



Skills Funding
Agency

College and Training Organisation Survey 2014

A summary of the results

November 2014

Of interest to colleges, training organisations, employers and stakeholders

Background

We ran our fourth annual college and training organisation survey for 2014 from Monday, 7 July until Friday, 25 July (inclusive).

For this year's survey we changed the format by asking respondents to rate each survey statement on a scale ranging from: 'very good', 'good', 'satisfactory', 'poor', 'very poor' and 'don't know'. In the previous three years' surveys our approach was to ask respondents the extent to which they 'agreed' or 'disagreed' with the survey statements.

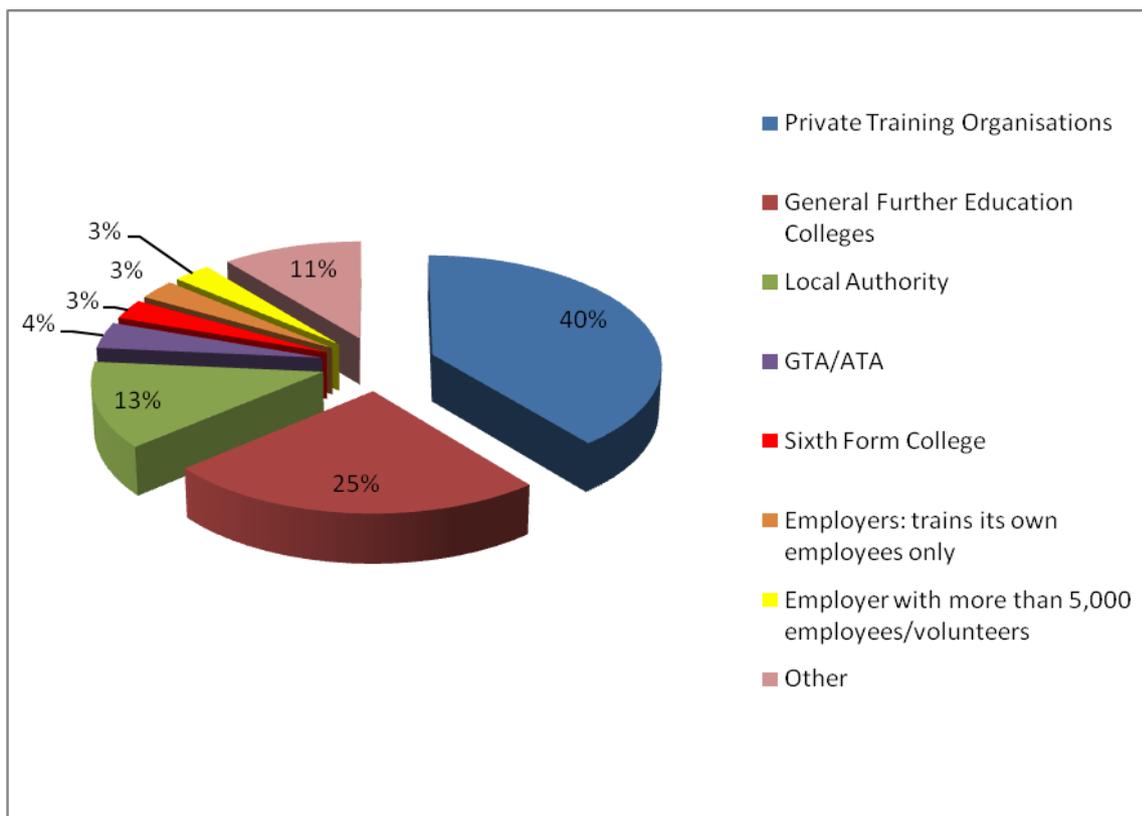
The change in format means we cannot make a **direct** comparison of results and feedback between this year's survey and those from previous years. Also, for the first time this year we restricted access to the survey to those colleges and training organisations who currently sit on our national provider database.

This year we received **594 responses** to our survey, which represents nearly **56%** of the total number of colleges and training organisations on our database in July 2014. Given that we restricted access to the survey this compares favourably with the 700 we received for 2013, 448 for 2012 and 256 for 2011.

Some **96%** of respondents confirmed they held a contract with the Agency at the time of completing the survey.

The statements for this year's survey remain broadly the same as those we used in the last three years. Where appropriate, we made a few minor changes to some of them to reflect any updates or changes in our systems and processes. We introduced two new statements this year, one on European Social Fund provision and one on data and information.

Table 1: Respondents by 'type' based on 594 responses



The 'other' category includes: Academies, Higher Education Organisations, Special Designated Colleges, sole traders, limited liability partnerships and Community Interest Companies. Each one of these accounted for 2 per cent or fewer of the total number of responses.

2014 survey headline results

(For this year's survey, the term 'approval rating' below refers to the combined percentage score of 'very good', 'good' and 'satisfactory' by respondents to each survey statement. For previous years' surveys it refers to the total percentage of respondents who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with each statement.)

Summary (overview)

Overall, the results from this year's survey are very positive. We have consolidated our approval ratings in nearly all areas whilst seeing increases in some. We have also restored our approval rating for the timeliness of our funding allocations to the level we achieved two years ago, after we had seen a fall of **15%** between 2012 and 2013. In one area, National Careers Service, our approval rating remains low at around **40%**.

Summary (detail)

In terms of our core function, over **87%** of respondents gave a positive approval rating to our effectiveness in funding FE skills training. This is up from the **81%** of respondents who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' in last year's survey.

Nearly **67%** approved of the actions we have taken since last year's survey to improve the way we operate with the sector. This perhaps highlights the level of trust that respondents have in our ability and willingness to respond to their concerns.

Around **74%** of respondents approved of the extent to which our funding rules have removed bureaucracy and simplified the funding system – up slightly from the **71%** who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with this last year. At the same time **69%** approved of the progress we have made in reducing the bureaucratic burden on the sector through a streamlined funding system, up significantly from the **52%** who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with this in 2013.

Nearly **70%** of respondents approved of the progress we have made in promoting high-quality Apprenticeships up **9 percentage points** from last year's survey when **61%** 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with this.

Respondents clearly approve highly of the way we communicate with them. We received an approval rating of **96%** and **94%** for the effectiveness of 'Update', our core communication channel to the sector and our ability to communicate free of jargon and in plain English, respectively. Over the last two years or so we have run in-house effective business writing workshops to over 300 staff as well as being a corporate member of the Plain English Campaign and this may, in part, have contributed indirectly to the very positive feedback.

In February and March this year we moved our website (and other platforms) to GOV.UK requiring us to completely redesign our approach to and the content of our website. Despite this fundamental change **68%** of respondents approved of the ease with which they could navigate the website and find information - up from the **61%** who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' in last year's survey.

We saw an increase in the approval rating (**77%**) for the timeliness of our funding allocations this year which is encouraging given that between the survey years 2012 and 2013 it saw the biggest approval rating fall for any survey category from **79%** (2012) to **64%** (2013) – a fall of **15%**.

The approval rating from respondents for the National Careers Service and its ability to engage organisations to ensure learners have access to the service, remains low. We saw a slight fall from **41%** (2013) to **40%** (2014).

For our two new survey categories this year we attracted an approval rating of **77%** for the information and data we produce whilst the support and guidance we provide for ESF (match) funding registered an approval rating of **60%**.

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to complete this year's survey and give their feedback. As with previous years' surveys we are looking closely at the results and comments so we can look at ways we can continue to improve the way we work with the sector.

Results from the 2014 survey

The figures for each statement below show the percentage of responses for each rating category.

Survey Statement and rating categories	Very good / good	Satisfactory	Poor / very poor	Don't know
Our effectiveness in our role of funding skills training for further education in England	49.80	37.50	11.51	1.19
The extent to which the Funding Rules 2014 to 2015 (and evidence requirements) publication has helped to remove bureaucracy and provide greater simplification of the funding system for you	32.54	40.87	22.62	3.77
The progress we have made to reduce the bureaucratic burden on the sector by streamlining the funding system – particularly the funding rates, formula and earnings method	30.36	38.69	28.96	1.98
The extent to which the National Careers Service engages with your organisation to ensure that learners have access to the service	13.29	26.39	49.60	10.71
The progress made by the National Apprenticeship				

Service in promoting the delivery of high-quality Apprenticeships	30.56	38.69	19.24	11.51
Your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Agency staff with whom you interact	48.21	34.52	15.67	1.59
The timeliness of our funding allocations to give you sufficient time to plan	37.66	39.09	21.61	1.64
The timeliness of our updated provider performance-management process to enable you to request funding to meet the needs of employers and LEPs	25.94	41.56	19.55	12.55
The extent to which the information and data we provide you (based on your data input) is in a useful and open data format, and enables you to make business decisions	34.16	42.59	19.75	3.50
The success of the procurement process we operate (through the Register) to secure the right provision for the sector	29.46	43.00	12.96	14.61
Where you have accessed ESF through us, or you have been notified that your provision will be used as match funding for ESF, the extent to which the information and support we have given you makes clear your	23.25	36.63	12.96	27.16

responsibilities and requirements on evidence, document retention and audit responsibilities				
The effectiveness of 'Update', our weekly round-up of business-critical information and news for the sector, in communicating key information to you	76.03	19.42	3.10	1.45
The extent to which our communications are written in plain English and free from unnecessary jargon	63.02	30.99	4.96	1.03
The ease with which you can find the information you need on our website now we have moved to GOV.UK	27.06	40.08	30.16	2.69
The actions we have taken over the last 12 months to improve the way we operate with you	27.08	39.66	28.58	4.69



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