

## Self Regulation for the Further Education Sector

A progress report from the Chair of the Self Regulation Implementation Group

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### Introduction

1. This report outlines the context and background to a presentation to be made to the meeting by Sir George Sweeney as Chair of the Self Regulation Implementation Group.

### Recommendation

2. The Council is requested to comment on and broadly endorse the progress of the work to develop self regulation for the further education sector and, in particular to support the further phases of the work being planned for 2007.

### Background

3. Sir George presented a paper on self regulation to the Council on 16 June 2005. An AoC self regulation group had been established in 2004, with support from the Council, to take forward the recommendation of the LSC Bureaucracy Task Force which had in its final report strongly supported the exploration of options for self-regulation both for further education colleges and other learning and skills providers.
4. Council noted that self regulation was now being seen as a 'realistic aspiration' and *Agenda for Change* was likely to help colleges move further towards taking full responsibility for improving the quality of their provision. The right measures and listening to the learner voice would be key and the outcome must be a robust system to ensure investment only in good provision.

5. The White Paper *Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances* (March 2006) includes, in Chapter 7 *A new relationship with colleges and providers*, the following paragraph:

*We want to create a modern, more self regulating form of college autonomy where colleges work together to set, review and raise standards and achieve continuous improvement in the interests of learners, employers and the local community. We will work with colleges, the AoC and other representative organisations to develop proposals for self regulation which make a reality of this vision.*

6. Preparatory work was undertaken in the summer and autumn of 2006. At the AoC Annual Conference in November the Secretary of State issued a challenge to the further education sector progressively to take collective responsibility for its own future destiny and reputation and thus forge a new relationship with government.
7. Sir George immediately responded to this challenge by drawing together a coalition of key interests (known as the Self Regulation Implementation Group (the group)). The group's terms of reference are:
- To advise on the development of a proposition to ministers in Spring 2007 showing how a rigorous and effective system of self regulation for further education which commands widespread confidence and support from learners, employers, key stakeholders, colleges and others delivering further education should be implemented
  - To ensure that the proposal is consistent with key principles set out in the Leitch Report, in particular the centrality of a highly adaptable demand-led framework for the delivery of improved skills training and the improvement of performance through simplification, rationalisation, performance management and clear remits
  - To advise on the specification of an action plan to make the proposition a reality, including the design and evaluation of prototypes starting in the Autumn of 2007.
8. The group is a broad coalition of the internal and external interests that form the further education sector; providers (including both professional and governance dimensions), learners, employers and stakeholders. It also includes an independent member with experience of self regulation (Claire Ighodaro) and a senior representative from the Financial Services Authority to provide challenge and demonstrate commitment to an outward-facing and rigorous approach.
9. There are three Council members on the group: Gareth Cadwallader, Claire Ighodaro and John Taylor. Council senior management is represented by Rob Wye, Melanie Hunt and Peter Newson.

## **The Presentation**

10. Sir George will set out the work of the group to develop a 'phase 1 proposition' that is currently being considered by the Secretary of State. He will also be able to give some preliminary views from the consultation exercise on the proposition being undertaken during March. Sir George will seek the Council's comments and broad endorsement for the approach being taken, together with support for the group's plans to develop the work during 2007.

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