

Use by LSIS

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service will use the Framework data to inform the development and targeting of its programmes and services. Where the Framework identifies colleges or providers that require additional support to improve their performance, LSIS will provide that support.

Looking Forward: The Governor's Role

College corporations are encouraged to use the Framework in setting and monitoring their own strategic goals and targets. There will also be an increased emphasis on validating self-assessment judgements, both internally and externally, using evidence such as Framework results, and through processes such as peer review. For example, the college's self-assessment report should make reference to the Framework's scores for 2007/08, which will have been shared with the institution in May 2009. Boards should also consider the Framework's scores and grades for 2008/09 and make reference to them in the self-assessment report, as data becomes available.

The Framework will provide a "balanced scorecard" of performance ratings which will enable governors and Boards to identify progress made by their own colleges and comparative evidence. It will provide a range of evidence for self-assessment and support improvement activity, including pre-and post-inspection actions. The Framework will also provide evidence to inform, and where appropriate, support proposals by colleges (and other providers) for commissioned business. It will provide a platform of comparative evidence for stakeholders and commissioning bodies once the 2010 Machinery of Government reforms are in place. By their engagement in the process of considering and acting upon Framework evidence now, governors will help ensure their colleges are ready for the challenges ahead.



i For information

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Leading learning and skills

The Framework for Excellence

An Introductory Guide for College Governors

May 2009

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©LSC May 2009
Published by the Learning and Skills Council.

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This publication is available in electronic form on the Council's website:
www.lsc.gov.uk

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Publication reference: LSC-P-NAT-090107

The Framework for Excellence

An Introductory Guide for College Governors

Background



The Framework for Excellence is at the heart of the ambition to create a world-class further education system, with a focus on skills, employability and social mobility. The prime purpose of the Framework is to provide information for learners and employers to make informed choices, supporting the drive towards a demand-led sector, and to ensure a consistent approach to commissioning arrangements for all post-16 providers.

The Framework will provide a single, unified system for assessing and reporting achievement in all key areas of performance. The use of the Framework will lead to better and more relevant outcomes for learners and employers, and an improved reputation for the FE system.

The Framework was created to take forward the aims of the first FE White Paper *Further Education: Raising skills, improving life chances* in 2006. Since then it has become a central element of the performance management arrangements proposed as part of the skills strategy and 14–19 reform. This approach was endorsed in the White Paper *Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver*, published by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and the Department for Children, Schools and Families in March 2008. *Raising Expectations* proposed a single, clear framework for assessing performance that will be common across all providers of education and training for young people and adults.

As well as demonstrating the quality of provision, the Framework will provide evidence for central government and its partners on the value for money achieved through spending on the FE sector.

The operation of the learning and skills system is itself being reformed from March 2010 as the Young People's Learning Agency, Skills Funding Agency and Local Authority arrangements replace the role of the Learning and Skills Council. These changes are described in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill, which is currently in Parliament and expected to become law during 2009. The Framework is being reviewed in this developing policy context to ensure that it is fit for purpose and flexible for effective use across the post-16 sector.

As the Framework has been developed to assess performance and help drive quality improvements it will be integral to providers' own self-assessment and self-improvement processes. It will also support the development of self-regulation. It is expected that colleges, providers and their representative bodies, including The Single Voice, will want to use Framework evidence to identify and take action in order to improve performance across the sector.

Taken together, the Framework, the LSC's intervention policy, the National Improvement Strategy, inspection and the current developments in self-regulation will help colleges and providers gain recognition for their success and identify areas for improvement.

To achieve these aims, the Framework will:

- set out the areas and levels of performance to be achieved by each college and provider in delivering the highest quality of provision to learners and employers;
- provide information to learners and employers to help them make decisions;
- provide a management tool for providers to help them improve quality;
- help Ofsted determine the timing and intensity of inspection, and inform inspection judgements;
- provide a transparent mechanism to enable Ofsted, the LSC and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) to support and to challenge colleges and providers, in line with their respective remits.

Structure of the Framework

The Framework was developed to assess three dimensions that are widely recognised as critical constituents of performance: responsiveness, effectiveness and finance. These were to be graded and contribute to an overall performance rating. This approach has been revised to create a flatter, simpler structure utilising the performance indicators that provide evidence in these areas of assessment. These performance indicators (PIs) are more sensitive to the diverse nature of the sector. The focus will be on individual PIs, with a core applying to all providers and components applying to particular provider types. This approach will help distinguish the elements of the Framework which are important for learner and employer choice from those elements which are more suitable for commissioners, funders and inspectors. There will not be grades for the former dimensions or an overall performance rating, based on the 2007/08 assessments.

These revisions are mainly structural. For each performance indicator, the provider's information or data is assessed against objective criteria and one of four grades is applied: 'outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' or 'inadequate'. In 2009 the LSC is calculating grades for the following PIs:

- Learner Views;
- Learner Destinations;
- Employer Views, or the Training Quality Standard (TQS) where achieved;
- Qualification Success Rate (QSR);
- Financial Health;
- Financial Management and Control;
- Delivery against LSC funding/allocation;
- Resource Efficiency (Use of Resources measures).

The Ofsted grade for overall effectiveness will be utilised alongside published Framework grades. Information about publication is included in the Provider Guide and on the Framework website.

This information will be disseminated to individual providers in the form of a report with supporting information and data.

The additional performance indicator of success at full Level 2 or Level 3 is under consideration for 2009/10.

Scope

In 2008/09, the Framework applies to all FE, tertiary, sixth-form, agricultural and horticultural, and art and design colleges, and to private training providers that deliver Apprenticeships, Train to Gain and other LSC employer responsiveness-funded provision. The *Provider Guide 2008/09* sets out in detail which elements of the Framework are relevant for each type of provider, including which performance indicators. The Framework is being piloted in 2008/09 by adult and community learning providers, independent specialist colleges and other providers not included for implementation in 2008/09. From summer 2009, following this second phase of pilot activity, the Framework will apply to all providers that receive some element of LSC funding, except universities and other higher education institutions delivering FE provision, learndirect and providers that deliver European Social Fund provision only. The Framework will apply to all post-16 providers from summer 2010 including school sixth forms but will not apply to Higher Education provision which is funded by Higher Education Funding Council for England. There will be a pilot programme for application of the Framework to schools sixth forms in 2009/10.

Use by Learners

The LSC wishes the Framework to provide information for learners and their supporters, such as parents and guardians, to enable them to make informed choices as users of the FE system. Learners have said that the most useful information will relate to:

- the views of other learners;
- the quality of provision, including facilities and resources, and whether learners' needs are being met;
- learners' success rates, which are particularly significant when there is a choice of providers offering similar courses;
- destination information, which will enable them to evaluate the worth of a course in terms of investment in time, effort and money.



Use by Employers

The Framework will provide a consistent, employer-generated rating of LSC-funded providers that employers will easily be able to factor into their decision-making process when selecting training providers. The rating will be based on employers' views of the publicly-funded training they have received.

Use by Colleges and Providers

The Framework should be used by colleges and providers to assess and improve their own performance, and incorporate the findings of self-assessment into reports for governing bodies and boards. The LSC expects all providers in scope to use the Framework's scores as part of the evidence for self-assessment from the academic year 2008/09 and refer explicitly to the Framework's performance indicators in the self-assessment reports submitted to the LSC in December 2009. Further details are in the Provider Guide 2008/09.

Use by the LSC

The Framework will be incorporated within LSC business processes for commissioning, procurement and challenging performance. From spring 2009, a consideration of Framework ratings and indicators will become part of the strategic commissioning dialogue with providers, and will inform the process of negotiated commissioning.

From spring 2009, the LSC's financial and wider intervention policy will have regard to the publicly available elements of the Framework. From spring 2010, interventions such as Notices to Improve, and other actions such as contract withdrawal and removal of funding, will be triggered by Framework for Excellence scores of inadequacy. The LSC will incorporate the Framework, as a minimum quality threshold, into the tendered commissioning process for provision to be delivered in 2010/11.