Securing success

setting targets and monitoring
and supporting learner progress
in post-16 education and training

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research
report

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Contents

Preface and acknowledgements

This report presents the outcomes of an investigation of effective practice in setting targets and monitoring and supporting learner progress in post-16 education and training. It is intended to support the implementation from September 2005 of the proposed New Measures of Success programme, developed jointly by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) as part of the government's Success for All strategy.

The project from which the report derives was undertaken as part of the Learning and Skills Development Agency's (LSDA's) strategic research programme contract with LSC for 2004/05 and took place between December 2004 and September 2005.

Summary of findings

- Evidence of commitment to target-setting, and effective monitoring and support of learner progress is apparent across all sectors. Established formal systems of 'value added' or distance travelled are much more common in Level 3 programmes in colleges than they are at Levels 1 and 2 and throughout WBL or ACL.

- Systems currently in place for setting targets and monitoring and supporting learner progress vary according to the nature of the provider, the level of the learner and the provider's ethos. Evidence suggests that a number of key indicators help determine the type of system that has been put in place, and whether or not it is successful:

  ➢ management commitment to have systems in place that work for the benefit of the organisation and its learners; this commitment is backed up by clear policies and procedures and dedicated staff with general responsibility for quality improvement and/or the specific coordination of target-setting and monitoring systems, including value-added methodologies
  ➢ staff development in place for everyone involved in the system, and organisational procedures to be reviewed regularly to ensure continuous improvement
  ➢ acknowledgement that systems need to be tailored to the characteristics of the learner so that, for example, different approaches are necessary for AS/A-level learners aged 16–19, adults, students with learning difficulties or for those in vocational training or WBL; there are important distinctions to be drawn between learners with a background of success and those who have previously under-performed or had false starts; furthermore, in WBL the expectations of employers and clients can be a much stronger motivator than assessment grades
  ➢ the need in certain circumstances to comply with contractual obligations, the specific requirements of Jobcentre Plus provision or programmes like Entry to Employment (E2E)
  ➢ the provision of systems and processes that are learner-centred, easy to understand and which wherever possible seek to measure effort, attainment and personal development; systems also encompass key skills, basic skills or Skills for Life
  ➢ buy-in of staff and learners throughout the organisation, so that all staff are complying with procedures, and feel they can contribute to the evolution of systems; learners also need to participate in, and preferably take ownership of, target-setting and monitoring their own progress; targets are negotiated sensitively and flexibly through discussions with tutors, and learners are encouraged to reflect on their own progress.

- Although providers have different systems for target-setting and monitoring and supporting learner progress, essentially all encompass the following main elements, with systems at individual providers varying in the detail, and in interpretation and implementation:

  ➢ initial assessment
  ➢ induction
  ➢ progress reviews
  ➢ record keeping and management information systems (MIS)
  ➢ progression
  ➢ related staff development (and sometimes appraisal).

- There are also indications of tensions concerning these systems and processes:

- Where one type of provision dominates, providers tend to concentrate on developing systems and processes for that area; this means that provision for other types of learner is often much less well developed.
- Many WBL providers are bound by contractual obligations that require achievement to take place within a certain timeframe and stipulate a minimum requirement for learner reviews. In these circumstances, some see little need for measuring 'value added' or distance travelled, especially where there are rigorous entry requirements and high achievement rates.
- The terminology that applies in this area is not well understood and is employed inconsistently. The term 'value added' is used to refer to a wide range of systems and characteristics associated with learner progress and performance, far beyond the definition employed in *New measures of success.*[1] As yet the term 'distance travelled' as defined in *New measures of success* is not widely used and the distinction between the two terms is not well understood.[2]
- There is some confusion and conflict between the use of value-added methodologies for formative assessment purposes with individual learners, and their use in measuring institutional performance.
- There are significant differences in opinion on the use of measures of 'value added' and distance travelled for purposes of the appraisal of the performance of teaching staff. In sixth form colleges the A-Level Performance System (ALPS) is currently employed in this way, and a number of WBL providers also make use of learner performance evidence within their staff appraisal procedures. In other instances, though, it is felt strongly that the exclusion of such measures from the processes of staff appraisal is crucial to their successful use with learners.
- There are problems whenever key members of staff move on or where organisations are subject to major management restructuring. In such circumstances, systems and processes often fall into abeyance, fail to develop further or are replaced with new systems that take time to implement.
- There are analogous issues when learners move between different types of provider, with different systems in place. Procedures are therefore not complementary and learners are disadvantaged as a result.
- A significant minority of staff remain sceptical, and consider target-setting inappropriate for the learners with whom they deal. In the main, though, those concerned are concentrated in areas that hitherto have had little or no exposure to the operation of formal 'value-added' or distance-travelled methodologies. Perhaps as a consequence they are resistant to the adoption of organisation-wide processes for monitoring and supporting progress.
- Some managers, too, are wary of involvement in national value-added benchmarking systems for fear they are not comparing 'like with like', despite reassurance that measures of value-added and distance travelled take account of differences in learner background in as much as they impinge on prior attainment. This perception appears to stem from a misunderstanding that such measures are only capable of being applied to learners on academic courses at Level 3.

- A major issue to emerge is the sensitivity with which achievement targets need to be mediated to individual learners if their motivation is to be properly sustained. Though quantitative methodologies have the advantage of robust statistical bases, when applied rigidly they can be met with considerable resentment by some learners – and especially

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[1] DfES, LSC, Ofsted and ALI, *Piloting new measures of success: the quality improvement pack*, 2005.

[2] For full details of the 'official' use and application of these terms, see *Piloting new measures of success.*

those whose performance at Key stage 4 does not represent their true potential. There are also issues related to the appropriateness of the application of quantitatively derived targets to those with learning difficulties or disabilities.

- There is also the question of how the evidence regarding effective practice presented here can be assimilated in a way that is fully compatible with and supportive of the introduction of the New Measures of Success programme. The roll-out of the Learner Achievement Tracker (LAT) software is set to replace or run alongside many proprietary and in-house systems referred to in this report.

- In the case of WBL and ACL the implications of New Measures of Success for future practice are likely to require significant changes. There are clearly major issues of awareness raising and staff development, and it is important that those concerned are absolutely clear about what is required.

1   Background and aims of the project

The project took place in a context where a number of further education (FE) and sixth form colleges were known to have established processes to set targets for learners, monitor learner progress and support learners in the achievement of their targets. Such systems appeared to be well developed in school sixth forms and sixth form colleges that specialised in AS/A2 levels and Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs). Where vocational qualifications are concerned, however, little had been researched and published in this area since 2001.[3] Discussions with providers in the context of the New Measures of Success initiative had revealed considerable interest in and enthusiasm to improve and extend target-setting systems. Providers and other stakeholders (notably the inspectorates) had advised that the new value-added and 16–19 distance-travelled data would be of most use to providers that had well-developed processes to set targets for learners, and to monitor and support their progress.

When the project commenced, work had already been undertaken to develop recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) process standards for adult learners in non-accredited learning. During the course of this project it was decided that RARPA would also be extended to accredited courses for adults, as other research undertaken by LSDA indicated that it would not be feasible to develop a viable quantitative measure of distance travelled for older learners.

The overall objectives of the project were agreed as being to:

- identify effective processes to set targets for learners, and support them in achieving such targets
- develop recommendations and case study examples in support of target-setting processes
- inform the implementation of the RARPA process standards to accredited provision.

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[3] Martinez P *Great expectations: setting targets for students*, LSDA, 2001; Martinez P and Rudden T *'value added' in vocational qualifications*, LSDA, 2001. In 2004, the Association of Colleges published a short survey: *Developing value-added measures for vocational and other provision.*

2   Methodology

The first stage of the project (Stage 1), undertaken in December 2004 and January 2005, comprised a postal questionnaire survey of a sample of school sixth forms, sixth form colleges, general FE and tertiary colleges, WBL providers and ACL providers. The survey was undertaken by RCU Ltd, and was aimed at establishing as detailed a snapshot as possible of the current state of play in learner target-setting within the sector. It sought to identify the level and type of qualification involved, the use and perceptions of proprietary and self-designed systems, the extent of progress made, plus perceptions concerning impact on student success, and needs for development and support. Respondents were also asked to indicate if they were prepared to be involved in the subsequent stages of the survey. In all 1214 questionnaires were sent out, and 373 returned completed – a response rate of just over 30%. The detailed findings of the survey are available under separate cover in RCU's report to LSC of January 2005.[4]

Based on the outcomes of Stage 1, quantitative analysis of learner performance was undertaken, based on individualised learner record (ILR), value-added and distance-travelled data supplied by LSC. The analysis was intended to check evidence for improvements in learner progress as a result of the implementation of learner target-setting and monitoring, and therefore to inform the selection of a sample of providers likely to be able to demonstrate effective practice.

During March–May 2005, LSDA consultants visited a sample of all types of provider to identify and record effective practice. The starting point for sample selection was the list of 167 respondents to the Stage 1 survey who had indicated their interest in being involved in follow-up work, plus relevant case studies within the *Support for Success* programme database (**www.s4s.org.uk**). An initial shortlist was then drawn up, aimed overall at ensuring there was a range of types of provider spread across the different regions, and serving different types of catchment area. This was then further refined on the basis of the quantitative evidence of learner performance with the providers concerned.

A total of 21 providers participated in this stage of the project, as follows:

- places of ACL   3
- general FE and tertiary colleges   9
- school sixth forms   1
- sixth form colleges   2
- places of WBL   6

Fuller contextual information for those taking part is set out in Annex A.

Please note that one of the participating ACL centres is also a provider of WBL. Likewise, all but two of the general FE and tertiary colleges are also providers of WBL, though in three instances the numbers of learners involved in that type of provision are very small.

Each of the participating providers was visited twice by a LSDA consultant. During the visits, interviews were held with senior managers, course organisers, lecturers, trainers and, wherever possible, individual learners. Interviews followed a semi-structured approach,

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[4] RCU Ltd, *Consultation with post-16 education and training providers*, Jan 2005.

based on a standard checklist of questions to ensure consistency (see Annex B). Associated documentation was also examined.

A summary of the findings arising from the quantitative analysis of learner performance that formed the second stage project is set out in Section 3 below. The findings concerning effective practice in setting targets and monitoring and supporting learner progress, as established via the consultants' visits to the sample of providers, then follow in Sections 4–10, with a checklist of related questions for providers in the final Section 11. The findings are supported by a range of case studies that together cover the various elements of the process and the different approaches followed according to type of provision.

3 Quantitative analysis of learner performance in relation to target-setting

Analysis was undertaken to investigate the extent to which there is evidence that the adoption of target-setting strategies has been associated with above average and/or improving levels of learner performance. Retention and achievement rates were examined for the years 2001/02, 2002/03 and 2003/04 – the last three complete years for which ILR data is available.[5] The aggregate 'value added' and distance-travelled scores that have so far been calculated by LSC for the sample of participating providers, in association with the forthcoming implementation of New Measures of Success, were also examined.

The main outcomes of this analysis may be summarised as follows.

- Rates of learner retention were found to be significantly above the national average in the case of the majority of the providers who participated in this study. This position had strengthened in the most recent year for which data was available, especially for AS, A2 and AVCE qualifications, where 10 providers had retention rates above the national average, and none below. A slight majority had also improved their retention performance at a faster rate than the national average over the period in question. Here again, this finding was particularly pronounced for academic qualifications at Level 3.

- Performance in relation to learner achievement was somewhat less positive – on balance achievement was better than the national average, but with a more even spread in the most recent year for which data was available. Furthermore, the improvement in the national rates of achievement across the period in question had outstripped those at all but a few of the providers concerned.

- With regard to the limited amount of value-added and distance-travelled data so far available, the picture was marginally positive. A slight majority of the providers who participated in the project had negative value-added scores. However, when confidence limits are taken into account six had scores which cannot be distinguished from the average, leaving three with above average scores and only one with a below average score. For the scores for distance travelled in FE and WBL providers, though, a clear majority of the providers concerned displayed positive scores, though in a number of cases only small numbers of learners were involved.

On this basis, therefore, quantitative evidence of the impact of learner target-setting can be regarded as generally positive, though far from conclusive. This is not to say that the true effect may not be more pronounced than we have been able to establish at this stage. Previous research has indicated that in recent years there has been a significant general uplift in learner achievement on academic courses at Level 3, especially in sixth form colleges in the wake of their nigh-on universal adoption of value-added methodologies.[6] Possible reasons why our analysis has not revealed stronger evidence of the positive impact of learner target-setting are suggested below:

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[5] ILR data for WBL is only available for 2002/03 and 2003/04, and for ACL only for 2003/04.
[6] Martinez P *Great expectations: setting targets for students*, LSDA, 2001.

- In some instances the use of target-setting techniques has not been in place long enough to have had time to have much effect on learners' performance up to 2003/04, the last year for which full data was available for analysis.

- Inevitably, a sizeable part of the evidence base for the selection of the sample of providers that participated in the project was qualitative – and some of it also self-reported. It is therefore quite possible that in practice a minority of them were no further forward with target-setting than the average for their type.

- In the case of academic qualifications at Level 3, the use of learner target-setting geared to previously available value-added systems was already widespread in colleges. Though some of the related providers that participated in this research may well have been employing learner target-setting to good effect, there are also many who were not involved of which the same is true.

- In other types of qualification, formal systems of target-setting were generally less well developed, and were applied less comprehensively. In these circumstances, the impact of good practice on learner performance data may be masked within the overall aggregate figures.

4   Systems in operation

This section of the report outlines some of the systems in place for setting targets and monitoring and supporting learner progress. The systems referred to are meant as illustrative examples only and are not recommended or endorsed by the LSC or LSDA. The purpose of this section, and those that follow, is to provide examples of effective practice and inform practitioners of some of the issues they may need to consider relating to their own practice or future developments. For details of the learning providers mentioned in the text, please refer to Annex A.

4.1   Factors that determine the systems to put in place

Systems do not develop overnight, but are the result of a number of factors, including government policy, contractual requirements and organisational development. The systems currently in place for setting targets and monitoring and supporting learner progress vary according to the nature of the provider, the level of the learner and the provider's ethos for developing systems for target-setting and measuring 'value added' or distance travelled.[7]

However, evidence gathered from providers suggests that there are some key indicators that help determine what systems are put in place, and whether or not they are successful.

- Management should be committed to have systems in place that work for the benefit of the organisation and its learners. This commitment is usually backed up by clear policies and procedures and dedicated staff with a responsibility for quality or coordinating specific systems of 'value added'. Staff development is in place for everyone involved in the system, and organisational systems and processes are reviewed regularly to ensure continuous improvement.

- Providers should acknowledge that systems need to be tailored to the characteristics of the learner so that, for example, different approaches are necessary for AS/A-level learners aged 16–19, adults, students with learning difficulties or for those in vocational training or WBL.

- In certain circumstances it is necessary to comply with contractual obligations, the specific requirements of Jobcentre Plus provision or programmes like E2E.

- Systems and processes should be learner-centred, easy to understand and which wherever possible seek to measure effort, attainment and personal development. Some providers also set and monitor targets in key skills, basic skills or Skills for Life.

- Staff and learners throughout the organisation should comply with procedures, and feel they can contribute to the evolution of systems. Learners also participate, and preferably take ownership of target-setting and monitoring their own progress.

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[7] Before the introduction of methodologies to measure 'value-added' and distance travelled from September 2005, as part of the New Measures of Success initiative, the best established and most robust systems of 'value added' were ALIS, operated by University of Durham, and ALPS, developed by Greenhead College and now operated by Alkemygold Ltd. In non-accredited learning, the process-based approach RARPA has been successfully developed and piloted over the last two years, and will form a major element of the New Measures of Success initiative for all adult learners.

Targets are negotiated through discussions with tutors, and learners are encouraged to reflect on their own progress. This requires that learners fully understand the process and their targets and are aware of what they need to do to achieve them.

There are, however, some indicators of tensions concerning these systems and processes, which can be summarised as follows.

- Where one type of provision dominates, providers tend to concentrate on developing systems and processes for this area. This means that provision for other types of learner is relatively underdeveloped. For example, a sixth form college might have a well-developed model for AS/A-level students, but not for vocational learners; a WBL provider might have a well-developed system for E2E learners, but not for learners on a foundation programme.

- Some providers are bound by contractual obligations that require achievement to take place within a certain timeframe and stipulate a minimum requirement for learner reviews. Where WBL providers have high entry requirements and high achievement rates, some see little need for measuring 'value added' or distance travelled. As one provider reported, 'Managers are concerned that inappropriate methods for understanding 'value added' and distance travelled may be imposed on WBL providers.'

- There is a tension between institutional target-setting and target-setting for individual learners. Several providers use the outcomes of value-added measures or learner achievements in WBL as a means of measuring staff performance as well as student success.

- There are understandable problems whenever key members of staff move on or where organisations are subject to major management restructuring. This means that systems and processes can fall into abeyance, fail to develop further or be replaced with new systems that take time to implement.

- There is a need to consider methods for engaging sceptical staff who consider 'targets' inappropriate for their learners, and who are reluctant to adopt organisation-wide processes for monitoring and supporting progress. For example, staff teaching foundation skills and Skills for Life in one of the participating colleges resisted the implementation of a new college-wide target-setting process because they considered that it was too stringent for the learners concerned. The involvement of teachers in the design of systems, together with related staff development, can help avoid this kind of problem.

- Some providers are wary of involvement in national value-added benchmarking systems for fear they are not comparing 'like with like', despite reassurance that measures of value-added and distance travelled take account of differences in learner background in as much as they impinge on prior attainment. This perception appears to stem from a misunderstanding that such measures are only capable of being applied to learners on academic courses at Level 3.

The range of circumstances referred to above is best illustrated by four case studies (Case Studies 1–4), which demonstrate how very different providers have developed systems to meet the particular needs of their learners.

Case Study 1 Sixth Form College K

Sixth Form College K is located in Greater Manchester and offers programmes to 16–19 year olds, though not to adults. A significant number of the students come from deprived backgrounds. Some 60% of the learners take AS/A-levels and 98% of A-level students gained grades A–E in 2004. The college has a high value-added rating, which places it in the top 30% of sixth form colleges nationally.

The college operates the ALPS system for its AS/A-level students, which operates by using a GCSE points system. Points are given for each GCSE qualification grade A–G and then averaged. These results are entered onto the college's MIS system and students are given a 'guidance grade', which indicates the AS/A-level grade usually achieved at end examination by students with similar points on entry. Students are given their guidance grade at induction. Tutors and course leaders explain what the guidance grade means and give examples of past students who have used their guidance grade as a benchmark to help them achieve at a higher level than that predicted. Progress against guidance grades is then reviewed at set points in the year and students are given targets that will help them improve. The students are also given grades for progress and effort. If targets are not met at the March review and some students are seriously under-performing, they are interviewed by the student services manager or the vice-principal responsible for the curriculum. This interview can lead to students being given extra supervised study.

At the end of the year the AS and A-level results are sent off to ALPS and the students' actual achievement compared with their guidance grades. This gives a value-added score for individual courses and the college as a whole. Data on grades for progress and effort are not included in this calculation.

The ALPS system has been built into the college's quality system and in general has been well received by teachers. The system has a hard edge, however, as performance related pay in sixth form colleges is linked with teachers' ability to demonstrate that their classes have above average levels of retention, achievement and value-added. College management looks at teacher performance in terms of outcomes and if a course falls below its value-added target, the vice-principal curriculum will meet the curriculum coordinator for that area in order to plan improvement.

Case Study 2 Developing a learner-centred process in a general further education college

College B is a small general FE college serving a disadvantaged area. Over the last three academic years the college has developed a homegrown user-friendly and student-centred system for setting targets and monitoring student performance, using college devised software. The history and scope of the development are described in a LSDA action research project report available at **www.s4s.org.uk**

The system is known as MARA (measuring attainment, raising aspirations) and includes 'hard' and 'soft' targets, the former relating to target grades, the latter to behaviours and personal skills. The software has been set up to allow students to enter and access their own data. It enables them to see a graph that relates their GCSE qualifications on entry to the

likelihood of success in their current courses and to monitor their progress towards targets as they complete units. For soft measures their self-evaluation is based on a checklist and five-point grading system from which the software derives a graphic representation of strengths and areas for improvement. Student involvement in the process provides evidence for the wider key skill Improving Own Learning and Performance and is central to their individual learning plans (ILPs).

Rather than by issuing a policy that all must follow, the college has chosen to roll out the system by incremental adoption as different programme areas are convinced of its relevance and manageability for their particular circumstance. Careful training and support are given to staff and students in each new area of the college that comes on stream. Having begun with a group of volunteer enthusiasts, the system is now in use across most of the full-time Level 3 vocational programmes, while the soft measures are being used on Level 1, Level 2 and non-accredited courses. By September 2005 the MARA system will be used on 80% of college programmes.

Case Study 3 A community education provider

Provider T is a local authority with some 8000 enrolled learners, all of whom attend part-time. Some 60% of learners are on accredited programmes, but many are not graded in the same way as A-levels and GCSEs, so the authority cannot operate a system based on GCSE points scores. In any case, students taking programmes may either have no GCSEs, or have qualifications taken some years ago that lack equivalence.

The authority has therefore developed its own system for measuring value-added and distance travelled on accredited courses. Targets are set out clearly on course information sheets and these, together with any individual targets, are included in students' ILPs. Review and adjustment take place during the course. Any prior knowledge, experience and qualifications required to take the course are also displayed on the information sheet, but for some courses no prior knowledge or attainment is required. Personal targets (referred to as 'personal goals') are established at interview.

Within the same learning group, however, there may be students with aspirations to different levels, so although the learning goals for a course may be similar they will differ according to level. This is because in order to make a course viable in terms of numbers, learners at different levels might end up in the same class – for example in a pottery class there might be learners with aspirations to any one of three levels.

Since there are no grades higher than a 'pass' for many of the qualifications, targets may be expressed in time taken to achieve the qualification or in terms of standards, based on techniques in practical classes. Personal targets can also include giving due regard to health and safety, or improving a particular learning style.

Students are involved in the process from the beginning. They take responsibility for their own ILP. Progress against learning goals (targets) is reviewed a minimum of every five weeks during the course. A section of the ILP 'Comments on progress' must be completed by the student and the tutor at each review. At the end of the programme the students receive a learner achievement record.

Case Study 4   A work-based learning provider

WBL Provider P delivers training in hair and beauty to approximately 400 young people in Merseyside. Half of all learners are on apprenticeship programmes and half are aged 14–16 and training on alternative vocational provision (AVP). A small number of learners are undertaking an E2E programme. Approximately 56% of apprenticeship learners are registered as having additional learning needs, and other learners also have additional support needs.

Although there is a contractual system in place in terms of learner progress against the apprenticeship framework, managers are concerned that this does not record other positive steps made by learners and that some learners also need to develop employability skills. The company had tried to measure these previously by using two college-based systems, but neither had proved appropriate for a work-based learning setting.

An in-house system for identifying a base-line and progress measures was developed by staff and has been piloted with a small group of learners. It is being implemented with all new learners from April 2005. As well as gathering information based on previous qualifications and initial assessment activities, the company has chosen seven key areas that it thinks will contribute markedly to learner progression and employer or industry needs. These are:

- attendance (how often learners attend on and off-the-job)
- punctuality (how often the learner is late for work)
- behaviour (whether the learner is well behaved and able to work unsupervised)
- communication (whether the learner can speak clearly and hold purposeful conversations)
- personal presentation (whether the learner looks after personal hygiene and wears appropriate clothing)
- working with others (whether the learner works well in a team and gets along with colleagues and managers)
- application (whether the learner is focused, motivated and working at an appropriate pace or level).

These descriptors are used to measure learner progress as well as achieving NVQ qualifications. Assessors and reviewers are asked to focus target-setting at the first tutorial or salon review on two or three of the descriptors that best match the development needs of the individual learner, and these are given a points score on a scale of 1 to 7. Reviews then take place every six weeks and these targets or baseline scores are reviewed alongside progress towards qualification. Trainee achievement is celebrated with a 'value-added certificate' for progress made in each area, and new targets are set if there is evidence of any other weaknesses.

These measures are seen as necessary, not simply because progress in these areas makes for better employment prospects, but also because they stimulate, reward, motivate and support learners across key areas. Without these targets learners often make poor progress or drop out before completion.

4.2 Components of a common target-setting process

Although providers have different systems for target-setting and monitoring and supporting learner progress (sometimes several in the same organisation) essentially, *all undertake the same process with learners*. This process comprises the following main elements, with systems at individual providers varying in the detail, and in interpretation and implementation:

- initial assessment for:
  - function, scope and purpose
  - links to previous systems experienced in school, college or with another provider
  - measuring prior learning or achievement
  - determination of 'at risk' factors
  - provision of support
  - target-setting (soft and/or hard)

- induction for:
  - explaining the system or process
  - completion of first ILP
  - initial target-setting (soft and/or hard)

- progress reviews for:
  - number and scheduling
  - preparation of review
  - structure of review
  - learner involvement and motivation
  - communication skills
  - setting SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related) targets
  - monitoring targets

- management information systems for:
  - systems used
  - information recorded
  - teacher and trainer access
  - learner access
  - how information is used

- progression for:
  - end of process and progression
  - use of documentation collected
  - use of data collected

- related staff development and appraisal, including:
  - provision of specific training in aspects of target-setting and review
  - involvement of all staff
  - (sometimes) contribution to the evaluation and appraisal of staff performance.

5 Approaches to establishing a starting point

Any value-added system or record of distance travelled requires some way of measuring where learners are at the start of their programme, in order that their outcomes may be measured in relation to attainment at entry. However, precisely what providers choose to record or measure at the start of a learning programme depends on a number of factors:

- the type of value-added or target-setting system in place
- the nature of the qualification
- the level of the programme of learning
- the typical prior attainment profile of the learners concerne
- whether or not the provider has the funding available and/or is willing or able to help the learner develop other skills and aptitudes, as well as their achievement of the required qualification(s).

Practice varies across all providers, but there are noticeable differences within and between colleges, and when colleges are compared with ACL and WBL providers.

5.1 College systems

5.1.1 Quantitative systems for setting target grades

College systems tend to be based on GCSE points scores, in the form of the A-Level Information System (ALIS) and/or ALPS for AS/A-level learners and, for vocational learners, either a variation of these or a methodology devised in-house. For instance, College G uses its own method for calculating prior attainment and predicting qualification outcomes by assigning scores to prior attainment other than GCSEs, as well as predicting target grades for vocational qualifications by determining equivalence to A-level scores.[8] The college is relatively happy with the accuracy of the system at present, though aware that with subsequent cohorts of learners over time they should be able to hone the accuracy of their predictions. This is also a familiar sentiment with other colleges, though a number are keen to access methodologies specific to newer vocational qualifications.

Where ALPS and ALIS are used, colleges vary according to how the results are conveyed to learners and what action is taken as a result. Sixth Form College K uses the initial assessment process to identify gifted young people with exceptionally high GCSE points scores and/or proven talent in sport, music or drama. The students concerned are encouraged to join the college's 'Aiming High' programme. Those with high GCSE scores undertake extension studies, while others with talent in sport or the performing arts are given the opportunity to improve their performance. At College H, GCSE points scores are not only used to establish a minimum target grade (MTG), but the latter are supplemented by 'Chance Charts', so that new learners are presented with a graphic representation of the proportional breakdown of the performance at final examination of previous entrants with the same target grade. In a similar vein, learners at the sixth form centre forming part of College G are informed of their target minimum grade. Data on the end achievements of former students with similar prior attainment profiles is also provided. Tutors use these examples in discussions with students, highlighting the reasons former students exceeded or did not meet their target grade. They feel this helps to focus students from an early stage on some of the factors that are likely to help them succeed – for example, by spending 'free' time in the library.

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[8] Based on the methodology set out in Martinez P, *Great expectations: setting targets for students*, LSDA, 2001.

However, in colleges using ALIS and ALPS systems the focus during initial assessment is on learners' individual GCSE points scores. These not only give the learner a starting point from where to improve, but they are also the base measure from which management and staff seek to improve the college's own value-added score. Some colleges use supplementary approaches to assess learners' potential. College A uses ALIS for A-level students but supplements targets based on aggregate GCSE points scores with the results of group tutorial assessments, which are set in the context of past student behaviour and experience.

A system that bases target grades solely or primarily on outcomes at GCSE is not without its critics, however, and teachers in some colleges point out the following anomalies:

- Learners' performance at GCSE sometimes reflects the fact that they have been 'coached' in their coursework at school, with the grades obtained overstating their true attainment.
- Some learners boost their overall GCSE points score by gaining a high grade in a community language, despite the fact that they have poor skills in English.
- Initially, some learners can be demotivated when informed of their target grades for A-level because they associate any grade below C with the lower status usually attached to grades D and below at GCSE.
- Some teachers feel that there is now a greater gap than previously existed between GCSEs and A-levels, and that high grades at GCSE therefore do not necessarily mean that learners concerned will excel in the same subjects at A-level.
- Others feel that GCSEs may not adequately capture students' true potential, where they are not be motivated to work hard in subjects for which they lack interest and enthusiasm. The opportunity for greater specialisation at Level 3 therefore means that they are able to reach a higher level of attainment than that predicted.

As an example of this last point, staff at two of the colleges involved in this project described dealing with a number of 'challenging' students, who it is claimed perform badly in some GCSE subjects because they dislike them. This means that they receive a MTG that does not represent their true ability in their chosen subjects at A-level, particularly if their A-level subjects are those in which they did well at GCSE. These staff also regard certain A-level subjects – such as Media Studies and Psychology – as very different in character from any of the GCSEs studied at school. In these circumstances, a low MTG can be demotivational and not reflect learners' true potential.

Although these are only perceptions, they demonstrate the importance of the ways in which this type of value-added scheme is explained to the learner. The views of some students suggest current explanations are not always effective. One learner said that she felt teachers in her sixth form college treated students as 'another mark on the scoreboard'. A student at another college said, 'All my grades were given to me by [the subject teacher]. I wasn't given a reason.' Another commented, 'Sometimes teachers have to make targets, so they do it, but it doesn't matter really.' There is also the view that students should be more involved in setting their own targets. One A-level student said, 'You can have it in your own mind what you can achieve if you want to', while another stated, 'If it's my target I care, not if it's given to me.'

Some colleges are able to demonstrate that they have effective methods of explaining target-setting and value-added processes to learners, as well as describing approaches designed actively to engage them in the process. College D uses a number of methods of ensuring

learners understand and own the process, including the display of posters 'advertising' the use of ALIS, for example: 'Do you know your boy band, do your know your girl band, do you know your ALIS band?'! Student handbooks or 'planners' are issued so that learners can keep their own tally of assignments, marks and activity against other targets that have been agreed. The college is also in the process of piloting the key skills qualification Improving Own Learning and Performance, which is intended to encourage even greater levels of student engagement and reflection on their progress. This initiative has commenced with the involvement of all first-year sixth form students who undertake GCSEs and AS levels.

College B's MARA software system also appears to be particularly student-friendly in its operation.

Case Study 5 Student involvement in initial target-setting at College B

College B offers vocational provision from Entry level to Level 4, in addition to a limited number of part-time GCSE and GCE AS/A-level programmes (the latter being mainly for mature students). Most 16–18-year-old learners are studying at Levels 2–3.

The college has developed its own system for measuring value-added, allowing more effective targets to be set for learners. Students are involved in the target-setting process from the beginning of their time in college. At the beginning of the course they are introduced to MARA and they input their GCSE and other prior attainment data (many students progress to Level 3 courses having previously followed a Level 2 vocational programme at the college). Prior results are divided into two groups:

- primary subjects – English, maths, science and specific course-related GCSEs
- other subjects.

The target grade is calculated on the basis of averaging the total of the scores of the primary subjects and adding the three best scores in the other subjects. The average scores of all students are then turned into a chances chart showing the probability of their success at the end of the programme.

Students also complete a 'soft measure' checklist that includes self-assessment of attendance, punctuality, deadlines, attitude in class, ability to work with others, literacy and numeracy skills, IT skills, time-management and managing the other demands of college. New developments to the software include the chance to self-assess confidence with examinations and other assessments, note-taking ability, learning styles and study skills – including using the internet for research, listening, asking for clarification, preparing a bibliography, writing a report and checking own work. These and other questions provide a rich starting point for self-evaluation and discussion with tutors. Students use pull-down menus against each heading, and enter their self-assessment grade by clicking one of the predefined areas of competency for each heading. The program then generates a profile, highlighting possible areas for development.

This software has received positive feedback from learners and has become an integral part of what they expect from the tutorial system. It allows them to experiment by running simulations of different potential outcomes in units they are taking, identifying how close they are to their target and what else they need to do to complete satisfactorily. One student commented: 'It's a good piece of kit – you can personalise it.'

5.1.2 Other college systems

Other value-added systems used within colleges for non-A-level students appear to be either hybrids of ALIS and ALPS systems (usually including initial assessment) or in-house systems that use initial assessment to develop a snapshot of learners' starting points. The information is then used as a basis for target-setting. This initial assessment process can comprise methods of diagnostic testing; learner self-evaluation of performance, motivation and attitude; practical assessment; the testing of aptitude for a particular career path; and/or the use of school reports. At College F a strong emphasis is placed on Level 1 programmes and Skills for Life, with A-level provision being phased out. As value-added systems based on GCSE points scores are less relevant in these circumstances, the college is instead using initial learning action plans (LAPs) to gather key information about new learners. Each LAP includes:

- previous qualifications
- work experience (paid and unpaid)
- computer skills
- basic skills test results
- perceived barriers to learning
- long-term career plans.

Once this information has been gathered during the initial assessment period, it is used to assess whether learners are on the right course and/or 'at risk' and in need of support. Targets are then set based on individual circumstances. The overall target so far as the college is concerned is that learners pass the course.

Although this is a cross-college system, individual targets vary from department to department, depending on the nature of the learner. As one teacher of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (SLDD) puts it, students with learning difficulties may only achieve 'tiny, tiny steps'. The college accepts that these are soft and variable targets, which differ according to the individual, but feels that the system reflects the level and ability of their learners.

Most colleges, however, tend to have mixed provision and operate two systems. The general pattern is to focus on a GCSE points-based system for A-level students, with a separate system for all vocational learners. Practice in vocational courses varies from department to department. There is evidence that it has proved relatively more difficult to put value-added or target-setting systems in place for part-time students than for those studying full-time.

Case Study 6 Value-added systems at College D

College D is operating in an extremely economically deprived borough with high levels of unemployment for young adults aged 18–24 and a staying-on rate at age 16 well below the national average. Most students at the college are aged 19 or older and well over half are studying Entry level or Level 1 qualifications.

The college has a long history of using value-added systems for all full-time and most part-time provision. Two slightly different systems are in operation, which have been developed over a number of years, and they are continually refined and improved. Because of the

success of the system at the college, staff are actively involved in disseminating their experiences to other providers across the country.

Use of ALIS at College D

A modified form of ALIS is used for A-level students; they are given target grades based on their GCSE points scores, but they are assigned a range of grades rather than just one, selected from four possible ranges: E–C, D–B, C–A and B–A. Students are informed that the lower of the two grades represents the minimum level of end attainment that they should be capable of achieving, but that they have the capacity to move up within the band and beyond. This approach is viewed as a safeguard against the potentially demotivating impact of being set a low target grade.

Many of the college's students enter with the minimum five GCSEs at grade C, which would normally translate into an ALIS target grade of D or E. In practice, this has been found to be demotivating to some of the learners concerned, and the banding approach has encouraged them to raise their aspirations beyond the lower target grade.

Target-setting system with vocational students

Vocational students are also given a target grade at the start of their programme, based on a value-added initial level of 1–7 as the starting point above which they should be aiming to achieve (7 being the lowest level). This score is based on a number of elements, including:

- students' prior qualification profiles
- vocational aptitude test or early diagnostic assessments
- initial course assignments
- assessments undertaken at interview, plus other factors considered important by course teams.

Staff feel it is important to consider more than prior attainment for these learners, and also want to include consideration of how well students perform early on. The college also considers that the 1–7 sequence of levels is easy for students to understand and allows a tangible method of encouraging learners to improve on their performance: 'Well I'm a 3 at the moment and I need to be a 2 in a month's time.' Diagnostic testing is also well established within the college. Further work in this area is being undertaken to ensure staff are employing it effectively.

Criteria have been developed to meet the circumstances of students who enter without previous qualifications. Here, the college employs a baseline measure based on attitude, cooperation, attendance, punctuality and motivation, assessed in the first six weeks during the induction process.

When extending the value-added system to vocational qualifications, the college had initial concerns about whether it would be workable in the case of programmes leading to NVQs, as outcomes are not graded within these courses. However, teaching staff are confident that it is possible to identify better levels of achievement, and that there are 'hidden grades' which are not articulated. Targets are therefore now set for attendance, time for completion,

attitude in the workshop and practical activities such as the use of tools. In this way, forward progress within the NVQ can be monitored effectively.

All learners at college D are introduced to the appropriate system at an early stage of their course, and are expected to be fully informed and engaged with monitoring their performance throughout their studies. The expectation is that the students should not have any surprises. Student reaction to the range of grades that apply appears very favourable, as the system is seen to help them understand the scope of their potential achievements, rather than having it encapsulated in just one target grade.

5.2   Systems in adult and community education

Value-added and distance-travelled systems in ACL are generally underdeveloped, although target-setting is now a feature of many courses. This situation reflects the following factors:

- Most of the learners involved are studying part-time.
- If they have qualifications, some may have been taken many years before, and may also be unconnected to the new programme of study.
- Providers often offer a wide range of accredited and non-accredited courses. Many non-accredited courses are customised to meet the needs of specific client groups.
- Courses can range from 'tasters' which last for only a few hours to those that run for a whole academic year, usually for a few hours each week.
- Learners come from a wide range of backgrounds and have many reasons for accessing education and training. Some have issues to do with health, well-being and personal self-esteem, and measuring distance travelled may be less relevant than steps to sustain them through their studies. Indeed, some tutors take the view that asking vulnerable learners to participate in a value-added or distance-travelled process might well be counter-productive.
- The majority of tutors are part-time, and may lack the time or support necessary to understand and operate formal target-setting systems and processes.

Nevertheless, all ACL participants in the research have ways of gathering information about learners and assessing them on entry, though they vary from provider to provider. Some of those interviewed are uncertain about how many learners in their organisations have an initial interview or test before they are enrolled. However, there is evidence of initial assessment and testing in the following areas:

- Skills for Life
- performing arts
- art and design
- foreign languages
- ICT.

The main purpose of these assessments and tests is to ensure that learners are on the right course at the right level, rather than as a benchmark against which to measure further progress and distance travelled. In one centre, systems and processes appear inconsistent, with different paperwork being used across the centre. For example, learners accessing ICT are given a 'learner pre-assessment questionnaire', while those who wish to study performing arts are given an 'initial assessment resourcing profile'. The chief purpose of

these questionnaires appears to be to find out more about learners' backgrounds and previous experience, but responses are not fed into a formal target-setting system.

In recent years much work has taken place in ACL to develop systems for RARPA, though implementation is still somewhat patchy. There is evidence of effective practice from Provider U, where interviewees noted that an increasing number of learners are coming forward with evidence on non-accredited learning accumulated through RARPA.

Other complications arise where ACL providers contract with Jobcentre Plus to deliver programmes where the major contractual obligation is to get learners into work. Although learners on these programmes undertake initial assessment, and their prior experience is taken into account before setting targets, there is a clear tension between providers meeting the requirements of ALI and the fact that the main aim of the programme so far as Jobcentre Plus is concerned is to obtain employment. Providers have to ensure that the programme and its target-setting systems will satisfy both ALI and the requirements of the Jobcentre Plus contracts.

The challenge for ACL therefore appears to be threefold:

- how to develop target-setting and monitoring systems to suit the wide range of learners involved
- how to ensure appropriate standardisation of systems, processes and paperwork without alienating tutors and learners, especially those taking non-accredited courses
- how to use information gathered through RARPA so that learners can progress effectively through different levels of non-accredited provision and giving clear evidence of distance travelled. The same principle applies to learners taking various Entry-level programmes as part of Skills for Life provision.

5.3   Initial assessment in work-based learning

Initial assessment in WBL varies according to the level and nature of the programme, but is integral to the target-setting process that follows. Provider N takes in a significant number of learners on its E2E programme. Although E2E has no formal entry criteria, there is a mandatory 'E2E passport' system whereby the recording of learners' aspirations and skills on entry enables targets to be set and tracked throughout the programme. These are recorded on an initial assessment summary (IAS) and may include the following:

- career aspirations
- personal and social skills
- outcomes of basic skills and key skills tests
- interests and hobbies
- health issues.

The IAS enables the provider to set targets against statements made, and to provide support where applicable.

Most WBL providers offer Modern Apprenticeships, which include NVQ qualifications. Initial assessment is therefore a vital precursor in planning how the individual will achieve a qualification within what is, in effect, a contractual timeframe. Provider O is a charity established by 40 local companies to meet their apprentice training needs. Currently, it has

no formal value-added or distance-travelled processes in use, on the basis that the employers involved are more interested in NVQ and apprenticeship achievement than in distance-travelled. However, there is in place a strong system for target-setting, and programmes are described by short-, medium- and long-term goals. They therefore place an emphasis on initial assessment, involving:

- recording prior attainment on the application form
- initial assessment to determine programme level and whether or not learners qualify for exemption from tests
- psychometric tests based on verbal and numerical reasoning and spatial awareness.

At Provider R, where apprenticeship programmes for the Army are delivered, wherever possible initial assessment is used to give credit for past experience. This entails looking at the learner holistically and trying to find out if there is any past practical experience that can be claimed against the new qualification, even if this has occurred through the learners' social activities or other interests. This provider faces some problems in terms of using GCSE points scores as a base line. The company provides training for a significant number of Ghurkha soldiers whose previous qualifications have not been obtained through the UK education system. Some of these soldiers, together with their British counterparts, will also undertake qualifications in telecommunications for which most previous academic qualifications are not directly relevant.

Because most WBL provision is time-limited and contractually based, providers tend to have strong systems for initial assessment, plus other mechanisms and processes that enable them to deliver within the contracted timeframe. Target-setting and review are an integral part of delivery systems, and the best examples encountered in the course of this research had excellent outcomes in terms of retention and achievement. Some of these are described in sections 6.3 and 7.3.

Case Study 7 WBL Provider M

WBL Provider M delivers apprenticeship training to approximately 1000 young people on engineering and business studies programmes. All have employed status and 90% are undertaking advanced apprenticeships in engineering programmes. All entrants are required to have five GCSEs at grades A–C, including maths, English and a science. Apprentices are recruited following aptitude, psychometric and dexterity tests and a structured interview. Approximately 89% of trainees complete their apprenticeship framework.

Because of the high success rate, this provider has so far seen little need to use value-added measures in apprenticeship programmes, based on prior attainment in Year 11. Only a small proportion of learners (10%) leave the programme at the end of the first year, usually on disciplinary or capacity grounds.

5.4   Students with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities

Many providers make provision to include students with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities as part of their programmes. College C is a specialist residential college for students with a wide range of learning and physical disabilities, which also delivers non-residential provision for the surrounding area.

Case Study 8 Initial assessment at College C

College C is a national FE college with specialist facilities for students with disabilities. Provision spans pre-Entry level to Level 4. The college does not operate a value-added system based on GCSE points scores because, as one senior manager puts it, 'Our learners come in with what we call a spiky profile.' Learners arrive at the college with a range of care and support needs which have to be taken into account, particularly for residential students.

Of all the providers who participated in this project, College C puts the most emphasis on initial assessment and its approach is the most holistic. Before entry, the college takes the following into account for each individual:

- previous qualifications and experience
- current level of basic skills (because health issues may mean skills have deteriorated over time)
- care and support needs
- the applicant as a whole person, giving due regard to personal interests and any involvement in clubs and societies; staff also receive reports from home and school about the prospective student's level of personal or social independence.

Detailed initial assessment is regarded as necessary in order to make a distinction between 'students' wish lists and what they can really do'. Initial decisions are sometimes subject to later amendment if students have a physical disability that causes their health to deteriorate during their course.

Staff identify some problems regarding students' qualifications at entry. GCSE grades in English and maths are not felt to be a true indicator of basic skills, and some parents do not always 'tell the whole story' about learners' health or behaviour. On occasion, schools also provide reports that do not give a full picture of individual needs. In response, the college's initial assessment is now followed by six weeks' extended assessment to ensure that learners follow the programme most appropriate to their circumstances. If there is any doubt, initial assessment is repeated, sometimes leading to a change of programme. The only element of prediction used at the college is an estimation of whether or not learners are likely to pass or fail their programmes.

Such a flexible target-setting system was similar to that found in other colleges on courses dealing with Entry level and SLDD students, where the emphasis was on 'bringing students up' by setting very small steps towards overall achievement.

6 Induction and target-setting

6.1 Induction and target-setting in colleges

The induction period in colleges gives providers an ideal opportunity to explain value-added processes to learners and to help them complete an ILP. Where schools and colleges operate value-added systems based on minimum target grades, time is taken to explain the process and to ensure students understand the system. At this stage some providers also introduce target grades for progress and effort, in order to encourage learners to meet or exceed their targets.

Where target grades are calculated solely on the basis of prior attainment, there is some variation in the ways colleges convey them to learners, although all seek to minimise any possible de-motivational impact. For some, calculating target grades is an automatic process. At College I, incoming students enter grades onto a computer at enrolment, and this automatically generates a target minimum grade for them, though tutors then explain that the grade is intended as indicative rather than a precise forecast. Similarly, in other instances students are offered one target grade, but opportunities are then provided for them to see how their predecessors fared with similar prior attainment profiles and target grade forecasts. This might involve, for instance, the use of a chances graph, or a spreadsheet showing the end results of former students with similar prior attainment profiles. College B's use of the MARA software enables students to generate their own chances graphs, so that they are able to see that their potential achievement is not confined to one grade. College D provides students with a range of grades by taking the target grade and adding two grades to it to indicate a potential upper level. Students understand that the bottom of the range is the minimum they are capable of, and that they should aim to achieve the top of the range.

A minority of teachers and tutors from sixth form colleges express concerns that though the process is explained at induction, it is not necessarily understood sufficiently at this early stage. Some students concur that being given a target at this early stage in practice provides little opportunity for negotiation. A few feel their targets to be unfair, or threatening. Adult learners in general FE colleges at Levels 2 and 3 appear to find the process easier to understand, though as one lecturer comments, 'understanding does not necessarily imply a lot of interest'. The view is also expressed that adults often feel wary of target-setting and tend to underestimate their full potential. The real area of concern, however, appears to relate to 16–19-year-old learners taking Entry and Level 1 programmes. It is widely felt that these learners are often not ready (or perhaps unable) to be involved in this type of discussion and that instead the key areas for focusing on are attendance, application and behaviour.

However, most colleges induct students into their system of target-setting and monitoring successfully, and use some of this time in one-to-one tutorials to help learners complete their first ILPs. Most colleges use this stage of the process to add softer targets, often linked to behaviour, or ways of working that support the achievement of target grades. At College E, for example, the first target-setting session is used to establish a minimum acceptable grade, plus targets derived from initial assessment or key skills. Learners may also be set goals related to time management, effort and punctuality. These are then recorded on the ILP, which incorporates the following information:

- main programme minimum acceptable grades for all subjects
- key skills target levels
- enrichment programme and extra curricular activities
- initial assessment score and agreed support
- voluntary and work experience
- career and higher education aims.

The ILP then forms the basis of future reviews with learners about their progress, and from this point onwards tutors keep a record of how current performance relates to the minimum acceptable grade target.

A similar process takes place at College L, but here ILPs are not completed until October so that staff can assess how learners are performing during the first half term of their courses. In this first session, students also agree a personal target grade with tutors based on:

- GCSE scores
- performance in early assignments
- attendance, punctuality and effort to date
- learner self-assessment
- for students on Level 3 courses, minimum target grades generated by the ALIS system.

Learners at College H are also encouraged to negotiate personal target grades, which can be higher than their minimum expected grade, though not lower.

Case Study 9 Induction and target-setting at College G

College G is a tertiary college offering provision from entry and foundation level through to advanced level. It is one of two post-16 providers in the borough, the other being a sixth form college located a relatively short distance away. In its last inspection report, effective student support was described as one of the college's key strengths – in particular pre-course advice and guidance, initial assessment and an effective tutorial system.

One of the key pieces of documentation used during the induction process is the 'student self-assessment profile'. Students are asked to complete this with their own assessments of where they consider themselves to be at the start of the course. Input at this stage comes under the heading 'induction targets' and includes learners setting their own targets for certain aspects of performance, for instance what they hope to achieve in terms of attendance and end achievement. As part of this profile they are also asked to reflect on some of the major factors likely to have an impact on their performance at college, including:

- living arrangements (with family/alone/shared house/residential home)
- personal commitments (children/work/other courses)
- previous education and qualifications
- work experience (to include part-time employment)
- travel arrangements (including distance to college and access to transport)
- interests
- health issues.

As well as serving as a basis for reflection in future reviews, this information enables tutors to identify 'at risk' factors so that they can put support in place for learners they are concerned about at an early stage. In determining learners 'at risk', tutors also incorporate the results of 'target skills' tests, and where available also take account of school reports.

Staff believe that this first stage of target-setting is crucial in enabling students to engage with their own progress and start reflecting on past and future performance, taking a greater degree of ownership to that expected when still at school.

The first stage of target-setting at the college then involves tutor and student agreeing long-term and short-term targets. As with many other providers, the long-term goal is that students meet the grade that they are aiming for. Short-term targets tend to focus on specific factors that impact on individual performance, and are capable of being monitored so that they can form part of the next review. The ILP also includes details of each student's career objectives and the skills that will be needed to fulfil them to get there.

All younger learners are asked if they are happy for their parents to be notified of their progress – even if they are over 18. It is considered very important to include parents within the target-setting process.

Case Study 10 College C

As College C specialises in students with learning and/or physical disabilities, its target-setting process is very distinctive when compared with that of other colleges. During initial assessment all the learners' needs are taken into account and recorded on a pre-assessment summary. This is used across the college to set individual targets (sometimes expressed as very small steps) in the following areas:

- curriculum subjects
- personal care
- independence training
- physical fitness.

Some students are attached to a mentor who might set them individual targets for social development. These are recorded on the student's emotional and social support plan, but are not arrived at through negotiation with the student. Although learners know they have these targets, they do not see any written reports about their progress, though a summary of their progress is sent to their parents.

Students also have a personal progress file (PPP), which is monitored through the tutorial system. This file contains lists taken from curriculum areas and some relating to personal care or nursing. These are expressed as 'aims' and 'goals' rather than targets, and students choose three of these to achieve as soon as the evidence is available. The students are responsible for maintaining their own PPP, and for ensuring that an appropriate member of staff, who is able to enter details in the file of when and how the aim was achieved, signs off the aims.

Tutors form the 'hub' for the learners' personal development, and are approached by teachers and learners so that they can assist with the achievement of goals. If any targets in the PPP are met early, tutors help learners to set new goals as appropriate.

The induction period in colleges, and the process of developing a learner profile, are often used to check learners' longer-term career aspirations to ensure they have embarked on a course that is appropriate. Sometimes short- and long-term targets are set at this stage to support the achievement of these goals. At College G, personal tutors discuss each learner's plans for career routes during induction by outlining topics for them to cover during their first session using the 'review administration form' (based on an ILP). At College F, space for career plans is provided on the initial LAP, and tutors are encouraged to discuss associated aims.

6.2   Induction and target-setting in adult and community education

Perhaps as a consequence of the nature of the provision, ACL providers display more variation in practice than colleges. For example, in one centre ILPs are said to be very much in a developmental phase, although provision does include a Jobcentre Plus programme that requires a very specific target-setting process to be in place. Elsewhere, it appears that course leaders have considerable autonomy. There are several types of ILP in existence, not always called by the same name. More importantly, although Skills for Life students have ILPs based on the outcomes of initial and diagnostic assessment, both tutors and learners regard attaining the qualification as the key target, rather than the development of the skills that would facilitate progress towards its achievement.

At Provider T, however, all course information contains three overall learning goals, which are incorporated into the programme and form part of every individual learner's ILP. During the first three weeks of term, tutors also negotiate personal goals for individual students, which are also recorded on the ILP. These might include a timeframe for completing the qualification, or they might relate to extending a particular skill. Although the number of targets set is limited, they form the basis of future reviews.

Other effective practice is beginning to emerge via piloting and extending the use of RARPA.

Case Study 11 Developing RARPA at ACL Provider U

ACL Provider U is part of the lifelong learning directorate of a London borough and is responsible for the delivery of ACL and WBL. Both accredited and non-accredited provision is offered.

An action research project was undertaken at Provider U during 2004 to develop a RARPA process across non-accredited courses. The project focused on recognising and recording learner progress and achievement with an emphasis on dialogue with the learner and non-traditional forms of recording and assessing. This has led to a move away from solely paper-based ways of recording progress. RARPA processes are also now impacting on courses leading to accredited qualifications.

At this provider it is now the policy to apply the RARPA process across all courses, curriculum areas and learners, with the exception of those enrolled on very short courses. There is a

common core of paperwork, including a course information sheet, an ILP and a record of learners' progress. Individual curriculum areas are allowed to augment this documentation paperwork to suit their own needs, and to adapt the process to the area of study concerned.

Targets are based on a form of initial assessment, which is most formalised for certain types of learner, for example those involved in Skills for Life provision. All programmes have clearly stated learning aims, which appear on the ILP as 'course learning outcomes'. They may be extended and set out in step-by-step form in an expanded ILP, although most are course goals rather than individualised for the learner.

Section 2 of the ILP asks: 'What else do you want to learn and gain from this course?' Responses assist tutors to help learners set individual goals and targets. For Skills for Life learners, individual targets are set each term and are mapped to national curriculum standards. They then become measurable targets to discuss at future reviews. Targets are always set in full consultation with the learner.

6.3   Induction and target-setting in work-based learning

WBL similarly provides evidence of some variation in practice, largely because of the relative absence as yet of formal systems of 'value added' or distance travelled, and because many of the qualifications involved have to be achieved within a set timeframe. Although learners are clearly inducted into their programmes, the main focus for providers is to deliver the qualification within a contracted duration. WBL Provider Q delivers NVQs to learners employed in dentistry, an occupational area where there is no national apprenticeship framework. At the request of their local LSC, they have implemented a temporary framework, which includes key skills. At present, however, only one learner comes within the framework.

The main focus of learners is on achieving the NVQ as a standalone qualification. This provider therefore has in place a basic ILP with common overall targets – the first that learners complete two units of the NVQ in six months; the second that they pass the independent assessment element in 18 months; the third that they complete the whole qualification within 18 months. These circumstances, however, are not typical of WBL, nor is the extra requirement developed by Provider P for setting targets for learners based on personal and social skills.

The way that learners are inducted onto their NVQ programme at Provider M is much more representative of the sector as a whole. Here, Year 1 of the apprenticeship programme is based in a training centre and during induction learners are told about their qualification and the ILP is explained. The plan includes the date the learner registered for the qualification and the expected completion date. At induction, learners' initial assessment outcomes are recorded on the ILP, as are their relevant learning experiences, skills and a record of any support needs. Learners are then inducted into the organisation, which includes being informed of its policies for equal opportunities and health and safety.

After induction has taken place and been recorded on the ILP, learners undertake six- to eight-week taught modules at their training centres. All learners have the same target of completing these modules by the end of each training period. Targets at this stage are clear and precise, because the content of the modules is measurable within the timeframe and there is every reason for learners to succeed.

Case Study 12 Induction at WBL Provider R

Provider R offers training for the Army in a wide range of work-based qualifications. In the last inspection report it was reported that overall retention and achievement rates are high. Programmes are run by regional managers whose staff are located at army bases throughout the United Kingdom and abroad. Unlike many other providers, this organisation has a problem in that the military personnel they train can be posted abroad without notice at any time. This means that learners' programmes may be suspended temporarily, although some do manage to acquire NVQ competences on active service and these are monitored and recorded. Because of this, the company's delivery of apprenticeships and NVQs is highly structured and organised.

The nature of army life also enables the company to deliver its apprenticeship programmes in two parts. While recruits are undertaking basic military training, they complete the key skills requirement for their chosen vocational qualification. This means that, although they receive a general induction for their apprenticeship programme, their primary target is to complete their key skills units before they are posted to a base that specialises in their vocational training. Once posted, the learners receive an induction into the vocational qualification they will be taking and are given an individual learning and assessment plan and a learner journal, which includes details of the qualification, and the roles and responsibilities of learners, assessors and verifiers. Credit is then given for any past experience of learning relevant to their chosen vocational area. At the end of induction all learners receive a structured schedule setting out the units and elements that can be achieved through their vocational training. This helps ensure that there is a strong correlation between the targets set and the work that trainees will actually be doing at their own army base. Trainees should therefore have no difficulty achieving the units and competences within the timeframe allowed, unless they are posted abroad at short notice. The strong correlation between employment and targets to be achieved is one of the main strengths of the programme.

7 Monitoring and supporting learner progress

7.1 Review systems in schools and colleges

All schools and college participants in the project have systems in place for monitoring and supporting learner progress. These usually entail:

- ongoing support from classroom teachers, personal tutors and others with a designated support role within the school or college
- informal support from the above outside time officially allocated for support purposes
- formal individual review sessions when initial targets and subsequent progress are discussed and future targets negotiated.

Although systems vary according to the level of programme, monitoring and supporting learner progress outside the classroom generally takes place through periodic one-to-one reviews in tutorials. Formal reviews usually take place every half term, or three times a year, usually at the end of each academic term. All reviews are treated as important, but some interviewees feel that AS/A-level students are particularly responsive at the end of Year 1 because they are able to reflect on the past year, think about opportunities ahead and write their CV or their personal statement for UCAS. This is considered to be 'an illuminating experience' for many of those involved. At College F, for example, the end-of-year review for AS students who are returning after the summer encompasses making a study of their progress over the year, in addition to setting targets and actions for them over the summer break. These typically involve students determining their university choices so that in September they are in a position to begin work on completing the UCAS form.

In most colleges, systems for monitoring and supporting learners are ongoing and cumulative. Sixth Form College L has a system of weekly one-to-one tutorials where each student receives a periodic tutorial of 10–15 minutes. These build up to termly formal reviews. Formal reviews are undertaken via structured meetings between tutor and student, based on information gathered together before the review and compared to the targets set within the first ILP.

Most colleges follow a similar pattern. Before the review, subject teachers send the personal tutor information on some or all of the following:

- performance on the course to date; in the case of AS/A-level learners, this is usually expressed in the form of a performance grade which can be compared to the target grade
- grades and comments on effort and progress
- attendance and punctuality
- attitude and behaviour
- motivation
- ability to meet deadlines.

This record forms the basis of discussion between teacher and learner in order to determine reasons for any underperformance, and the action that needs to be taken for improvement to take place. Tutors then reassess targets with the learner or reinforce targets already set by subject teachers.

This discussion, described by one tutor as a mixture of 'negotiating and convincing', is considered crucial if underperformance is to be tackled, and it may result in students being referred for other forms of support. These might include study skills, additional support in literacy and numeracy, attendance at enrichment sessions or 'homework clubs', and support from learning mentors or counsellors. Students deemed to be particularly 'at risk' are sometimes required to attend additional formal reviews in order to monitor their progress. The end result of the review is a new action plan for the period before the next formal review.

Case Study 13 Additional target-setting at College F

College F is a small FE college at which most learners are classified as living in disadvantaged areas. The majority of students aged 16–18 enter the college with significantly lower GCSE point scores than the LEA average.

The college incorporates additional target-setting within its 'student probation procedures', a 'low-level introductory disciplinary procedure'. It operates at two levels, amber and red, the colours denoting the relative seriousness of concern. If an ILP and one-to-one tutorials are ineffective, and there are concerns regarding a student's progress, it is sometimes considered necessary to introduce a 'wake up call', which is also a supportive measure. It is intended to address problems with 'attendance, punctuality, production of work, standard of work, preparedness for learning and minor classroom behaviour problems'.

The process works at amber level via discussion between the student's personal tutor, programme area leader and learning mentor. According to the nature of the problem, the personal tutor sets targets and dates for reviewing progress. Students are warned that parents will be involved if the problem escalates.

If subsequently the student is not felt to have made sufficient progress, he or she will be raised to red status. The programme area leader then meets the student to set targets to address the problem. These targets have very tight timescales, and are typically reviewed after two weeks.

This process is well known to staff and learners and receives positive feedback. One student with significant personal problems was identified through this process as a result of poor attendance. Action was then taken to get the individual concerned 'back on track'. The process is seen as giving credibility to lecturers, as students realise that their actions have consequences.

There is general awareness within the college of a need to modify the behaviour patterns with which some students arrive, and to help them think differently about themselves. Probation procedures are a precursor to formal disciplinary procedures. This process is regarded as particularly effective in focusing students, providing a boundary that some have difficulty establishing for themselves.

The most interesting refinements in relation to this process are found at two of the colleges that participated in the project. In both cases, students are required to prepare for tutorials through self-evaluation. At College B, a simple self-evaluation tool is employed, which encourages students to look at their recent work and not only identify what went well or badly, but also to identify why. As well as helping them to become accustomed to planning

and evaluating their own learning, the completed pages can be used as portfolio evidence for the key skill Improving Own Learning and Performance. Students can also use the MARA software system to run simulations to see how their future targets would be affected by different outcomes in units taken during the course, and to see how closely their progress to date matches their target grades.

At College D, students prepare for their review by completing a form to assess how well they are doing. They also set targets for attendance, punctuality and motivation. The college believes in student ownership of targets, and learners are required to provide their tutor with a description of how they will meet their targets before the next review. Support is provided for students who are underachieving, and those most 'at risk' are referred for motivational interviewing with a trained student adviser. The college also ensures that students who achieve above expectation are rewarded with a letter containing an invitation to a 'Value-added Celebration of Achievement' lunch with the principal, plus a £5 gift voucher.

Although all schools and college participants in the project have developed strong systems for monitoring and reviewing learner performance, it is clear that systems based on GCSE points scores are less relevant when carrying out formal reviews with learners on courses at Level 1 and below. At College G, staff believe that these learners need to be treated differently, and those concerned are therefore provided with a two-hour individual review, as well as three formal reviews to measure performance against their first ILP. Targets are related to course performance rather than to initial grades set by GCSE points scores. These usually consist of small steps, and need to be realistic in terms of the learners' personal circumstances. Reviews with learners at these levels are as much about attitudinal problems and family and personal issues as they are about academic performance. Some Entry level learners might well have major health problems, accompanied by emotional difficulties. Targets are therefore often based on confidence-building, and are expressed as small steps toward employability, or educational progression. For example, after telling her personal tutor that she wanted to work in a care role, one student was set a related work experience target. This was achieved, although in fact the placement led her to consider that it was not the right vocation for her.

Health issues are also important factors in the review process at College C. At present, distance travelled is not quantified, although the college has given consideration to the introduction of RARPA. The focus instead is on personal progress in order to ensure that learners, as one manager puts it, 'become better functioning human beings'. It is accepted that it is usually easier to review targets relating to curriculum areas than it is to record all the subtle changes that take place in respect of personal care, independence training and personal fitness. The key forums for discussing learner progress against targets are the college's December and June reviews. The student attends these reviews with all stakeholders (tutor, care staff, enablers and so on) and the focus is on every area where targets have been set. Care is taken to ensure that the student is fully conversant with what is being said and what the next targets will be. The learner is present because college staff feel that a student should 'share in the achievement and take away the value from that'. There is also a transition period at the end of a full-time programme where learners discuss with staff what they should do next.

Overall, as interviewees at College E point out, teachers, tutors and learners value the processes in place for monitoring and supporting learners. Learners are usually engaged in the process and welcome the opportunity for tutors to remind them when they are going off track, and their encouragement to keep up with their work. At College H, students are

particularly keen on one-to-one tutorials. One tutor comments, 'Students feel supported: they need direction, they need constant review. But they make all the decisions. They need help to achieve, but they appreciate it.' Although the focus at College C is very much on individual development, students understand the idea of target-setting and are very much in favour of it. One learner said the value of target-setting was that 'If you achieve it, you can say to yourself, I did that.' Another said, succinctly, 'Life would be very boring if you didn't have aims and goals.'

7.1.1 Issues relating to college review systems

Colleges are large and complex organisations and although review systems have developed and are generally operating effectively, there are still issues to be addressed. Some teachers believe grades for effort and progress are too subjective and that there are problems carrying out reviews with learners on lower level programmes because, 'You may not be able to have an academic conversation with them.' In one college, teachers point out that work during the early stages of a course is not always marked to exam standard, in order to encourage learners. This means that early performance grades may be unrealistically high when compared with the initial target grade at the first formal review. Some tutors also see a conflict between their role of being responsible for pastoral care and their part in target-setting and review.

There are other apparent anomalies. Student performance in key skills is not always part of the review process, nor is there evidence of progression reports in literacy and numeracy in cases where learners are receiving additional support. Where targets are set, there is some evidence that they do not fulfil SMART criteria, and it is difficult to see how they are monitored to ensure that they are met before the next review. Without regular monitoring, there is a danger that reviews focus on retrospective targets, which if they have not been met will only have to be set again or abandoned in preference to new ones.

Although college managers, teachers and tutors generally believe their systems for monitoring and review place a strong emphasis on negotiation, a minority of students beg to differ. Some feel their targets have not been sufficiently specific – for example, 'keep up with your work' or 'try to attend all your lectures'. One college uses a 'comment bank' and chooses targets for subjects from this via negotiation with students. Some learners express cynicism about this process, saying that they would prefer specific tasks rather than general exhortations such as 'plan your time more thoroughly', particularly when these same targets apply to the whole class. In this regard, they feel personal tutors who are not the teachers of the subjects at issue are not best placed for offering specific advice on how to improve performance. However, the college concerned does have a system in place whereby subject tutors provide very detailed feedback to personal tutors, and usually will also have conducted a one-to-one review with the students they teach. Where learners feel involved in negotiations, feedback is favourable and is often contrasted positively with previous experiences at school – for example, 'At GCSE you're told what to do, here you've got to sort yourself out.' Learners at College I like being involved in monitoring their own learning and receiving intensive one-to-one support, saying that at school there were 'no one-to-ones unless you got into trouble'.

College staff and students identify a number of barriers to students meeting targets, where further consideration of actions to tackle them might be required.

Staff perceptions of barriers that impede student achievement of targets

Staff perceptions of barriers that impede student achievement of targets include:

- part-time employment, especially if it is more than 20 hours per week
- diminishing work ethic regarding academic study
- past history of underperformance at school
- peer pressure 'not to be a "bod"' (academic swot)
- culture of the 'me' society
- long gap since previous study (mainly adult learners)
- lack of study skills
- poor dictionary skills
- no sanctions for failure to undertake homework (younger learners)
- personal problems
- poor attendance
- ethos at home or family has no academic background
- other domestic responsibilities, such as carer role
- holidays taken during term
- diet
- drug culture
- weeknight discos targeted at young people
- modest aspirations (students' horizons too local and parochial)
- gender – young males relatively less engaged in the process
- learners already set in 'lifestyle' pattern.

For students with learning or physical disabilities there is also the additional problem of societal expectations. As one head of department puts it, there is a lot of pressure for people with disabilities to conform to the norm, and society 'tries to make it a level playing field which our learners can never compete on'.

Learners' perceptions of impediments to achievement of targets

Learners' perceptions of impediments to achievement of targets include:

- teacher attitudes to learners and teaching methods
- teachers who don't interact and just set work
- part-time jobs
- spending money on pleasure rather than education
- social life, pressure from peers to go out (especially friends in full-time employment)
- pressures at home
- laziness
- spending too much time watching TV or on computer
- having 'too many frees' in one day
- disinclination to study (mainly younger males)
- lack of an Education Maintenance Allowance because of the length of time to apply and obtain one.

Case Study 14 School Sixth Form J

School J is a large comprehensive with just under 200 pupils in the sixth form. It offers an increasing number of vocational courses, and caters for learners of all ability levels.

Once student initial target grades have been established, the school monitors progress with weekly monitoring forms. These are used for each subject and record target grade, attendance, homework and action targets for each learner. Form tutors meet the head of the sixth form briefly each week so that any students with problems can be identified and support put in place. The school's pastoral team often oversees the latter, and underachieving students can receive a range of support options, including:

- specific subject guidance on action plans and goals
- a weekly report at a meeting with the head of year
- parental involvement
- attendance checks, including in the library and on study courses
- referral to a learning mentor
- dropping, picking-up or leaving subjects
- re-starting the course the following year.

The assistant head teachers have regular meetings with heads of department and successful strategies are shared.

Learners meet regularly with subject tutors who agree review dates and activity dates with them. Tutors also let students know how well they are doing and discuss progress with them. The ethos behind the termly formal reviews is that these provide a basis for dialogue and discussion with students about their progress towards academic success. They act as the key motivator so that students can understand how they are doing and what needs to be done next. Student and tutor will also discuss any support needs that will help them achieve their targets or improve performance. Students are required to self-assess their progress against targets set before the formal review and will negotiate new target grades for each subject and for effort, attendance, homework and personal action points. If students surpass their targets, they receive a termly certificate of achievement, and a letter of commendation is sent to their parents.

7.2   Review systems in adult and community learning

ACL provision is rich, varied and has an ethos for supporting and sustaining learners, often making provision for those who are most disadvantaged. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that review systems vary according to whether the provision concerned leads to a qualification, a job or whether it is unaccredited. This means that individual providers may have a variety of review systems in operation across the same organisation. At its simplest, tutors give frequent feedback to part-time learners, which includes reviewing group progress; as a result of funding restrictions tutors have little or no time to undertake formal one-to-one reviews. That said, there is much evidence of tutors giving unofficial feedback to individuals, even though this often goes unrecorded. Developments in RARPA are making a difference, and more providers are seeking to record progress, particularly in non-accredited provision.

Some learners undergo periodic reviews, which lead to targets being discussed and, if necessary, adjusted. Where centres like Provider S offer provision under Jobcentre Plus,

periodic reviews are a contractual requirement of the programme. New Skills for Life provision also means that learners have to have ILPs, and that targets have to be set and reviewed periodically. Skills for Life provision at Provider U, for example, involves learners being set individual targets at the start of the programme, which are reviewed each term. NVQ qualifications are also offered that involve a monthly review of learner progress against unit targets, and some ICT courses have mid-term mock exams followed by a progress review. If target-setting and one-to-one reviews are not part of a programme, they are unlikely to happen. RARPA is encouraging tutors to collect more innovative forms of evidence, such as videos and photographs of learners' work, as well as improving the quality of assignments and learner portfolios.

7.2.1 *Issues relating to adult and community learning review systems*

As well as the necessity to ensure that appropriate review systems are in place for learners on all courses, it is also clear that 'time' is a major factor that providers need to address if systems are to be developed and embedded. For example, one major provider is wholly reliant on part-time coordinators and a part-time workforce to deliver its provision. Without additional resources, the development and implementation of formal target-setting systems will rely significantly on the goodwill of an already stretched delivery service.

As far as learners are concerned, there are some other barriers to be overcome:

- Some learners either lack motivation or their main purpose for taking a course is to gain employment and improve career prospects, rather than acquiring a qualification for its own sake. These types of learner may be deterred by what they see as more unnecessary paperwork.
- Other adult learners are disadvantaged and suffer from diminished self-esteem and a lack of confidence in their own skills.
- A minority appear to be resistant to the whole idea of target-setting, some being mystified as to why such processes are considered necessary.

Case Study 15 ACL Provider T

At Provider T there is a requirement that tutors must review student progress against learning goals at least every five weeks for the duration of a course. There is also a requirement that the tutor, in consultation with the learner, must update individual learning goals at least twice a term. This means that students are encouraged not to see goals as static and unchanging, but to achieve targets and progress, although students have to agree with any new targets that are set. A section of the student's ILP has a section heading 'Comments on progress' and this has to be completed by the tutor and student at the same time. Meetings take the form of one-to-one reviews organised by tutors.

7.3   Review systems in work-based learning

Although most WBL providers that took part in this study do not have any formal 'value added' or distance-travelled systems in place, all had mechanisms to ascertain learner progress against targets set relating to the achievement of NVQ qualifications and apprenticeship frameworks. Although these vary according to the type of programme, some providers offer many more reviews than the 12-weekly review required under contractual

obligations. At Provider P, for example, there are six-weekly reviews, which alternate between the workplace and the training centre, while at Provider O learner reviews are held 10 or 12 times a year. Here staff believe that more reviews are necessary to ensure that learners are progressing. Wherever possible, workplace supervisors are involved in each review.

Review systems vary most when provision is very specific to the provider. At Provider R, for example, targets are set that link very closely to what learners will do in their Army role for the 12 weeks following the review. It is not always possible, however, for assessors to visit learners in the field, or when they are on active service, so learners have to rely on line managers to sign witness statements that targets have been met. This means that the provider can only give learners 12-week reviews, although if necessary support is arranged for basic skills and in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Assessors tend not to use the word 'targets' about their learners, but prefer instead to refer to learners' 'commitment to the qualification'.

Provider M delivers training for a large international defence company, and has a very specific product developed to meet organisational needs. During Year 1 of their apprenticeships, learners complete six- to eight-week modules at the company's training centres. At the end of each module, learners undertake a review with their assessors. The outcomes of these reviews, together with attendance and sickness records, feed into the 12-week review required under LSC funding guidance. Learners also have a probationary review nine months into their training. This involves their assessor, a human resources manager, a senior director and a union representative. This review determines whether or not the learner will continue on the apprenticeship. During Year 1 progress against outcomes common to all learners is displayed on wall charts, and end of unit reviews are used to identify and certify outstanding trainees in each module.

From the beginning of Year 2, apprentice training is based on eight placements within the holding company. Trainees use a personal development record for each placement, for which they:

- identify a job role and agree a job description
- agree objectives with their workplace supervisor
- complete an end of role (placement) review
- have a placement appraisal with their supervisor.

During these placements they also have regular meetings with their assessor to review progress against their NVQ qualifications

Case Study 16 E2E reviews at Provider N

On E2E programmes, individual learner's targets are expressed in the form of an initial assessment summary (IAS), which is part of the 'E2E passport' system developed by the LSC to record the planning and delivery of learning across the E2E exemplar learning cycle. It identifies key aspects of the learner's position at entry to the programme and includes details of:

- achievements, qualifications and prior experience and learning
- language, literacy, numeracy, ESOL and key skills
- career preferences and suitability

- interests and hobbies
- learning difficulties and other support needs
- preferred learning style
- personal and social skills
- health
- personal circumstances
- other relevant information.

The IAS forms the basis for targets that are recorded in a learning log and a weekly activity plan where the learner has to write down points in answer to the question 'What am I going to do today to help achieve the targets I have agreed?'

A student's progress is then monitored by key workers on weekly activity sheets. These record what the learner has done in relationship to the targets set. Reviews then take place every four weeks with the E2E coordinator, targets are signed of and new ones set. Reviews may also record the learner's awareness of health and safety issues and equal opportunities. Learners also have key skills reviews with specialist staff and take part in two progress meetings with their personal adviser from Connexions. All paperwork is kept in each learner's individual file, which is available to them at any time. Information from these sources is also stored in electronic form to which all staff have access.

The value of this process for learners is that they have regular targets set for them as 'achievable small steps'. They recognise this to be an important feature of the programme and see the system as helpful, supportive and fair. Students who surpass their targets can be awarded their 'E2E passport' earlier than initially expected and if appropriate progress into employment.

8   The role of management information systems

This project did not set out to explore the pros or cons of existing systems, but rather to identify the current role of management information systems (MIS) in relation to learner target-setting and monitoring. As might be expected, the existence of centralised systems for storing target evidence was variable, although where centralised systems existed they were of a standalone nature, independent of the provider's main MIS system.

8.1   Management information systems in colleges

MIS appears to be most developed in terms of formal value-added systems based on GCSE points scores, such as ALPS and ALIS. Before data are entered onto the system, all learners must produce either their GCSE certificates or copies of their results slips. This helps ensure that the subsequent target grade is based on accurate data. Target grades are generally issued before students complete their first ILP.

As AS/A-level courses continue, progress grades are entered and the ALIS and ALPS software systems enable comparisons to be made with the target grade. The ALIS software is also able to produce statistical evidence of plus and minus factors in relation to candidate performance. It is standard practice to enter grades for student effort, even though these will not affect final value-added scores for either the individual or the organisation. On completion of A-level programmes, students' final results are analysed by ALPS and/or ALIS and value-added scores calculated against target grades.

Generally speaking, data from the ALPS and ALIS systems is posted on college intranets in order to make it readily accessible to managers, teachers and tutors, so that they may assess performance either by individual student or by whole groups. Some providers also enable staff to input their own data on effort and progress, while others are planning to do so.

Systems other than ALPS and ALIS appear to be much more variable. College B's MARA system is very user-friendly and gives students complete (read only) access to the data kept on them, though the system is separate from the college's main MIS, so the recording of students' exam results is duplicated. Nor does the MARA system as yet apply across the whole college. At College H, individual courses have their own spreadsheets to support the recording and monitoring of student progress against targets and College I records tutor group profiles, tutorial records and progress reports. These are kept in spreadsheet form and are available on screen to all lecturers and tutors.

Although many colleges have learner tracking systems in place, or are in the process of installing them, others rely on paper-based record-keeping systems, mainly because of the amount of work involved in setting up an electronic system, and ensuring that all staff have access to it and are fully trained to use it. Staff 'buy-in' is seen as an important factor in the successful implementation of IT-based systems.

Some staff interviewed during the project voiced concerns that incorporating IT into a one-to-one review session would have a negative effect on the interaction between personal tutor and learner. Where paper-based systems are relied on there is some evidence that not all staff use them; sometimes different documentation is used by staff in different departments or sections for what is ostensibly the same system, particularly where college-wide systems

have only recently been introduced. In other cases no authentication of qualification is required from learners on entry to the course. Some interviewees also claimed that the ALIS system cannot assign scores to some newer non-GCSE qualifications.

Case Study 17 Ensuring efficient paper-based systems

At College D there is a very well-established target-setting and value-added system that is used across the college. The system for recording targets and progress is still largely paper-based, apart from the use of ALIS for analysis of overall A-level results, and the employment of a performance monitoring database for tracking learner grades. At present the 'personal development portfolio' – which records other targets and progress – is not computerised. However, steps have been taken to ensure the efficiency of the system, including the deployment of two 'value-added coordinators', who take responsibility for the documentation, ensuring that staff contribute on time and that personal tutors are able to concentrate their time on the review itself.

8.2   Management information systems in adult and community learning

Although the majority of providers use the same software to record recruitment, retention and achievement data, they do not appear either to keep data on target-setting, or to have common systems. However, systems based on RARPA are being developed. At Provider T, an ILP monitoring form is sent to MIS enabling learning goals to be recorded. Records of achievement and partial achievement are also maintained. More work remains in the ACL to develop evidence of distance travelled by learners and to ensure that it is recorded appropriately.

8.3   Management information systems in work-based learning

MIS in WBL are generally well developed, either as requirements of the E2E process or because systems are necessary to claim funding against achievement. Systems are also in place in some instances to record other data. At Provider P, for example, data is stored as hard copy in every individual learner's file, and initial assessment scores are also recorded on a spreadsheet.

Some WBL providers have very sophisticated systems, especially where they are national providers working from a head office and delivering training at a number of sites. At Provider M, there are systems for tracking their trainees for each element of their apprenticeship framework, and the MIS can be used to set targets and milestones against which progress can be assessed. Each of the provider's training sites has its own system for tracking trainee progress against component parts of the qualifications, which is accessible to assessors and trainees. Plans are now in place to implement one system that can be used across all sites.

At Provider R a similar arrangement applies, with a central system used for storing data for funding purposes, plus a different procedure at training centres. At each training centre assessors are case-loaded and operate a paper-free software system on laptops to record learner progress. The use of laptops means that assessors can record data in any place and at any time. The paper-free software contains a record of all the NVQ units and elements, and the evidence requirements needed to achieve them. As learners achieve their units, the

evidence is stored on the laptop in individual files, which include scanned witness statements and digital camera clips of operational activities.

9   Value-added systems and progression

Providers appear to give relatively less attention to the end of the review process and to learner progression. However, learner achievement data is used in a number of associated ways:

- to calculate an overall value-added score for the provider
- as a means for approving performance-related pay in sixth form colleges
- as evidence within the process of staff appraisal
- to inform programme reviews
- to facilitate the sharing of curriculum and support strategies
- to inform staff development needs.

Colleges also record the known destinations of their learners.

9.1   Progression issues in colleges

Some younger learners have experience of a value-added system when still at school, though many remember little about its operation. Teaching staff are aware that school systems exist, but do not have detailed knowledge. It is not surprising therefore that a minority of learners do not regard their college experience of 'value added' systems and processes as very important. In one instance, although individual progress is measured during a course at individual and faculty level, there is no direct link between minimum grade outcomes and target-setting for the following year. In another, the target grade established at the start of the programme does not alter, regardless of learner progress and achievement in the first year of the course.

There is also an issue over who 'owns' the ILP and other related documentation. In one case, the student's personal tutor holds all records, but there is some lack of clarity about who should access the information and whether they could do so at the appropriate time. There is an even bigger question mark over what happens to the information at the end of a programme. Some students express concerns about the repeat of value-added processes in cases where they fail a programme, or come back to college to start a different one, despite the fact that the college already held all the relevant information.

At College G, work has started to develop a progression process. The college is aware that if students are on a one-year programme there is a need to consider their progression. At the final review the tutor and the student discuss the student's performance against their overall targets, and what the student would like to do next.

9.2   Progression issues in adult and community education

Progression in ACL is clearly a more difficult issue, particularly as many learners are accessing part-time courses normally lasting no more than two to three hours a week. Most providers have end of course evaluations, but there is little evidence of significant attention being paid to performance against targets or a learner's personal goals. In one instance where course evaluation takes place there is no service-wide review of how individual targets have been met. The emphasis is rather on whether or not courses have met their targets for

recruitment, retention and achievement. In another case, students receive a learner achievement record at the end of their programmes, though it is uncertain if and how this is taken into account when any re-enrol.

Providers may need to give more consideration to this issue, particularly concerning Skills for Life, where programmes have a strong emphasis on ILPs, target-setting and review. In terms of progression, Skills for Life learners appear to need to own their own records if they are to achieve meaningful progression. It is unclear what steps are in place to take learners' prior experience into account if they move from one provider to another. It is likely that another provider will simply ask a Skills for Life learner to undertake initial assessment again, rather than taking into account the results of previous assessment and the distance travelled since then, as evidenced by previous ILPs and records from progress reviews. The experience of college-based providers emphasises the value to learners of measuring how much they have achieved via a review of the fulfilment of previous targets. Allowing learners to retain ILPs may be one way of doing this.

9.3   Progression issues in work-based learning

While there is evidence that some providers have developed strategies for in-house progression, others see qualifications as an end in themselves, particularly in the case of NVQs. Most keep the information gained through ILPs and progress reviews only for the duration of the learner's time with the company.

Effective practice in relationship to learner progression in WBL is demonstrated within the E2E programmes run by Provider N. Progression is fundamental to the E2E programme, and learners are expected to gain their 'passport' and move into employment. The company is currently achieving progression rates at 10% above local and national levels. A key feature of E2E is that all learners have a 'moving on plan', which is agreed when they complete their individual programmes. This is then followed up eight weeks later to confirm that progress has been made and to see if the individual's circumstances have changed since leaving E2E.

9.4   General issues relating to progression

Some general issues emerging from this study apply to most, if not all, providers:

- It is unclear whether learners are ever asked formally for their opinions on the whole process of ILPs, target-setting and progress reviews. Such information has a potentially important role within providers' self-assessment processes, and helps to develop and improve the systems in place – as is evident at College D.
- Individual providers have developed their own systems and processes for target-setting and review, but appear not to have considered how they relate to those of others. In-house systems may not be easily understood by other providers, and may present problems of compatibility.
- The end of the target-setting and review process raises the question of whether the systems used are learner-centred or provider-centred. Some appear to be insufficiently focused on supporting learner progression.

10   Staff development

All colleges involved in the project offer training in the use of their target-setting systems via induction and staff development programmes. Staff development sessions are provided in most, if not all, of the following:

- overviews of ALPS/ALIS/college systems
- how to use ILPs and set targets
- how to conduct one-to-one interviews and fulfil the requirements of the personal tutor role
- how to record learner progress.

Paper- or intranet-based guides are provided for staff, and in some colleges staff participate in discussion and feedback sessions to help shape improvements to systems.

Case Study 18 Staff 'buy-in' to target-setting

College D has well-established arrangements for target-setting and 'value added'. The system has been in place for a number of years, and developed gradually over time. Initially the process started with a pilot – nurturing a small group of staff who were given extra support and training to ensure they understood the process. The following year these staff were given responsibility for disseminating their knowledge, understanding and enthusiasm to other staff. The value-added team began by developing the generic principles of the system and other staff then had the opportunity to adapt its application according to the needs of the curriculum areas concerned. This policy acknowledged staff professionalism, and helped to ensure their active support.

This process of listening to staff and involving them in consultations continues. Learners are also consulted within specific 'value-added forums'.

Managers at the college believe that an important factor in the staff's engagement with the system is that it is not used as a 'threat'. Its purpose is solely related to the improvement of learner performance; it is not used in conjunction with staff appraisal. However, data are monitored to check for problem areas and whether or not targeted interventions are required.

Case Study 19   Issues in developing the MARA system

At College B a pilot project was carried out by a small group of staff selected for their interest in the subject and their credibility with colleagues. They met frequently, developed the system and gained experience of using it as they went along. As the project was rolled out to more staff, the process became more formalised, with weekly staff development sessions run by the original pilot team. Care was taken to present the system in a non-threatening way, playing down its statistical basis, and concentrating on its personal, student-centred nature. Although there was some initial hostility to what was characterised as the reduction of human diversity to numerical computer inputs, in general MARA has been well received. Staff have been influenced by the enthusiasm for its use on the part of colleagues they respect.

Time is the main resource in the development of the system, and the amount spent by the project team was far in excess of the remission they received to carry out the work. At this stage it is clear that MARA has had an impact on the college, not least in highlighting the need for a more consistent approach to tutoring. As the scheme is rolled out across the college over the next two years it is considered likely that it could have a similar effect on other aspects of college provision – for example, the design and use of the ILP.

At some colleges, 'value added' is used to identify issues related to staff performance. For example, in one instance consideration is being given to adopting ALPS in place of ALIS, as the former system is felt to be more suited to assisting judgements on the performance of individual teachers. However, at other colleges, such as that described in Case Study 18, it was felt that the successful widespread adoption of 'value added' within the organisation was dependent on value-added results not being used in the evaluation of individual staff performance. Where expressed, staff were described as being more engaged with the process as they saw it as solely for the benefit of learners.

There is awareness that developing and embedding effective methods of target-setting across a college takes time. High rates of staff turnover can be a hindrance, and evaluation of the impact of systems is important if staff are to be provided with evidence of value. At some colleges, tutorial observation is incorporated within programmes to help drive improvements. At others, the profile of tutoring has been raised, and greater consistency encouraged, via the appointment of senior tutors within individual faculties. Among other things, such individuals promote the use of a standardised approach.

Some support for ACL staff is evident in aspects related to use of target-setting processes. For example, in one case training is offered in the use of RARPA, including ILPs, writing learning outcomes and what constitutes 'an acceptable learning goal'. It is clear that many staff would like access to training in this area.

Guidance for staff on how to undertake reviews was not commonly available within WBL providers. However, where it was provided staff found it to be very useful. New trainer assessors are also observed by experienced trainers to ensure there is a satisfactory approach to the delivery of reviews. At Provider P, specific training is delivered in the use of the in-house value-added system. 'How to…' guides for staff on understanding and using value-added systems and target-setting with learners have also been produced.

11 Conclusions and checklist of questions for providers

11.1 Main conclusions

Most providers in the learning and skills sector have systems in place for target-setting and review, though formal methodologies to record 'value added' or distance travelled are not universally in place, especially outside academic programmes at Level 3. Some of these systems are well developed, but are not necessarily standardised across one provider let alone across any particular sector of provision.

The findings arising from this project raise a number of issues about the development of guidelines for providers on effective practice in target-setting, monitoring and supporting learner progress. A major issue to emerge is the sensitivity with which achievement targets need to be mediated to individual learners if their motivation is to be properly sustained. Though quantitative methodologies have the advantage of robust statistical bases, when applied rigidly they can be met with considerable resentment by some learners – and especially those whose performance at Key stage 4 does not represent their true potential. There are also issues related to the appropriateness of the application of quantitatively derived targets to those with earning difficulties or disabilities.[9] Here, the RARPA approach appears to be more suitable.

Then there is the question of how the evidence regarding effective practice presented here can be disseminated in a manner that is fully compatible with and supportive of the introduction of the New Measures of Success programme. The roll-out of learner achievement tracker (LAT) software is likely to replace many systems referred to in this report that have been developed by providers in-house. And even in instances where ALIS or ALPS have been in use, the colleges concerned will from now on effectively be required to use LAT for purposes of liaison with the LSC and Ofsted, even though they may choose to continue to operate ALIS and/or ALPS alongside.

It is likely that significant changes will be required in future by WBL and ACL providers following the introduction of New Measures of Success, even among those who have provided exemplars in this project. In both cases, there are clearly major issues of awareness raising and staff development, and it is important that those concerned are absolutely clear about what is required.

11.2 Some questions for providers

This study has suggested a number of questions providers might wish to discuss with staff within their organisations as part of a review process. The list is not exhaustive and the report may stimulate discussion relating to other areas of activity.

- Does the value-added system and target-setting process you have in place help meet the requirements of the new Common Inspection Framework?
- Is the system and process in place appropriate for the programme being delivered and the level of the learner? If not, should the system be adapted to accommodate different learner groups?

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[9] Now the subject of a further LSDA project for LSC – *Improving the inclusivity of New Measures of Success.*

- Does the initial assessment process establish clear starting points in relation to the learners' prior attainment and potential, using information from a variety of sources?
- Does initial assessment ensure that additional learning needs are identified and support put in place as soon as possible?
- When should learners first be introduced to the provider's value-added system or process for target-setting and review?
- Will this introductory stage explain systems and processes in a language that all learners can understand easily?
- If the value-added process is based on GCSE point scores, will there be a clear explanation of how past achievement links with target grades, particularly if the new programme has few or no links with GCSE subject areas?
- Are the number of planned review meetings based on learner need or a fixed number of meetings determined either by the provider or by contractual obligations?
- Could more be done to prepare learners for one-to-one meetings so that target-setting and review become a genuine two-way process rather than running the risk of being dominated by assessors, teachers and tutors?
- Do assessors, teachers and tutors need to develop their skills further so that they can communicate effectively with learners at Entry level and Levels 1 and 2?
- Before review meetings, does the assessor or tutor receive all relevant information to inform the discussion, particularly over progress in key skills, basic skills or enrichment activities?
- Are review meetings structured to ensure they are focused and productive?
- Are learners given SMART targets that can be monitored effectively?
- How are agreed targets notified to teachers and trainers to encourage differentiation in order to help learners achieve their individual goals?
- What incentives or rewards are offered to learners who meet or exceed their targets?
- How do assessors, teachers and tutors deal with barriers that hamper learners' achievement of their targets? Are appropriate support systems in place to deal with these barriers?
- Is information collected through the target-setting process managed in a way that allows all stakeholders (assessors, learners, teachers and so on) to access it easily?
- What steps are being taken by providers to ensure that target-setting, monitoring and review systems are not over-bureaucratic and that they track learner progress effectively?
- How can large providers ensure that systems and processes do not proliferate independently leading to different systems using different paperwork operating within one organisation?
- Does the end of the target-setting and review process deal effectively with learner progression?
- What use is made of the data collected on target-setting and review and what is its value to the learner or any future provider for that learner?
- Are there regular evaluations of the operation of value-added system and processes for target-setting and review, so that all those involved can contribute to their continuous improvement?

Annex A: Providers participating in the project

Identifier	LSC region	Characteristics
General FE or tertiary		
A	Y&H	The main provider of post-16 education in its borough, this college has over 3000 full-time and almost 5000 part-time students.
B	Y&H	A small general FE college serving a disadvantaged area. Around 1100 full-time and 5000 part-time students are currently enrolled.
C	WM	A general FE college with specialist facilities for students with disabilities. Currently there are 211 full-time students and 111 are residential. Students come from all parts of the UK and courses range from Entry level to Level 4.
D	NW	A general FE college with approximately 12,000 students (just over a third of whom are full-time). There is a wide curriculum offer, including most vocational areas.
E	NW	A large FE provider with over 25,000 learners, over 80% of whom are aged 19 and above. 76% of students currently study part-time.
F	GL	This small FE college has just over 4000 learners, half of whom are undertaking full-time courses. A third of students are aged 16–18.
G	NR	The college was formed in 1994 via a merger between a general FE and sixth form college. About 36% of courses are run at entry and foundation level, 31% at intermediate and 20% at advanced level; the remainder are in higher education.
H	SW	The college has some 1750 full-time, and over 25,000 part-time students, of whom 65% are adults, enrolled on nearly 36,500 qualifications.
I	SW	A tertiary college serving a wide rural area. Enrolment is currently around 1500 full-time and 7000 part-time students. 80% of full-time students are aged 16–18.
School sixth form		
J	NW	A large 11–19 comprehensive with approximately 200 sixth formers. The sixth form offer mainly comprises AS/A-levels, AVCEs and some intermediate vocational courses.
Sixth form college		
K	NW	This college offers programmes to 16–19 year olds. 60% of learners take AS/A-level qualifications, with the remainder following vocational programmes.
L	E	This college concentrates on learners aged 16–19, though part-time, evening and higher education courses are also offered.
Work-based learning		
M	NW	Delivers apprenticeship training to approximately 1000 young people on engineering and business administration programmes with a large international company.
N	GL	This provider offers training for a variety of different programmes, the most significant of which is E2E. It also has a contract with

		Jobcentre Plus and is involved with Learndirect.
O	WM	A charity established by 40 local companies to meet their apprentice training needs. There are currently 300 trainees undertaking engineering, retail, business administration and accountancy.
P	NW	Delivers training to approximately 400 young people on hair and beauty programmes. Half are undertaking apprenticeship programmes; the bulk of the remainder are aged 14–16, taking alternative vocational provision or E2E.
Q	NR	Delivers training and assessment for Oral Healthcare and Dental Nursing NVQs. There are currently 40 trainees undertaking NVQ at Level 3. Almost all learners are employed.
R	SE	Provides training for the Army in a range of work-based qualifications, including in business administration, telecommunications and intelligence analysis. Learners are all employed.
Adult and community learning		
S	Y&H	A voluntary centre with approximately 1000 part-time learners. Approximately half are referred by Jobcentre Plus and the remainder mainly supported by LSC funding.
T	GL	A local authority service with some 8000 part-time learners. 60% of learners are undertaking accredited courses such as Skills for Life.
U	GL	A local authority service with approximately 20,000 enrolments, all part-time. Qualifications currently offered include A-level, GCSE, NVQ, ITQNVQ, C&G, Pitmans and RSA.

Annex B: Checklist for consultant visits to providers

Learning and Skills Development Agency

Setting targets and monitoring and supporting learner progress in post 16 education and training stage 3: checklist for consultant visits to providers

Theme / Indicative Interviewee(s)	Potential topics	Evidence (Potential documentation to back up views of interviewees)
1. Overview of target-setting within organisation *Senior Curriculum Manager / Training Manager Anyone with formal value-added function Quality Manager Tutor(s)*	1.1 Processes for target-setting 1.2 Coverage of the process across the organisation *Across whole organisation / only certain programmes? Existence of institution-wide policy covering process?* 1.3 Types of learner involved *A –level, AVCE, vocational, entry, other? Full/ part-time? Level 3 only / all 16-19 / all including adult?* 1.4 Type(s) of process, including different target-setting processes in place for learners taking different courses? *Statistical value-added system developed externally eg ALIS, in-house value-added, ALIS hybrid for vocational qualifications, other* 1.5 History of system(s) Length in place Guidance on designing system	Value-added / distance travelled / RARPA or other target-setting policies Staff guidance manuals

Theme / Indicative Interviewee(s)	Potential topics	Evidence (Potential documentation to back up views of interviewees)
2. How targets are set *Tutor(s)* *Anyone with formal value-added function* *Quality Manager*	2.1 Information targets based upon *Prior attainment (only GSCEs, key skills, other?), qualifications achieved or taken, early diagnostic assessment, early course feedback, interview assessment, other?* 2.2 Other aspects of student performance considered 2.3 Process for predicting student performance. Guide / criteria for setting targets. Availability / use of diagnostic assessments in setting targets 2.4 Way(s) in which targets expressed *Eg examination grades, defined competency outcomes, learner behaviour or other process measures* 2.5 Responsibility for setting targets. Others involved in the process. Remit of any specialist role(s) (eg dedicated tutor) 2.6 Involvement of learners in the process *Eg keeping progress record/ learning log?* 2.7 Stage learners are introduced to process. Ways in which they are encouraged to be involved with it 2.8 Extent of targets notified to learners / information not disclosed *(if so, what)*?	Prior attainment data Data on predicted grades Documentation issued to learners about process – any types of learner agreements Examples of progress review/ feedback forms

Theme / Indicative Interviewee(s)	Potential topics	Evidence (Potential documentation to back up views of interviewees)
3. Student contact/ monitoring and reviewing targets *Tutor(s)* *MIS Manager* *Student Services Manager* *Quality Manager*	3.1 Method(s) for monitoring & recording progress. Criteria used. Who has responsibility? 3.2 Responsibility for meeting with learners. Frequency / Average duration of meetings 3.3 Format of meetings 3.4 Other information used during review meetings to ascertain student progress against target *(eg Work set by tutor prior to review)* 3.5 Feedback delivered at other times 3.6 Mechanisms for agreeing resulting action (with learner / course team / student support). Other parties notified. *Eg parents* 3.7 Processes when learners exceed or undershoot targets *(Extra support is made available / re-negotiation of targets)* 3.8 Impact of targets on learner Eg *in class –* *differentiation of teaching, grouping learners, extra support*	Learner assessment records Action plans

Theme / Indicative Interviewee(s)	Potential topics	Evidence (Potential documentation to back up views of interviewees)
4. The learners *Tutors* *Teachers* *Sample of learners*	4.1 Student understanding of target-setting process Awareness of individual targets 4.2 Perceptions – realism / fairness of targets Process by which they are determined. How originated and determined? Opportunity for negotiation / influence. Satisfaction with tutorial process / support offered 4.3 Means by which tutors / staff know that learners are starting to fulfil targets 4.4 Extent to which targets are adjusted as a result of learner performance / progress on course. Learner understanding / perceptions of how this is done 4.5 Differences in attitudes of learners to target-setting process. Eg *adults v young; by level of qualification* 4.6 Main barriers to achievement of targets	Assessment & guidance information issued to learners Individual Learning Plans

Theme / Indicative Interviewee(s)	Potential topics	Evidence (Potential documentation to back up views of interviewees)
5. Value-added issues *Curriculum Manager* *MIS Manager* *Tutors* *Quality Manager*	5.1 Ways target-setting data employed. Relationship between target-setting and value-added methods – use beyond impact on individual learner. *Eg how informs decisions relating to academic performance, staff appraisal & development, student support systems, admissions advice & guidance policy and tutorial systems?* 5.2 Process for monitoring, evaluating & reviewing attainment of targets. Resulting adjustments made 5.3 Staff perceptions of process / use of target-setting. Impact upon personal practice *Eg Professional development based on openness & trust v 'naming and shaming'* 5.4 Impact of value-added / distance travelled measures on institutional performance *Impact upon retention and achievement. Links with any other institutional initiatives. Impact upon teaching practice, curriculum and assessment design*	Examples of any reports produced

Theme / Indicative Interviewee(s)	Potential topics	Evidence (Potential documentation to back up views of interviewees)
6. Staff development/ development of practice *Tutor(s)* *Teachers* *Staff Development / HR Manager*	6.1 Staff development / training on any aspects of the target-setting process. *Eg good tutoring practice, providing feedback, identifying and supporting at-risk students* 6.2 Additional support/ resources made available in implementing / delivering scheme 6.3 Impact of target-setting on institutional practice *Review of outcomes / subsequent changes*	Staff development policy / training schedule

Theme / Indicative Interviewee(s)	Potential topics	Evidence (Potential documentation to back up views of interviewees.)
7. Information management *MIS Manager* *Tutors* *Quality Manager*	7.1 Method of storing / managing target-setting data. Access to / responsibility for ensuring data input and accuracy of records 7.2 Method for ensuring integrity of prior attainment data / reconciling gaps & anomalies (Relevant for systems such as ALIS & ALPS)	ILR data & other learner records
8. Perception of own process/ future developments *Tutor(s)* *Curriculum Managers* *Quality Manager*	8.1 Institutional / organisational review of policy & practice on target-setting. Comparison with what happened before process was implemented. Eg Relevance and appropriateness of targets that are set and perceived impact 8.2 Perceptions of impact of the process on learners – motivation, retention, achievement 8.3 Awareness of target-setting systems in operation elsewhere; pros and cons compared with own processes	Review reports ILR records