

**John Hayes MP**

Minister of State for Further Education,  
Skills and Lifelong Learning

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To All Chairs of FE Corporations

Firstly I would like to congratulate you and your students on today's excellent A Level results. Results published today by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) show that nearly 15,000 A level passes were achieved by learners aged 19 and over in English FE Colleges this year. The pass rate was 95.5%, an increase from 94.8% last year. 12.2% of A level results by these learners were at grade A or higher. These results are a testament to colleges' importance in delivering academic as well as vocational excellence – the latter exemplified at Worldskills London 2011 and VQ Day. All reflect the dedication and hard work that you and your colleagues contribute in making a real difference to people's lives. I hope that you will take time to celebrate your achievements.

It is now time to pause and reflect on the progress made since we published *New Challenges New Chances* last December: the National Careers Service has been launched very successfully and is providing high quality information, and independent, professional advice and guidance for those who need it most, a vital part of ensuring an efficient labour market to drive growth; Community Learning Trust Pilots have been launched; Lord Lingfield's interim report on professionalism has been published; plans are progressing for the introduction of 24+ Advanced Learning Loans including the recently announced package of support for key groups; we have also received 269 bids for the first round of Employer Ownership Pilots and proposals for basic skills are in hand. Meanwhile we continue to work to simplify the FE system to deliver greater efficiency and value for money.

As Governors, you have a central and pivotal role in taking these reforms forward, setting the strategic direction for your colleges so that they are truly responsive to the needs of your communities, learners and employers. I would like to thank you

and the members of your corporation for your energy and dedication approaching these demanding, but critically important, responsibilities.

In my letter of 11 May I emphasised the important role of College Governors in the achievement of high quality teaching and learning. Quality of FE provision remains high overall (with over two thirds of colleges currently judged good or outstanding). However, we know that inspections conducted this year, although selected on a risk-targeted basis, have yet to see a step change in addressing the issues identified in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education's report in 2011, in particular too little outstanding teaching and learning.

Maintaining an oversight of performance in your institution throughout the year is clearly essential in helping to achieve the highest inspection grades. If you have not already seen it, you may find it helpful to familiarise yourself with guidance recently issued by Ofsted, which sets out how inspectors assess 'learner outcomes'; and how they will use the revised Learning and Skills Framework from September this year.

I am convinced that the reforms being implemented through *New Challenges, New Chances* will enable real change and improvements in quality. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of colleges and training providers to ensure the quality of the services they provide. Leadership and management are central to achieving that.

I am pleased that LSIS has teaching and learning as one of its top three priorities and will continue to offer a range of products and services to support colleges and providers, working with a range of its strategic partners such as NIACE and employer bodies. I launched the independent Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning in July. This will provide a unique opportunity to develop a sector owned strategy for further improvement and innovation of adult vocational teaching and learning and improved outcomes for learners and employers, based on evidence from employers and providers.

As well as the existing reforms, Ofsted, the Department for Education and BIS, are taking steps to ensure a 'level playing field' in the performance management of 16-18 provision, so that fair comparisons can be made across all institutional settings. To enable this convergence, Ofsted are reviewing the inspection and data guidance used by school and learning and skills inspectors; this is due to be re-published shortly. Ofsted will then ensure that this guidance is communicated through September and subsequent inspector training events. Full alignment will occur once the Department for Education has published its final proposals for 16-18 performance tables information and floor targets.

Continuing on the theme of quality some of you will be aware of our plans for “Chartered” status and for creating a guild for the FE sector.

On college community status, I believe it is important to recognise, and celebrate, the role of high quality FE colleges and training providers in serving their communities. This could be best achieved by developing a scheme which creates a ‘Chartered’ status for these high performing providers. This would only be given to those who meet criteria which demonstrate the good progress they have made in using new freedoms and flexibilities to meet the needs of their local areas and their broader communities. I want to work closely with the sector to develop this scheme, taking account of your views.

At the FE and Skills Ministerial Advisory Panel on 10 July I was able to discuss first thoughts on developing an FE Guild. This would potentially:

- provide a focal point for all FE sector interests in taking forward the professionalism agenda flowing from the Lingfield Review;
- take account of the outcomes later in the year from the LSIS review of teaching qualifications and from the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning;
- reflect and exemplify where appropriate the generic characteristics of a “modern guild” that would be applicable across industry more widely.

Since then, we have published a prospectus seeking outline proposals for the Guild's development. More information can be found at <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/further-education-skills/workforce>. Once an outline proposal has been selected, the intention is that a fully developed proposal should be ready by November, alongside that for "Chartered" status.

In a short space of time we have made significant progress in implementing our ambitious FE reform plan. This has not been without its challenges and I am grateful for your continuing commitment as we continue on our exciting journey.

I hope you will take time to relax and refresh over the summer break and return with renewed vigour for the new term.

Yours sincerely,



**JOHN HAYES**