

Framework for Excellence

Update, March 2007

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Background and introduction

- 1 The Framework for Excellence takes forward the FE White Paper *Further Education: raising skills, improving life chances* and its overall themes and key policies in support of the skills, 14-19 and schools strategies.
- 2 The Framework is a comprehensive and radical approach to performance and quality in the further education sector. It will set out areas and levels of performance that colleges and other providers need to achieve in order to deliver the highest quality provision to learners and employers.
- 3 The Framework has three levels: an overall performance rating for each provider, three performance dimensions: responsiveness, effectiveness and finance, and two or three key performance areas of each of the dimensions.
- 4 A policy document *Framework for Excellence: informing learner and employer choice* will be published by the end of March 2007. This policy document clarifies the purpose of the Framework, sets out its overall aims, the way that these aims will be achieved, and gives details of the development process.
- 5 The development path of the Framework includes the pilot of a prototype version from summer 2007, the publication of the first version of the Framework in summer of 2008, and in summer 2009, roll out of a fuller version that includes the specialist colleges, adult education providers and voluntary sector providers.

- 6 The Framework will support moves towards self regulation. A high-level timeline is attached at Annex 1.

Purpose

- 7 The purpose of the present paper is to bring recent developments to the attention of National Council. It updates paper LSC 35/2006 and also updates the oral report given to Council on 31 January 2007.

Recommendation

- 8 Council is recommended to note the current position and status of development of the Framework for Excellence.

Governance and management arrangements

- 9 Since November 2006 a programme board chaired by Henry Ball, South East Regional Director, has overseen work relating to the development of the Framework. This Board reports internally to the LSC *agenda for change* Board and thence to the FE System Programme Board. Stakeholder groups have also been created to advise on the development of the Framework.
- 10 The governance and management arrangements are currently under review. A Technical Working Group has been established co-chaired by LSC and DfES, to drive forward the data and information system for the Framework. We are also exploring other opportunities to work more closely in partnership with senior DfES officials, and colleagues from OfSTED and QIA in particular.

Project development

- 11 Since November 2006 the programme has been split into 10 projects, which are shown in Annex 2. Projects have detailed plans for future development, which have all been approved. Each project manager prepares a monthly highlight report which is collated into a high-level progress report which tracks the overall progress of the project.
- 12 The programme's status has improved and is now red/amber. Further action is being taken to ensure stronger programme management and improve the overall status to amber/green or better by the end of May 2007.

Trialling and piloting

- 13 Since November, more than 80 colleges and other providers have been testing trial aspects of the Framework. This work will continue until the end of April.

- 14 It is planned that 100 colleges and work based learning providers will pilot the prototype from summer 2007. The sample sites have been carefully selected according to a range of criteria to reflect:
- a regional spread
 - a variety of types of college and work based learner providers
 - a range of inspectorate grades for leadership and management.

Stakeholders

- 15 There are a large number of stakeholders with an interest in the Framework. The forthcoming policy document is jointly owned by four partners: LSC, DfES, OfSTED and Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) and sets out plans for future work to be undertaken jointly by LSC, OfSTED and QIA.
- 16 In addition to consultation through advisory groups and bilateral discussions, the four partners have met with the Association of Colleges, National Audit Office, Association of Learning Providers, National Union of Students and other stakeholders to develop a shared view of the ways in which learners and employers can be 'put in the driving seat'. This work was supported by a 24 hour residential event at Windsor.
- 17 A stakeholder management strategy for the Framework for Excellence programme is in preparation.

Communications

- 18 Bill Rammell has indicated a desire to announce the publication of the policy document personally, and sign the foreword to the policy document.
- 19 Working with regional and partnership team representatives, a communications plan is in preparation to support the introduction of the Framework across the sector.

Legal implications

- 20 The LSC may need to require providers to furnish new data S54 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 imposes a requirement on the governing body of FE Colleges to give the LSC such information as it requires for the purposes of the exercise of its functions. This requirement is also contained in part 1 of the Financial Memorandum with FE colleges.
- 21 In relation to other providers, what the LSC can require them to provide depends on what has been specified in the funding agreement. If the LSC is going to require providers to provide additional information this will have to be covered by the terms of the funding agreement and the LSC may need to review the existing terms of these agreements in relation to the provision of information. It should also be noted that the Information Authority will also

have a view on whether any request for additional or new information is justified and reasonable which the LSC will need to take into account.

22 There are no other legal implications

Financial implications

23 The DfES has allocated £6.8 million to the LSC for the Framework for Excellence programme in 2007-08. Outline plans are also being drawn up for the periods 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, at the request of DfES.

Risk management

24 Programme level risks have been identified and contingencies and countermeasures developed. Project managers are currently engaged in identifying risks and management strategies at the level of their individual projects.

Clearance

25 This report to Council has been cleared by Henry Ball and Melanie Hunt.

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Annex 1	Timeline
Annex 2	Programme structure