



Department  
for Education

# College staff survey 2018

Research brief

November 2018

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# College Staff Survey

## Background

Kantar Public, working with RCU, was commissioned by the Department for Education to deliver the College Staff Survey 2018. All General Further Education (GFE) and FE specialist colleges in England were in-scope for the research. The research contained three components: a principals' survey; a teachers and leaders survey; and a staff return questionnaire, which asked colleges to return administrative data.

The research was commissioned to improve the workforce data available to DfE and the wider sector on teachers and leaders in FE colleges in England; provide insights into the experience, qualifications and expectations of teachers and leaders in general and specialist FE colleges; and provide insights into churn within the sector.

The teachers and leaders and principals' surveys were conducted online, with a telephone option for principals and paper option for the staff return. Fieldwork began with a soft launch of the research in February 2018. The main stage began in April 2018 and fieldwork finished in June 2018. In total, 140 principal surveys; 9,603 teacher and leader surveys; and 117 staff return questionnaires were completed. Data have been weighted to account for non-response amongst different types of college and staff characteristics (where relevant).

This report contains findings amongst principals, teachers and leaders within general and specialist FE colleges. Teachers were defined as anyone who said their main role was Advanced Practitioner or teacher, lecturer or tutor; or whose role involved regular teaching. Leaders were defined by anyone who said their main role was a governor; part of the Senior Leadership Team; middle or junior manager; or who were a staff-governor. Respondents were classed as both a teacher and a leader if their survey responses met both these criteria.

## Composition and background of college teaching and leadership staff

Population estimates from the staff return estimated there were 66,970 teachers and leaders within FE colleges. Nearly nine in ten (88%) were teachers and the remaining 12% were leaders.

The age and gender profiles for teachers and leaders showed that the workforce was skewed towards women and those aged 45-59. Teachers tended to be younger than leaders with 16% of teachers aged 35 or younger compared with only nine per cent of leaders. The majority of teachers and leaders were white British. Over nine in ten

teachers and leaders said this was the case (95% for both teachers and leaders in response to being white and British).

Income varied quite substantially by role, as would be expected. Nearly seven in ten leaders (67%) earned more than £35,000 compared with 11% of teachers. More than half of principals (57%) earned between £100,000 and £149,000.

## **Support and opportunities for staff in the FE sector**

Teachers and leaders were asked how satisfied they were with opportunities to develop their career in FE. Less than half of teachers (41%) said they were satisfied with the opportunities available. This compared with 64% of leaders who were satisfied with opportunities to develop their career. This may reflect that leaders had already experienced some career development to get to their current role.

More than one in seven teachers (15%) and leaders (16%) had accessed financial support during their time working in FE. The FE training bursary was the most common form of financial support accessed.<sup>1</sup> One in ten teachers (9%) and leaders (10%) had accessed the bursary, which was available until 2012.

## **The best and most challenging parts of working in FE**

Working with learners was most often cited as the best part of working in FE for teachers (90%) and leaders (85%). Teachers said that learner achievement (30%) and learner progression (40%) were the best parts of working in FE. However, 30% of teachers also said working with learners was the main challenge of working in FE.

Workload was the most commonly cited challenge or difficulty of working in FE by teachers (48%). Teachers gave a wide range of responses to the main difficulty of working in FE. This likely reflects the varied and complex role of teachers in FE colleges.

Leaders were more likely than teachers to cite funding (62% compared with 31% of teachers) and government policy (23% compared with 8% of teachers) as the main difficulties of working in FE. More than a third of leaders said that workload was the main difficulty (37%).

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<sup>1</sup> This bursary was offered through the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)

## Composition of workforce

The proportions of teaching staff across vocational subject(s) taught were consistent across all regions. The exceptions to this were a higher concentration of agriculture teachers in the North West (which corresponds to a higher number of land-based colleges in the region); a concentration of construction teachers in Yorkshire and the Humber; and engineering and manufacturing teachers in the North East.

A large proportion of teachers taught only vocational provision (72%). Less than one in five (17%) teachers only taught academic provision.<sup>2</sup> The majority of teachers felt that they were qualified to teach to at least level 3 (see appendix table 26).

Construction, and engineering and manufacturing had some of the highest volumes of staff and teaching hours. Creative and design had the highest proportion of teachers of vocational qualifications (10%). English and maths had the highest volumes of teachers for academic qualifications (4% in each).

## Qualifications and previous experience in industry

Teachers were asked what teaching qualifications and status they held. Teachers, leaders and principals were also asked about any experience they had in industry.

Almost all teachers (93%) held a teaching qualification. The most commonly held qualification was a level 7 qualification, for example a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), which 45% of all teachers held.

Around four in ten teachers (41%) held a teaching related professional status. The most commonly held were Qualified Teacher Status (QTS – 23%) and Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills status (QTLS – 16%).

The vast majority of principals (82%) and leaders (73%) had worked in industry before becoming a leader. This compared with 64% of teachers who had worked in industry. Teachers were asked whether they had ever worked in industry related to any of the vocational subjects they taught. Industry experience was most common amongst teachers of sales, marketing and procurement (88%); hair and beauty (87%); and agriculture (86%).

Teachers were also asked whether they currently worked in industry (not necessarily related to subjects they taught in). More than one in six teachers (17%) worked in

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<sup>2</sup> Primarily GCSEs or A-levels delivered within a college setting

industry at the time of interview. This was most common among teachers of hair and beauty (31%); creative and design (30%); and agriculture (29%).

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of leaders and 68% of principals had worked as a teacher, tutor or lecturer before becoming a leader. This suggests the vast majority of leaders in FE colleges had worked their way up to a leadership role after starting out as a teacher.

## Recruitment and retention

Principals were asked which subjects their college found it most difficult to recruit in. The staff return also asked colleges to provide the number of vacancies they held at time of interview. This data, combined with teachers and leaders data which asked whether staff were likely to leave FE in the next twelve months, provides an understanding of recruitment and retention challenges in the sector.

Construction, engineering and manufacturing, and digital/IT had some of the highest vacancy rates (4% or higher) and were identified by principals as the most difficult vocational subjects to recruit in. Construction (22%), and engineering and manufacturing staff (20%) were also more likely to say they were 'very likely' to leave FE in the next twelve months or already had a job outside FE. This suggests there were particular challenges in these subjects. Construction and digital/IT are among the first T Level routes, planned to launch in 2020.

Three quarters (75%) of principals identified maths as the most difficult academic subject to recruit teachers compared with 42% who identified English as the most difficult academic subject to recruit in. Numeracy and literacy also held some of the highest vacancy rates and were the most difficult 'other' (non-vocational and non-academic) provision to recruit in. This chimes with issues in the school sector recruiting and retaining maths teachers in particular.<sup>3</sup>

Principals were asked what challenges they faced in recruitment and retention. The most common responses were competition from higher salaries in industry (22%) and schools (17%). A lack of qualified staff (18%) was also given as a challenge in recruitment.

One in seven (14%) teachers said they were very likely to leave FE and two per cent said they already had a job outside FE. Nearly six in ten teachers (58%) said they were unlikely to leave the FE sector in the next twelve months.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://royalsociety.org/~media/policy/Publications/2018/14-03-2018-maths-snapshot-teaching.pdf>

Nearly half of teachers who already had a job offer outside FE said they were leaving either because of perceived poor college management (44%) or pay (42%).

Similarly, teachers who said they were likely to leave FE in the next twelve months were asked why they were considering leaving. The most common responses were workload (40%), perceived poor college management (39%) and pay (35%). This suggests perceived college management and pay are important tipping factors to teachers leaving FE.

## **Next steps**

Kantar Public will be conducting a follow-up survey in 2019 with teachers and leaders. The follow-up survey will focus on staff who have moved role or have a job outside FE and explore reasons why they have moved. This will provide further evidence on reasons for churn within FE colleges.



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**Reference: DFE-RB870**

**ISBN: 978-1-78105-966-1**

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