



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

HANDBOOK FOR INSPECTORS

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Purpose of inspection

The *Common Inspection Framework*, against which all inspections are carried out, identifies the three main functions of inspection as follows:

- to give an independent, public account of the quality of education and training, the standards achieved and the efficiency with which resources are managed.
- to help bring about improvement by identifying strengths and weaknesses and highlighting good and poor practice.
- to keep the Secretary of State and the funding bodies informed about the quality and standards of education and training.

Through inspection, learners receive information which enables them to make informed choices about learning programmes they might join.

Following an inspection, a provider of publicly funded provision is required to submit an action plan to the funding organisation/s, detailing how it intends to respond to the inspection findings.

Roles in the inspection process

Lead Inspector:	Full-time inspector responsible for planning, managing and leading the inspection and drafting the inspection report.
Assisting Lead Inspector:	Full-time inspector, whose main responsibility is the quality assurance of the inspection and who supports and advises members of the inspection team.
Associate Inspector:	Inspector contracted to the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) on an inspection-by-inspection basis, to inspect an area of learning or leadership and management.
Specialist Adviser:	In the absence of an inspector with the required specialist knowledge, a specialist adviser works alongside an inspector, providing this knowledge.
Provider Nominee:	Senior member of the provider's staff who helps the lead inspector to organise the inspection and ensures that the inspection team has full access to all relevant evidence. The nominee attends all inspection meetings and is the link between the inspection team and the provider.

Inspection Manager:	A senior manager of the ALI, who may attend an inspection in both a line management and quality assurance capacity. Inspection managers moderate inspection reports.
Director:	A director of the ALI may attend an inspection in a quality assurance capacity.
Observer:	A person viewing aspects of the inspection without taking part in it, such as a trainee inspector or a member of the ALI's administration centre staff.
Mentor:	A person who supports and evaluates a trainee inspector.

NB: The lead inspector and the assisting inspector may, in addition to their main roles, inspect areas of learning or leadership and management.

Purpose of the handbook

This handbook is intended to guide inspectors when carrying out inspections of providers. It covers standard procedures used for inspections. The handbook is on the ALI's website (www.ali.gov.uk) to help people outside the ALI gain an understanding of how inspectors go about their business.

The handbook relates to those inspections carried out solely by the ALI, which include the inspection of:

- work-based learning for young people
- programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- Ufi **learndirect**
- adult and community learning
- prison education and training
- provision funded by government departments other than Department for Education and Skills and Department for Work and Pensions
- provision funded privately

A separate handbook, available on the websites of both inspectorates, relates specifically to inspections of colleges, directed by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and carried out jointly by the ALI and Ofsted.

This handbook should be read in conjunction with the *Common Inspection Framework*. A range of guidance documents on the *Common Inspection Framework* explains how it applies to different types of provision. These documents are available on the ALI's website.

Structure of the handbook

The first section of the handbook sets out the inspection procedures before, during and after an inspection, and for reinspections.

The second section of the handbook is a set of detailed guidance notes on specific aspects of inspection.

The third section of the handbook relates to paperwork, such as guidance notes, standard forms and sample letters.

Updating the handbook

The handbook for inspectors will be held on the ALI's website and on its learning network, Excalibur. The contents of the handbook will be reviewed from time to time.

CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTORY PAGES	
Purpose of inspection	3
Roles in the inspection process	3
Purpose of the handbook	4
Structure of the handbook	5
Updating the handbook	5
SECTION 1 Procedures to be followed by inspectors	
<u>PART A BEFORE THE INSPECTION</u>	
Scheduling of ALL inspections	8
The lead inspector's tasks	8-10
Inspectors' tasks	10
<u>PART B DURING THE INSPECTION</u>	
Managing the inspection	11-13
The provider's nominee	13-14
<u>PART C AFTER THE INSPECTION</u>	
The lead inspector's tasks	15
Moderation	15
<u>PART D REINSPECTIONS</u>	
Introduction	16
Planning the reinspection	16
Before a reinspection visit	17
During and after a reinspection visit	17
<u>PART E COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE</u>	
Complaints procedure	18
SECTION 2 Guidance notes	
<u>The composition of the inspection team</u>	19
<u>The planning meeting</u>	20-22
<u>Avoiding conflicts of interest</u>	22-23
<u>Actions to avoid conflict of interest</u>	23
ASPECTS OF INSPECTING	
<u>Conduct and approach</u>	24
<u>Confidentiality</u>	24-25
<u>Health and safety</u>	25
<u>Suspicious about fraud or malpractice</u>	25
<u>Role of observers</u>	25

CONTENTS cont'd	Page
THE COLLECTION OF EVIDENCE	
Observations of learning	26-27
Documentary evidence	28
Examining learners' work	29
Interviews with learners and staff	29-30
Recording evidence	30-31
Collecting evidence for other inspectors	31
MAKING JUDGEMENTS	
Strengths	32
Weaknesses	32
Bullets	32
Areas of learning	32
Leadership and management	32
GIVING FEEDBACK TO TEACHERS AND TRAINERS	
Giving feedback to teachers and trainers	33
Team meetings	33
Conduct of team meetings	34
REPORT-WRITING	
Associate inspectors	35
Lead inspectors	35
Writing style	36
MEETINGS	
Grading meetings	37-38
Feedback of inspection findings	39-40
SECTION 3 Standard documents	
Standard documents	41
Guidance on the Common Inspection Framework	41
1 Letter of confirmation	42
2 Planning meeting agenda	43
3 Outline inspection schedule	44

SECTION 1

Procedures to be followed by inspectors

PART A BEFORE THE INSPECTION

Scheduling of ALI inspections

- The ALI plans an annual programme of inspections and consults on the list with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Jobcentre Plus, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).
- The ALI normally notifies providers of their inspection three to six months before the inspection.
- The LSC and/or Jobcentre Plus provide the ALI with a range of information about the provider: this might include self-assessment reports, development plans, performance data, learners' records and information on financial and governance matters as appropriate.
- This information is supplemented by additional data collected from providers.
- The provider nominates one person as their representative on the inspection team - the 'nominee'.
- The provider's nominee is invited to a briefing event before the inspection. This briefing covers a range of topics, including: the *Common Inspection Framework*; self-assessment; the role of the nominee, the lead inspector and others on the team; documentation to be provided for the inspection team; data on learners' achievements; the organisation of the inspection; and the evaluation processes for the inspection.

The lead inspector's tasks

Before the inspection, the lead inspector:

- contacts the provider's nominee to inform him or her of the inspection date and to determine the date of the planning meeting. Sufficient time is allowed between the planning meeting and the inspection for the provider to make the necessary preparations for the inspection.
- asks the provider's nominee to invite a representative of the relevant funding organisation/s to the planning meeting and the inspection feedback.

- confirms which of the areas of learning are to be inspected, establishes approximately how many learners will be in each at the time of the inspection, and finds out what the geographical spread of the provision is (e.g. including the location of training centres and workplaces).
- checks that the ALI has received the self-assessment report from the funding organisation.
- checks that the ALI has received the performance data about the provider and assures themselves of the accuracy and validity of the data.
- provisionally agrees where the inspectors are to be based. For the inspection of a national provider, inspectors may need to be based in several parts of the country.
- uses the information given to decide on the composition of the inspection team, referring to the guidance on the composition of an inspection team, and sends a completed inspection requirement form (IRF) to the ALI's inspection planning and deployment team (IPDT).
- sends a letter of confirmation to the nominee about arrangements for the inspection, setting out the dates of the planning meeting and of the inspection, and an appropriately amended planning meeting agenda.
- sends a copy of the letter of confirmation and inspection agenda to the official contacts of other relevant agencies, such as the local LSC or Jobcentre Plus, with an invitation to the planning and feedback meetings.
- in liaison with the IPDT and the relevant inspection manager, decides if trainee inspectors will be involved in the inspection. If they are, the lead inspector obtains the agreement of the provider and arranges for the trainee inspector to be supervised by a registered inspector during the inspection.
- when notified of the inspection team, checks that those in it are suitable to carry out the inspection, and notifies the IPDT of any concerns about the composition of the team.
- chairs the planning meeting using an appropriately amended version of the planning meeting agenda and following the guidance on the planning meeting.
- provides the nominee with professional profiles of the inspection team.
- agrees with the nominee a schedule for each inspector that makes clear the responsibilities of each inspector and specifies which section of the report the inspector will write. The times of meetings are also established.
- produces notes on the main points agreed at the planning meeting and copies them to the nominee.

- sends a briefing letter to each team member about the inspection, attaching a copy of the inspection schedule, a copy of the notes of the planning meeting and any additional briefing notes. The lead inspector also sends relevant data to the team.
- liaises closely with the nominee about the inspection schedule as the inspection draws closer, agreeing changes if necessary. The lead inspector liaises with members of the inspection team as appropriate.
- informs the nominee that the provider will be able to evaluate the inspection by means of an evaluation form that the ALI sends out with the published inspection report.
- carries out a health and safety risk assessment for each inspection and informs the inspection team of any findings.

Inspectors' tasks

All inspectors

- decline requests to inspect a provider with which they have a conflict of interest. Refer to the guidance on avoiding conflicts of interest.
- decline requests to inspect areas of learning or other areas that they are not registered to inspect.
- read the self-assessment report sent to them by the IPDT; read their inspection programme and the notes sent by the lead inspector; record in the inspection notebook additional themes for the area they are inspecting.
- plan their inspection activities. For example, they may identify learning sessions they intend to observe, meetings they want to hold and when they will write their section of the report.
- familiarise themselves with the inspection notebook and forms to be completed during the inspection.
- contact the lead inspector (not the provider) about any queries or concerns they have relating to arrangements for the inspection.
- give as much notice as possible to the IPDT if they find that, because of exceptional circumstances, they are unable to take part in the inspection.

PART B DURING THE INSPECTION

Managing the inspection

The lead inspector has overall responsibility for managing the inspection and communicating with the provider. Many inspection teams will also include an assisting lead inspector. The assisting lead inspector shares responsibility with the lead inspector for the quality of the inspection process, and for ensuring that inspectors' judgements are valid and the inspection report is clear and well written. Some of the specific responsibilities are as follows:

The lead inspector:

- calls and chairs team meetings and the feedback meeting.
- liaises with the nominee throughout the inspection.
- participates in a broad range of inspection activities.
- briefs the inspection team about the provider and operational aspects of the inspection.
- makes sure the nominee is kept informed of emerging inspection judgements.
- ensures that provisional grades awarded are agreed by the team as a whole.
- discusses strengths and weaknesses with his or her inspection manager if grades 1, 4 or 5 are anticipated.
- plans activities relating to the quality assurance of the inspection process.

The assisting lead inspector:

- carries out the quality assurance of the inspection process
- helps inspectors to work as a team.
- supports and advises members of the inspection team.
- ensures inspection judgements are valid and substantiated by firm evidence.
- checks that correct inspection procedures are followed.
- ensures that draft contributions to the inspection report are written in plain English and set out clearly the findings of the inspection clearly.

- gives feedback to associate inspectors on their performance. The assisting lead inspector (or the lead inspector if there is no assisting lead) completes an associate inspector assessment form for each associate inspector.

All inspectors – at the start of the inspection:

- arrive punctually for the initial team meeting. They must attend this meeting unless their absence from it has been agreed in advance for a good reason, such as their participation elsewhere in the country in an inspection of national provision.
- make sure they understand their individual inspection schedule and check its practicality with the nominee, and that they know the names of those whom they will meet, and where and when they will meet them.

All inspectors – during the inspection:

- inspect the provision in accordance with the schedule for the inspection; keep to the agreed timings as closely as possible; give advance notice of late or early arrival for an appointment; agree major changes to their own inspection schedule with the lead inspector and the nominee.
- collect evidence about the standards of learners' work and the quality of the provision from a number of sources, cross-checking the evidence whenever possible. They should aim to achieve good practice in inspection, following the notes in section 2.
- keep a record of the evidence in the inspection notebook.
- check regularly that they are inspecting in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework*.
- at the end of each day, summarise the emerging judgements and, if possible, discuss them with the rest of the inspection team, including the nominee. They should follow the [guidance on team meetings](#) and complete the daily summary of evidence forms.
- accumulate valid evidence over the course of the inspection and reach secure judgements. Judgements should be firm, not provisional. See [guidance on making judgements](#).
- ask the nominee for any additional information they need and, if necessary, seek the agreement of the lead inspector to amend the planned inspection schedule.

- produce a draft of the section(s) of the inspection report they are required to write. Refer to the [guidance on report writing](#).
- discuss their judgements with the lead inspector and the nominee before the grading meeting.
- agree on the grade for each area inspected with other members of the inspection team. Follow the [guidance on grading meetings](#).
- present a summary of the judgements to the staff of the provider and to representatives of other organisations, such as the local LSC or the Jobcentre Plus, who attend the inspection feedback meeting. Refer to the [guidance on inspection feedback](#).
- give all the evidence collected during the inspection to the lead inspector. They also give the lead inspector the completed inspection notebook and other forms.
- give the lead inspector their final draft of the section(s) of the inspection report they are required to write. Ideally, the text should require only minimal editing
- with a large team, full-time inspectors will assist with the quality assurance of the inspection process.

The provider's nominee:

- is usually a senior member of staff who knows the provision well and understands how it is managed.
- is familiar with the provider's self-assessment process and report.
- has prepared the provider's staff and others, such as employers and workplace supervisors, for the inspection, so that they can help the inspectors gather valid evidence.
- ensures that a health and safety briefing is given to inspectors at all sites they visit to carry out inspection.
- can take an objective view of their organisation.
- has the confidence and trust of the provider's chief executive or equivalent, and has ready access to him or her.
- is well organised and makes sure that the inspection runs smoothly.
- ensures that all staff, and where appropriate governors, board members or trustees, and other relevant parties, co-operate with inspectors.

- attends inspection team meetings and provides any information which is needed by the inspection team.
- registers with the lead inspector any concerns about inspection procedures and findings.
- helps to resolve any difficulties which arise, in liaison with the lead inspector.
- completes the inspection evaluation form that accompanies the published inspection report and returns it to the ALI to assist in quality improvement.

PART C AFTER THE INSPECTION

The lead inspector's tasks

After the inspection, the lead inspector:

- completes the inspection review and attendance form (IP11) and sends it to the IPDT
- completes an associate inspector assessment form (IP09) for each associate inspector, and signs off a trainee inspector assessment form for each trainee inspector, and sends the forms to the IPDT
- prepares a draft inspection report and detailed inspection findings (the report)
- forwards the report to the reports production department (rpd), using the e-mail address moderation@ali.gov.uk, by 17.00 on the Friday of the full week following the inspection (the report writing week)
- keeps a copy of the report to hand, and inspection evidence where possible, during the second week after inspection (the moderation week)
- liaises with the moderating inspection manager over any queries raised about the report during the moderation week. If required, he or she amends the report and resubmits it to rpd or the moderating inspection manager as requested
- explains to the provider, verbally and in writing, any changes in grade that result from moderation

Moderation

The purpose of moderation is to ensure that the inspection judgements and grades are fully explained in the text of the inspection report and that the evidence for them is sufficient. The inspection report is first moderated by an inspection manager and subsequently by ALI directors.

PART D REINSPECTIONS

Introduction

Most of the procedures described in this handbook apply to reinspections. The following are procedures that specifically apply to reinspection:

- reinspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework*.
- any area of learning graded 4 or 5 will be reinspected.
- a full reinspection of the whole provision is normally carried out if more than one third of the areas of learning are graded 4 or 5.
- a full reinspection of the whole provision is normally carried out if leadership and management are graded 4 or 5.
- reinspections are carried out over a period of time through monitoring reinspection visits. In most cases, the reinspection process is completed within one year of the first monitoring reinspection visit. In no case does the process last for more than two years.

Planning the reinspection

- a lead inspector is appointed to see the reinspection through to a conclusion. A number of on-site days are allocated to each reinspection. The lead inspector has discretion in the way days are allocated during the reinspection period.
- before the planning meeting with the provider, the lead inspector obtains a copy of the provider's post-inspection action plan.
- at the planning meeting, a reinspection plan is drawn up. The plan reflects the nature of the strengths and weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, the post-inspection action plan and the likely speed of the provider's response to the findings of the previous inspection.
- after the planning meeting, the lead inspector writes to the provider to confirm the reinspection plan and to comment on the post-inspection action plan. The letter is copied to the local LSC/Jobcentre Plus office or other relevant funding organisation.

Before a reinspection visit

- before each visit, except for the final one, the lead inspector asks the provider for updated information on learner numbers and for evidence about trends in retention and achievement. In advance of the final visit, detailed information on learner numbers and retention and achievement rates will be collected by the ALI from the provider.
- the local LSC/Jobcentre Plus office is asked to brief the lead inspector on any issues about the provider arising from the provider review process.
- the lead inspector contacts the provider to confirm the arrangements for the visit. The provider should be clear about the focus of the visit and whether the lead inspector is to be accompanied by other inspectors. The provider is asked to invite a representative from the local LSC/Jobcentre Plus office to the spoken feedback at the end of the visit.

During and after a reinspection visit

- interim reinspection visits end with a spoken feedback of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Arrangements for the next reinspection visit are also discussed and, if necessary, the reinspection plan is amended. The findings of the visit and any changes made to the reinspection plan are confirmed in a letter sent to the provider after the visit. A copy of the letter is sent to the local LSC/Jobcentre Plus office.
- at the end of the final reinspection visit, the inspection team confirms the strengths and weaknesses of all reinspected aspects of provision.
- following the final visit, a reinspection report is published.

PART E COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- The lead inspector will attempt to resolve any complaints or disputes as they arise during the inspection process.
- Lead inspectors will keep their inspection manager informed of any unresolved issues in case they become a complaint.
- If the provider is not satisfied that its complaint has been dealt with adequately by the lead inspector, it may use the ALI's complaints procedure, *Making a Complaint*. A copy of this is sent out to providers at notification stage. The procedure is also available on the ALI's website.

SECTION 2

Guidance notes

The composition of the inspection team

- The lead inspector puts together an inspection team, taking into account the type and scale of the provision, and the geographical spread to be inspected. In the case of national providers or other dispersed provision, the lead inspector must decide on the proportion of learning venues to be sampled.
- The lead inspector submits an IRF to the IPDT. An inspection manager amends the IRF if appropriate and approves the final team.
- The specialisms required in the team should be made clear. For example, 'plumbing' should be specified rather than the generic 'construction'.
- Areas of learning with fewer than 10 learners will not normally be inspected, except in those providers where none of the areas of learning has 10 or more learners.
- Aspects of leadership and management can be inspected by inspectors who are also covering an area of learning.
- The lead inspector and assisting lead inspector are normally expected to carry out some inspection themselves. In the case of particularly large or complex inspections, the lead inspector or the assisting lead inspector, or both, may need to concentrate solely on managing the inspection.
- Inspectors who are not needed for the full duration of the inspection should attend for the later stages, to take part in grading discussions.
- Some inspection activity may take place outside the period scheduled as the inspection week (or weeks), to accommodate the needs of the provider. Such activity should happen before, rather than after, the scheduled period, so that findings can be considered by the whole inspection team.
- The lead inspector makes a provisional decision on the location of accommodation for the inspection team, which can be amended after the planning meeting if necessary.
-

The planning meeting

The purpose of the planning meeting is to agree with the provider the detail of the inspection. Good planning is the key to a smooth inspection. By the end of the inspection, the inspection team has to be satisfied that the sample of provision inspected has been sufficiently representative for its judgements to be valid.

The meeting is also an opportunity to reassure the provider's staff and answer their questions about the inspection process.

The agenda for the planning meeting is likely to cover the following points:

- introductions

The planning meeting is attended by the lead inspector, the nominee, and where appropriate, a representative of the LSC, Jobcentre Plus or another relevant body. The provider may invite additional staff if they have a key role in the planning of the inspection.

- the basis for the inspection

The lead inspector confirms that the inspection will be based on the *Common Inspection Framework* and refers the provider to the ALI's guidance on the framework.

- proposed inspection team

The lead inspector gives the provider summary information about each person on the team. The provider is asked to inform the lead inspector as soon as possible if the inclusion of any member of the inspection team raises any conflict of interest or of any other concerns. In the final analysis the ALI determines the composition of the inspection team.

- identity of the nominee and their role

The provider confirms who will act as nominee and that he or she understands the role, or is due to attend a briefing event for nominees. The lead inspector checks that the nominee is an appropriate person for the job, is well informed about the provider and carries sufficient authority within the provider's organisation.

- scope of the inspection

The lead inspector makes sure the scope of the inspection is fully understood. He or she explains which learning programmes and areas of learning are to be inspected and which are to be awarded a contributory grade. He or she also checks which centres and learners are covered by the inspection and that all relevant subcontractors are identified.

- opportunities for observation

The lead inspector finds out what activities, such as learning sessions, assessment sessions and progress reviews, can be observed during the inspection.

- sample selection

The lead inspector selects the sample of learners to interview, centres or workplaces to visit, portfolios to examine and so on. To ensure that the samples are representative, the lead inspector should select at least 50 per cent of the learners and employers to be interviewed without prompting by the provider.

- agreement of an outline inspection schedule

The lead inspector draws up outline schedules for each inspector, using a suitably adapted outline inspection schedule. The lead inspector should point out that he or she reserves the right to ask for amendments to the inspection schedule.

- inspection timetable, including start times

In conjunction with the nominee, the lead inspector decides the start time for the first day and subsequent days of the inspection, and the times when the daily team meetings, the grading meeting and the final inspection feedback meeting take place.

- data

The lead inspector checks that the data forms have been completed and, where appropriate, agrees arrangements for the validation of data supplied by the provider. Once these arrangements have been completed the lead inspector and the nominee will need to agree the validity of the data. The lead inspector may advise the provider that data will need to be updated at the time of the inspection.

- documentation requirements

The lead inspector gives details of the documentation to be placed, in advance of the inspection, in the room to be used by inspectors during the inspection. The lead inspector seeks to minimise the need for the provider to prepare documentation specifically for the inspection.

- base room, parking, hotel and domestic arrangements

The lead inspector asks for a suitable room to be made available to the inspectors during the inspection. The lead inspector also ensures that the inspection team will have access to refreshments and facilities, such as a photocopier.

- health and safety of inspectors

The lead inspector should identify the risks and hazards that inspectors may encounter during the inspection and agree how they can be minimised.

- feedback arrangements

The lead inspector explains how staff are given feedback throughout the inspection and refers to the daily team meeting at which the nominee is present. The lead inspector explains the purpose and format of the final inspection feedback meeting. It is vital also that the lead inspector explains the nature of feedback given to teachers and trainers following a learning session observation. Such feedback will necessarily be brief and will simply focus on key points arising from the observation. The feedback is not intended to be a comprehensive review of a teacher's, or trainer's, professional capabilities.

- report

The lead inspector outlines how and when the inspection report is published and stresses that all inspection findings are moderated and edited, and are therefore provisional until they have been published.

- complaint procedure

The lead inspector checks that the provider has received a copy of the complaint procedure booklet, *Making a Complaint*, and, if not, provides a copy.

- evaluation

The lead inspector explains that the provider can evaluate the inspection by completing an evaluation form that is sent with the published inspection report.

The lead inspector draws up the detailed inspection schedule after the planning meeting. The schedule will reflect the discussions at the meeting. The lead inspector makes clear to the nominee that it may be necessary to alter the schedule as the inspection proceeds.

Avoiding conflicts of interest

Inspectors must not inspect a provider with which they have a conflict of interest, or with which they may be perceived to have a conflict of interest. The *Common Inspection Framework* requires that inspectors have no connection with a provider that might undermine their objectivity while inspecting that provider. Contracts of service for lead inspectors and associate inspectors give guidance on outside interests, which must be followed.

During an inspection, inspectors must make it publicly evident that they are independent and objective by:

- not accepting gifts from a provider
- offering to pay for any refreshments provided during inspection
- not accepting hospitality except at a modest level.

Actions to avoid a conflict of interest before and during inspection

All inspectors must:

- on appointment, declare all possible conflicts of interest so that these can be noted by the ALI.
- decline to take part in any inspection which involves them in an obvious conflict of interest. No inspector should inspect a provider that has employed them in any capacity during the previous five years.
- when asked to join an inspection team, check that they do not have any connection with the provider that could present a conflict of interest. It may not be immediately obvious from the name of the provider: if in doubt, ask the lead inspector for more details.
- notify the lead inspector immediately if they become aware of a conflict of interest during an inspection.
- Lead inspectors must:
 - at the planning meeting, supply enough information to the provider about the inspection team to enable the provider to check that no member of the team has a potential conflict of interest.
 - request a replacement inspector if notified of a conflict of interest before the inspection.
 - check that no one added to the team, including trainee inspectors and observers, has a potential conflict of interest.
 - consult the nominee immediately if alerted to a potential conflict of interest during inspection. If it appears that a genuine conflict of interest has arisen, contact an inspection manager for guidance on a course of action.

Aspects of inspecting

Conduct and approach

All inspectors should act in a professional manner at all times. They should be courteous and clear in their communications. They must make carefully considered and fair judgements based on firm evidence. They must adhere to the policies and procedures of the ALI.

Many **associate inspectors** act as consultants to training providers in addition to carrying out inspection work for the ALI. The ALI recognises that much of this consultancy work is of significant benefit to providers and learners. However, associate inspectors must be fully aware of the ways in which consultancy work with a provider can create a conflict of interest with their role for the ALI. With this in mind, associate inspectors should not:

- discuss consultancy work in the presence of provider staff while working as part of an ALI inspection team.
- carry out consultancy work with a provider within two years of working as part of an ALI inspection team with that provider.
- engage in on-site support for providers during the course of an inspection or reinspection visit.
- make unsolicited offers of consultancy work to other associate inspectors.
- carry out mock inspection activity with a provider that includes awarding grades.
- represent themselves as an ALI inspector when doing consultancy work.

Confidentiality

Inspectors have a responsibility to respect the confidentiality of the information they are given throughout the inspection. They are responsible at all time for the security of the information supplied by the provider.

Before the publication of the inspection report, all judgements made individually and collectively by inspectors remain confidential to the inspectorate, the provider and the funding bodies. Inspection findings may be shared with a third party when there are exceptional grounds for so doing. Such grounds might, for instance, include the need to seek clarification of a particular point at issue from awarding bodies or the QCA, or suspicion of fraud or malpractice. Should such grounds arise, the lead inspector consults an inspection manager and may then pass information to an appropriate external body.

Providers should treat all those involved in the inspection with respect and in a courteous manner. They should raise any concerns about the inspection process,

differences of opinion about inspectors' judgements or complaints about the conduct of an inspector promptly, to enable the lead inspector to resolve such matters during the inspection with the minimum of disruption.

Providers are expected to observe the same conventions of confidentiality as inspection team members.

Health and safety

The lead inspector carries out a health and safety risk assessment for each inspection and communicates the findings to the inspection team

Throughout the inspection, inspectors should check the health and safety practices on all premises that inspectors visit where learning and training take place. Inspectors are not health and safety experts, but they have a responsibility to alert the provider to hazards they encounter during the inspection. In addition, inspectors have a responsibility to ensure their own working practices throughout the inspection are in accordance with health and safety regulations.

An inspector who encounters evidence of an actual or potential health and safety problem should promptly draw it to the attention of the lead inspector, who will then take it up with the provider.

Suspicious about fraud or malpractice

Inspectors should alert the lead inspector to any suspicions they may have about any deliberate fraud, improper use of public funds or other such malpractice. The lead inspector should, in the first instance, raise such suspicions with their inspection manager.

Role of observers

The role of every person present at an inspection should be made clear to the nominee. Observers must not take any part in the inspection, either by collecting evidence, giving comments or making judgements.

The collection of evidence

Observations of learning

The extent to which inspectors can observe learning depends on the type of provider and the nature of the provision. For example, in the case of a course or programme based entirely in a classroom or workshop, inspectors will gather most of their evidence through observation of the learning process. Some types of provision may afford inspectors fewer opportunities to observe learning directly. Inspectors will therefore need to identify other ways in which they can gather evidence, such as by interviewing learners and examining their work.

On inspections which lie within the sole remit of the ALI, a single overall grade is awarded for each learning session observed. This practice differs from that employed on joint ALI/Ofsted inspections where each observation leads to the award of three grades, for teaching, learning and attainment.

Inspectors must not be dogmatic about what makes a successful session. They should not approach an observation with a fixed view on what the session should contain. Inspectors must be prepared for alternative styles of teaching and learning which might be as effective as more familiar styles.

The acid test of a successful learning session are whether its objectives:

- have been met
- are in line with the overall learning plan
- represent an appropriate challenge for all learners

In other words, lesson observations should lead to judgements about what learners have achieved, whether it is appropriate in terms of the overall programme and significant in terms of challenging the learner. Judgements about the outcomes and achievements should be supported by judgements about the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes and other features of the learning session. These may include:

- planning of the session
- extent to which the session relates to previous sessions and other work
- extent to which learners understand the purpose of the session
- management of the session including use of time and the control exercised by the teacher/trainer
- quality of teaching/training
- extent to which effective use is made of learning resources and the quality of the resources themselves
- the quality of accommodation and other physical resources
- appropriateness of learning activities in relation to learning objectives
- extent to which learners' needs are catered for
- level of involvement/engagement of learners

- motivation of learners
- punctuality/attendance of learners.

In short, when observing learning, inspectors are required to assess, first and foremost, the learning outcomes. Judgements are then required about the 'ingredients' of the session: the features which made it successful or not. If the learning outcomes are unsatisfactory, it is unlikely that the session as a whole can be anything other than unsatisfactory, regardless of other factors.

Inspectors:

- identify opportunities for observing learning sessions as early as possible. Where appropriate, select a sample of sessions to observe and agree this with the lead inspector on the first day of an inspection. You may be given a provisional list of sessions agreed between the lead inspector and the nominee. Use your professional judgement to decide if this list provides a representative sample of the sessions available. Ask for changes if it does not.
- avoid observing more than one or two sessions led by the same teacher or trainer.
- introduce yourself very briefly to the teacher or trainer. Ask to see the plan for the session and a copy of any scheme of work.
- record how many learners are, and should be, attending and look at records of attendance.
- do not participate in the learning or assessment process
- be as unobtrusive as possible during learning sessions.
- observe some sessions from the start to see how they are introduced and how latecomers are dealt with.
- observe the later stages of some sessions to see how the teacher or trainer summarises what has been taught and learnt, concludes the session and prepares learners for the next session.
- stay long enough in a learning session to reach valid judgements on the effectiveness of the teaching or training and the learning.
- focus on the standards of learners' work. Wherever possible, look at some learners' folders and practical work during the session.
- if you observe any unsafe or dangerous practice during your observation you must use your professional judgement about any, or the right degree of, intervention to make.

- always make notes during the session using the learning session observation form and record grades using the following 7-point scale:
 - grade 1 - excellent
 - grade 2 - very good
 - grade 3 - good
 - grade 4 - satisfactory
 - grade 5 - unsatisfactory
 - grade 6 - poor
 - grade 7 - very poor.

This contemporary record of the observation is your evidence. It should not be copied out later, so your writing must be legible.

- if questioned, make it clear to the teacher or trainer that inspectors focus on the effectiveness of the learning process, not on the performance of individual teachers or trainers. Explain that findings about the effectiveness of the learning process are taken into account when determining the grade for an area of learning.
- make it clear that inspectors do not identify individual teachers or trainers in meetings, when giving feedback to the nominee, or in the report.
- only sessions in which learning takes place should be graded. These may include tutorials, practical sessions, and on-the-job and off-the-job training sessions.
- at the end of your observation (or by arrangement later) give each teacher or trainer observed some feedback on what you have seen. Do not disclose your grade but do make it clear how effective you judge the learning to have been.
- remember that the *Common Inspection Framework* focuses on the needs of the individual learner.

Documentary evidence

- Inspection judgements cannot be made solely by examining documents. Documents, however, can be a key source of evidence, which may corroborate other evidence.
- The ALI's guidance on interpreting the *Common Inspection Framework* suggests various sources of evidence under each of the framework's key questions.
- The provider is asked to place the main documents in the inspectors' base room, and to indicate where inspectors may find other documents they need.
- Inspectors may ask the nominee for other documents during the course of the inspection; do this as early as possible.

- The provider's self-assessment report and development plans are key sources of evidence.
- Read reports from internal and external verifiers, as appropriate.
- Learners' files, attendance records, meeting notes, complaints' records, policy documents and management data must be examined.
- Avoid taking any of the provider's documents off the premises.
- Keep a copy of key documentary evidence.

Examining learners' work

Inspectors:

- examine a sample of learners' practical and written work at various levels and across different types of provision.
- discuss work with a sample of learners.
- observe learners carrying out practical activities.
- look at work in progress and work that has been completed and assessed.
- evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of assignments.
- make judgements about the standard of learners' work and its appropriateness to the course or programme.
- determine whether assessment is rigorous and fair, and evaluate the quality of the written and spoken feedback given to learners.
- assure themselves that the work has been carried out by the learners themselves and by no one else.

Interviews with learners and staff

Inspectors:

- prepare for interviews in advance, making notes of the topics you wish to cover.
- explain to the interviewee who you are and what you are doing. In particular, make sure that learners know that you are inspecting the provider, not them.
- stress to interviewees that what they say will not be attributed to them as individuals.

- explain to learners that their views may be quoted verbatim in reports, but that individuals will not be identified.
- take account of people's individual circumstances (for example those who have a disability) when arranging and conducting interviews.
- conduct interviews in a place that is sufficiently private.
- be approachable and professional; many interviewees will be nervous and may interpret your questions as 'aggressive' unless you are careful.
- mainly use open questions and avoid terms that the interviewee may not fully understand.
- give interviewees time to collect their thoughts.
- prevent interviewees from dominating the interview with their individual concerns.
- make a note of key messages and an overall evaluation on the evidence forms.
- give interviewees an opportunity to make further points that they consider relevant.
- compare evidence gathered during interviews with similar evidence obtained from other sources, looking for means of corroboration.
- continuously review whether a wider sample of learners or staff needs to be interviewed.
- as with observations, the contemporary record of your interviews forms the evidence.

Recording evidence

- Detailed records are kept throughout an inspection using the inspectors' notebook. The notebook is a permanent record of the inspection judgements and the evidence upon which those judgements are based. Make notes of any key points, a summary of the main evidence and the findings as they emerge during the inspection.
- The contents of the inspectors' notebook are used by the lead inspector when compiling the final report. The notebook should include instances of good or poor practice which enliven published reports and feed into the good practice database and are valuable material for inclusion in national survey reports.

- Records kept by inspectors are an essential source of evidence if a provider makes a complaint or an appeal.
- The completed notebook must be given to the lead inspector at the end of the inspection.

Collecting evidence for other inspectors

- You are responsible for collecting and analysing a comprehensive range of evidence for the area(s) that you are inspecting. Each inspector must pass to others on the team any evidence that may be relevant to them.
- In particular, the inspector reporting on leadership and management relies heavily upon other inspectors for evidence that they collect during the inspection of areas of learning.
- Area of learning inspectors must provide the leadership and management inspector with judgements on how well the teaching and learning is managed and led.
- Area of learning inspectors must provide the quality assurance and equality of opportunity inspectors with judgements on these aspects as they relate to a particular area of learning.
- All inspectors must use the INO8 forms of the inspection notebook to record Key Findings. These notes will be used by the lead inspector when they prepare the inspection report.

Making judgements

Strengths

Those features of the provision that are above and beyond that which is expected and lead to a more than satisfactory learning experience for the learners.

Weaknesses

Those features of the provision that are below that which is expected and lead to a less than satisfactory learning experience for the learners.

Bullets

Strengths and weaknesses are expressed in bullet points during the inspection and in the report. Short, single theme, jargon-free plain English bullets must be formed as soon as the judgement is secure.

Areas of learning

Each area of learning is graded separately. The grade awarded is determined mainly on the balance of the strengths and weaknesses, taking into account aspects of provision which are merely satisfactory. Separate contributory grades may be awarded for different types of programme or for subdivisions of the area of learning.

Leadership and management

The grade for leadership and management is determined on the balance of all of the strengths and weaknesses in leadership and management, taking into account aspects of provision which are satisfactory. An overall grade for leadership and management is decided upon first. Then, contributory grades are arrived at for equality of opportunity and quality assurance. In line with the *Common Inspection Framework*, the grades for leadership and management will reflect the quality of the areas of learning.

Giving feedback to teachers and trainers

An inspector must give confidential feedback to the teacher or trainer after observing a learning session. This should be done immediately after the session, or as soon after as is practicable. The feedback will necessarily be brief and will simply focus on key points arising from the session. No grade is given to the teacher or trainer. The feedback is not intended to be a comprehensive review of the teacher's or trainer's professional capability.

Team meetings

The purpose of team meetings is to enable inspectors to share emerging findings with each other and the nominee.

Only inspectors and the nominee may attend these meetings. A substitute nominee may be allowed in exceptional circumstances such as illness.

All team members are expected to attend team meetings unless permission to be absent is obtained from the lead inspector. In inspections where team members are widely dispersed, alternative arrangements may be made for inspectors to share information each day by e-mail, fax or telephone.

The initial team meeting provides inspectors and the nominee with an opportunity to raise and clarify queries concerning the inspection schedule and documentation.

After this meeting, the provider's lead manager will give a brief introduction to the provider's work and highlight any aspects of the self-assessment report to which they wish the inspection team's attention to be drawn.

As the inspection progresses, **daily team meetings** allow inspectors to raise queries and problems, discuss progress and share inspection findings with each other and the nominee. These meetings give the nominee an opportunity to correct factual inaccuracies, to query emerging judgements and to provide additional information.

At the final grading meeting, the findings of the area of learning inspectors are considered by the team as well as the findings of inspectors working on leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality assurance.

Conduct of team meetings

- Meetings should not last an unreasonable length of time.
- Before the meeting, inspectors should make notes of emerging judgements.
- Inspectors should keep their feedback to the team as brief as possible, concentrating solely on emerging strengths and weaknesses.
- Issues meriting lengthy discussion with the nominee or other staff should be dealt with outside of the meeting.
- Inspectors should not modify or dilute the message they are giving. Possible problem areas should be signalled as they arise.
- The nominee may take notes.
- The nominee should be aware that the judgements shared at the team meeting are provisional, although as the inspection progresses the judgements become more secure.
- The nominee should register any disagreements or concerns he or she has with inspection findings at the meetings, so that the team can address them before provisional grades are agreed at the final grading meeting.

Report writing

An inspection report is the public record of an inspection. As such, it must be factually accurate. The judgements presented must be consistent with the inspection evidence and reflect the collective view of the inspection team. The inspection report and, in particular, the detailed inspection findings, should contribute to bringing about improvement by giving the provider a sound basis for a post-inspection action plan or development plan and furnishing useful information to funding bodies.

Associate inspectors:

- produce a draft of the section(s) of the report for which they are responsible, in the format requested by the lead inspector and in line with the ALI's house style.
- ensure that an area of learning report clearly makes judgements on all seven key questions of the *Common Inspection Framework*. This means making judgements on aspects that are satisfactory, as well as strengths and weaknesses.
- check that all data used are traceable to a verified source and that the numbers add up correctly.
- check that the interpretation of data in the text is consistent with any data in the tables.
- use form IN09 of the inspection notebook to record any examples of good practice and pass this form to the lead inspector.

Lead inspectors:

- work on the draft sections of the report to produce coherent text that is ready for moderation and editing. This means eliminating inconsistencies in judgements, weeding out unnecessary repetition and producing clearly written, unambiguous text that is rich in judgement.
- produce a 'Key Findings' section for the inspection report that gives an overall picture of the provision and reflects the grades awarded and the strengths and weaknesses identified. Inspectors will find an exemplar report, *GFI Training*, on the Inspection Zone of Excalibur. This outlines the prescribed elements of the inspection report.
- ensure that the report accurately reflects the judgements made by the inspection team and communicated to the provider at the feedback meeting.
- check all the data in the report for consistency and accuracy, both in the tables and the text.

- use the guidance on the Inspection Zone of Excalibur to create a report on the inspection report system.

Writing style

- the inspection report should be written in language that can be understood by a 'lay' person; that is, someone who is not familiar with the jargon of the adult learning sector.
- the detailed inspection findings can use some of the language more commonly used in the sector. See the ALI's house style guide on the Inspection Zone of Excalibur for details. However, plain language is still preferred and editors will comment unfavourably on excessive use of jargon.
- bullet points should convey as much meaning as possible within about 12 words. Do not use main verbs as these make bullets less punchy. Start each bullet with an adjective or adjectival descriptor, e.g. good, poor, well-planned etc. See guidance on Inspection Zone of Excalibur.
- description should be kept to an absolute minimum in the detailed inspection findings; inspectors should reserve description for setting judgements into context by means of short examples.
- keep tenses consistent. Use the present tense, except where describing specific events in the past, such as observed learning sessions. Do not use future or conditional tenses as these can read as recommendation or speculation.
- a logical and consistent order is needed for paragraphs of a report. Inspectors should deal with strengths, satisfactory elements and weaknesses (in that order) within each section (achievement and standards, the quality of education and training, leadership and management).

Meetings

Grading meetings

The purpose of the grading meeting is to clarify inspection judgements and decide grades. Grading decisions are the responsibility of the whole team, not just the inspector responsible for inspecting and reporting on the area concerned. The aim should be to reach a consensus.

- the lead inspector chairs the grading meeting. All inspectors and the nominee are present. Exceptionally, for example because of illness, a substitute may attend instead of the nominee. The nominee is not involved in making decisions about the grades.
- grading is against a five-point scale. Refer to the following descriptors:
 - grade 1 - outstanding
 - grade 2 - good
 - grade 3 - satisfactory
 - grade 4 - unsatisfactory
 - grade 5 - very weak
- each area of learning is discussed and graded in turn. A grade is then decided for leadership and management.
- contributory grades are agreed after the main grade.
- each grade is decided mainly on the basis of strengths and weaknesses, taking into account satisfactory elements of the provision. Each member of the team should be given a written set of bullet points for all the areas to be graded.
- those inspectors least involved in inspecting a particular area are asked to propose a grade first.
- in arriving at the contributory grades account is taken of the extent to which each of the bullet points applies to the contributory aspects. For example, some bullet points may apply only to quality assurance and others may apply partially to quality assurance.
- the inspection team should check that judgements are made in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework*.
- when all team members understand the judgements for the area, and acknowledge the weight to be given to each, the team agrees a grade. If the team comes to a unanimous decision about the grade, there is no further discussion. If team members have differing views about the grade, they debate

them until a consensus is reached. The nominee listens to their discussion but may not contribute to decisions on grading. The lead inspector helps the inspectors to agree on a grade.

- the process of deliberation continues until grades for all areas have been decided. The lead inspector must be satisfied that all grading decisions are justified.
- grades at this point are subject to moderation and remain so until the report is published.
- the lead inspector collects all papers that have been used for grading from inspectors and the nominee.
- provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate and require full reinspection where
 - more than one third of published grades for areas of learning are judged less than satisfactory, or
 - leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory.
- the lead inspector must inform the provider of any grade amendments as soon as possible.

If the grade profile meets the condition for full reinspection, then the lead inspector indicates this to the nominee, explaining that the final decision rests with the Chief Inspector.

Feedback of inspection findings

The feedback should reflect the structure of the inspection report. The provider must be left with a written record of the feedback, either in the form of a copy of any presentation slides used or the lead inspector's feedback notes.

It is vital that the feedback should provide a balanced account of the strengths and weaknesses in each aspect of provision inspected. Inspectors need to balance strengths and weaknesses carefully to ensure that they reflect the grade awarded. As far as possible, inspectors should try to leave the provider in a positive frame of mind.

- the lead inspector starts the feedback by thanking the provider for the co-operation received in the course of planning and carrying out the inspection. The lead inspector should explain that the feedback will be delivered in its entirety, followed by questions from the provider. Where appropriate, the lead inspector will call on other members of the inspection team to give feedback on specific aspects of provision.
- the lead inspector explains the inspection process and outlines the evidence base for the inspection judgements.
- the lead inspector presents the learning session observation grades if there has been a sufficient number of observations for a table to appear in the report.
- the lead inspector presents the inspection grades and emphasises that, at this stage of the inspection process, they are provisional and subject to moderation by inspection managers and then by directors. The lead inspector explains that the moderation process is designed to ensure that the inspection grades are consistent and in line with those awarded for similar providers nationally.
- the lead inspector, drawing on other members of the inspection team where appropriate, presents the strengths and weaknesses in each area of learning and in leadership and management. These should reflect the strengths and weaknesses that the lead inspector intends to include in the inspection report.
- the strengths of each aspect of provision should be covered first, then the weaknesses.
- where relevant, the word "weakness" should be used rather than a euphemism, such as "issue" or "area for improvement". The provider should be left in no doubt about the nature of the weaknesses which have had a material effect on the grades.
- through discussions before the feedback, the lead inspector must have a clear understanding of each strength and weakness and be assured that there is sufficient inspection evidence to support them.

- the provider should be given a written record of the strength and weakness bullet points. The lead inspector must explain that these may be revised as a result of the moderation and editing process. In the feedback, it will generally not be sufficient to simply read out each strength and weakness bullet point. Some exemplification and reference to the evidence base will usually be necessary.
- the lead inspector outlines the key challenges for the provider. These should reflect the challenges that will appear in the inspection report.
- the lead inspector informs the provider that any specific examples of good practice identified by the team will be followed up by an ALI representative, usually by a phone call, for potential inclusion in a database of Good Practice.
- at the end of the formal feedback, the lead inspector, drawing on other members of the inspection team as appropriate, should be prepared to clarify points made and answer queries from the provider about particular strengths and weaknesses.
- following any questions, the lead inspector outlines what happens next.
- the provider's attention is drawn to the publication timescale. The lead inspector explains that a draft copy of the report will be sent shortly before publication to enable the provider to check that facts in the report are correct.
- the lead inspector explains how the provider can evaluate the inspection by using the form that accompanies the published inspection report. Note is taken of any concerns which the provider expresses about the inspection.
- the lead inspector refers to any requirements that relevant finding bodies have regarding the preparation of a post-inspection action plan.
- the lead inspector draws attention to the complaints procedure, particularly where the discussion has resulted in a dispute about the validity of the inspection outcomes.
- it may be that the nominee wants further clarification of inspection judgements after the inspection team has left. To facilitate this, the lead inspector should indicate a willingness to provide this by phone in the week following inspection.

Overall, the feedback has to be an authoritative account of the inspection judgements. It must give the provider confidence that the lead inspector is in a position to produce a fully evidenced inspection report. The feedback, or the report itself, is no place for tentatively presented judgements or grades. Regardless of whether the lead inspector personally fed back the inspection findings for a particular aspect of provision, it is vital that they fully understand why each judgement has been made.

SECTION 3

Standard documents

Many of the forms and other documents needed by inspectors are available to them only on the ALI's Excalibur network. Examples of three documents of wider interest are shown on the next pages:

1. Letter of confirmation
2. Planning meeting agenda
3. Outline inspection schedule

A range of other documents, including the *Common Inspection Framework* and *Making a Complaint*, may be found on the ALI's website:

Guidance on the *Common Inspection Framework*

The following documents are available on the ALI's website to help in interpreting the *Common Inspection Framework*:

Guidance for providers on the inspection of Adult and Community Learning
Guidance for providers on the inspection of **learn**direct
Guidance for providers on the inspection of literacy, numeracy and ESOL support
Guidance for providers on the inspection of provision funded through Jobcentre Plus
Guidance for providers on the inspection of work-based learning
Guidance for providers on the inspection of Workstep provision funded through Jobcentre Plus

1 Letter of confirmation

Provider's nominee name

Job title

Name of provider

Provider address 1

Provider address 2

Provider address 3

Postcode

Date

Dear

Confirmation of Inspection – (name of provider)

I understand you are the nominee for (name of provider) for the purpose of the inspection. I confirm the arrangements for the inspection, which we agreed by telephone:

Planning meeting: Date, time, location

Inspection dates: Dates

Feedback meeting: Date, time, location

Accuracy check meeting: Date, time, location

I will invite representatives of the local LSC (and/or Jobcentre Plus) to the planning and feedback meetings. I attach an agenda for the planning meeting. For the meeting, it would be helpful if you could have up-to-date numbers of learners and/or clients and their likely location on the first (three) days of the inspection.

I look forward to meeting you. Please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail or by telephone if you have any queries or concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Name

Lead Inspector

e-mail

Telephone:

2 Planning meeting agenda

Adult Learning Inspectorate

Planning Meeting Agenda

(Name of provider)

Date and time of meeting:

Location:

- Introductions
- The basis for the inspection
- Proposed inspection team
- Identity of the nominee and his or her role
- Scope of the inspection
- Opportunities for observation
- Sample selection
- Agreement of an outline inspection schedule
- Inspection timetable including start times
- Data
- Documentation requirements
- Base room, parking, hotel and domestic arrangements
- Health and safety of inspectors
- Feedback arrangements
- Report
- Evaluation & complaints procedure

3 Outline Inspection Schedule

Outline Inspection Schedule for (name of provider)

Inspector	Inspecting responsibility	Report-writing responsibility	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Lead inspector						Grading meeting Report writing Feedback meeting
Assisting lead inspector						
Associate inspector 1						
Associate inspector 2						
Associate inspector 3						
Associate inspector 4						

* Change table size to suit the inspection