff appraisal and review are effective in improving the quality of provision*
- *there are explicit aims, values and strategies promoting equality for all that are reflected in the provider's work*
- *there are effective measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour, including all forms of harassment*
- *there are effective procedures for dealing with appeals and complaints*
- *governors or other supervisory boards effectively oversee the provider's strategic direction, and regularly monitor the quality of provision and their own performance*
- *the 'best value' principles of comparison, challenge, consultation and competition are applied in securing resources and services*
- *efficient and effective use is made of resources.*



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

**The Adult Learning Inspectorate**  
3rd Floor  
101 Lockhurst Lane  
Coventry  
CV6 5SF

Tel: +44 (0) 870 240 7744  
Fax: +44 (0) 870 242 1444  
E-mail: [enquiries@ali.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ali.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.ali.gov.uk](http://www.ali.gov.uk)



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS  
IN EDUCATION

**OFSTED**  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

Tel: 020 7421 6800  
E-mail: [geninfo@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:geninfo@ofsted.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)