

# Implementing the Further Education and Skills Reform Programme

BIS / DfE brief on progress for FE Governors and Leaders:  
December 2015

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## Apprenticeships

As set out in *English Apprenticeships: Our 2020 Vision* (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-vision-for-2020>), we are committed to reaching 3 million apprenticeships starts in 2020. We will continue to support employer-led apprenticeship reforms, which are improving the quality of apprenticeships to provide the skills that employers need. We are taking action to support the growth of apprenticeships – working with businesses to begin or expand their programmes, setting new expectations for public sector bodies and through public procurement.

Over 140 Trailblazers involving more than 1300 employers are designing new apprenticeship standards with 194 published (of which over 60 are Higher and Degree Apprenticeships) and more than 150 new standards in development. The first apprentices started on the employer-led standards in September 2014. Standards and assessment plans produced by employers and agreed by Government are published at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards>.

A UK-wide levy will be introduced for all larger employers in the public and private sector to help fund the increase in quantity and quality of apprenticeship training in England. Following the consultation, the Chancellor announced the rate and scope on which the levy will be collected. The rate will be set at 0.5% of the employer pay bill and will be collected via PAYE. There will be a pay bill allowance of £15,000 which means that employers with a pay bill of less than £3m will not have to pay. This means that less than 2% of employers will pay the levy.

The Government intends to create a single apprenticeship body - the Institute for Apprenticeships - to support the development and delivery of high quality apprenticeship standards and assessment plans and the work of BIS and DfE in setting a cap on the level of government funding available for each apprenticeship standard. The body will be funded by Government using public funds as the rest of the governance system is.

To encourage employers to offer more opportunities, eligible employers can receive a £1,500 per apprentice Apprenticeships Grant for Employers (AGE) for up to five new apprentices aged 16-24. From April 2016, employers will not be required to pay employer National Insurance contributions for apprentices under the age of 25 on earnings up to the upper earnings limit.

## Degree Apprenticeships

We are happy to say that more degree apprenticeship standards have been approved – the full list of higher and degree apprenticeships can be found on the gov.uk website. It is very encouraging also to see that Universities are working with FE providers to ensure the standards are delivered, building on the best quality training that's available. This is an area where FE and HE can work together to meet employers' needs across the full range of qualifications from Level 2 to Level 7.

## Traineeships

In August 2013, we introduced traineeships for young people who wish to get an apprenticeship or other employment but lack the basic skills and experience that employers are looking for. They have made an excellent start: nearly 30,000 young people have participated in the programme in its first two years; around two-thirds of year-one trainees reached positive destinations following their traineeship, including apprenticeships; and 94% of employers consider traineeships an effective way of preparing young people for work.

We want to see continued growth of traineeships in order to support as many young people as possible into apprenticeships and sustainable employment. The Skills and Education Funding Agencies are continuing to fund and prioritise traineeships and encourage more providers to deliver them; and as part of this, the agencies are making traineeships a priority when considering in-year growth bids from providers.

When we introduced traineeships we required that providers are graded 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted in order to ensure quality from the outset, but said we would keep this under review as the programme develops. Now that traineeships are fully established and getting excellent results for young people, from 2016/17 we will place them on a par with other provision by removing this requirement. This will enable more providers to deliver traineeships and ultimately more young people to benefit from them.

## Technical and Professional Education (TPE)

We have set out plans for reforming technical and professional education, which will set England's system on a par with the best in the World. The reforms will focus on simplifying the currently over-complex technical and professional education system into clear routes, working in direct partnership with employers to ensure the new system provides the skills most needed for the 21st-century economy.

While we have already delivered substantial reforms to apprenticeships, stripped out thousands of low value qualifications, increased accountability and tackled poor quality provision, the system is still too complex, confusing young people and failing to adequately deliver the employees of the future that business needs. For the next stage, we will deliver a technical and professional education system that is genuinely owned, understood and valued by employers, that helps young people make informed choices about the value of different types of study and the opportunities these bring, and that better integrates classroom-based training and employment-based training like apprenticeships.

A number of key design principles for reforming TPE have been identified through the introduction of a new routes system, including having a small number of clearly-identified progression routes extending from the end of compulsory schooling at 16 to skilled employment. The structure of the routes will vary according to employers' needs, designed from the end-point backwards and underpinned by high quality advice, clear content and coherent alignment between routes and work-based

programmes i.e. apprenticeships and Traineeships, and will supplement well-established graduate routes. The reformed system will support all levels of ability, support social mobility and will drive the right behaviours through clear accountability and funding.

To deliver our technical and professional education system, we need a provider base that is fit for purpose and resilient, where there is a strong network of independent institutions with a specific focus on the delivery of high quality technical education. In the Productivity Plan, we announced the development of a new network of Institutes of Technology (IoTs) to deliver high standard technical education, and support progression to the most economically productive Technical and Professional disciplines. These new institutions will operate collaboratively and complement other providers including FE and Sixth Form Colleges, National Colleges and University Technical Colleges. We will be issuing further guidance on IoTs shortly.

### TPE Independent Expert Panel

To deliver the reforms, the Government will work closely with an independent expert panel, headed by Lord Sainsbury, the former Minister of Science and Innovation. The views of post 16 education providers will be vital in shaping the reforms and we are pleased that Bev Robinson, the Principal and Chief Executive of Blackpool & The Fylde College, has agreed to join the panel. Lord Sainsbury and Bev Robinson will be joined on the panel by Professor Alison Wolf, author of the Wolf Review of Vocational Education, Simon Blagden, the Non-Executive Co-Chairman of Fujitsu and Steve West, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West of England.

The Panel will advise the Minister on developing policy to implement the reforms. The panel will focus on defining the form and structure of the routes e.g. ensuring clear TPE pathways to those occupations which typically require qualifications at Levels 2 to 5. The content of these routes will be designed by working with employers and professional bodies to understand the needs of these occupations. Particular attention will be given to lower attaining students who may not be ready to embark on TPE at the age of 16, and ensuring these students are able to access appropriate classroom based education and work experience to enable them to progress to an apprenticeship, further education or employment.

The Panel will continue to engage with the sector and business community to decide what these routes will be in mid-December. The panel expects to make recommendations to government on what the reformed technical and professional education system should look like in March and we expect to be able to say more about this in spring 2016.

### Advanced Learner Loans

In the autumn statement, the Chancellor announced that Advanced Learner Loans will be expanded to 19 to 23 year olds at levels 3 and 4, and 19+ year olds at levels 5 and 6 to provide a clear route for learners to develop high-level technical and professional skills. This will benefit an estimated 40,000 students a year. The

government will also consult on introducing maintenance loans for people who attend specialist, higher-level providers, including National Colleges.

The expanded remit will be implemented from the beginning of the 2016/17 academic year and learners will be able to apply for a loan to cover courses in the 2016/17 academic year from May 2016. More detail will be provided by the Skills Funding Agency in the funding rules. BIS will be working with the Skills Funding Agency and Student Loans Company to update all the resources we've made available to colleges on the SLCs practitioner site, so they can use these to tell learners about the expanded remit.

In the meantime, colleges might find it helpful to see the case studies we have published on the [NCS website](#) in the last couple of weeks, about how colleges and independent training providers have made loans work for their business. More case studies will be added over the coming weeks.

## Restructuring of Further Education – Area Reviews

The objective of area reviews is to create a stronger educational offer through a locally driven process. This will include a strengthened capacity to deliver apprenticeships and high level professional and technical training. They will also improve efficiency and value for money.

Area reviews will consider the best structure of provision to meet the needs of learners and employers in that locality. The reviews look at an area's skills and education needs before considering how to align educational provision to meet those needs. They will take place under a national framework, but led by a local steering group. The FE and Sixth Form College Commissioners will oversee the process.

Further education colleges remain independent, and will take their own decisions on the recommendations of the area review process but the Secretary of State retains a responsibility for protecting learners, and ensuring good use of public money, and Government will engage in the process to ensure those objectives are achieved. We expect reviews will lead to fewer, larger more specialised colleges and more collaboration between institutions. They will strengthen capacity to deliver high quality apprenticeships and provide a greater focus on professional and technical education through the creation of institutes of technology. An important objective is to strengthen progression to higher levels of study.

Details of the area reviews already announced can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reviewing-post-16-education-and-training-institutions-list-of-area-reviews>

As sector owned organisations, the Education and Training Foundation and Jisc are both taking an active role in the area review process. They provide advice and support to the review teams and colleges on the FE workforce and best technology solutions.

## Converting Sixth Form Colleges into Academies

As part of the Autumn statement, the Government has announced that it will give sixth form colleges the opportunity through post-16 area reviews to establish themselves as 16-19 academies and establish or join a Multi-Academy Trust, helping to drive up standards and improve the efficiency of 16-19 education by enabling further collaboration between schools and sixth form colleges.

The DfE will be issuing detailed guidance on the application process, criteria and timetable in February 2016. The intention is that sixth form colleges will be able to consider becoming an academy as well as other restructuring options that will be available within post-16 area reviews. We expect any applications for 'conversion' to academy status to form part of the recommendations of the area review. Decisions will be taken in the context of the area reviews of post-16 provision. Proposals involving formal partnership within a multi-academy trust will be particularly well-placed in this respect. Our detailed guidance in the new year will confirm how decisions will be taken on individual cases.

## Localism

The Government wishes to see local areas and employers leading in establishing a stronger, more responsive, skills system. Accordingly, the Government has recently announced skills devolution arrangements for Sheffield, the North East, Tees Valley, Liverpool and the West Midlands. These announcements on skills devolution provide a stable framework for future settlements and indicate that the Government is looking towards the full devolution of the non-apprenticeship adult (19+) skills funding budget to local bodies.

To transition to these new arrangements, for 2016/17 providers will receive their total 19+ skills funding as a single block grant allocation, against which Combined Authorities will develop a series of delivery agreements with providers setting out what should be delivered in return. For 2017/18, and following the area reviews, Combined Authorities will be able to influence the budget allocation between local providers to best meet local skills needs.

This approach builds upon the commitment the Government made in "Fixing the Foundations" to transform the skills system so that it can better support increased productivity in the country's workforce.

## FE/Sixth Form College Commissioner Summary Assessments

BIS continues to publish the FE Commissioner's summary assessment reports outlining the findings and conclusions from his assessment of colleges referred to him for intervention. A report is published once the college or institution has seen it and been given the chance to comment. Governing bodies and senior management across the sector will be able to learn lessons from the FE Commissioner's experience in intervention cases.

To date, the FE Commissioner and his team have carried out interventions in 34 institutions, including 29 general FE colleges, 4 local authority institutions and 1 specialist designated institution. Of these, 10 general FE colleges, 4 local authority institutions and 1 specialist designated institution have been successfully removed from intervention enabling provision to be maintained in the best interests of learners in the respective local areas.

To date, 32 summary reports have been published and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-commissioner-intervention-summary-assessments> The FE Commissioner's annual report will be published shortly.

The Sixth Form College Commissioner also publishes the summary reports and letters issued to sixth-form colleges that are subject to government intervention, that serve to drive improvement. These can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sixth-form-college-commissioner-summary-reports-and-letters>

## English and Maths

English and maths remains a priority for this government. We have put English and maths at the heart of all our programmes, and set high expectations for our young people so that they are clear about the importance of studying these subjects.

The latest in-year data shows that 97% of 16-19 year olds in the 2014/15 academic year without GCSE A\*-C English and/or maths attending an FE institution continued their study of these subjects. This year's GCSE results showed that the number of students aged 17 and over securing A\*-C grades in English and maths GCSEs is higher than ever before - compared to 2014, there are over 4,000 more passes in English and over 7,500 more maths passes.

In light of this excellent progress, we took the decision to not apply the English and maths funding condition in full. For the 2014/15 academic year only, a 5% tolerance will be applied. Funding reductions (which will apply to the 2016/17 allocations) will only apply to institutions where more than 5% of students by value without A\*-C GCSE in English and/or maths did not enrol on an approved qualification in these subjects. Funding reductions for these institutions will be removed at half the national funding rate above the tolerance, rather than 100% as originally planned.

Since August 2015, the funding condition was revised, so all full-time students starting their study programme who have a grade D GCSE or equivalent in English language and/or maths must enrol on a GCSE or approved IGCSE qualification, rather than an approved stepping stone qualification.

The Government intends to align the new GCSE good pass in English and maths with the 16-19 English and maths funding condition. We will, however, take a phased approach: for the academic years 2017/18 and 2018/19 the funding condition will be based on the new GCSE grade 4.



We are taking steps to improve the relevance and content of Functional Skills qualifications, as well as to improve their recognition and credibility in the labour market. The Education and Training Foundation are leading the reform programme and further details can be found here: <http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/news/foundation-welcomes-plans-to-reform-english-and-maths-functional-skills/>

The Education and Training Foundation continue to offer a range of opportunities and resources to help support practitioners to teach English and maths confidently. We urge you to make full use of these: <http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/our-priorities/maths-english/>

## FE Workforce Strategy

The joint BIS/DfE FE Workforce Strategy remains the focus for Government's support in helping to improve professional standards and the capacity and quality of leaders, managers, teachers and other staff in further education.

We continue to work with the Education and Training Foundation, as the independent sector-led organisation responsible for standards, to enable them to support ongoing improvement across the sector.

The Education and Training Foundation continues to offer a range of opportunities and resources for teachers, trainers and leaders to support practitioners to confidently teach maths and English, which we urge you to make full use of. Please visit <http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/our-priorities/maths-english/>

Alongside this, we have seen the continued success of the Initial Teacher Training Bursary scheme with over 180 English and 140 maths bursaries provided for this academic year. The Foundation also continues to deliver significant work to support the sector to enhance its governance and leadership so that colleges are best placed to respond to the challenges they face.

The independent evaluation of the impact of the workforce strategy undertaken by ICF is progressing well and we will look to publish a report in Spring 2016, which will inform further work in this area.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-workforce-strategy>

## Outcome Based Success Measures

Work continues on Outcome Based Success Measures. The measures, which apply to 19+ learning, capture three areas: learner *Destinations* (into sustained learning, and into or within sustained employment, including apprenticeships); learner *Progression* (progression to a higher level qualification); and *Earnings* (following completion of learning). The measures use matched data which is already collected across government. These new measures, with the existing success rates (to be re-named "achievement") will give a more rounded picture of provider performance

which can be used by learners, employers, providers and others to inform choice, for provider self-assessment and for performance management and inspection.

We published a further consultation in September 2015 with more detailed proposals for a new minimum standards accountability framework using outcome measures. This completed on 2 December 2015. Our aim remains to introduce the measures as part of a new minimum standards framework in 2017. The consultation can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/adult-further-education-measuring-success-detailed-proposals>

Our consultation last year showed a clear demand for the outcome measures to also be published at course or qualification level. This can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-further-education-outcome-based-success-measures-experimental-data-2010-to-2013>

## 16-19 Technical Qualifications

There is a wide range of technical and applied qualifications that can count in one of three performance tables categories:

- Tech levels – level 3 qualifications for students wishing to specialise in a specific industry or occupation;
- Applied general qualifications – level 3 qualifications for students who wish to continue their education through applied learning;
- Technical certificates – level 2 qualifications that equip students with specialist knowledge and skills and enable entry to employment or progression to a tech level.

All of the approved qualifications have met tough new quality criteria and, importantly, have the support of employers and universities. Teaching qualifications from the approved lists will give students the confidence that the courses they are taking are of a high quality and are the right ones for their career aspirations. The lists of qualifications that can count in the 2018 performance tables will be published shortly.

## Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

We're now well into the second year of implementing the SEND reforms and, as the reforms bed in, it's equally important that the needs of young people with special educational needs and disabilities are not forgotten as wider policies on 16-19 education develop at pace. We are working to ensure that, in areas such as the development of technical and professional education, the needs of this group of young people are fully considered.

The needs of this group are equally important when considering the future provider base as part of Area Reviews. Reviews will need to take into account appropriate provision for 16-19 year olds and adult learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), both with and without high needs. They should also consider the need to make SEND provision available in both mainstream and specialist institutions

and to ensure that learners with additional needs are not disadvantaged by the Area Review process.

With Ofsted now inspecting high needs provision in colleges separately within individual inspections, we are also developing plans for wider accountability for SEND at a local authority level. On Monday 12 October, Ofsted and CQC launched a 12 week public consultation on proposals for inspecting how effectively local areas are fulfilling their responsibilities towards children and young people who are disabled and/or have special educational needs. The consultation can be found online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

## Chartered Status

The Chartered Status project has moved on at pace over the summer. The sealing of the Royal Charter on 9 October created the new corporation known as the Chartered Institution for Further Education, and hence the first chartered professional body for the sector. Work since then has focused on creating the internal structure of the new organisation and developing the internal rules and processes required under the Charter. On 17 November, the Chairman Lord Lingfield announced the Institution was ready to open its doors to applications for membership from the high performing organisations that will be key to the sector's future. For further information on the project or to enquire about membership please see [www.fecharter.org.uk](http://www.fecharter.org.uk) or email [ed.guilty@fecharter.org.uk](mailto:ed.guilty@fecharter.org.uk)

## Tackling Extremism and the Prevent Duty

The tragic events that unfolded in Paris on the evening of 13 November has thrown into sharp focus the important work the FE sector is doing in preventing students and staff from being radicalised and drawn into terrorism.

As set out in the Prevent Duty, Ofsted, as part of their revised inspection framework, are now monitoring and inspecting on compliance with the Duty as part of governance, leadership and management. As previously advised, BIS has agreed with Ofsted that 2015/16 will be treated as a year of working towards full compliance. This does not mean that Ofsted will not expect to see clear evidence of self and risk assessment leading to a review and update of existing policies and procedures.

Ofsted will also be looking for evidence that all governors, leaders and managers have been trained on the Duty and in identifying possible extremist activity. BIS will continue to offer advice, support and guidance to FE institutions through our network of FE/HE Prevent co-ordinators, the Education Training Foundation website at:- <http://www.preventforfeandtraining.org.uk/> and the JISC website at:- <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/advice/training/workshop-to-raise-awareness-of-prevent-wrap>

## Honours

Honours nominations are an important way of recognising and rewarding excellent governance. Governors and Clerks perform an invaluable and sometimes

challenging role in our colleges and one way of rewarding those who have achieved much in their work and wider contributions is through the Honours system. We strongly encourage you to consider whether any members of your governing body have made an exceptional contribution to the success of the college. You may submit honours nominations all year round to [alison.marsh@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:alison.marsh@bis.gsi.gov.uk).

If you need help, guidance or a blank citation form to complete, please get in touch with Alison. If you would like to learn more about how the honours system works and/or want to nominate people in other categories, please see the guidance available on [www.gov.uk/honours/overview](http://www.gov.uk/honours/overview).

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