

Date	15 December 2010
Subject	Skills Funding Agency Advisory Board
Attendees	As per annex

1. Welcome and Introductions

1.1 Geoff Russell welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Advisory Board and gave a particular welcome to Jon Graham, who had joined since the last meeting. Apologies had been received from Derrick Anderson, Michael Davies, Frances O'Grady, Ruth Farwell, James Fothergill, Scott Johnson and Philip Rutnam.

1.2 Since the last meeting the two documents, *Skills for Sustainable Growth* and *Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth*, had been published which set out the future path for the sector and also the Agency. Geoff Russell explained that he wanted to use the meeting to give members the opportunity to respond to key aspects of these documents. He hoped the Board would provide advice to the organisation to ensure effective implementation so it could meet the needs of learners and employers.

2. Minutes and matters arising

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting held on 27 October 2010 were agreed. These would now be published on the Agency's website.

3. Skills for Sustainable Growth & Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth

3.1 Verity Bullough and David Hughes briefly outlined some of the principles behind the FE reform programme. This was focused around fairness, shared responsibility and freedom. They ended their presentation by setting out three questions for discussion:

- How should colleges and providers be accountable to their communities and stakeholders, and what should the Agency's role in this be?
- What are the key issues in re-balancing the investment in skills? What should the Agency focus on in promoting more co-funding from learners and employers and in introducing fee loans from 2013/14?
- What are the main implications of the Skills Strategy for the Agency in terms of its remit, focus, size and shape?

They asked the Board to debate these questions and to consider if there were any others that they may wish to discuss.

- 3.2 There was a wide ranging discussion and the following points were raised:
- The reform programme sets a clear agenda for colleges to deliver.
 - The programme talks about a 'skilled nation' but we need to define this first as there are differing conflicting views of this.
 - Important to understand what success looks like and providers will look to the Agency for a clear view of this.
 - Success will be the same for the sector as for the Agency.
 - Providers need to be accountable to their communities and the Agency provides a framework for them to do this.
 - How do you define 'communities' as these are different and can be transient. They may also not be geographically based.
 - Providers need to work collaboratively on community engagement.
 - We should take a 'rear view mirror' approach and consider the measures for success.
 - The Agency has a facilitative role to play in partnership with the sector.
 - Skills for those who are out of work are important and a best practice framework for JCP and colleges to work together is needed.
 - There needs to be a co-ordination of levers to deliver (e.g. loans) and then determine what works.
 - There is a tension between what employers and learners want, which has to be reconciled.
 - There is a tripartite relationship i.e. college, learner and employer, and employers need to be involved in defining success if they are to benefit.
 - Signals and incentives need to be provided to steer the sector.
 - The role of the Agency is to facilitate, incentivise, and intervene as well as be the 'guardian' of quality.
 - There is a need for mediation of judgement and less automation.
 - We need to ensure consistency and clarity of message to the sector.

3.3 GR summarised the discussion by commenting that there was a theme emerging, in that the definition of success cannot be prescribed here, but should be led by colleges, providers and customers in their communities. Once success is defined, then the Agency has a role to collect the outcomes delivered and report on overall delivery. The Agency will also have a role in facilitation and sharing best practice. This would result in a culture change and some will take time to get there, however the Agency will support colleges and providers to achieve this.

4. Any Other Business

4.1 There was no other business so the meeting drew to a close.

ANNEX: List of attendees

Members:

Geoff Russell (Chair)	Skills Funding Agency
Shane Chowen	National Union of Students
Peter Davies	City Lit
Martin Doel	Association of Colleges
Mark Farrar	Construction Skills
David Frost	British Chambers of Commerce
Jon Graham	CIPFA
Graham Hoyle	Association of Learning Providers
Matthew Nicholas	Jobcentre Plus
Ian Pryce	Bedford College and 157 Group
Tim Ward	Learning Curve and TSNLA

In attendance:

Verity Bullough	Skills Funding Agency
Priya Gossain	Skills Funding Agency
David Hughes	Skills Funding Agency
Susan Pember	BIS

Apologies:

Derrick Anderson	Lambeth Council
Michael Davies	UK Commission for Employment and Skills
Prof Ruth Farwell	Bucks New University
James Fothergill	Confederation of British Industries
Scott Johnson	CBI SME Council
Frances O'Grady	Trades Union Congress
Philip Rutnam	BIS