



Rt Hon Anne Milton MP

Minister of State for Apprenticeships and Skills
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Richard Atkins

Further Education Commissioner

By email

27th March 2018

I am writing to you to set out your key objectives for the 2017/18 Academic Year.

I am grateful for your continued hard work to improve quality in Further Education colleges generally, and particularly, working with the ESFA, to help colleges that have either serious quality or financial problems to improve. I note that the 14 providers under your remit, that were Ofsted 'Inadequate' at start of last academic year, have now all improved or merged with a stronger provider after FEC intervention.

Given that you have a wide remit, and your knowledge and expertise gained through your extensive experience in Further Education is constantly in demand, I felt that it would be helpful to write to you to set out my expectations formally. I hope this will help you to plan and focus even more effectively, and provide more transparency around your role.

Your overarching goal is to help the government improve the quality of education provided by FE colleges, and reduce the risk of colleges failing (including Specialist Designated Institutions, Specialist Further Education Colleges, incorporated Sixth-Form Colleges and Local Authority Adult Education Providers).

In order to do this I expect you to work towards the following objectives:

- To ensure colleges that trigger formal intervention improve as quickly as possible, and that improvement is sustained.
- To ensure, through the diagnostic assessment process, that fewer colleges fall into formal intervention.

- To help ensure that FE provision is financially sustainable, through facilitating appropriate and effective restructuring where necessary.
- To provide leadership to the FE college sector and help bring together organisations that fund, monitor and seek to improve colleges, in order to accelerate quality improvement, and strengthen the capacity of the sector to improve itself.
- To ensure that Ministers and policy officials have a wide range of evidence and advice to inform policy development and implementation.
- To lead a team of Deputies and Advisors.
- Through all of your functions, to strengthen leadership and governance in FE colleges, and further develop peer support and the sharing of good practice amongst colleges.

I have enclosed a table with this letter that provides examples of some of the specific functions that I would expect you to perform in order to achieve these objectives. This is not an exhaustive list of your functions, but outlines your main areas of work. This table also sets out the types of outcome measures I, and others (such as FE Colleges through the Principals Reference Group) will take into consideration when reflecting on the success of your work.

I hope this helps provide clarity and focus to your continued work as the FE Commissioner, for which I am especially grateful. It has been a pleasure working with you since I became Skills Minister and I hope we can both see our efforts bring the college education that people rightly expect and deserve.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anne Milton', with a large, stylized initial 'A'.

Rt Hon Anne Milton MP
Minister of State for Apprenticeships and Skills

Table of Responsibilities

Objective	Example Functions	Outcome measures
Formal Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess colleges that reach intervention triggers and make recommendations to improve¹. 	Time colleges spend in formal intervention.
Diagnostic Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess colleges that meet Diagnostic Assessment criteria and make recommendations to improve¹. 	Number of colleges meeting formal intervention triggers.
FE Provider Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review ongoing or proposed mergers. Provide Area Review pre-implementation support. Make recommendations on further structural change, including by conducting independent Structure and Prospects Appraisals. 	<p>Performance of colleges post-merger (Ofsted markings and financial health).</p> <p>Number of colleges that have remained standalone after Area Reviews falling into financial difficulty.</p>
System Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair, and work with, College Improvement Board (CIB), the Principals Reference Group (PRG), and National Leaders of Further 	<p>Proportion of Ofsted 'Good' and 'Outstanding' Colleges.</p> <p>Feedback from CIB, PRG, and NLFES.</p>

¹ See *FE colleges: intervention policy and the FE Commissioner role* at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fe-colleges-intervention-policy-and-the-fe-commissioner-role>

	<p>Education (NLFE) biannual meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop peer support and the sharing of good practice by raising awareness of NLFEs and the Strategic College Improvement Fund • Communicate FE Policy and FE Commissioner activity to the sector. • Regularly meet with sector leaders and provide weekly MP 'surgery'. 	
Policy advice and intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend regular meetings with Ministers and policy officials, to update on activity and provide policy advice. 	Feedback from Ministers and policy officials.
FE Commissioner Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegate responsibilities to Deputies and Advisers where necessary. • Lead the team, providing leadership and direction on performance and capability. • Advise the Department for Education of any issues relating to the team. 	<p>Time colleges spend in intervention.</p> <p>Number of colleges meeting formal intervention triggers.</p>