



Department  
for Education

# **Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot – summary of self- evaluations**

**Research report**

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**CooperGibson Research**



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## Executive Summary

The Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) was launched as a pilot on 24th October 2017, with the aim of helping to address weaknesses in the quality of provision delivered by further education (FE) and sixth-form colleges identified as needing to improve. The 14 colleges in receipt of the SCIF funding were required to design and produce self-evaluations related to the activities they had implemented.<sup>1</sup>

Overall, the self-evaluation reports were positive about the SCIF programme. Several echoed the process evaluation findings<sup>2</sup> that the SCIF had enabled quality improvement work to be completed much more quickly than would have happened otherwise. Colleges reported that they particularly appreciated the development of peer-to-peer relationships between colleges, as these allowed staff at all levels to observe, share and embed good practice.

It was challenging to assess the impact of the SCIF activities against targets, as some of the examples provided in the self-evaluations were conditional (e.g. outcomes to be delivered by the end of the academic year). In addition, targets to improve student retention rates were commonly not met. In terms of progress, however, colleges were most commonly able to provide evidence of improving teaching, learning and assessment, developing the student experience and improving the quality of apprenticeship provision. Furthermore, the self-evaluations indicated an ongoing commitment from colleges to sustain activities over the longer-term.

Clarity of communication from senior leaders during a SCIF project was reported to be important in encouraging buy-in across a college community. Where communications had not been perceived to be as effective, this had a negative impact on the SCIF model of delivery. To support effective partnership working, colleges reported that flexibility in the design of activities was crucial, including the willingness and capacity to change plans in response to issues as they emerged.

Mentoring was noted in several self-evaluation reports to have been an effective approach to supporting improvement. Support mechanisms and gathering feedback from staff were perceived to improve morale, whilst also challenging them constructively to improve.

As part of the self-evaluation process, colleges were asked to set out detailed objectives, including key performance indicators (KPIs) that were SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound). However, there was varying use of

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<sup>1</sup> Most colleges reported challenges with the methods employed to evaluate the progress made against SCIF aims and objectives. These challenges are detailed in section 1.3.1.

<sup>2</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE.

the latter and a limited use of baseline data. For self-evaluation to be an effective tool moving forward, colleges require guidance and support. Providing direction or some prescription around the range of common KPIs to use would help colleges to provide more comparative and reliable results. Future evaluation activity should include clearly definable and measurable outcomes for identifying impact to ensure this aspect of the programme is considered effectively from the outset.

# 1. Introduction

The Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) was launched as a pilot on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017, with the aim of helping to address weaknesses in the quality of provision delivered by further education (FE) and sixth-form colleges identified as needing to improve.<sup>3</sup> CooperGibson Research (CGR) was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to carry out a process evaluation of the SCIF pilot, to inform the national roll-out of the SCIF.<sup>4</sup>

The pilot SCIF programme involved 14 colleges that had successfully applied for SCIF funding. Applications were received in two waves. The first wave of applications was received in November 2017, from which six colleges (four general FE colleges and two sixth form colleges) received funding. The second wave of applications was received in January 2018, from which eight general FE colleges received funding. The six colleges that received funding in the first wave of applications began work in January 2018, and the eight colleges that received funding in the second wave began work in March/April 2018.

The colleges in receipt of the SCIF funding were also required to design and produce self-evaluations to allow them to learn from the improvement activities they had implemented. These were expected to explore key deliverables, performance indicators and success measures, and provide data to identify the impact of college projects. The self-evaluation reports were submitted to the DfE in December 2018 to March 2019.

This report provides an overview of the self-evaluation reports from all 14 applicant colleges.

## 1.1 Background to the SCIF pilot

The SCIF programme of support is one of a suite of initiatives aimed at addressing weaknesses in the quality of provision delivered by some FE and sixth form colleges, whilst drawing on the knowledge and experience of stronger providers. Other improvement initiatives include an expanded role for the FE Commissioner to help

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<sup>3</sup> Indicated by an Ofsted inspection rating of requires improvement or inadequate for overall effectiveness or apprenticeship provision at their most recent inspection.

<sup>4</sup> Announced by the DfE on 28 June 2018: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-applicants-to-the-strategic-college-improvement-fund>. See the process evaluation report at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-college-improvement-fund-process-evaluation>

support improvement in colleges at risk of failure, and a new National Leaders of Further Education (NLFE) programme which was launched in October 2017.<sup>5</sup>

The SCIF is designed to support general FE and sixth-form colleges that need to improve the quality of provision, including for apprenticeships. The programme is based on a peer support model. Colleges awarded the SCIF funding partner with one or more higher-performing college(s) to undertake focused quality improvement activities.<sup>6</sup>

For the pilot programme, the latest Ofsted grading was used as an indicator to identify colleges that were eligible for support (those rated as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' - grades 3 and 4 - for overall effectiveness or apprenticeship provision at the most recent inspection). Eligible colleges were able to apply for a grant of between £50,000 and £250,000, although this was an indicative range and applications requesting funding outside this range were considered. There was also the expectation that participating colleges would provide match-funding.<sup>7</sup> Grant funding was expected to be spent by 31 July 2018, with a proportion used by 31 March 2018.<sup>8</sup>

The plans developed by applicant colleges included a range of improvement initiatives focused on aspects of provision such as business strategy, performance management, curriculum design, teaching, learning and assessment, and governance.

## 1.2 Self-evaluations

Each applicant college was asked to submit a self-evaluation plan, which outlined the key activities and measures used to identify and monitor impact. To ensure that a range of evidence was being collected, colleges were encouraged by CGR to improve and refine these plans over the course of the pilot. This aimed to help colleges understand what had worked, where SCIF had a positive impact, and where there were potential areas for improvement.

CGR worked in partnership with applicant colleges where required, providing advice and support towards the development of appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) and self-evaluation processes. Key success measures and KPIs included both soft and hard measures. Soft measures related to evidence generated from focus groups, surveys or learning walks. Hard measures related to data such as attendance and achievement figures. Challenges colleges faced in developing objectives and KPIs are summarised in sections 1.3 and 2.1.

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<sup>5</sup> See: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-leaders-of-further-education-guidance-for-potential-applicants>

<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of this report they are referred to as 'applicant colleges' and 'partner colleges'.

<sup>7</sup> Match funding of £1 for every £3 of grant. Matched funding could be waived where it was deemed appropriate.

<sup>8</sup> During the SCIF pilot, some colleges were granted extensions to their timescales for grant spend.

Applicant colleges were provided with a reporting template to help them to report outcomes and impact achieved from the interventions delivered using the SCIF. The template provided a structure for colleges to follow, and guidance on reporting the self-evaluation findings. Colleges were expected to measure impact via a mixture of proxy/interim measures and longer-term performance and achievement measures.

## 1.3 Methods of self-evaluation

The objectives set by colleges were used as a means by which activities carried out through the SCIF programmes of work could be evaluated for effectiveness and impact. Colleges drew on a range of evaluation methods and criteria in order to assess their activities, including gathering quantitative and qualitative data. Examples include gathering data on attendance and retention, whole college and departmental/subject outcomes and achievement, progress, results of formal observations and learning walks, and staff and student feedback via surveys, discussions and focus groups. Colleges often provided data from several sources to add depth and a level of robustness to the self-evaluations. Varying depths of detail were provided in this section of the self-evaluations. However, all colleges provided information on the approaches taken to evaluate progress and data against the aims of the SCIF projects (see Table 1 in the Appendix for a summary).

Furthermore, some challenges were encountered by colleges in implementing the evaluation methodologies selected. These are detailed below. Further challenges around developing aims and objectives and measuring success and impact are discussed in section 2.1.

### 1.3.1 Methodological issues

Most colleges reported challenges with the methods employed to evaluate the progress made against SCIF aims and objectives.

- **Limits of self-evaluation:** By its very nature, the process of self-evaluation risks a lack of independence and objectivity in presenting findings, and therefore the outcomes presented in this report should be treated with some caution. Nonetheless, during both the process evaluation and the self-evaluation reports, colleges were generally positive about the experience of the SCIF and the work and progress achieved through the programme of activities implemented.
- **Attributing change to the SCIF:** Similar to the process evaluation findings, a small number of colleges reported that it was challenging to determine the level of impact of the SCIF, due to the range of simultaneous activities taking place and the multi-layered approach taken to drive college-wide improvements (including many SCIF activities being embedded into broader Quality



Improvement Plans).<sup>9</sup> The process evaluation also reported that the short timescale for the SCIF project had not allowed colleges ‘sufficient time...to gather evidence of impact’.<sup>10</sup> Where one perceived that the monthly reporting requirements for the SCIF were onerous, another suggested that the regular scrutiny and focus on evaluation had ensured ‘that we are on track to meet the targets which we set at the application stage’ and had been beneficial to action planning.

*‘The rigour of the evaluation and monitoring of our data and other sources of evidence brought about through the SCIF project will continue. This has held staff at all levels accountable for the performance of the college and provided us with assurance that the focus of the staff, the teams and the managers is on the right things and is having impact’.*

- **Timings:** Although the deadline for the self-evaluation was extended to enable the capture of evidence/data, a small number of colleges noted that the timescales for the SCIF activities had been ambitious, and that KPIs had not yet been fully achieved. This echoed a similar finding in the process evaluation, which highlighted that impact on outcomes may not be identifiable until the summer term of academic year 2018-19 at the earliest.<sup>11</sup> In addition, some reported that they were waiting for the results of external appraisals, audits or anticipated Ofsted visits before they could provide evidence as to whether activities had had a positive impact on college performance.
- **Recording data:** Colleges reported that competing deadlines/priorities, or a lack of knowledge of software tools/systems meant that staff did not always provide timely or full datasets for analysis (e.g. for in-year analysis/staff appraisal records). In addition, a lack of confidence in (or absence of) historic observation data meant that it was not always possible for meaningful and/or comparative analysis to be carried out in relation to the impact of the SCIF on quality/outcomes. For example, where one college had recorded improvements in the proportion of observed lessons meeting/exceeding expectations, this was also caveated with ‘limited confidence’ in the data ‘derived from the previous observation policy and procedure, due to historic trends of over-grading’. However, as a result of the activities and resources put in place through the

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<sup>9</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p.17 - 20

<sup>10</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p.23.

<sup>11</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p.17

SCIF, colleges were generally confident that challenges with evaluating data would decrease over time.

- **Continuing Professional Development (CPD):** The process evaluation identified that CPD needs and training requirements had often been estimated within original SCIF proposals, reflecting the low level of consultation that tended to take place with wider college staff and partner colleges during the drafting process. The requirements for CPD therefore needed to be revised during the SCIF activity itself.<sup>12</sup> Subsequently, when offering training as part of the SCIF programmes of work, colleges identified scheduling issues. This meant that it was not always possible to include all staff in training sessions, as intended; colleges also experienced a lack of consistency in the delivery of CPD to different groups, and not all staff signed attendance registers during CPD sessions. These factors meant that CPD attendance data, and the subsequent staff feedback regarding the impact of training, could not be used with full confidence when informing evaluation work.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** A lack of response/engagement from employers and learners to surveys, or a lack of understanding of how to most effectively frame questions in the surveys, meant that data was either incomplete or skewed. This had led some colleges to review the employers engaged with apprenticeship provision (as they were not responsive to requests for feedback), and to implement processes to ensure improved understanding among employers of the expectations and requirements of being involved. In some cases, staffing changes meant that gathering feedback from a whole sample of staff surveys had not been possible.
- **Financial expenditure:** Variations in budget, where they were reported, ranged between £500 and £10,000 and were met through match funding. The variations tended to be due to increased expenditure on specific aspects of the SCIF, for example to implement activities more extensively or to provide additional CPD where it was felt to be required/beneficial. However, few applicant colleges provided financial information within the self-evaluation reports. Instead they referred to other documentation (e.g. final project report) where financial data could be found. Therefore, in-depth analysis of this section of the self-evaluation reports has not been possible.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p.22

<sup>13</sup> All pilot projects reported to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on a monthly basis. Seven colleges spent the exact amount allocated. Colleges were free to spend more on their projects if they wished, but had to finance this out of their own budget rather than the grant provided by the Department for Education – four colleges were in that position. Two colleges underspent by a significant amount, which was recouped by the ESFA in both cases.

## 2. Focus of self-improvement

This section provides a summary of the aims and objectives that applicant colleges set out for their SCIF programmes of work and key areas identified for improvement.

### 2.1 Setting aims and objectives of the SCIF activity

As part of the self-evaluation reports, colleges were asked to set out what the detailed aims and objectives for the SCIF programmes of work had been. These tended to have been refined following the initial application process as the SCIF activity got underway. CGR advised that objectives should include specific targets against which progress could be measured. This included ensuring that objectives and KPIs were SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound).

Examples of the aims, objectives and key performance indicators (KPIs) that colleges included in the self-evaluation reports against each of the six themes can be found in the Appendix (Table 2).<sup>14</sup> Overall, college priorities were generally reflected in the aims, with information provided as to how each would be achieved through a core set of objectives and KPIs. However, the process evaluation established that colleges faced a number of challenges in relation to monitoring and evaluation, particularly around setting SMART objectives and establishing baseline figures.<sup>15</sup> Further detail is provided in the process evaluation report, but challenges were reflected in the self-evaluation reports included:

- **Varying use of SMART objectives:** Although examples were identified throughout the reports, some colleges had very few objectives that were SMART. In particular, few were specifically measurable or timebound (such as those related to establishing new monitoring processes or performance review cycles). Instead, these success measures tended to be descriptive narrative of outputs, rather than quantifiable measures of outcomes or impact.
- **Less focus on defining objectives:** Despite the support provided throughout the monitoring and evaluation stages of the SCIF pilot, establishing and defining objectives remained challenging for some colleges. The self-evaluation reports showed that some objectives were more akin to overall programme aims, or

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<sup>14</sup> Several colleges refer to 'Alps' (A-level performance system) scores. This is an analytical tool used by some schools and colleges to track, monitor and assess their progress and the level of value they add to students' performance and progression at key stages 4 and 5.

<sup>15</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p.54 - 55

KPIs were included as objectives, rather than the target for measuring impact. This suggests more work is required in ensuring colleges understand the definitions and differences between setting 'aims' (what should be achieved), 'objectives' (how the aims would be achieved), and 'KPIs' (evidence of the level of success in achieving the aims).

- **Limited baseline measures:** The self-evaluation reports confirmed that most colleges did not use baselines when reporting evidence of success or impact. Whilst they were provided by some colleges for hard measures such as achievement and retention rates, for soft outcomes such as teacher confidence or governors' perceptions, baselines were less likely to be referenced. Evidence provided for success against these measures was often qualitative, based on narrative feedback and perceptions.
- **Reliability of findings:** There were sample sizes included in a few self-evaluation reports, but the reliability of the data overall is questionable. Where sample sizes were included, for example, for staff surveys, details of a comparative sample for previous years was not reported, limiting any informed comparisons. Some colleges made reference to 'all staff', or '100% of staff' surveyed, but did not provide the relevant figures. This variability in information provided makes any assessment of change difficult overall.
- **Timings for gathering data:** Some colleges reported challenges in evidencing the quantitative impact of the SCIF programme of work on areas such as attainment, retention and attendance measures within the duration of the project. Although colleges were encouraged to include interim measures for these within their self-evaluations, several noted that the quantitative impact of the SCIF project would not be seen until the end of the 2018-19 academic year.

Despite these challenges, it was clear from the reports, that colleges had, where possible, established some baseline data and set targets either in terms of outcomes, or date/timelines by which activities should be completed. The general focus of the aims and objectives is summarised below in section 2.2. For further detail on where KPIs had been achieved, or where targets were missed, see section 3.

## 2.2 Key areas of self-improvement

Colleges provided a summary of the self-improvement activities focused on throughout the SCIF programme. Although this varied for each college, there were broad commonalities, linked to challenges identified during recent Ofsted visits, or other external peer reviews (see below for examples). The themes also reflected the broad

areas that colleges had identified for improvement as part of the SCIF application process.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the themes underpinning the self-evaluation reports could be grouped into six broad categories. In order of prevalence:

1. **Teaching, learning and assessment:** This included an overarching focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, through activities designed to develop staff skills and, commonly, increase the level of stretch and challenge for students (including the most able and those with high needs). To achieve this, colleges focused on: improving the quality of lesson observations, raising aspirations and expectations across the student body, monitoring and tracking to ensure the implementation of timely interventions, and enhancing ICT support and systems for staff use. Mathematics and English were specific areas of provision to be improved through the SCIF in several colleges.
2. **Leadership and management:** The development of leadership and management teams was a core focus for most colleges, with recognition of the need for senior leadership teams to possess the skills and ability to drive improvement across an institution. Areas of work included: redesigning performance management processes to ensure continual monitoring took place, and strengthening data management, reporting and analysis to inform leadership decisions.
3. **Quality of apprenticeship provision:** This commonly included increasing retention rates and the number of completions, including 'timely' completions. Some colleges focused on specific aspects of delivery such as: developing readiness to learn, raising expectations among students, improving links between study and work placements, improving workplace observations, developing employability skills, the strategic engagement of employers, and enhancing the quality of information, advice and guidance (IAG) for students.
4. **Student experience and engagement:** This covered a range of activities underpinned by the aim of improving student engagement and aspiration (including preparation for progression) and, as a result, student attendance rates (either across the college, or in specific subject areas).
5. **Governance:** Governance processes were a focus for improvement in a few colleges, to ensure that this function offered support and challenge to colleges, whilst holding management and leadership to account.

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<sup>16</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p.27

6. **Curriculum planning and development:** A small number of colleges reported that a focus of the SCIF was to ensure that provision met local need and enabled progression for students.

### 3. Measuring success

This section provides an overview of the evidence provided by colleges within the self-evaluation reports against the targets set at the start of the SCIF activities.

#### 3.1 Meeting targets

In the self-evaluation reports, colleges were asked to assess the overall success of the SCIF projects against their stated aims and objectives. They were specifically requested to refer to changes in Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), including evidence demonstrating both quantitative and qualitative changes. Colleges were also asked, where possible, to evidence baseline data so that added value of the SCIF could be demonstrated (and/or compared with non-SCIF areas).

Examples of success and positive change against KPIs as reported by colleges within the self-evaluations are provided in the Appendix in Table 3. These should be viewed with caution however, due to the reasons explained in section 2.1. Successes were generally evidenced in meeting targets for Alps scores,<sup>17</sup> improved outcomes data (in some cases exceeding targets), and improved feedback scores during student engagement surveys. Overall, colleges were most commonly able to provide evidence of achievement against targets in:

- **Improving teaching, learning and assessment**

Target: *'Improve progress rates from 81% to 86% by end September 2018.'*

Progress (at the time of self-evaluation reporting): *'Progress rate increased to 87%.'*

- **Developing the student experience**

Target: *'Improve six-week retention rate by [five percentage points] from baseline of 86.5%.'* Progress (at the time of self-evaluation reporting):

*'This had been achieved, with a retention rate of 91.5%...'*

- **Improving the quality of apprenticeship provision**

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<sup>17</sup> Several colleges refer to 'Alps' (A-level performance system) scores. This is an analytical tool used by some schools and colleges to track, monitor and assess their progress and the level of value they add to students' performance and progression at key stages 4 and 5.

Target: *'Target of 90%+ learners...to achieve timely [completion]'*.  
Progress (at the time of self-evaluation reporting): *'Timely success is improving...90% of learners on track to achieve timely [completion]'*.

As well as the successes, colleges also noted where targets had not yet been achieved, or work was still in-progress. Some examples of progress provided were conditional, for example suggesting that outcomes would meet the intended KPIs by the end of academic year 2018-2019, if current performance remained static. This made it difficult to assess the impact of the SCIF activities against targets, but indicated improvement and an ongoing commitment from the colleges to sustain activities over the longer-term and achieve the KPIs set at the start of the programme. In a limited number of cases, the reasons for this lack of success were provided, for example, staff turnover and delays in implementing new software or processes.

Targets to improve student retention rates were most commonly reported to have not been met (for examples see Table 4 in the Appendix).

*'Retention target of + 6% to 91%. By the time of the self-evaluation, improvement of retention was +3.6% to 88.6%; classroom-based achievement had improved +5.1% to 79.8% (against target of +7.3% to 82%).'*

Some targets were yet to be achieved particularly, around teaching, learning and assessment, leadership and management, and student experience and engagement. Where colleges had not yet met KPIs/targets, most reports noted that improvements had been made to some extent, and that initial KPIs remained targets moving forward. Self-evaluations generally included a note that as new systems became embedded over time, the targets would be achieved. This suggests that longer-term tracking/evaluation of the impact of the SCIF activities may be beneficial for future funding rounds.

### **3.2 Evidence of success**

As with the aims and objectives, and evaluation methods used, there was a broad range of ways in which colleges had measured success of the SCIF programmes of work. The following sections discuss the successes colleges have identified under seven key themes:<sup>18</sup> the strategic use of data, developing strong peer-to-peer relationships, impact on soft measures, student experiences, receiving external validation of new strategies and approaches, ensuring that activities were sustainable over a longer period of time and overall college assessment.

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<sup>18</sup> These were common themes identified throughout the self-evaluation reports, and are not presented in any specific order.

### 3.2.1 Strategic use of data

When measuring the success of strategies implemented through the SCIF, most colleges conducted a comparative exercise between pre- and post- SCIF activities, data and planning. Where this was provided qualitatively, self-evaluation reports tended to state that the SCIF had brought about positive changes in longer-term institutional planning, and the skills and knowledge of leaders required to underpin that planning. For example, one college had explored the broad strategic direction of the institution and noted that where before the SCIF, some general targets had been in place, this had changed as a result of the SCIF activity into the development of a new five-year strategic plan with specific KPIs plotted by the leadership team against each area of work.

*[The SCIF] has been extremely successful, allowing the college to develop sustainable and comprehensive quality and curriculum planning operating cycles. The provision of additional resource has facilitated the condensing of two year's work into approximately 9 months. The rate of improvement...has increased as a result'.*

Subsequently, in measuring the success of the SCIF, several colleges linked a broader strategic change to direct improvements evidenced through progress or outcomes data. To provide these quantitative examples of success, most colleges used Alps or other data analysis processes to evaluate whether outcomes had improved over time, or specific objectives/targets had been met. Thus, performance measures were being tracked by colleges in-year against internal targets, or against progress scores, attendance/retention rates and class sizes.

*'Overall apprenticeship success for 2017/18 is predicted to be 80% which will be 9% higher than 16/17, 13% higher than the national average for all providers, 7% higher than specialist providers & 3% above the KPI target of 77%'.*

The impact of changes made through the SCIF was also identified as part of performance management processes.

*'There has been an improvement in the quality of annual performance review targets, particularly around achievement rates and performance in teaching, learning and assessment for lecturing staff. Non-curriculum staff have seen an improvement in...targets around service standards and accountability as most curriculum and non-curriculum Heads of Department benefited from direct collaboration with [the partner college] on accountability and leading from the front'.*



Colleges commonly reported that a key success of the SCIF was that existing data were being used differently, and more effectively (rather than, for example, institutions purchasing different software/new tools). This included evidence of skills development among management and leadership as a result of CPD delivered via the SCIF, enabling them to use data more effectively in identifying and acting upon issues as they arose. This has led to identification in improvement in outcomes, retention levels, and early interventions.

*'Data now underpins the organisation, and its pivotal and on-going development sets the scene for live, transparent and accessible reports, that are RAG [red, amber, green] rated to support and promote timely intervention. The revised quality cycle will be embedded and the evaluative reports be used to inform immediate improvements and to embed more sustainable change. Data trends are built into reports and live monitoring continues to identify and manage risks more effectively'.*

### **3.2.2 Improved relationships and teacher development**

The process evaluation identified that peer-to-peer support for senior leaders, middle leaders and governors was a core aspect of the SCIF programmes of work. The quality of these peer relationships was found to 'impact on the extent of practice shared' and the effectiveness of collaborative working.<sup>19</sup> In the self-evaluation reports, colleges supported this finding, reporting that effective programmes of internal peer support had been put in place through the SCIF. This was evidenced by the colleges through examples of improved working relationships and team-working.

*'Mentoring support for teachers available is timely and personalised – the focus on sharing good practice has allowed the relatively new posts of [specialists in teaching and learning] to have a positive impact on the quality and quantity of individual and peer support. A curriculum-led [process for] sharing good ... [has been] embedded into the quality cycle. Sharing good practice is now [delivered through discrete] curriculum areas and is having a more positive impact that when it was approached centrally. The additional curriculum-based elements are expected to have the targeted impact on achievement rates by the 2019 milestone'.*

Some colleges also reported that there were improved relationships with stakeholders as a result of the SCIF, evidenced through employer attendance at network meetings, and increased employer take-up of face-to-face meetings with placement officers. However, this was not a common finding as other colleges reported that low levels of

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<sup>19</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p.30

engagement among employers had made progress against KPIs difficult to track. For these colleges, the SCIF had provided an opportunity to review existing relationships with employers and, where engagement from employers was low, consider whether these would be continued in the future.

### 3.2.3 Impact on soft measures

The range of activities implemented through the SCIF programmes of work was noted in the self-evaluation reports to have had a beneficial impact on soft measures, and in particular on teacher confidence. Recorded outcomes of formal lesson observations included that tutors were being 'braver and more creative' in their lesson content/delivery, lesson observations were increasingly graded as good or better and, as a consequence, student retention rates in a few cases improved (see Table 3 in the Appendix).

*'100% of management team reported improved confidence in their approaches with staff and student performance management following support from partner college; they also gave positive feedback on using new systems with these processes identifying specific staff requiring targeted support to improve.'*

### 3.2.4 Student experiences

Colleges that had focused on improving student engagement reported that attendance and retention rates had improved as a result of the implementation of clearer policies and procedures. This reflected the process evaluation findings.<sup>20</sup> Self-evaluation reports indicated that as a result of improved attendance, students were not missing important course content, and less time was being spent revisiting topics in lessons.

*'Attendance for apprentices has increased since the last inspection... Most apprentices completed and achieved their functional skills qualifications by their planned end date... The overall proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications at the [college] has improved further and is above the national average.'*

There were also examples provided where new approaches implemented through the SCIF had enabled tutors to act more promptly to provide intervention where a student required additional support.

*'A...pastoral officer will visit the apprentice within the first six weeks of the apprenticeship start to ensure any one-to-one support requirements'*

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<sup>20</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p.45

*are actioned. Due to this change in approach, the college has been able to identify more apprentices that have needed support’.*

### **3.2.5 External validation**

All colleges reported that they had received validation of their progress either through recent Ofsted monitoring visits/inspections, or via reports from external peer reviews. Feedback from these visits confirmed that improvements in key areas had been made (for examples, see Table 3 in the Appendix). Three colleges had improved Ofsted gradings to ‘Good’ from ‘Requires Improvement’ during the time of the SCIF pilot.

For example, during a recent inspection one college received an Ofsted rating of ‘Good’ – ‘a rapid turnaround’ from a rating of ‘Requires Improvement’ eighteen months previously. This was based on improvements in apprenticeship provision, progress and leadership. The college’s self-evaluation report attributed this success to the opportunity made available via SCIF ‘for investment in a whole series of activities that the college would not otherwise have been able to support, e.g. additional staffing, partnership working, new development and use of technology’.

Other colleges had undergone recent Ofsted monitoring visits at the time of the self-evaluation. Where colleges reported Ofsted feedback, it generally identified improvements or progress in teaching, learning and assessment, and leadership.<sup>21</sup> Where colleges had established new processes for conducting curriculum reviews, work scrutiny and staff appraisals, these were ratified through Ofsted monitoring visits and external consultancy support.

*‘The SCIF action plan was robustly tested by Ofsted...and then again by the FE Commissioner team as part of a diagnostic assessment...both citing it as evidence of a leadership strength in terms of recognising and addressing...key areas for improvement. The SCIF action plan rapidly evolved to become both the college-wide Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP)’.*

Within the self-evaluation reports, colleges noted an increased understanding of inspection processes, and therefore more knowledge among leadership teams on how to be prepared and interpret the information used to reach judgements. It was felt that such work provided assurance for improvement activities where there would be ‘no meaningful comparators with the previous academic year’ as a result of new processes being put into place.

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<sup>21</sup> One college had received external feedback to suggest that the quality in teaching and learning was not improving during the timescale of the SCIF project. This prompted a change in focus in the SCIF work, which was subsequently reported to have made a positive impact.

### 3.2.6 Sustainable changes

The process evaluation found that a key impact of the SCIF interventions had been a ‘college-wide improvement in culture, leadership and raising aspirations’.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, a key measure of success identified in many of the self-evaluations was that activities and processes introduced during the SCIF programme of work had been embedded into daily working practices, thereby instigating culture changes over time.

For example, regular CPD programmes had been integrated into college cycles of work, e.g. tailored sessions to meet specific needs, or internal sessions among staff to share good practice; formalised agreements had been rolled out to all employers to make expectations clear; and several colleges demonstrated how new processes and systems were successful in driving improvements in outcomes because they had created more streamlined or integrated working practices across the institution.

*[Learning support staff] have received increased levels of one-to-one CPD...which is logged on the internal [HR] system...This approach has enabled [learning support staff] to receive bespoke support which has led to improvements in delivery...as evidenced by the management performance review tool that is reviewed on a monthly basis by the managers to ensure...completion. This [subsequently] informs any training and development requirements’.*

Several colleges noted a positive impact through the increased or more efficient use of technology to support data monitoring, reporting, referrals and quality. Examples included centralised systems introduced through the SCIF so that all data was recorded in one place. Evidence was also provided of more regular and consistent data analysis and reporting, meaning that monitoring processes were more rigorous. These systems related both to student outcomes, and staff development.

*‘The new HR system...has brought positive feedback from managers and staff, as there is now accessibility to performance and CPD management. 100% of managers are positive about the new system and the impact it can have around change. This system has highlighted a closer way of working and staff ownership in their professional development and reviewing of action plans/ targets’.*

### 3.2.7 Overall college assessments

All self-evaluation reports were positive about the programme, and particularly the opportunity to be partnered with another college. Several echoed the process

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<sup>22</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p.36

evaluation findings by including comments that the additional resource accessible via the SCIF meant that planned work to improve the quality of provision had been completed much more quickly than would have been otherwise possible.<sup>23</sup>

*'There has been the opportunity for investment in a whole series of activities that the college would not otherwise have been able to support, e.g. additional staffing, partnership working, new development and use of technology'.*

*'SCIF funding allowed the college to deliver a broader programme of continuous professional development activities over a sustained period, which are now embedded and being further developed'.*

A small number of self-evaluations suggested that colleges were unable to directly link positive outcomes to SCIF specifically, as it had been part of a suite of improvement activities occurring simultaneously; however, the reports also acknowledged that the SCIF programme of work had made a valuable contribution to improvement cycles.

*'The college has made reasonable steps in its improvement which was acknowledged by Ofsted and can be demonstrated in the improvement of its headline performance. Having the help of the SCIF funding enabled us to access the most appropriate support needed to take the college forward'.*

Similar to the process evaluation findings<sup>24</sup>, the lack of 'competition' from partner colleges as a result of their geographical location was generally reported to be beneficial, whilst similarities in terms of provision or improvement journey meant that partners were perceived to offer 'credible' support and helped to ensure buy-in with all stakeholders involved in the programme.

*'The project offered us constant support and challenge from experienced and respected partners from the FE and School Sectors driving the improvements... Whilst this report lists a range of KPIs and improvements against those, the greatest benefit of the SCIF project ... although less easy to measure, has been a significant culture change... Whilst there are still inconsistencies and not all changes are fully embedded, the SCIF project has facilitated a change in attitude and working practices of managers and team members towards the reforms and the new requirements. This change is now slowly but surely being*

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<sup>23</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p.48

<sup>24</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p19.

*reflected in apprentices' and employers' attitudes and working practices. Best practice is being shared as a matter of routine and the momentum will secure sustainable change'.*

## 4. Lessons learned

When asked what had been learned as a result of the SCIF projects, the self-evaluation reports most commonly and frequently included reflections on the partnership aspect of the model, and in particular the mentoring and peer support/review that occurred as a result.

### 4.1 Partnership working

Reflecting the findings of the SCIF pilot process evaluation,<sup>25</sup> nearly all reports mentioned that the opportunity to work with a partner college was a beneficial aspect of the SCIF programme, particularly in that it had allowed staff (including leadership teams) to observe working examples of what ‘good practice’ looked like in other settings. This was perceived to have improved overall staff understanding of the aims of the SCIF programme of work, as they could relate the aims to the practical work that they had observed in the partner colleges. Importantly, and echoing the process evaluation, the partnerships were reported to have helped to reassure staff in areas where existing working practices were appropriate and did not require change.<sup>26</sup> In turn, this was perceived to have enabled current good practice to be strengthened, whilst ‘allowing for a critical analysis’ of other areas of provision.

Within the self-evaluations, clarity of communication by leadership and management to all staff during a SCIF project was felt to be important in ensuring that the required changes were well understood/communicated to staff, and to encourage buy-in across the college community. Where communications had not been perceived to be as effective, this was identified during the process evaluation as having a negative impact on the SCIF model of delivery.<sup>27</sup>

To support effective partnership working, colleges reported that flexibility in the design of activities was crucial, including the willingness and capacity to change plans in response to issues as they emerged.

*‘The relationship established with the partner college has provided a wealth of support and development opportunity for the college leadership teams. Both the senior and middle leaders have gained extensive*

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<sup>25</sup> ‘The SCIF encouraged a more meaningful collaboration between colleges, based on a model of self-improvement. Colleges and stakeholders welcomed this approach as a cost-effective means to maintaining and developing expertise within the FE sector’. CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p.7

<sup>26</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p.48

<sup>27</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p.54

*knowledge of improvement strategies that have brought about greater than anticipated improvements in student progress’.*

*‘One of the key lessons learnt by all was that although a specific strategy works perfectly in one organisation that practice doesn’t always transfer exactly into a different context and staff need to be prepared to take risks, experiment with strategies and not give up if things don’t work straight away’.*

This flexibility, however, had resource implications, and – as identified in the process evaluation – had implications for the ability to effectively manage the SCIF programmes of work within the short timescales provided, or to gather robust evidence for monitoring and evaluation purposes.<sup>28</sup>

## **4.2 External insight and mentoring**

Mentoring was noted in several self-evaluation reports to have been an effective approach to supporting improvement, and also in developing an understanding among staff members of how to raise expectations and why this was important. Support mechanisms and gathering views/input of staff were perceived to improve staff morale, whilst also challenging them constructively to improve. Some self-evaluation reports indicated that this also allowed for the testing of ideas prior to implementation, and encouraged staff to reflect on provision and practice.

*‘Managers have developed confidence in new systems that help manage all levels of performance, and the...quality standards are being embedded in all aspects of their daily work. The staff survey has highlighted the need to continue to work with staff on effective ways of working and ongoing communication to keep staff involved. The working groups forum will continue to provide the opportunity to share ideas and confidence in being part of the...journey’.*

One college noted that mentoring programmes required sufficient internal capacity to deliver effective support. As a result, this college had recognised the need to engage all middle managers with CPD in order to increase the wider capacity of the college to mentor staff and improve quality in leadership going forward.

Accessing independent, impartial external support (e.g. by commissioning external CPD provision or consultancy services) was noted in some reports to have enabled college staff to access new or different perspectives on current working practices,

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<sup>28</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p.53-54



whilst raising their awareness of strategic developments within an institution or across the sector more broadly.

### 4.3 Timing and resources

Similarly to the process evaluation, the self-evaluations highlighted that it was necessary for some colleges to be mindful of the practicalities of the SCIF delivery, and to be realistic about what could be achieved in the time available.<sup>29</sup> Although one college noted that the peer-to-peer work provided through the SCIF project could be delivered 'at all levels of the organisation including the Principal and governors', another noted that this could be 'too ambitious' in terms of sharing practice in a short timescale and on a wide scale.

A small number noted that the SCIF programme of work may have benefitted from starting earlier in the academic year.

*'Ideally the SCIF project should have been based upon a full academic year to allow for planning, implementation and a more detailed and realistic impact assessment'.*

A few self-evaluation reports also noted that it was important to ensure staff capacity to focus on the SCIF activities, and to mitigate as far as possible any risk of single person dependencies for key tasks (therefore ensuring that any lack of success in recruitment, or the departure of any members of staff, did not create barriers to project progress).

### 4.4 Next steps

When asked what the next steps following the SCIF would be, self-evaluation reports tended to mention the need to embed practice and continue to improve processes introduced during the work with partner colleges. Nearly all reports mentioned the following next steps:

- Continue to access and communicate with peers (including the partner college and other external consultancy support) to ensure improvements were in line with good practice/best practice identified across the sector. The process evaluation identified that colleges expected their relationships to continue in the long term but that the level of contact would be less intense.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p.52-53

<sup>30</sup> CooperGibson Research (2019), *Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) pilot: process evaluation*. DfE, p50.

- Continuation of work towards meeting the priorities, actions and objectives as set out in the SCIF delivery plans (e.g. through college improvement cycles).
- Embed staff development programmes and targets, coaching support, CPD projects or follow-on work emerging from these activities, with evidence-based practice and performance review cycles now underpinning these. Examples of CPD for staff planned for the future included: embedding English and mathematics into apprenticeship provision, delivering effective challenge and feedback, ensuring quality observation/mentoring, managing workload/caseload, improved planning.
- Continual monitoring and review of areas requiring development, and processes put in place through the SCIF, e.g. improve lesson observation, external peer review, new curriculum planning, performance management processes/reviews.

*'The college has identified ongoing work in key aspects of the Quality Improvement Plan and this includes ongoing staff development, training in the next steps of systems use and management support to develop core skills further. Through student and delivery monitoring, new emerging themes may arise, and the college is committed to handling these in a timely manner to ensure a positive journey into the next Ofsted inspection. College have engaged external consultant support to continue the pace of required change relating to quality and outcomes'.*

## 5. Conclusions

Overall, the self-evaluation reports supported the findings of the process evaluation, that the SCIF was perceived by colleges to have made a valuable contribution to the improvement work being undertaken. It was generally reported that the resources made available via the SCIF programmes of work had enabled planned improvement work to be implemented at a much more rapid pace than originally anticipated.

Through the SCIF, colleges had been expected to show progress against key performance areas of attendance, progress, retention and achievement.

- **Attendance:** Many colleges provided evidence of improved attendance rates during the SCIF pilot, as well as positive and improved feedback gathered through student surveys in terms of their overall experience and level of engagement with provision. Much of this was attributed to improved staff CPD and working processes leading to more direct engagement with students and employers. However, it should be noted that a lack of consultation with staff during the initial SCIF application process meant that much CPD activity encountered difficulties in terms of scheduling, consistency and gathering holistic feedback. This indicates a need (as per the process evaluation) for colleges to provide more time to initial planning and diagnostics before applications for funding are submitted.
- **Progress:** Several colleges provided evidence of progress being made, and sustained, at whole college level and within individual subject areas/departments. This was evidenced through improved progress measures, or – more commonly – added value scores. Where baseline data had not been established in advance (e.g. where reporting systems had changed and therefore comparative data were not available) this made assessment of progress more challenging. Echoing the process evaluation, should the policy around SCIF and its evaluation be improved, colleges should be provided with support on establishing baseline KPIs and encouraged to include this evidence as part of the SCIF applications.
- **Retention:** Student retention created the most challenges for colleges in terms of meeting targets set at the start of the SCIF programme of work. Although some reported improvements in short-term retention, many colleges reported that overall retention targets set at the start of the SCIF programme of work had not been achieved in the timescales of the SCIF trial and evaluation. Colleges should therefore ensure that any KPIs set at the start of the programme are quality assured for how realistic they are in the timeframe available to them.

- **Achievement:** Most colleges had set targets in terms of improving overall achievement, as well as improving achievement rates in specific subject areas. Data were reported where these targets had been met, or where progress was being made towards them. Several colleges noted feedback from Ofsted inspection/monitoring visits that reflected overall improvements in provision and leadership. Such progress in meeting targets could be shared during the programme to encourage motivation and commitment to continue with the activities. Increased networking between colleges involved in the programme would encourage the dissemination of good practice and learning across the sector.

Where data and/or outcomes were unavailable to colleges at the time of the self-evaluation, or targets had not yet been achieved, there was however a shared optimism and commitment that through embedding practice and sustained improvement, the targets would be met over time. Colleges particularly appreciated the opportunity to develop peer support partnerships with other institutions in the sector and, confirming the value of that support, reported that these working relationships would be continued following the end of the SCIF pilot. Notions of sustainability should remain at the heart of future SCIF activities, to ensure appropriate levels of commitment, capacity and willingness of colleges to embed improvement into longer-term initiatives.

There were clear challenges with the monitoring process and subjective nature of self-evaluation, stemming from the initial difficulties that many colleges had – despite the support provided – in establishing SMART objectives, KPIs, baseline data and effective data collection methodologies. This confirms the significance of the process evaluation findings, that future evaluation activity should include clearly definable and measurable outcomes for identifying impact to ensure this aspect of the programme is considered effectively from the outset.

There is value in colleges conducting self-evaluations, where this helps them to monitor and evaluate their own activity. Where there is not the opportunity to conduct an independent evaluation, self-evaluation does have a place for allowing new initiatives to be monitored and assessed. Self-evaluation is not without its limitations, however. A broader evaluation conducted external to the college environment provides the opportunity to collect and assess more consistent and independent data. It is important to work with the colleges to minimise any duplication of data collection efforts, but this approach does allow a wide range of data to be gathered and compared across more than one institution. For self-evaluation to be an effective tool, colleges require guidance and support. Providing direction or some prescription around the range of common KPIs to use and reporting requirements helps to focus data collection and analysis and will provide more comparative and reliable results.

## Appendix

**Table 1: Methods used by colleges to evaluate progress (Source: college self-evaluation reports).**

<p><b>Teaching, learning and assessment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results of formal observations recorded, using quantitative rating scales to enable comparison pre- and post-SCIF interventions.</li> <li>• Attendance tracked at staff CPD sessions.</li> <li>• Proportion of students achieving core subjects (English and Maths) monitored.</li> <li>• Targets tracked for the number of learning walks and observations carried out</li> <li>• Data/mark books analysed to internally assess progress and skills development.</li> <li>• External reviews conducted by SCIF partners.</li> <li>• Internal audits conducted (e.g. once every half term).</li> <li>• Feedback submitted via staff and student surveys.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Leadership and management</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall college outcomes tracked and reported.</li> <li>• Financial performance tracked through regular scrutiny of college management/financial accounts.</li> <li>• Staff surveys pre- and post- external training sessions gathered perceptions of skills/confidence.</li> <li>• Feedback gathered from external monitoring visits (e.g. Ofsted monitoring).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Apprenticeship provision</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student achievement/outcomes and progress against targets tracked.</li> <li>• Feedback gathered from learner and employer surveys.</li> <li>• Observation of assessors recorded.</li> <li>• Data tracked consistently (e.g. regular analysis against in-year targets for progress).</li> <li>• Centralised timetabling and monitoring of core sessions to support attendance measures.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of feedback from targeted observations.</li> </ul>
<b>Student experience and engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner surveys distributed and feedback gathered.</li> <li>• Data monitored and learner records (including attendance) tracked.</li> <li>• Strategic use of data changed to support accountability, e.g. attendance targets tracked at college level, but also at department/course level.</li> </ul>
<b>Governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback sought on Continuing Professional Development (CPD)/development days.</li> </ul>
<b>Curriculum planning and development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student retention data tracked.</li> <li>• Analysis of staff timetables and learner numbers.</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Examples of aims, objectives and KPIs associated with SCIF activity (Source: college self-evaluation reports).<sup>31</sup>**

<b>Aims</b>	<b>Objectives/KPIs</b>
<b>Teaching, learning and assessment</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase the support from assessors and tutors to skilfully support the development of English and maths skills and ensure that those students who do need English and maths qualifications benefit from regular support or teaching.</li> <li>• Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by supporting the lesson observation process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 90% of lesson observations graded good or better. No lessons graded inadequate. Learner voice scores good for teaching learning and assessment</li> <li>• Value added to improve overall from Alps 6 to Alps 5.</li> <li>• Overall achievement to increase from 71% to 80%.</li> <li>• Improve progress score in Maths from +0.17 to +0.3.</li> </ul>

<sup>31</sup> Several colleges refer to 'Alps' (A-level performance system) scores. This is an analytical tool used by some schools and colleges to track, monitor and assess their progress and the level of value they add to students' performance and progression at key stages 4 and 5.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise the standard of teaching, learning and assessment through experiential learning, enhancing stretch and challenge, including the effective deployment of learning support.</li> <li>• To unlock Potential through Learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 70% of learners to have tracked skills development between September and October 2018.</li> <li>• 50% increase in walkthroughs and learning walks completed by October 2018 in comparison to 2017/18.</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop targeted specialist and technical staff skills and leadership and management skills to enable sustainable improvements across all areas.</li> <li>• Develop the diagnostic abilities of the senior leadership team and their engagement in improvement strategies through collaboration with the Principal and senior leaders at the partner College to ensure greater consistency in monitoring of student progress.</li> <li>• To strengthen and improve the college's leaders to impact on improvement rates.</li> <li>• Sharing the use of data dashboards to drive performance improvement and reviews.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership and Management target: Ofsted good in next inspection.</li> <li>• Alps Quality indicator to improve from Alps 5 to at least Alps 4.</li> <li>• Overall achievement rate to increase [including year-on-year comparisons] and is sustained.</li> <li>• 100% of teaching teams to undertake 2-day team development and standardisation CPD.</li> </ul>

<b>Apprenticeship provision</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across apprenticeship provision to result in improved experience and achievement rates.</li> <li>• Improve the strategic engagement of employers in the apprentice learning programme.</li> <li>• Enhance the timely achievement rates across apprenticeship frameworks and standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the professional practice of assessors from 58% good or better to 70% good or better by end of September 2018.</li> <li>• Improve 6-week retention rate by 5% points.</li> <li>• Standardisation of live data across all teams to demonstrate consistency through half termly system reviews, by October 2018.</li> </ul>
<b>Student experience and engagement</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance the student experience and development of employability skills to achieve attendance and progression KPIs.</li> <li>• Increase student attendance.</li> <li>• Develop quality systems, performance management and processes to support a culture of continuous improvement in attendance and progress monitoring, leading to timely intervention.</li> <li>• Improved destinations rates.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KPI: attendance target +7%...[via] an enhanced student induction and admissions process and programme.</li> <li>• Attendance to improve from 87% to 90%.</li> <li>• 3% increase in attendance of active students in Sept/Oct 2018 compared to Sept/Oct 2017; 20% increase in value added data outcomes...compared to October 2017.</li> <li>• At least 5% increase in attendance compared to same time previous year.</li> <li>• Progression targets entry to Level 1 – + 10% to 35%, Level 1 – Level 2 + 9% to 65%, Level 2 – Level 3 plus 18% to 50%.</li> </ul>



<b>Governance</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through collaboration, sharing of experiences and advice from our partner college to upskill the governing body in monitoring performance to help them engage further with curriculum areas and teaching, learning and assessment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governors' minutes accurately record improved information and robust challenge that secures the improved college 'quality indicator' Alps grade from 5 to 4.</li> </ul>
<b>Curriculum planning and development</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the curriculum planning process and strategy.</li> <li>Ensure that the curriculum uses funding efficiently to achieve its learning objectives, is effective in delivering the learning outcomes that it is designed to achieve and has employability and enterprise at its core.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retention improves from 87% to 90% for 16-18. Retention improves from 87% to 90% for post-18.</li> <li>Contribution of each faculty to be a minimum of 40% at curriculum plan sign-off.</li> </ul>

**Table 3: Evidence provided by colleges of success against KPIs.**

<b>Teaching, learning and assessment</b>	
<b>Target</b>	<b>Progress by time of self-evaluation (November 2018)</b>
Improve progress rates from 81% to 86% by end September 2018.	Progress rate increased to 87%.
Consult upon and disseminate a new set of core standards for teaching, learning and assessment.	Achieved, shared and implemented through CPD and team collaboration
Improve attendance and performance for at risk students, with all A level students retained to the end of the academic year.	100% pass rate for A levels in 17/18; in-year withdrawals for first year students reduced from 18 in 16/17 to 6 in 17/18,

	and to-date no first year A-level students had withdrawn from the course in 18/19.
Improve value added score from Alps 6 to Alps 5.	Alps 5 score achieved.
80% of learners achieving their aspirational target grades.	93.8% of learners on track and all learners have targets for progress and destinations.
<b>Leadership and management</b>	
<b>Target</b>	<b>Progress by time of self-evaluation (November 2018)</b>
New leaders needed to receive support to help with performance measures and accountability, this included a target for overall achievement of 84%. Overall achievement target for 16-18 was 77% and to sustain post-19 achievement at 86%.	The college achieved 85% (an improvement from 82%). Overall achievement for 16-18 provision was 77.9%, post-19 achievement was 88.8%.
Increase staff confidence in leadership and change management, transferring staff onto new systems, and leaders showing confidence in using new college systems and in monitoring at risk students.	100% of management team reported improved confidence in their approaches with staff and student performance management following support from partner college; they also gave positive feedback on using new systems with these processes identifying specific staff requiring targeted support to improve.
<b>Apprenticeship provision</b>	
<b>Target</b>	<b>Progress by time of self-evaluation (November 2018)</b>
Overall achievement target of 69%.	Overall achievement rate was 72%.
Improved communication and clarity of the apprenticeship journey	Ofsted monitoring feedback highlighted improved information, advice and guidance processes for apprenticeships.
Establish a central single in year progress monitoring and reporting system for apprentices.	Ofsted monitoring feedback confirmed that this system had been implemented, with improved rigor and consistency of apprenticeship monitoring.
Improve the overall and timely achievement of apprentices, with	Achievement rates of apprentices now significantly above national rates and Ofsted judged this provision to be good.

particular focus on progress tracking and achievement of functional skills.	Overall achievement improved from 58% at the start of the pilot to 78% in 17/18. Timely achievement improved from 43% at the start of the pilot to 71%.
Increase in timely apprenticeship achievement to 65%.	The current best case for timely achievement in year was 69.8%, with a current rate of 60% against 17% at the same point last year.
<b>Student experience and engagement</b>	
<b>Target</b>	<b>Progress by time of self-evaluation (November 2018)</b>
Improve six-week retention rate by 5% from baseline of 86.5%.	This had been achieved, with a retention rate of 91.5% - achieved through closer liaison with learners and employers to discuss expectations and agree realistic timeframes for progress through the apprenticeship training.
Improved student satisfaction – target 90% positive.	Feedback was 96% positive.
5% improvement in attendance from 83% for 16-18 and 85% for adult learners	These targets achieved with new processes in place for emphasising good attendance.
90% of students on a 16-19 study programme benefit from external work experience.	94% of eligible students had completed, were currently undertaking or had planned work/industrial experience placements.
<b>Governance</b>	
<b>Target</b>	<b>Progress by time of self-evaluation (November 2018)</b>
Improve strategic planning capacity, with a strategic plan and KPIs in place.	New board members and chair of governors appointed, and a new five-year strategic plan including KPIs put in place as part of the SCIF activity.
Governors to meet to share practice, undertake gap analysis and improve strategic oversight: baseline survey of governor satisfaction, target to improve satisfaction by 30%.	Survey results indicated 45% improvement.

<b>Curriculum planning and development</b>	
<b>Target</b>	<b>Progress by time of self-evaluation (November 2018)</b>
Improvements to curriculum delivery leading to a satisfactory financial health rating 2017-18 and forecast good 2018-19, plus enhanced progression developments.	A new curriculum strategy was launched. A significant increase in employer engagement, co-design and co-delivery is enriching the student experience...A new cross-college transition curriculum offer for students at level 1 has been implemented, focussing on developing students' progression and employability skills...The college has achieved a satisfactory financial health rating for 2017-18, a clean audit and forecast good financial health rating for 2018-19.

**Table 4: Examples of SCIF targets not achieved.**

<b>Teaching, learning and assessment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease in progress gaps of &gt;20% from 19% to 9% by end of Sept 2018: by the time of self-evaluation, this gap had reduced to 16%.</li> <li>• Value added scores had not yet improved: the target was Alps 5 but was at Alps 6 for A levels and Alps 7 for vocational programmes.</li> <li>• Target: 90% of lesson observations graded good or better and no lessons graded inadequate; result was 85% graded good or better and 4% lessons graded inadequate.</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership and management</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% appraisal completion: at the time of the evaluation, completion of the revised appraisal process was 81% compared to 60% at the same point last year.</li> <li>• Annual performance reviews – low success rate due to college delay in adopting new software. Positive impact was expected over the medium term.</li> <li>• Finance/budgeting training – medium success level due to the departure of key personnel mid-project.</li> </ul>

### **Apprenticeship provision**

- Decrease in progress rates of >20% for apprenticeships from 35% to 15% by end September 2018: by time of self-evaluation, the reduction was to 24%. Challenges faced included competing deadlines/priorities creating issues with scheduling CPD; knock-on effect of this on staff knowledge of software to record and track data/progress.

### **Student experience and engagement**

- An aim to improve the strategic engagement of employers, including setting a target for engagement. However, by the time of the self-evaluation, targets for 2018/19 had not been set. This was due to an ongoing review of the frameworks to be offered and rationalising the number of employers to be engaged.
- Retention target of + 6% to 91%. By the time of the self-evaluation, improvement of retention was +3.6% to 88.6%; classroom-based achievement had improved +5.1% to 79.8% (against target of +7.3% to 82%).
- Improve retention from 87% to 90% for 16-18; by the time of the self-evaluation, retention had improved to 88%.
- Improve retention from 89.3% to 91%; retention was 89.4% at the time of the self-evaluation.

### **Curriculum planning and development**

- Embedding English and maths – low success due to key role becoming vacant. Future attempts will spread workload across the English and Maths departments rather than relying on one staff member.



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