

FE Week

NATIONAL COLLEGE PLANS 'NOT SUFFICIENTLY MATURE'



PAGE 2

THREE PAGES OF OFSTED ANNUAL REPORT ANALYSIS

PAGES 4, 5 & 13

QUESTIONS FOR NEW FETL PROF DOEL



PAGES 15



Boles unveils deep pan degree apprenticeships

Skills Minister Nick Boles was on hand to roll out Pizza Hut's first ever apprenticeship scheme.

Ranging from level one to degree standard, the programme aims to provide apprentices with a range of skills, from guest service and hospitality leadership, through to more technical requirements focusing on food production and financial analysis.

The apprenticeships will be open

to all Pizza Hut employees with each individual supported by a personalised development plan, and will be run with Manchester Metropolitan University.

Mr Boles said: "These apprenticeships at Pizza Hut Restaurants will offer even more people the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge while working."

Pizza Hut plans to take on 1,500 apprentices over the next five years.

Skills Minister Nick Boles learns to make a pizza with new apprentices Alexia Seabrook and Jarod Pratt, both aged 18, to launch Pizza Hut Restaurants' first apprenticeship programme

BIS REPORT HAILS 'SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT' OF FE ON UNEMPLOYED

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A government report has hailed the "substantial impact" of FE in getting unemployed people back into work — and called for greater investment into provision for people looking for a job.

The report, published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), was based on the experiences of unemployed people.

A government spokesperson said: "Analysis of over 2 million unemployed found that FE can make a substantial impact on the chances of unemployed people finding work."

It used individualised learner record data on, for example, enrolments on government initiatives such as the Work Programme as well as "self-refer" learners out of work.

"This study shows that FE learning provides good labour market returns for unemployed

individuals," the report says.

"Those who engage in FE experience a greater improvement in the likelihood of being in employment than those who don't engage in FE.

"The evidence presented here implies that an expansion of FE learning for the unemployed (including at level two and below) would be beneficial, which should be taken into consideration in any decisions about changes in funding for this provision."

The 71-page report follows last month's spending review which appeared positive for FE with news of protection of the "core adult skills participation budgets in cash terms, at £1.5bn" but left lingering questions with no definition as to where "£360m of efficiencies and savings from the adult skills budget by 2019-20" would come from.

A spokesperson for the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) said told *FE Week*: "These findings

come as no surprise because our members have long delivered effective skills provision for the unemployed.

"It's a major reason why we argued against significant cuts to the adult skills budget which funds this provision and why we have pushed for contract growth in this area."

A spokesperson for the Association of Colleges said: "Colleges have always been successful in helping unemployed people gain the skills and qualifications to find a job. It is therefore pleasing that this is confirmed by the BIS research."

The report analyses the experiences of new benefit job-seeking benefit claimants between April 2005 and April 2009, and between August 2010 and July 2012, with around 2.3 million people in each group.

Among its findings were that "individuals facing the highest barriers to employment are more likely to be observed in FE

learning" and that "this group also see the biggest difference in outcomes relative to those who don't engage in FE".

Of those aged 18 to 24 who had "no prior employment experience according to HMRC records", those who had some form of FE learning were between 4 and 7 per cent more likely to have found work one, two and three years after starting their benefit claim than those with no FE learning.

The report further highlighted the value of learning at level two and below for unemployed learners, which it says had previously been underestimated.

"The central role of FE in helping the most disadvantaged is also central to the methodological problems that led to previous underestimates of the value of learning at level two and below," it said.

A BIS spokesperson said it was not commenting on the report.

See editor's comment on page 6



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NEWS

Bankruptcy warning on Saudi ventures

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English colleges who set up new learner ventures in Saudi Arabia as part of multi-million pound deals could be facing "bankruptcy" as the projects prove less popular than expected, it has been claimed.

Education Investor has reported that Saudi's Colleges of Excellence programme, which attracted the likes of Lincoln College, Moulton College and Activate Learning among others, is struggling to get the number of learners it had expected.

The report said Pearson, which was contracted to run three colleges, dropped out of the programme in June and is understood to be in a legal dispute with CoE.

Dr Ian Baird, former chief executive of the Pearson and Hertvec (Hertfordshire Vocational Education Consortium) CoE initiative, was quoted as saying: "The CoE project was deemed to be a massive change to how technical and vocational education is delivered in the Kingdom, but the initial excitement for providers has waned.

"The size and complexity of this project could actually cause British state-funded colleges to go bankrupt, as they incur costs without getting paid for the resources they are providing."

In April last year, then-Skills Minister Matthew Hancock announced that UK education providers had won four new contracts worth £850m to set up 12 technical and vocational training colleges in Saudi.

At the time, 16 British operators had been hired to run 37 Saudi institutions and the

project was said to be worth £1bn to the UK economy.

UK Trade and Industry (UKTI) Education was responsible for bringing together consortia to bid for what it described as "high value contracts".

Although the projects were thought to be providing new revenue streams for an increasingly cash-strapped domestic college sector, such ventures have not been without their critics. Ofsted boss Sir Michael Wilshaw, for instance, once urged colleges to focus on "Deptford not Delhi," as previously reported by FE Week.

However, according to Education Investor, representatives of several operators have now spoken out to say highlight the lack of student demand that has left some running "virtually empty colleges".

Other providers whose involvement was highlighted on the gov.uk website included Lincoln College; the Oxford Partnership, a consortium comprising Activate Learning, GEMS Education Solutions and Moulton College; Hertvec, a consortium led by Hertford Regional College and including North Hertfordshire College and the University of Hertfordshire; and FESA, another consortium of UK colleges and training providers.

Education Investor reported that Hertvec, for example, won a £225m five-year deal to run three colleges in 2014, but added that its "numbers are understood to be well below target".

All college groups, the UKTI and CoE were contacted by *FE Week* for comment but were yet to respond at the time of going to press.

Rejected National Colleges plans 'not sufficiently mature'

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The teams behind two proposed National Colleges told their plans were "not mature enough" to proceed have told *FE Week* of their determination to keep the projects alive.

Business proposals for seven different employer-led National Colleges were handed in to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills by July 17 with an announcement about successful bids pencilled in for last month's Budget.

But Chancellor George Osborne said just five of the bids had been given the go ahead — with the National College for Wind Energy, in the Humber, and the National College for Advanced Manufacturing, in Sheffield, missing out.

A BIS spokesperson said: "Following a detailed assessment, which included presentations to the assessment panel from each of the colleges, it was concluded, subject to final due diligence, that five of the colleges were ready to proceed.

"The chairs of all the colleges have been informed of the outcome of the assessment process. The due diligence process with the five successful colleges has started.

"Proposals for a National College for Wind Energy and a National College for Advanced Manufacturing were not sufficiently mature to proceed."

The National College for Advanced Manufacturing was hoping to have bases in Sheffield and Coventry in partnership with the High Value Manufacturing Catapult (HVMC) and manufacturers' organisation the EEF, while the National College for Wind Energy was to be established in the Humber.

At Sheffield University's Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) Training Centre, lined up as one of the bases for the National College for Advanced Manufacturing, Kerry Featherstone, head of operations, said: "The HVMC and EEF are still in discussion with BIS about the development of the National College for Advanced Manufacturing. We are not yet in a position to confirm plans and timing."

Maf Smith, deputy chief executive of RenewableUK, the renewable energy trade association that proposed the National College for Wind Energy to government alongside the Humber Local Enterprise Partnership, said: "It's disappointing that the National College for Wind Energy wasn't included in the wave of colleges announced as part of the Chancellor's spending review.

"There's a great deal of support and enthusiasm for this National College, so we're currently reviewing the options available to us, to enable us to meet the needs of this important industry.

"We're working with government and industry to find alternative routes forward

FE WEEK NEWS IN BRIEF**Dual mandate wait goes on**

The government still cannot say when it will publish a response to for Business Secretary Dr Vince Cable's 'dual mandate' consultation — six months after the consultation closed.

A government spokesperson told FE Week that its response to the consultation, which addressed the FE sector's dual role of providing vocational training for the workplace and being a 'second chance sector' for those who didn't get their GCSEs at school, would be published "in due course". A spokesperson had previously said the government's response would be published in late October.

New area review waves

The government has announced the second wave of post-16 education area reviews, including 34 general FE colleges and 15 sixth form colleges (SFCs).

It is set to get under way from next month covering The Marches and Worcestershire, Thames Valley, West England, Cheshire and Warrington, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, and Surrey.

It follows the first wave of seven reviews which covered 50 general FE colleges and 33 SFCs.

Indications of three futures waves, with 22 proposed review areas have also been released.

See feweek.co.uk for more.

Ofsted boss at FE Week event

Ofsted boss Sir Michael Wilshaw has been unveiled as one the key speakers at the FE Week 2016 Annual Apprenticeship Conference and Exhibition.

Sir Michael is pencilled in to appear on day two of the event, which takes place from Wednesday, March 16, to 18 at ICC Birmingham.

Conference host will be BBC broadcaster and journalist Emily Maitlis. Visit feweek2016.co.uk for more information and to book tickets.

so that we can continue to work together to address the skills challenges we face in our sector."

The five successful projects were the National College for Digital Skills, the National College for High Speed Rail, the National College for Nuclear, the National College for Onshore Oil and Gas, and the National College for Creative and Cultural Industries.

The government previously pledged £80m funding for the colleges, to be matched by employers.

Skills Minister Nick Boles has said the aim is to have a network of industry-led National Colleges by September 2017.



Kerry Featherstone

NEWS

Launch date revealed for overdue ESF tenders

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EXCLUSIVE

The launch date for the first round of long-overdue invitations to tender for European Social Fund (ESF) contracts has been set for Monday (December 7), FE Week can reveal.

The previous 2007 to 2013 Euro skills contracts closed on July 31 and none have gone out to tender through the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) since.

A spokesperson for the Association of Employment and Learning Providers said that resulting ESF funding gap had “led to staff redundancies, centre closures and even providers having to cease trading [because of the sudden loss of the ESF cash]”.

But an SFA spokesperson told FE Week on Thursday (December 3) that “as communicated to our stakeholder group today, we have processed six specifications for NEET [not in education, employment, or training] provision, and we are now in a position to launch six Invitations to Tender on December 7”.

“The second set of invitations to tender are scheduled to be launched on December 14,” she added. “In line with our procurement process there will be a 30 calendar day bidding window (excluding December 24 to January 3 inclusive).”

“The procurement programme is flexible and when we are in receipt of agreed specifications from local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), we will process and

launch them in appropriate sets, at regular time frames.”

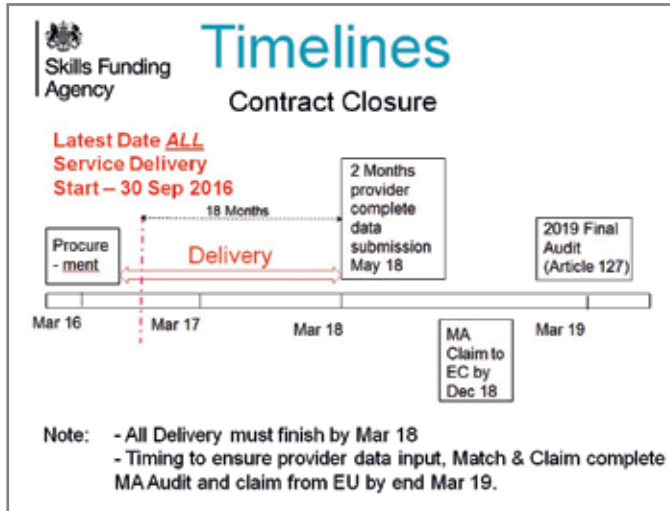
The SFA is yet to comment on which six NEET geographic areas the first round of contracts will be tendered for.

It comes after FE Week exclusively revealed on November 10 that the SFA planned to run a “sequence of procurement” for handing out £650m of delayed ESF cash, which must be finished by the end of September next year at the very latest to allow a minimum delivery period of 18 months.

The delivery period, up to March 2018, was determined with ministers unable to say that the SFA would oversee anything other than apprenticeships beyond then.

Mike Bell, SFA deputy director for localism policy implementation, wrote to Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) committees with details of the timeline.

“Ministers have agreed that we cannot put in place contractual or match-funding arrangements beyond the point at which the SFA might cease to be accountable for the non-apprenticeship adult skills budget,” wrote Mr Bell, who said a new “simplified procurement initiation document” would



help the process.

Furthermore, FE Week revealed in March that then-Minister for Communities and Local Government European Programmes, Lord Ahmad, had told Leps that only the London Lep would be allowed to “take decisions” over ESF funding.

The government had previously planned to give all 39 Leps a “direct role” in dishing out ESF cash, but his letter to them said the European Commission had barred this.

It is thought that the long-running dispute between the government and the European Commission leading up to Lord Ahmad’s announcement, over the role that should be played by Leps in the process, was a significant cause of delay with launching the tendering process.

Principal’s ‘regret’ at school closures over pupil numbers

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The principal of a Midlands college behind two studio schools struggling with low pupil numbers has told of her regret at having to shut them down.

Midland Academies Trust, which is sponsored by North Warwickshire and Hinckley College, is set to shut Midland Studio Colleges in Hinckley and Nuneaton next summer with just 157 pupils out of a combined capacity of 600 making them economically unviable.

Marion Plant OBE, college principal trust chief executive (pictured), told FE Week: “The first thing to say is that it is hugely sad and personally am deeply regretful that, what was a very innovative project and development, hasn’t worked.”

“What I am proud of is the huge amount of success that has come out of both studio schools, because a lot of the young people have progressed to apprenticeships and gone on to working with local companies.”

The Hinckley school opened just three years ago and the Nuneaton branch followed a year later.

But trust board chair Tim Render said “lower than forecast” pupil numbers meant the trust

was unable to achieve a “high standard” of education.

The trust has started the process of finding places for pupils from the losing studio schools at its other four schools — The Nuneaton Academy, Hartshill School, The George Eliot School and The William Bradford Academy.

Ms Plant was adamant there would be no further school closures, that the decision would not affect the college, and said: “It is just two small schools which, for different reasons, have under-recruited and are not viable in the longer term.”

She added: “It’s about us having put everything into trying to address the situation around student recruitment, including investing heavily in a very professional marketing and recruitment campaign.”

The year 11 and 13 pupils can stay at the closing studio schools until the end of the academic year and the year 10 and 12 students will be given the option to continue their studies at either The George Eliot School, or The William Bradford Academy from January 2016.

Ms Plant said the schools had been appreciated by employers who saw them as connecting education and work.

She said: “While I am expressing regret — and I am deeply regretful that the students’, parents, and carers are so upset at the decision — I think what we have learned on a positive sense is the studio school model of learning is a really effective model.”



Funding cut for back-to-work support

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Providers have been warned that government funding to help long-term unemployed people back into work was likely to be dramatically cut by 2020, FE Week can reveal.

The Department for Work and Pensions’ (DWP) director for contracted employment provision Matt Thurstan last month sent a letter, seen by FE Week, to providers advising on what will happen after current Work Programme contracts end in April 2017.

The scheme, launched in June 2011, involves private, public and voluntary organisations helping to find jobs for people who have normally been unemployed for at least 12 months, although shorter-term unemployed people can also be referred by local Job Centres.

Total funding to providers through the payment-by-results scheme was around £2,001m up to June — which worked out at just over £500m a-year.

But Mr Thurstan said in the letter that the department now recognised “the number of those requiring this support is reducing” — so “core funding” could be cut to just £130m-a-year by 2020/21 for a replacement scheme expected to be launched from May 2017.

“Our new provision will support long-term unemployed claimants reaching the 24-month point in their claim, as well as targeted referrals of claimants with health and disabilities issues,” he added.

The DWP currently has contracts with 15 providers for 18 regions across the country.

The only FE college group contractor is NCG, which currently covers Birmingham, Solihull and the Black Country.

The DWP terminated NCG’s contract for the North East Yorkshire and the Humber last March, replacing it with Devon-based Maximus.

The DWP told FE Week at the time that this was because it was the “lowest performing [contract] assessed against a range of measures”.

No-one from NCG was available to comment, but Employment Related Services Association (ERSA) chief executive Kirsty McHugh (pictured), which represents employment support providers, said: “The programme has done fantastically at moving the long term unemployed into work, but it’s no surprise that the new contracts from April 2017 will focus far more strongly on jobseekers with disabilities and health conditions.”

“Our understanding is that the funding mentioned in the letter is the minimum available for the new work and health programme.”

A spokesperson for the Association of Employment and Learning Providers said: “The number of people who have been out of work for over a year has fallen by a quarter in the last 12 months, so providers had anticipated that a replacement programme would be on a smaller scale.”



Level three 19 to 23 entitlement remains

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has given more details of its plans to extend FE loans, as announced in Chancellor George Osborne’s Budget.

He said loans would be made available to level three and four learners aged 19 to 23, and to level five and six learners aged 19 and above.

“The extension of loans, which we plan to implement from the 2016/17 academic year, does not affect the duty on the Secretary of State to ensure that learning for a first full qualification at level three should be free for 19 to 23-year-olds,” a BIS spokesperson told FE Week.

A spokesperson for the Student Loans Company (SLC) said implementation of the FE loans expansion was “progressing well”.

“SLC is confident that application and payment systems will be in place for those starting courses next September,” they said.

The spokesperson was unable to confirm when the system would be open for applications.

A spokesperson for the Association of Colleges said: “It is important that these loans are properly administered to provide additional support for students.”

Stewart Segal, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said: “We need to understand the details of how the loan facility will be extended to the new groups.”

ANNUAL OFSTED REPORT EXPOSES FE MATH

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Ofsted deputy director for FE and skills Paul Joyce has outlined how the story of the education watchdog's 2014/15 annual report was one of a huge rise in maths and English learners "undoubtedly" impacting upon worsening inspection grades.

He spoke to *FE Week* moments after Ofsted chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw unveiled the report, which raised concern that only 35 per cent of English and maths provision had been judged good or outstanding, on Tuesday (December 1).

It blamed the percentage in part on colleges struggling with the consequences of meeting a rule obliging providers to ensure 16 to 19-year-old FE learners without at least C grade GCSE maths and English continued to study the subjects or miss out on funding.

Mr Joyce told *FE Week*: "Maths and English undoubtedly has had an impact on [overall Ofsted] inspection grades, although it is important to realise they're not the only factors."

Analysis by *FE Week* in February gave early indication that the sector's performance was being affected. The research showed the proportion of general FE and tertiary colleges inspected up to that point and graded inadequate or told to improve was up 27 percentage points on the previous year, while the percentage of sixth form colleges and independent learning providers with grade three or four inspection results had also increased.

The previous year, 36 per cent of inspections across the sector had resulted in providers being rated as inadequate or requires improvement — it stood at 66 per cent in February.

And the 2014/15 annual report warned the performance of general FE colleges had been hit harder by maths and English resit requirements than sixth form colleges (SFCs) with higher GCSE entry requirements.

Mr Joyce said these pressures "had a detrimental impact in terms of inspection outcomes [across the sector] in that many providers are struggling to deliver maths and English to the required quality standards that both they and we would like to see".

"I think there's a whole host of reasons [for this], undoubtedly one will be due to the number of learners that are now having to do these qualifications," said Mr Joyce.

"Often when I speak to principals or chief executives, particularly when there are very large numbers on these programmes, their concern is the recruitment of staff that can deliver to the standard they would like."

Sir Michael recognised in the report that "many colleges" had been placed under "considerable" pressure, because of funding cuts and merger proposals, including this year through post-16 education and training area reviews.

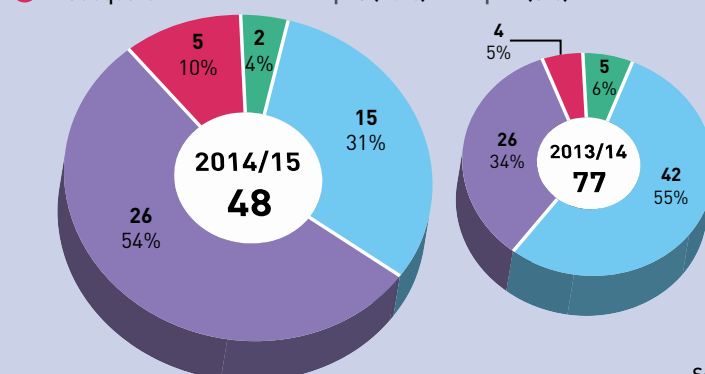
Mr Joyce told *FE Week*: "The financial situation the sector finds itself in, and the reorganisation potential through area reviews, are obviously challenging circumstances.

"Area reviews are something additional for leaders to deal with, but in many cases some

Overall effectiveness of FE and skills providers inspected between

GENERAL FE COLLEGES:

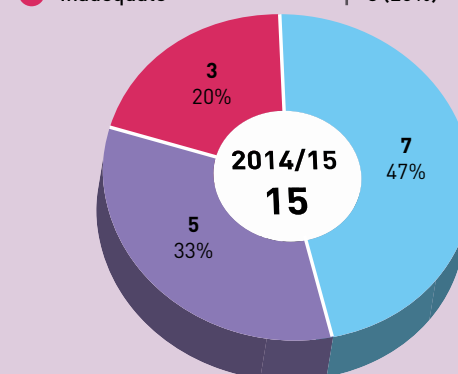
	2014/15	2013/14
Total inspections	48	77
Outstanding	2 (4%)	5 (6%)
Good	15 (31%)	42 (55%)
Requires improvement	26 (54%)	26 (34%)
Inadequate	5 (10%)	4 (5%)



Source: Ofsted

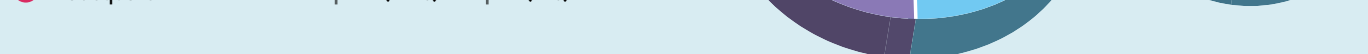
SIXTH FORM COLLEGES:

	2014/15
Total inspections	15
Outstanding	0 (0%)
Good	7 (47%)
Requires improvement	5 (33%)
Inadequate	3 (20%)



INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROVIDERS (INCLUDING EMPLOYER PROVIDERS):

	2014/15	2013/14
Total inspections	127	130
Outstanding	7 (6%)	4 (3%)
Good	57 (45%)	82 (63%)
Requires improvement	49 (39%)	35 (27%)
Inadequate	14 (11%)	9 (7%)



Source: Ofsted

WILSHAW WARNS PACE OF IMPROVEMENT FOR SECTOR SLOWED

Ofsted boss Sir Michael Wilshaw (pictured) reported that he had "seen the pace of improvement slow" in FE and skills — picking out general FE colleges in particular as where "performance has declined". English and maths commitments, finances and falling standards in leadership were among the college issues identified by the education watchdog's chief inspector as he launched his 2014/15 annual report on Tuesday (December 1) morning.

Sir Michael's report described how Ofsted had hailed sector improvements over the previous two years — but they had had now "slowed down," he warned. "In the case of general FE (GFE) colleges, there has been an overall decline in standards," he said.

of these colleges, particularly those in financial difficulty do need that support in order to survive.

"Inevitably there's likely to be recommendations around merger," he added.

Last academic year also saw a change in inspections with Ofsted looking closer at financial issues.

But, said Mr Joyce: "Inspectors are not, or predominantly not, auditors or accountants. When we go in we are primarily looking at the quality of education and training provided.

"But clearly under leadership and management, you wouldn't expect our inspectors not to take account of the financial viability of a provider, so they are provided with that information by the funding authorities and people qualified to make those

"With the financial pressures on the sector and the structural uncertainty brought about by the area-based reviews, it is imperative that the underlying weaknesses are tackled to prevent further falls in quality."

He added: "The majority of general FE colleges inspected this year were judged less than good. With only 35 per cent judged good or outstanding, this reflects the fact that general FE colleges are struggling on a number of fronts.

"This year, the number of learners who had to study English and mathematics in order to have their study funded rose dramatically, and because many colleges did not have an adequate strategy to respond, the quality of teaching declined.

judgments."

Mr Joyce also said inspectors saw "a variable picture over employer engagement".

"Providers that we see as good or outstanding have very good relationships with employers, have employers involved in their curriculum planning and perhaps involved on their governing board.

"Hence, the shape of the curriculum and the courses are tailored to those employer needs. "However, we do see some instances where employers aren't as engaged and providers are not doing enough to engage with employers."

But the report also raised concern about poor progression rates to apprenticeships from traineeships and a lack of "high quality training" through apprenticeship programmes run by colleges and independent learning

"At the same time, almost half of these colleges were operating a deficit budget, in part because the sector lost almost 267,000 learners in a single year." His conclusions were drawn from the inspection results of 48 GFE colleges, 127 independent learning providers and 15 sixth form colleges. Sir Michael said: "Ofsted found just 44 per cent of the leadership in general FE colleges to be good or outstanding, 19 percentage points lower than last year.

"Her Majesty's Inspectors have reported concerns about the performance of leaders in the sector across most regions of the country, with London performing slightly worse than other areas." He added: "Across England, 77 per cent of all GFE

providers (ILPs).

Mr Joyce told *FE Week*: "You can see in the report that we are worried about delivery of apprenticeship provision, whether that's with an ILP or a college."

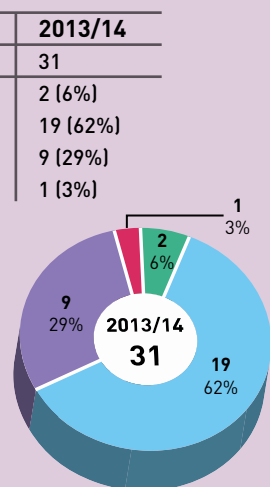
"Our key message is whether you're a college, ILP, or an adult community provider, what matters is getting leadership and management, the curriculum, and teaching and learning right, so the outcome for learners on apprenticeship or study programmes are positive," he added.

The report was based on inspections from 2014/15 which were carried out under a common inspection framework (Cif) that was changed this academic year.

However, Mr Joyce said the annual report was still of relevance.

S AND ENGLISH ISSUES

en September 1, 2014, and August 31, 2015



Source: Ofsted



See page 13 for expert pieces on the Ofsted annual report by Hoxley boss Sue Pember and former Ofsted inspector Phil Hatton

IN 2014/15

colleges are good or outstanding compared with 79 per cent last year [2013/14].

"This decline is because one-in-three of the GFE colleges inspected this year dropped at least one grade and a further 16 failed to improve from their previous grade of requires improvement or inadequate.

"Worryingly, just 34 per cent of 16 to 19 study programmes were found to be good or outstanding." He revealed that a "thematic survey" of study programmes would be carried out to look into what the issues were.

And Sir Michael also revisited the criticism of apprenticeships that emerged from an Ofsted report on the programme in October.

"The figures from our routine inspections this year are shocking, with almost half the provision judged to be less than good.

But Sir Michael also acknowledged the college sector's financial pressures.

"The National Audit Office this year published a report that demonstrated the rapid decline in the financial health of the sector," he said.

"The figures were alarming, with just under half of the 244 colleges operating in deficit. It is understandable then that the government has begun a process of area-wide reviews to ensure that FE providers have sufficient capacity to meet the needs of learners and employers, are financially stable and deliver high-quality provision going forward."

"I think the report lays out the challenges that the sector faces in light of the new CfE — so with progression from learner starting points, the increased focus on personal development and behaviour, and learner destinations," he said.

Sector leaders to have responded to the report include Gill Clipson, deputy chief executive of the Association of Colleges.

She said: "Her Majesty's Chief Inspector has highlighted a decline in the overall performance of FE colleges. We are pleased though that Ofsted has recognised the 'context'.

"Considering the level of funding cuts colleges have had in the last five years, and the massive task of



Paul Joyce

providing thousands of young people with GCSE maths and English qualifications, it is a great achievement that nationally, 77 per cent of colleges are good or outstanding."

James Kewin, deputy chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges' Association, said: "This year's report acknowledges that more SFCs are good or outstanding than any sector.

"All of this has been achieved against a background of funding reductions and curriculum reform."

Stewart Segal, the Association for Employment and Learning Providers chief executive, said: "Despite funding pressures acknowledged in the report, it is pleasing Ofsted found the percentage of training providers judged good or outstanding

POOR PRISON EDUCATION BACK IN THE DOCK

Learning and skills in prisons came in for severe criticism once again from Ofsted chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw in his 2014/15 annual report.

He said it had been one of the "worst performing elements of the FE and skills sector for some time, and Ofsted has long been critical of this failure".

There were 50 prison and young offender institution inspections — of which four resulted in outstanding grades, 24 good, 56 requires improvement and 16 inadequate.

Sir Michael wrote: "The overall quality of the education and training funded by the Skills Funding Agency was reflected in the judgements given for the offender learning and skills service."

The report comes with Justice Secretary Michael Gove having ordered a review of the system of prison learning in September, as previously reported by FE Week.

Former Education Secretary Mr Gove wants the inquiry to, in part, look at how the Offender Learning and Skills Service (Olass) — currently contracted regionally to three general FE colleges and one independent learning provider — operates.

It will be led by Dame Sally Coates, director of academies south for the United Learning schools group, and an interim report is due by the end of next month with the full report, including recommendations, expected two months later.

Rod Clark, chief executive of the Prisoners Education Trust (Pet), said: "We have long called for learning to be at the heart of prisons and this latest report highlights the increasing and urgent need for improvements to be made.

"We agree with Ofsted that there must be more accountability and leadership to achieve this and the government's Coates Review provides a timely opportunity for new policies to reform learning in prison."

David Hughes, chief executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Niace), said: "Once again, the chief inspector was highly critical of learning and skills in our prisons. This cannot continue and we must make sure the Coates Review and re-tendering of Olass contracts really do make a difference."

increased again in 2015 to 79 per cent, up a point from last year."

A spokesperson for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills responded to the concern raised in the report about FE funding cuts.

She said: "By 2019/20, government spending on apprenticeships will have doubled in cash terms compared to 2010/11.

"Funding for the core adult skills participation budgets will be protected in cash terms."

She added: "Area reviews will help improve quality by securing an efficient and financially resilient sector."

See feweek.co.uk for more responses to the annual report

FALLING NUMBERS IN COMMUNITY LEARNING

Falling numbers of people taking part in community learning was an issue addressed by Sir Michael Wilshaw.

A graph appeared in his 2014/15 annual report's section on adult learning, showing how the number of funded students undergoing personal and community development learning had fallen from around 580,000 in 2009/10 to just under 500,000 in 2013/14.

"The community learning budget has been frozen and therefore buys less each year," he said.

"There has also been a shift towards courses for people who are more disadvantaged, which are more expensive to deliver. As a result, across the sector, the number of learners in 'personal and community development learning' has dropped by just over 80,000."

Ofsted inspected 60 community learning and skills providers in 2013/14, including specialist designated institutions, not for profit organisations and local authorities. Of these, two resulted in outstanding overall grades, 32 good, 19 requires improvement and seven inadequate.

"There has been increasing pressure for providers to deliver value for money by aligning publicly funded adult learning to some demonstrable community benefit," said Sir Michael.

"As a consequence, as funding has shifted, not all providers have survived. Those providers that have adapted to these challenges have flourished. Many adult learning courses remain popular year on year and therefore providers have often successfully evolved these to become self-financing."

He added: "Where providers declined or did not improve, this was linked to leadership and management. This included a mixture of insufficient oversight, lack of clarity in how leaders and managers evaluated the provision, lack of governance and not addressing fundamental areas for improvement over time.

"Other weaknesses included insufficient use of data to monitor the provision in order to respond quickly to a decline in the proportion of learners achieving qualifications, or slow improvement in the outcomes and the learning experience for learners. Another challenging factor was the impact on provision where providers were subject to changes in management, restructure or merger."

Dr Sue Pember, director of policy and external relations at adult and community learning provider membership body Hoxley, told FE Week: "The Chief Inspector was right to draw attention to the drop in adult learning participation. We need to do more and collectively we need to refocus our adult learning strategies."

She added: "Adult education is not a luxury but an essential service, to meet the demands made on it, it will need to grow in the future and our collective challenge is to ensure we provide the leadership and direction and not to let down those older learners who are relying on us.

"Therefore it was right to feature in the annual report and I hope that it now galvanises us all into establishing a new focus on adult learning."

FE WEEK COMMENT

Seeing substantial sense

First came the 'better-than-expected' settlement in Chancellor George Osborne's Budget last month and now this — a BIS report that is clearly, and rightly, complimentary of the FE sector.

They are two seemingly concrete indications that someone in the corridors of power is finally seeing sense.

However, the extent to which Mr Osborne's Spending Review announcements were as positive as they seemed (ok so, positive in that they may well have been bad, but not as bad as expected) will only emerge with the unpacking of the finer details.

And the extent to which BIS officials, or indeed Mr Osborne himself, will take heed of this report with its praise for the "substantial impact" FE has on unemployed people's job hopes also remains to be seen.

Of course there's always the get-out clause in the report, when budgets are being decided upon, that "the views expressed" within are those of the authors and not necessarily of BIS.

But there can surely not be many more clear-cut arguments for the good that FE can do and more clear-cut reasons for the government to finally give the sector the backing it deserves.

Because, as the report points out, it's support that ultimately would help the government achieve its own aims of reducing levels of unemployment.

Chris Henwood

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 TOP #OFSTED ANNUAL REPORT TWEETS

@LSWatBHH
Congratulations @StrodeCollege an example of a highly effective & improving college in Ofsted Annual Report 2014-15

@afuahirsch
6th form colleges facing "perfect storm" of funding shortages, leadership gaps, curriculum changes #OfstedAR15 #ofsted

@gatesheadcoll
So proud to be praised in Ofsted annual report "Outstanding teaching & learning prepared learners very well for next step." #OfstedAR15

@CBI_ES
Ofsted right to underline that 3mill apprenticeships target won't drive quality. Working with employers to deliver this is vital #OfstedAR15

@Crissietoff
Any mention of the huge job in #FE to right the lack of English and maths of school leavers? #OfstedAR15



NUS leader Martin backs MPs' call for free apprentice prescriptions

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A cross-party group of MPs has won the backing of NUS FE leader Shakira Martin (pictured) with their bid to put first-year apprentices on a par with full-time learners in claiming free NHS prescriptions.

Labour's Stephen McCabe's early day motion (EDM) to Parliament had, at the time of going to press, been signed by 20 other MPs, including from his own party along with Conservative, Scottish National Party, Independent Democratic Unionist Party MPs.

It was tabled on November 18 and states: "This House notes that those on apprenticeships aged 16 to 18 or 19 and over, but in the first year of their apprenticeship, earn only £3.30 per hour but are required to pay for their prescriptions, whereas those of the same age but in full-time education receive free prescriptions."

Apprentices can actually get more than the £3.30 figure, which rose from £2.73 an-hour in October, depending upon their employer, but the EDM continues: "This a serious barrier to access to health care for such groups and a disincentive to those wishing to commence an apprenticeship."

A Department for Business, Innovation and Skills spokesperson declined to comment on the EDM saying it did not relate to apprenticeship policy.

However, Shakira Martin, National Union of Students (NUS) vice president for FE, said she would "welcome any move to cut vital expenses for apprentices".

She said: "Despite a raise this year, the current apprentice minimum wage is still exploitative and not enough to cover basic living expenses. This includes travel, accommodation, food and other living costs. This is a barrier to any young apprentice, but especially for apprentices with a disability, long-term health condition or those who are parents."

Mr McCabe told *FE Week*: "It is clearly unfair that a young person on less than minimum wage completing an apprenticeship isn't entitled to free prescriptions but someone studying for their A-levels is."

"This disadvantages young people on apprenticeships and the situation is even worse if you suffer from a chronic condition which requires regular medication."

A spokesperson from the Department of Health said that there were currently "no plans to extend the prescription charge exemption for 16 to 18-year-olds".

They added: "If someone in an apprenticeship scheme is not already eligible for free prescriptions, they may be able to get these via the NHS Low Income Scheme, or lower cost prescriptions through an annual Prescription Pre-payment Certificate."

According to the NHS website, an apprentice resident in England could apply for the NHS Low Income Scheme if their savings and investments did not exceed £16,000.

The scheme offers help with covering medical costs, including prescriptions. Alternatively, buying an annual Prescription Pre-payment Certificate costs £104, meaning you save if you require more than 12 items over the year.

The government spokesperson also said that an apprentice may be eligible for free prescriptions if their parents received specific benefits, such as income support, or if they had specific ongoing health problems such as certain types of diabetes.



COMMENTS

Local authorities come under the FE Week 2015/16 adult apprenticeship allocations spotlight

Is this really the wisest way to invest £101m-plus of the Adult Skills Budget?

Wouldn't it be better spent with colleges or other organisations whose core business is in delivering high quality teaching, learning and assessment for adults and young people?

I struggle to understand why Local Authorities are doing this in an era when they are supposed to be focussing in on their core functions rather than dabbling in areas which would be better undertaken by others.

R Carter

Good point R Carter but what concerns me even more is that as a result of Devolution — eg Sheffield, Liverpool, Tees Valley, North East — the government is going to hand over what remains of the non-Apprenticeship Adult Skills Budget to groups of Local Authorities (Combined Authorities). But surely as

long as they have their own in-house adult education departments there is going to be a conflict of interest. What will there be to stop Local Authorities just keeping the devolved ASB "in house"? Surely one of the basic conditions for devolution of the ASB should be a clear separation between Local/Combined Authorities as commissioners and providers of adult education???

Tony R

Hang on, we need to put this into perspective.

- 1 Look at the sizes of allocations — in the wider scheme of things, most are not very big at all.
- 2 LAs mostly commission out their provision — few actually keep them "in-house"
- 3 A large chunk of LA ASB is spent on engaging hard to reach and disadvantaged learners and dealing with local literacy and numeracy issues.
- 4 Some LAs supplement their safeguarded budget for "First Step" and Family Learning programmes that support communities to re-engage.

LAs never used to spend their FE cash on Apprenticeships until fairly recently. Many have

embraced them and have wider Apprenticeship strategies as enablers rather than deliverers. Many are coming round and to be frank, some shouldn't — they may not have the expertise, but their wider work should not be de-valued. Oh, and I do not work for an LA.....!!

Paul B

Much-feared Budget looks positive for adult skills budget — but what could the new 19-plus FE loans mean?

Really hope the UK Employer Skills Survey is not affected by the potential loss of UKCES

Lucy Hargrave

The 16-19 funding rate is protected but let's see how the technical aspects of the funding formula now get adjusted. Reducing programme uplift or disadvantage funding won't get headlines, but may deliver the savings they need. Until we see the formula funding in Dec, we can't rest easy on planning 16/17 budgets.

Dan Wallman

FE Week & Me

PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

OPEN TO ALL FE STUDENTS



INFO

Our annual *FE Week and Me* photography competition is back and once again *FE Week* has teamed up with NCFE to find stunning pictures that depict learning environments in the FE and Skills sector.

TWO CATEGORIES

This year there are two levels of entry: photography student and non-photography student. Entrants will be in with a chance of winning some stunning prizes and the chance to shadow a high-profile professional photographer. The competition is open to anyone studying within the FE and skills sector.

Our readers will vote for the winner, which will be announced on February 5, 2016 on the *FE Week* website.

To enter simply email your entry by January 15, along with your name, college or independent learning provider, course details and whether you are entering as a photography or non-photography student.

We look forward to viewing your entries.

For more information visit feweek.co.uk.

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DEADLINE ENTRY: FRIDAY, JANUARY 15, 2016.

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NEWS

Midland college FoI responses in spotlight

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The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is investigating a Midland man's claim his local college is struggling with its legal duties under the Freedom of Information Act.

Julian Saunders complained to the ICO and requested that Sandwell College's FoI practice be monitored after it issued a number of late responses to his requests.

Principal Graham Pennington (pictured) has even sent him four apology letters for failing to disclose information that should have been released.

The college claimed that 60 per cent of FoI requests it had fielded so far this academic year had come from Mr Saunders and said that "unfortunately it can take time to collate complex information for so many different requests".

The ICO has nonetheless agreed to discuss Mr Saunders's case, which covered FoI requests into issues such as delays in revealing the number of student studying A-levels and publishing the minutes of the college's governing board meetings.

A spokesperson for the ICO told *FE Week* it could not comment specifically on the case, adding that its role was to look into the complaint rather than investigate the college.

"We cannot investigate other matters that may lie behind the request. We focus on only whether an organisation has complied with the Act," she said.

She added: "There are circumstances

under which we may monitor an organisation to check it is handling its FoI requests in a timely manner."

Mr Saunders, who writes community news blog The Sandwell Skidder, began engaging with the college after it took over The Public — a public building in West Bromwich, where the college is based, that previously housed an art gallery and was run by his wife.

One of Mr Saunders's FoI requests, made on June 6 last year, got no response, he claimed.

Mr Saunders followed up with a further email asking for an internal review on July 9, and received a response on August 4 apologising for the delay saying that his FoI request had been "forwarded to an incorrect email within Sandwell College". His request was answered on August 8.

He said it was one of a number of internal review requests he had made to Sandwell College having seen his FoI requests go unanswered or contain significant redacted information.

He said these had resulted in four letters of apology sent to him from principal Mr Pennington. He wrote: "I consider that the college should have disclosed the information it held." He added: "Please accept my apologies for the delay in providing this information."

A Sandwell College spokesperson said: "So far this academic year we have received 10 FoI requests, six of which have been from the

Sandwell Central Sixth
(formerly The Public)



same person, requesting detailed information on various and complex subjects, including our A-level provision and arts provision at Central Sixth. In addition to these we have received five requests for internal reviews.

"These requests are all from the same individual, the husband of the former managing director of The Public, which the college has transformed from a loss-making arts facility into Central Sixth, a highly successful sixth form centre in partnership with Sandwell Council.

"These are the only areas of delay we are aware of. The college always endeavours to provide timely information but unfortunately it can take time to collate complex information for so many different requests. The college is constantly reviewing its processes to ensure efficiency."



Ofsted identifies improvement at horror youth prison

FE WEEK REPORTER
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Ofsted inspectors who uncovered "degrading treatment, racist comments and care from staff under the influence of illegal drugs" at a youth prison have reported an improvement.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ), as previously reported on *feweek.co.uk*, pledged "urgent action" in light of Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre's May inspection report.

And the actions appeared to have set the G4S-managed centre, near Rugby, on the path to improvement with a team made up of four Ofsted inspectors, two from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons and one from the Care Quality Commission, reporting it now required improvement. It was previously labelled inadequate.

Inspectors said inmates at the centre, which houses young people aged 12 to 18 who have been given a custodial sentence or are on remand, "have not experienced the level of harm or degrading treatment identified at the last inspection".

They found "senior managers have taken consistently prompt robust action to deal with staff and protect young people, which is an improvement".

The inspection report, published on December 2, added: "Education provision is judged to be good overall but would benefit from the recommendations of the previous



inspection being fully implemented alongside new recommendations to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment."

It was announced in October that MTC Novo would be taking over from G4S in managing the centre for five years from May next year.

Paul Cook (pictured), managing director for G4S children's services, said: "I am encouraged that inspectors now report that the team has responded effectively to the findings of the last inspection and that the centre has improved.

"We set out to return the centre to the high standards we have delivered over our previous 16 years and it is heartening that inspectors report many examples of staff putting themselves at risk to prevent harm to young people and that over 95 per cent

of trainees say that staff treat them with respect."

Lin Hinnigan (pictured), Youth Justice Board chief executive, said "We are pleased that progress has been made at Rainsbrook STC since Ofsted's last inspection and that the improvements reported are in line with findings from our own monitoring activity.

"We will continue to monitor and ensure robust action is taken to address any staff conduct issues.

"The YJB will work closely with G4S to see it makes the improvements required in line with the standards we set. We expect continuous improvements to take place throughout the transition to MTC Novo taking over the running of Rainsbrook STC from May."

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson said: "It is encouraging to see progress is being made at Rainsbrook and that, crucially, the majority of young people reported feeling safe. Clearly there is more work to be done and we will continue to closely monitor the situation."



Social mobility tsar labels FE 'absolute jungle'

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Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission chair Alan Milburn has told a Lords committee how the FE sector is "an absolute jungle" for learners and it needs to "take lessons from the higher education system".

Mr Milburn told the House of Lords Social Mobility Committee that FE was in need of "simplification" as he gave evidence on improving the social mobility in the transition from school to work.

He appeared before the committee at its penultimate evidence session on Wednesday (December 2) and said: "The choices that young people are making are not the greatest choices.

"And that is for a whole variety of reasons, like the lack of transparency in the [FE] system.

"In fact to grace it with the word system seems to me a complete misnomer — this is not a system it's a jungle."

He said the higher education system had "total clarity" and "a portal of entry" — referring to Ucas, which operates a system called Progress for the FE and skills sector.

The FE system, he claimed, was "almost designed to induce more complexity and the wrong choices".

He added: "We need to imbibe some of the lessons from higher education and translate those lessons into how we structure and guide people through vocational education.

"I think we have got to do some serious rethinking of all of this and almost go back to basics in terms of design."

Mr Milburn referred to "16,000 courses" to choose from in FE and said "with such a multitude of organisations and qualifications, it's almost impossible to make a trade-off between them". He said: "Heaven help us — if there is ever, ever a need for simplification it is here." He also commented on last month's Budget and said "colleges probably breathed a sigh of relief" after hearing Chancellor George Osborne's speech, but added that "there are some real challenges" with growth, which "has obviously fallen".

The Social Mobility Committee evidence session came just a day after Association of Colleges (AoC) president John Widdowson discussed higher education at the House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee.

He said: "It's tempting to use university as a proxy for all higher education, but clearly it isn't, and will become less so in the future."

Mr Widdowson added that a set of metrics "might work perfectly well in the current university system, probably won't work with some of the new entrants that are coming into the higher education world".

The set of metrics to enhance teaching and learning in higher education include, focusing on enhancement, enhancing reputation, preserving diversity, preserving autonomy and efficiency within the sector.

The final Lords Social Mobility Committee evidence session is due to take place on Wednesday, December 9 at 10.35 with Education Secretary Nicky Morgan and Skills Minister Nick Boles as witnesses. The committee has already heard from high profile figures including former Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg and Ofsted chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw. It is expected to report its findings by late March.

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PROFILE



Almost from day one I knew that this was the sector for me because I absolutely loved the process of teaching and learning, and it became so fundamental and so important to me



THE WRIGHT TYPE

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A typist course at Warwickshire College at the age of 29 was the moment Sarah Wright knew her “life was going to be different”.

Today she sits in the principal’s chair at Central Sussex College safe in the knowledge of when and where her next paycheque will come from — but such certainty and security was not always present in her life.

Wright left school in 1975 at the age of 16 with “surprisingly to everybody, some pretty decent O-levels.”

However, with influential dad George not “overly impressed by academic qualifications,” Wright found herself married and settled for family life just two years later and by the age of 23 she had two children — Emma and James.

But with her marriage having failed, and two small mouths to feed, Wright applied for

a typing course at her nearby Warwickshire College.

She says: “When they interviewed me they advised me that I should do their mature A-level course — so I did that and I studied history, English and maths.”

It was a move that led to the realisation for Wright that “life was going to be different to how it had been before”.

She says: “I felt that, for the first time really, somebody in an educational environment believed in what I could do.

“So I did well in my A-levels, and then went on to Warwick University to do a history and politics degree.”

Wright, a grandmother-of-two, reflects with great passion on how much she enjoyed her university experience and explains how it made her grow in confidence.

And it was during her time at Warwick University that she met husband Gordon, who studied the same degree but in the year above. Wright, now aged 56, graduated when

she was 33.

A move into journalism followed, before Warwickshire College asked Wright to do some cover teaching of GCSE and A-level English.

She says: “Almost from day one I knew that this was the sector for me because I absolutely loved the process of teaching and learning, and it became so fundamental and so important to me.”

Wright took up teaching part-time and also taught at an independent school. A year later she was offered full-time posts at both, but with “no doubt in mind” opted for the Warwickshire College post.

She says: “It just seemed to be such an exciting environment, and one in which I felt I could really make a difference.

“And I think the experience of not having done extremely well at school gave me an insight into the minds of the students there.

“I didn’t have the stereotypical ‘go through education, leave school, go to university and

be the top of everything’ background,” adds Wright.

She worked at the college for a decade, working her way up through the ranks to the position of quality manager by 2003.

Her next career move was to take up post as director of quality at the nearby Solihull College, before returning to Warwickshire College in 2007 as vice principal until 2009.

Wright then landed the role principal of Seevic College, in Essex in 2010, before she secured her current role as principal of Central Sussex College in January 2013.

“When I arrived here and started looking at things, I felt a real thrill about being back in a large FE college,” she recalls.

Central Sussex College has 11,000 students and nearly 400 staff and Wright saw the job opening for the principal of the college as a great opportunity to make an impact on a sizable FE provider.

“However, it quickly became clear that the situation with the finances was not what I

It's a personal thing

What's your favourite book?

Hermione Lee's *Life of Virginia Woolf*. I just think that's an amazing read, and it's non-fiction, which is quite unusual for me

What do you do to switch off from work?

Switching off isn't something I'm particularly good at, but I see a lot of films and plays with my husband. I talk a lot to my sister, who is totally not in the world of education, but seems to understand it anyway.

But I guess really the only time that I completely switch off from work is when I'm playing with my two grandsons, George, aged six and Samuel, two. They are all-consuming, and I find them completely hilarious — I'm completely besotted

What's your pet hate?

I really hate any form of smugness or pretention — pomposity. I just wonder who people are trying to fool when they behave like that

If you could invite anyone to a dinner party, living or dead, who would it be?

Both my parents have died in the last couple of years, so I'd definitely have them. I'd have the potter and fabulous writer Edmund de Waal. I'd also have Vanessa Bell, the artist, Nina Simone singing, and my dad playing saxophone. And my son would be cooking — he's the best cook ever

What did you want to be when you were growing up?

I wanted to write, but until I started teaching at an FE college, I just wasn't sure what I wanted to do. But I was completely sure, almost from day one, that that's where I was going to stay



Wright, aged seven, on holiday with dad George

had believed — and we ended up that year with a £10m deficit," explains Wright, who has overseen two Ofsted inspections at the college, both of which resulted in 'requires improvement' ratings.

She explains that the college had "a massive financial hole" due to building a new campus and says it took the college to borrowing more than 100 per cent of income — she says the average in the sector is around 40 per cent.

And a month after Wright's arrival, the college received a notice of improvement for financial concern from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), which was lifted in August.

Wright says she knew she had to build the college, which has a current SFA allocation of nearly £6m, from the "bottom up" when she arrived and so revamped the board and senior team.

And while the finances blow soon after her arrival prompted a visit from FE Commissioner Dr David Collins in January,

he would later praise the "well balanced" governing board which had "changed significantly over the past two years".

"The senior management team has been completely revised following the appointment of a new principal in 2013," reported Dr Collins.

"The incoming principal inherited a number of major problems including a debt representing more than 100 per cent of turnover and unsatisfactory internal auditing arrangements."

Wright says the college has done all it can to enact the commissioner's recommendations, but his involvement with the college has not ended there. He chairs the Sussex Coast post-16 education area review in which Central Sussex College is one of eight GFE colleges and three sixth form colleges whose futures could be in jeopardy.

"I am confident that the recommendations of the review will be sensible and sound, because of the people running it," says



From left: Wright, aged two, with a monkey, grandmother Kathleen and mum Ann



Wright graduating from the University of Warwick with daughter Emma, who has two sons, and son James in 1993



A three-year-old Wright enjoys what would become a lifelong pastime of reading



Wright on holiday with husband Gordon in 2010



Wright with grandsons George, aged six, and Sam, two

Wright.

"So we do welcome it, and really we're at an early stage, but we'll work through it, and we're pleased to be a part of it."

But back to the daily pressures of the college and Wright says "financial control now is extraordinarily strong" and she has made a "great effort to get their finances under control".

And what keeps the college's ethos strong, says Wright, is the effort and passion she and her team put into it.

She says: "I admire my team — I also really greatly admire the legions of staff in colleges across the country in what is a sector which has had successive cuts to funding and now must be considered underfunded, who every day go that extra mile to make that real difference.

"They help students achieve who wouldn't necessarily have achieved, and they help them to have different lives to the lives they would have had if they hadn't come to us."

She adds: "I am very keen to walk around and talk to students to ask them about their experience of the college, and they tend to be very open and frank about things — and actually really mature about what they want and what they don't want.

"Students do know when they are getting a good experience and when they're not, so we do listen very carefully to that.

"I think some of the feedback that we've had very recently is that they like being taught by people who have been there and done it — and that has come through to me very strongly."

But a great challenge remains, she says.

"I think the big challenge is the reputation of the sector and the lack of understanding sometimes about the good work that the sector does," explains Wright.

"FE is about that fundamental change to the life of an individual who can then take their real part in the economic life of the country."

EXPERTS



FE INSIDER

Shane Chown is head of policy & public affairs at Niace and a governor at Westminster Kingsway College. He is also a former Institute for Learning policy officer and ex-vice president of the National Union of Students. His exclusive FE Insider column features in the first *FE Week* of every month.

The big Lep Euro funding step

Within the next couple of weeks, we expect the Skills Funding Agency to finally begin the process of European Social Fund procurement, advised by European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF) committees within Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

This will be the first time LEPs will have influence over where and how public money is spent on learning and skills programmes.

Yet, with devolution all the rage, this is just the beginning of stronger local oversight over economic growth and public service reform. Since Lord Heseltine's 'No Stone Unturned' report just over three years ago, devolution agreements have been made between central government and nine local areas.

From Cornwall to West Yorkshire, Liverpool to Tees Valley, more and more city regions and combined authority will be afforded devolved budgets and decision making powers over health, social care, transport, employment and skills.

The strengths, opportunities and potential benefits of devolved education and skills systems are persuasive. Skills is a good example of how England stands out as the European Capital of centralised skills policy.

As a democracy, we are facing up to the realisation that central government can't solve all of the problems. Programmes from Whitehall can't close skills gaps, they can't eliminate lifetime low pay and they are not making progress in getting those furthest away from the labour market into work.

That's why it is welcome that local areas have been promised co-commissioning roles for new employment support programmes.

Yet, I remain restless about a couple of things in particular when it comes to devolution of skills.

My first one is about political leadership. In return for powers, local areas have to commit to electing a 'metro-mayor'. Working with the mayor will be a combined authority with its own cabinet of local authority leaders and its own executive. Combined authorities are networks of local authorities, each of which will have its own executive and cabinet of elected councillors.

The quality of local outcome agreements,

skills and employment strategies etc rest on the quality of leadership, policy and oversight from councillors.

My real worry here is how much freedom local political leaders will actually be given to direct policy in their area. It's all well and good devolving power and responsibility, but if it's in HM Treasury wrapping paper with a massive un-Christmassy list of government policy requirements, then it's not really devolution at all. So I think the quality, and freedom, of local political leaders are really important.

Following any discussion about political leadership usually comes accountability.

While the government's consultation on outcome based success measures only closed last week, I know that many are concerned about this idea of a trade-off between accredited and employment outcomes versus non-accredited and other types of outcomes.

There's potential for an 'accountability paradox' here for local political leaders in that if devolution only provides proportioned central government budgets, rather than actual power, local political leaders could find themselves satisfying their devolution conditions at the expense of their constituents.

My hope though, is that in areas like Greater Manchester, local people feel a genuine sense of ownership over learning and skills and local politicians have the ability to prioritise those in most need in their communities.

Clearly, the devolution agenda at the moment throws up as many questions as it does theoretical benefits.

We know that it's most likely at this stage that adult skills and community learning budgets are likely to be devolved under a combined umbrella package.

With that would also come learner support funding, but we don't know the extent to which local areas will have powers of learner support policy or just the PIN number for the central government budget.

Now that learning loans are to be extended, it'll be interesting to see what ideas local areas have in flexing local learning markets to boost demand for advanced-higher level learning and, again, whether localities will have powers over eligibility policy.



GRAHAM RAZEZY

Principal, East Kent College

The 'heartbreaking' path to raising standards through competition

Among the many proud principals watching learners take part in last month's WorldSkills UK competitions at the Skills Show was Graham Razezy. But despite no mention for his college among the medal winners, he views taking part as an opportunity to challenge and improve.

I'm a very competitive individual. That trait is one which comes from my longstanding passion for team sports. I've seen first-hand the difference that competing can make for people, as they practise repeatedly to hone their skillset which is eventually tested in the arena of competition.

I make no bones about my competitive nature and drive. So it would be understandable, therefore, for you to think a skills competition — for me, as principal of East Kent College — would be all about winning and the haul of medals our students could bring home.

So when the college's competitors returned from the recent WorldSkills UK Skills Competition finals held at the NEC without any glittering awards, you'd think I would be upset.

You'd be right. In fact, I was utterly inconsolable, but not for the reason you're thinking.

At East Kent College, we took the decision to get involved in skills competitions about two years ago, so we're fairly fresh to them on the national stage. We made the decision to start taking part because we, as a college, wanted to begin showcasing the high standards which our students were achieving.

We wanted to put our students up against the best of their peers. There was a reason for that — confidence. We, as a college, were confident that we were teaching our students at the highest standards, and they too were pushing themselves to achieve the best possible results.

The crucible of skills competitions would also, in our view, ensure that our tutors and all staff continued to not only provide the highest standard of education, but would keep innovating, keep pushing forward to help students fulfil their potential. Our students would also benefit from taking part in skills competitions.

Being tested in the tough competitive environment, we felt, would help to not only get the best from them, but also to inspire them. Being surrounded by the cream of the crop would motivate our students to push themselves.

And it seems to be working at East Kent College. Our students are achieving ever higher standards, and our staff have continued to drive forward, always working to ensure

that they are the top of their game.

So as a competitive man, and someone who believes in our students and staff, when the results for the WorldSkills were announced I was heartbroken. But it was not because of the lack of medals.

It was because over the three-day competition I'd seen the passion, determination and drive of all of the college's students and tutors, and in truth, I was gutted for them. By the time the competition had finished all of our students looked shattered. I have never seen nine individuals give so much to a competition, they were all utterly drained.

And that is the heart and soul of what skills competitions are about. It isn't about getting a medal, it's about building our students up — shaping them and helping them to be the best they can be. When I saw how much my students had achieved, with such high standards, I desperately wanted them to be rewarded for their efforts. That was the real reason I was inconsolable, not the lack of medals.

The journey East Kent College is taking is one of progression. Not achieving podium finishes this year has not deterred us from going back and striving for yet higher standards. In fact, it has only served to make us more determined to come back stronger.

Not achieving podium finishes this year has not deterred us from going back and striving for yet higher standards

And when our students win gold in the future — and I have no doubt they will — it won't just show an individual with talent, it'll show a college which has worked hard to continue improving its skills standards, and showed commitment to helping everyone achieve their full potential.

It will show that the college is further down the road in its journey to being the best educational establishment it can be, for students, for staff, for the local community and for the businesses our young people will go on to work for.

Sue Pember casts her eye over the Ofsted 2014/15 annual report.

Ofsted's mission statement is 'raising standards and improving lives' and that is certainly the focus of the 2014/15 annual report.

Chief Inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw was absolutely right to highlight the failure of many secondary schools and point out how the performance of secondary schools in the North is worse than those in the South.

I do worry though that poor schools in the South will think they are now off the hook. It is scandalous that the good work of primary schools is undermined and not followed through into secondary schools.

However, this is not new. Ask any FE lecturer and they will tell you stories of bright youngsters who didn't do well at secondary school but flourished when they went to college, and they tell you of the heartache they feel when they have to try to re-motivate a young person who has been turned off learning for five years, has completely lost confidence, and has to start back at the basics.

What is also interesting in the chief inspector's report is that the North/South divide is not there for primary schools, or for colleges.

He also highlighted concerns related to the new study programmes and, in particular, the English and maths element.

I struggled to find in his report a comparison of how schools are doing compared to colleges, or any recognition that this element was



DR SUE PEMBER

Hollex director of policy and external relations and former senior civil servant in charge of FE and skills at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

Should Ofsted help shape programmes as well as inspect them?

always going to be very problematic. This is an area where we all need to work together and, if Ofsted has the answers, then course managers and lecturers must listen and respond.

But, this issue, did make me reflect on the role and timing of inspection.

In business and in manufacturing, inspection is key to quality control and the inspectors don't just appear at the end of the process — they are in the mix from the start, making it clear what they will be looking for in the final inspection.

So shouldn't we be encouraging Ofsted to get involved and help shape the activity when it is being developed rather than leaving it to when a programme is up and running and only then saying what they are looking for?

I don't want to distract from the issue of improving quality, but I do feel this is what has happened on study programmes. Wouldn't it have been more effective to detail the inspection criteria at the start?

I am worried that we may repeat this scenario again with apprenticeship standards

and we will find ourselves in two or three years' time with Ofsted offering their critical assessment of the new standards without having said in development stage anything about what they will be assessing.

There will be many hundreds of standards with different delivery patterns and many with different end tests/assessments — these could be about how to build a wall, completing a workplace project or sitting a viva voce.

Many of these will be delivered without being piloted. Therefore, it is vital that the quality measures/outcomes which the inspectors will be reviewing are determined now, otherwise we will undermine the policy and the inspectors will be back criticising apprenticeship quality in three years' time.

The chief inspector was right to draw attention to the drop in adult learning participation. We need to do more and collectively we need to refocus our adult learning strategies. Our nation's productivity is never going to improve unless we tackle the legacy workforce with poor basic skills. We

need a sustained programme of adult English and maths courses in the work place and we need to share the cost between the state who failed them when they were at school and the employer.

Shouldn't we be encouraging Ofsted to get involved and help shape the activity when it is being developed rather than leaving it to when a programme is up and running?

Adult education is not a luxury but an essential service, to meet the demands made on it, it will need to grow in the future and our collective challenge is to ensure we provide the leadership and direction and not to let down those older learners who are relying on us. Therefore it was right to feature in the annual report and I hope that it now galvanises us all into establishing a new focus on adult learning.



PHIL HATTON

Former Ofsted HMI and FE practitioner who now works with Learning Improvement Service

Sir Michael sees how 'inequalities in funding impact on what we can do with our learners'

Phil Hatton reviews the Ofsted 2014/15 annual report and pinpoints as key its mention of how funding issues are affecting quality.

Reading the learning and skills section of the Chief Inspector's annual brought few surprises for those who have been monitoring inspections throughout last year.

However, the picture painted of being 'above' or 'below' the line of being good or better made difficult reading.

Being a principal or leader of any learning and skills provider is becoming an increasingly demanding and difficult task, as reflected by Sir Michael.

At least Ofsted has recognised that declining budgets to run our sector are so severe they are contributing negatively in their impact on quality.

The report is a key one in that it is also brings to an end the last Common Inspection Framework (Cif) after a relatively short three years.

Sadly, a substantial chunk of the sector did not get the chance to be evaluated against that Cif, which put more emphasis on developing the English and maths skills of learners, even if they have a grade C or above in their previous GCSE results.

It has been a real game-changer, as a key part of both study programmes and apprenticeships, contributing to ever declining overall and timely success rates for the latter.

Sir Michael likes to headline what the sector looks like by quoting what providers look like at their most recent inspection, giving a falsely high and reassuring picture of learners attending 'good or better' providers.

For example, general FE colleges (GFEs) are headlined as having dropped from 79 per cent to 77 per cent for the gradings, while in reality for the 48 colleges inspected only 35 per cent achieved them.

Rather oddly, Sir Michael claims that 'what differentiates the colleges that succeeded from those that are in decline is the calibre

of the leadership and management', yet inspections found leadership and management to be good or better in 44 per cent of GFEs.

Ofsted has put more emphasis on leadership in the new Cif, including governance, by placing the judgement before that of teaching and learning and increasing the inspection focus on it.

Good or better for outcomes in GFEs was only 27 per cent while for teaching and learning 40 per cent. The last year saw an increased focus on linking curriculum development to local and national priorities.

It is good that Ofsted has recognised the prior attainment of learners in GFEs is much lower than in school sixth forms and sixth form colleges, with prior attainment for those elusive GCSEs in English and maths also being lower.

Hopefully, this will be taken into account more when making judgements under the new Cif. The loss of some 270,000 mainly 25+ learners is also acknowledged as a consequence of funding.

The report continues the Ofsted rhetoric when assessing the performance of independent learning providers that only certain types of apprenticeship are worthy of the name.

While there is some substance that there is a need to get equality in levels of apprenticeship right (NVQs at level two vary too much in content and difficulty) it is not the fault of the providers that there are more places with employers who want customer service than there are in aeronautical engineering.

Oddly, comments around weak subcontracting performance are made around

small providers when it is a feature of parts of the entire sector including colleges and community learning. Little mention is made of traineeships save to say they appeared to have little success in fulfilling their primary role of being a stepping stone into apprenticeships.

Ofsted has recognised that the declining budgets to run our sector are so severe that they are contributing negatively in their impact on quality

This is a disappointing oversight as it is an area that is being pushed by local enterprise partnerships as a possible stepping stone. Ofsted needs to be giving government a firmer steer on the success, or not, of the value to young people of the current traineeship model.

In summary, Sir Michael has at last stated what those of us with lifetimes in the sector have always known, that the inequalities in funding impact on what we can do with our learners.

EXPERTS



NEIL CARMICHAEL

Stroud MP, chair of the House of Commons Education Select Committee and former governors' board vice chair at Stroud College

Climbing out of the abyss

Chancellor George Osborne's Budget last month was widely expected to be disastrous for FE. But while many are still awaiting the finer details, the sector appeared at least safe for now. Neil Carmichael outlines his view of the sector settlement.

The mood of the Association of Colleges conference when I attended on the closing day could be best summarised by the headline in the conference edition of *FE Week* — 'Staring into the funding abyss', following warnings from Skills Minister Nick Boles that "FE will not be insulated from further spending cuts".

The reaction therefore when the spending review announced that the core adult skills budget would be protected in cash terms at £1.5bn was one of relief at a better than expected settlement.

Coupled with the announcement of the apprenticeship levy and increased availability of loans for students who wish to pursue higher levels of vocational education, the

overall settlement in my view represents a clear recognition by this government that the FE sector will have an increasingly important role to play in delivering its policy outcomes around apprenticeships, workforce skills and productivity.

The government wants strong local areas and for employers to take a leading role in establishing a post-16 skills system. The series of area-based reviews is already being carried out to establish how local areas can set up institutions that do this.

Colleges will be invited to specialise according to local economic priorities, and to provide better targeted basic skills alongside professional and technical education. Some of these will be invited to become Institutes of Technology which will be sponsored by employers, registered with professional bodies and aligned with apprenticeship standards.

In my own constituency the South Gloucestershire and Stroud College (SGS) has already made itself well poised to develop even more exciting opportunities for young people,

building a new training centre at the now decommissioned Berkley Green power station focussing on energy renewables, advanced manufacturing and cyber security which is already proving to be highly popular, judging by the success of the recent open day.

The FE sector is not just in need of reform. For too long, it has been seen as Cinderella in contrast to higher education so parity between technical and professional training with academic outcomes is long overdue.

One way to achieve this is to introduce a properly valued and recognised National Apprenticeship Award — guaranteeing the quality of the training and saluting the achievement of recipients, which should be part of the government's early proposals for an Institute for Apprenticeships.

Another useful change made in the Spending Review was to allow sixth form colleges to become academies. This will simplify the post-16 arena and, by extension, help to define more clearly the role of the FE sector.

The FE sector is currently charged with the task of dealing with the huge number of GCSE maths retakes — and I congratulate the way many colleges have risen to this challenge — but this policy needs to be reviewed.

While it is absolutely right for young people — wherever possible — to have a qualification in maths (and English), a numeracy qualification could suffice. Furthermore, maths should, in my view, be part of a post-16 curriculum through learning for a National Baccalaureate, formed through maths and English components plus traditional A-levels or

technical qualifications.

I am very alert to the challenges that still exist for the FE sector — for example, between them the Department for Education and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills both still need to secure potentially £500m of savings outside the adult skills budget, and managing this will create challenges.

I am very alert to the challenges that still exist for the FE sector

But both myself and the Labour chair of the Business and Skills Select Committee have long recognised the importance of the FE sector in addressing UK skills and this will be a focus of our joint inquiry into UK productivity over 2016.

The challenges of the spending review now present a real opportunity to create more resilient colleges taking the opportunities now available to them through greater employer engagement and an ability to embrace new innovative structures to meet students, and employer demands.

The sector might not be about to change quite as drastically, or catastrophically, as had been expected from Chancellor George Osborne's Budget. But the need for change is nevertheless as urgent as ever, explains Kirstie Donnelly.

So the Comprehensive Spending Review has finally been announced and, after months of speculation about exactly how deep the cuts would run, we are all breathing a collective sigh of relief at the unexpected surprise. It wasn't so 'bloody' after all.

Perhaps the significant contribution that the FE sector makes to the UK economy is finally being recognised in helping to deliver the government's plan for the future skills growth of the UK workforce.

However, we're not out of the woods yet. Back in September, Education Secretary Nicky Morgan said that the FE sector was in a 'fragile state' and that certainly hasn't changed. Added to that was the fact that the annual review by Ofsted was far from favourable, with Sir Michael Wilshaw's inspectorate rating just 35 per cent of colleges as good or outstanding.

So what next? It's vitally important that colleges and independent learning providers work more effectively with employers and accept they are there to serve their needs, and in turn the needs of the learner. Some colleges are already firmly on the case in this regard — Procat in Essex for example is fully immersed in its local employer landscape.

Closer employer links mean colleges will be able to make choices about their curriculums based on real insight which delivers not only



KIRSTIE DONNELLY

Managing director, City & Guilds

What next for FE after the Comprehensive Spending Review?

skilled individuals but fills specific local skills shortages.

This is something that we at City & Guilds recognise and have invested considerably in. We work closely with employers on the apprenticeship reforms and are involved with two thirds of the new Trailblazer groups and we formed the Industry Skills Board (ISB) made up of a range of employers responsible for delivering apprenticeships.

The ISB recently published the Making Apprenticeships Work report, which provides a real employer view of apprenticeship reforms, how to implement successful reform and ultimately deliver quality apprenticeships.

The focus for the sector must now be the pursuit of quality; we have to push up standards right across the sector not only to address the concerns raised by Ofsted but also to ensure that we are viewed as being

the best possible training option for the employers who will be making a significant financial contribution to training in the form of the levy.

They will now become the 'customer' of FE in the real sense of the word as they will be making the choices of who they work with to achieve their skills needs.

This quality message also needs to get through to the learners themselves, particularly 14 to 19-year-olds who are still biased towards traditional academic learning. Our recent Great Expectations report, which surveyed over 3,000 young people, found that the vast majority of them (70 per cent) wanted to go to university despite economic modellers EMSI telling us that only 30 per cent of jobs were at graduate level.

We know that there are excellent professional and technical pathways that

can give a young person a degree level education while they progress in their jobs but we need to do so much more to promote these routes.

It's a fact that the sector must shed the reliance it has had on the government by looking for alternative routes of funding. This will include working more closely with local enterprise partnerships, tapping into new European Social Fund monies and being open to new commercial delivery models and partnerships. Equally we cannot ignore the success of the university sector in getting students to pay for their own courses and must consider how we turn the extension of 24+ loans into an opportunity by better selling the benefits to learners.

The focus for the sector must now be the pursuit of quality

We have reached a moment in time where there has never been as much pressure on us as a sector to deliver. It will be tough, but we have the tools and the potential to make a huge contribution to the success of individuals and the country as a whole — it's time for us to step up to the plate and show everyone what we're made of.

Martin Doel has revealed plans [see Movers & Shakers on page 18 for more] to become the inaugural Further Education Trust for Leadership (Fetl) Professor of FE and Skills in the University College London (UCL) Institute of Education (IoE). He outlines the kind of issues he wants to be looking at.



MARTIN DOEL

Chief executive of the Association of Colleges

Questions, questions, questions as AoC chief Doel prepares for life of a professor

The first task of leadership is to impart direction and define purpose — what then is the distinctive purpose and direction of institutions delivering FE? What does the term FE mean? Should skills follow FE like a horse and carriage in the phrase 'FE and skills'?

As the Fetl Professor of FE and Skills in the UCL Institute of Education, these are some of the questions that I'm hoping to have the opportunity to explore and discuss. They're the type of questions that, against the litany of day-to-day challenges, are often neglected.

Further questions might be — how do autonomous institutions make themselves properly accountable to those they serve? If improved skills are a necessary, but not sufficient, condition to improve productivity, what are the other elements required and how do these elements interact with skills provision? What should be the balance between broad education and focused training, especially for young people? How do leaders of FE institutions contribute to leadership of 'place' with other agencies and local partners? How can collaboration co-exist with competition in the world of FE and

skills as it does in other areas of business? How do we sustain and build further an entrepreneurial spirit in FE colleges and providers that is reconciled with the requirement for accountability for public funds?

But do those questions, and those being addressed by the Fetl fellows that I'm looking forward to working with, actually matter? After all, colleges, independent learning providers, adult learning providers and employer providers have proven themselves remarkably adept at surviving whatever is thrown their way.

In my opinion, they do matter. Unreflective action might achieve temporary respite, but it's not the behaviour of a mature and autonomous sector. A sign of maturity is a secure sense of 'self' and a wish to be self-determining. These are indicators of underlying confidence that in turn inspire confidence in staff, students and in those that fund education and training,

whether employers or in government.

Working with colleagues at the Institute of Education, Fetl fellows and friends and colleagues across the sector, I hope to find answers to the questions or at least form better questions — as you can see I'm already beginning to make the transition to being an academic. I think also that we should have the humility to learn from others who are engaged in addressing the same type of questions — providers in other educational sectors, in commerce, in other countries both near (we have our own experiment ongoing in the UK as the FE and skills systems in each of the nations diverge but retain very similar cultural roots) and far, in local government and in the voluntary sector.

In the meantime, there's a day job to do at AoC until September when I will take up my full responsibilities at the IoE.

While beginning to think about more and even better questions and while working

Colleges, independent learning providers, adult learning providers and employer providers have proven themselves remarkably adept at surviving whatever is thrown their way

with Fetl fellows, there will more than enough to do in supporting colleges through area reviews, in making full sense of the spending review, in contributing to policy that enables colleges to deliver their full share of 3m high quality apprenticeships, in ensuring that colleges are at the centre of the rejuvenation of higher technical and professional education and in making sure that the achievements of colleges and their students are properly acknowledged and recognised. In fact, it's business as usual.

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FROM FRAMEWORKS TO STANDARDS

DAY THREE - 18TH

ASSESSMENT - PLANS, END-POINT ASSESSMENTS AND APPROVED ORGANISATIONS

WORKSHOP TOPICS WILL INCLUDE:

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CAMPUS ROUND-UP



Curtis May performing his rap-style music in the Derby College recording studio

Rapper Curtis sings Dame Kelly praise

A Derby College rapper featured on a BBC Lifeline TV programme to highlight the support he has gained from the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust.

Curtis May, aged 18, is a music technology learner and joined the Trust's Get on Track programme two years ago to help him overcome the challenges he faced at school and home.

Curtis said: "When I left school I didn't really know what I wanted to do and I had a lot of anger problems and depression.

"I was bullied at school and had a lot

of family problems at home. My sister suggested that I join the Get on Track programme and it has been brilliant.

"After the eight week programme, I continued to receive a lot of help from my athlete mentor GB swimmer Ross Davenport and I am now able to focus positively on the opportunities that are available to me."

Curtis is now a student at the Derby College's Joseph Wright Campus and continues to compose and perform his rap-style music.



City of Liverpool College's Simon O'Brien (back right) with the England under 19s volleyball team

Tutor brings back Danish lessons

A City of Liverpool College sports tutor is using his experience in working with Olympic hopefuls to benefit his students.

Simon O'Brien is the lead medical officer for the England volleyball under 19s squad, helping to prepare them for, hopefully, future Olympics.

He returned from Denmark with the team last month where they competed in the Northern European Volleyball Championship and secured a bronze medal.

Mr O'Brien was the lead sports therapist for the team, coordinating with the managers and coaches to aid England's success at the games.

He said his experience at the championship would be a "huge advantage" to his students as he can demonstrate real hands-on experience in the field.

"The whole experience has been fantastic and the connections I have made will benefit my students at the college greatly," said Mr O'Brien.

"We have made excellent steps in securing a permanent relationship with the team that will give our sports therapy students the chance to gain some vital hands on experience working with England Volleyball and taking part in lessons at the national training base in Kettering."

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CAMPUS ROUND-UP

Postnatal progress earns Zoe just deserts

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An ex-offender who passed an exam less than 24 hours after giving birth has been honoured for her efforts to turn her life around through FE, writes Billy Camden.

Zoe Marie Roberts feared a traumatic past would continue to lead her to a life of crime — but she decided to change track and enrolled for studies at Coleg Menai Bangor and has not looked back since.

The 19-year-old learner studied a new direction course which consisted of health and social, IT and psychology, followed by a social sciences diploma.

Her determination to better her life was underlined when she sat her social work exam just one day after the birth of her third son, Harvey, and passed.

As recognition, Zoe was named winner of the No Offence Redemption & Justice Young Person Award, an annual award that recognises the achievements of people who have overcome adversity to change their lives.

“When I heard I had been nominated for the award I was shocked as I didn’t think I was doing anything special,” said Zoe.

“I just wanted to give back to the community and to help others, to show them that there is a chance.

“When I heard I won it was an emotional time as it showed me the changes I had made in 10 years. It has been an amazing experience.”

At the age of 10 Zoe was abused which led



Zoe being presented with her award. From left: Sergeant Stephen Williams, Zoe Marie Roberts, Carys Jones from Gwynedd Mon Youth Justice Service and Lois Jones, Zoe's former social worker

to her committing minor offences within the community throughout her teenage years, usually while under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

She refused to attend school and later “became a danger” to herself.

Zoe’s life choices, along with her traumatic experiences, drove an escalation in her offending which led to two periods in custody and another of her being placed within a secure unit for her own safety.

On reaching age 18, Zoe decided she could no longer continue on this path and enrolled for her studies despite a four-year absence from education.

She has since progressed into work roles with a company offering young people the chance to live independently, and has also provided support voluntarily to the Edge of Care Team and helped to interview staff for



Zoe Marie Roberts with her No Offence Redemption & Justice Young Person Award

the Youth Justice Service.

Zoe has also acted as a mentor to another young female with a similar offending history to herself.

Novus, a not-for-profit social enterprise which delivers education, training and employability services to people in custody, sponsored Zoe’s award.

The company’s director of justice services, Barbara McDonough, said: “Zoe clearly demonstrated to the judges her ability to make positive changes in her own life and sustain those improvements over a significant period of time. In addition, Zoe has helped others to change and has had a positive

impact on people’s lives with similar issues to her own.”

Zoe added: “I still face difficulties now and my life is far from perfect but I’m far away from life of crime.

“Having my three children — Tylor, Sopheia and Harvey — is what inspired me to change.”

DO YOU WANT TO BE IN CAMPUS ROUND-UP?

Send your stories with pictures to campus@feweek.co.uk including names, ages and course details of students where applicable

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Your weekly guide to who’s new and who’s leaving

Abingdon & Witney College deputy principal Di Batchelor will take the step up to principal after the Christmas break when Teresa Kelly retires.

The board of governors said it appointed Ms Batchelor because of her “impressive personal contribution” to the college’s recent progress in curriculum development, teaching and learning, and the development of new facilities.

Ms Batchelor, who joined Abingdon College in 1992 as head of adult learning, previously

worked at Oxfordshire County Council as part of the adult education team.

Stephen Dexter, chair of governors said the board was “unanimous in its decision and has utmost confidence in Ms Batchelor to continue the successful progress of Abingdon & Witney College”.

Ms Kelly said: “I am delighted that Ms Batchelor will take up the position as college principal when I retire at Christmas.

“I have worked closely with Ms Batchelor for

the last 12 years and I have every confidence that I will be leaving the college in safe and inspirational hands. This is very good news for education and training in Oxfordshire.”

Meanwhile, awarding organisation Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT) has appointed Alan Woods OBE to succeed Dr Stephen Vickers as its chief executive with effect from January 1.

Mr Woods arrives after leading on apprenticeships and vocational education with the University of Law (ULaw) for the past 18 months.

Before working with ULaw he led Skills for Justice, a sector skills council licensed by the government to work with employers on competences, skills and apprenticeships.

Mr Woods said: “I am particularly looking forward to leading, with a great set of staff colleagues at VTCT, on new areas of work

including: on-line assessments, working with employers to engage with new, higher and more bespoke qualifications, new partnerships with education providers and centres to develop outstanding technical centres of excellence, particularly within hair and beauty therapy, and to support the ambition of our employers to support the apprenticeship revolution that is sweeping the UK.”

And Martin Doel will be standing down as chief executive of the Association of Colleges (AoC) from September to move to a new professorship for the Further Education Trust for Leadership (Fetl).

Mr Doel will continue in his post with the AoC until then, helping to establish his new role as Fetl Professor of FE and skills at the University College London (UCL) Institute of Education (IOE) from April 1.

A Fetl spokesperson said the role was “the very first professorial role for the sector and will help lead thinking to influence policy and help shape the future for FE and skills”.

Mr Doel said: “Working at the AoC has been the most rewarding job that I have had.

“In my new role on behalf of Fetl in the Institute of Education, I will look to draw on my experience at AoC to continue to enhance understanding of the FE and skills sector.”

A spokesperson for the AoC said it “will undertake the process of appointing a new chief executive in January”.



Di Batchelor



Teresa Kelly



Alan Woods



Dr Stephen Vickers



Martin Doel

JOBS

Director of Customer Support and Operations

nocn
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

Sheffield
From £57,000
Closing date: 18 December 2015

NOCN is looking for a new Director of Customer Support and Operations. The primary objective of the role is to lead the Customer Support functions to meet customer service and quality standards. The position will report to the MD as part of the Senior Management Team and includes liaison with internal functions and external partners.

The ideal candidate will have a commercial perspective and understand the needs of customers, they will be an excellent leader with great communication and motivation skills. They will have previous experience managing customer services teams, on-line support, database management and related systems.

Knowledge of the vocational skills and education market is essential including the management of assessments and examinations. Experience of working in a regulated environment is also important, as is any direct experience in education, training or with awarding and assessment organisations.

NOCN is a progressive, non-profit organisation creating amazing opportunities for its customers, employees and partners.

For further details and a full job description, visit:
www.nocn.org.uk/jobs

Application instructions:

Email CV and covering letter explaining why you are best suited for the position, to:

Dr David Hutchinson, HR Director.
Email: david.hutchinson@nocn.org.uk



LECTURER IN AGRICULTURE

Writtle
College

A partner of the University of Essex

Unqualified: £24,775 pa, pro rata

Qualified: £28,695 pa, pro rata

1x Part-time, 29.6 hours per week (0.8 FTE)

1x Full-time, 37 hours per week (1.0 FTE)

Both roles are fixed-term initially until 31 August 2016

For more information on these roles, other opportunities and Writtle College, please visit our website: www.writtle.ac.uk

Closing date: 11 December 2015. Interview date: 22 December 2015.

Writtle College strives to be an Equal Opportunities employer. All applicants who are offered employment will be subject to a criminal records check from the Disclosure and Barring Service. This college is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Lancaster & Morecambe College

Programme Area Manager in Business, Computing, Travel & Hospitality

Salary £32,189 - £37,537 per annum

37 hours per week

Job Ref: MS 867

We are seeking to recruit an innovative and highly motivated individual wishing to develop their curriculum management career within the FE sector. This post offers the opportunity to lead and manage a well-established team dedicated to providing excellent educational and vocational opportunities, including full-time FE courses and Apprenticeships. Benefits include Teachers' Pension Scheme, generous leave entitlement and opportunities for continuing professional development.

For full details including how to apply, please visit our website www.lmc.ac.uk

Interviews will take place on Thursday, 7th January 2016.

Closing date: Thursday, 17th December 2015

Contact information:

Email: jobs@lmc.ac.uk

Phone: 01524 521507

Address: Morecambe Road, Lancaster, LA1 2TY



Lancaster & Morecambe
the College

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A COLLEGE FOR THE COMMUNITY



Principal £competitive salary plus relocation, St Helens

With 2,100 students drawn from 40+ secondary schools across Merseyside, Cheshire and Lancashire, Carmel College is an inclusive Catholic Sixth Form College that welcomes students of all faiths and backgrounds. Recently ranked as the top Sixth Form College in the country for student progress by ALPS, the College operates from a single campus which has seen £23m of investment and provides an outstanding place of learning. Our mission is to be a centre of educational excellence, opportunity, challenge and support within a caring Christian environment. Our new Principal will lead the College to achieve continued academic excellence and provide exceptional pastoral care, whilst maintaining the ethos of the College.

With unprecedented levels of change in 16-19 education, we do not underestimate the challenges ahead and we will expect you to have experience of developing and implementing effective and sustainable strategies in response to the national agenda. You will have a successful track record of strategic leadership in an educational setting which has high academic standards, a culture of continuous improvement and effective management of resources. A collaborative, inspirational and ambassadorial leader, you will be able to bring out the best in your team, develop strong working relationships with stakeholders and have the gravitas and credibility to influence agendas at a sector level.

This post presents a significant opportunity for professional rewards in a values-driven organisation with a strong team ethic and where the student experience is at the heart of every decision. It is a requirement of this role for the postholder to be a practising Catholic.

To find out more, visit www.carmelprincipal.co.uk or contact Trudy Searle, Mike Galloway or Peter Ryder on **0113 287 8445**. Closing date: 3 January. Initial interviews: 11 & 12 January. Final interviews: 20 & 21 January.

Maple GROUP



FEWeek

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dedicated to further
education and skills*

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**LAST EDITION OF THE YEAR
EDITION 158: MONDAY 14TH DECEMBER 2015
BOOKING DEADLINE: WEDNESDAY 9TH DECEMBER AT 5PM**

**FIRST EDITION OF 2016
EDITION 159: MONDAY 11TH JANUARY 2016
BOOKING DEADLINE: WEDNESDAY 6TH JANUARY AT 5PM**

TUTOR / ASSESSOR VACANCIES

East Midlands - £22,000 - £26,000 pro rata
(Part-time or Associate)

Closing Date: January 12, 2015

MITRE GROUP

EDUCATION | CONSULTANCY | RESEARCH

Tutor / Assessor - Marketing

Role and Responsibilities

- Delivery of high-quality, accredited programmes in Marketing, Digital Media and Social Media
- Meet the quality assurance requirements as set by Mitre Group, the Awarding Body and the Funding Provider

Qualifications and Education Requirements

- Minimum 3 years' experience of working in marketing / digital media / social media
- Teaching / tutor qualification (e.g. PGCE, L4 Education and Training)
- Understanding of Marketing Principles and up to date experience of Digital Media software and Social Media platforms
- Microsoft Office skills

Preferred Skills

- NVQ Assessor qualification (e.g. A1, TAQA)
- Experience of working with Government funded programmes
- Minimum GCSE A-C in English and Maths

Tutor / Assessor - Business Skills

Role and Responsibilities

- Delivery of high-quality, accredited programmes in Business Skills including Customer Service, Business Administration, Contact Centre and Team Leading
- Meet the quality assurance requirements as set by Mitre Group, the Awarding Body and the Funding Provider

Qualifications and Education Requirements

- Minimum 3 years' experience of working at a managerial or supervisory role within business
- Teaching / tutor qualification (e.g. PGCE, L4 Education and Training)
- Experience and up to date understanding of customer service, administration and business principles
- Microsoft Office skills

Preferred Skills

- NVQ Assessor qualification (e.g. A1, TAQA)
- Experience of working with Government funded programmes
- Minimum GCSE A-C in English and Maths

To apply, email jobs@mitregroup.co.uk with a CV and covering letter



Nescot
Epsom's college of further and higher education

Teacher in Maths

GCSE and Functional Skills

**Full time, Part Time or
Sessional hours available.**

**Up to £32,263 p.a. for full time (plus Market Supplement for exceptional candidate dependent on skills and experience.)
Fractional pro rata and Sessional £27.08 per hour.**

We require a teacher to deliver GCSE and Functional Skills mathematics to students working on vocational programmes from Entry level to Level 3. The successful applicant will understand the GCSE and Functional Skills courses and how to best enable our students to achieve well.

You will join our strong and experienced Maths team and with them, inspire, excite and engage students and help them to move on to higher education, further education, employment or training. You will be sensitive to your students' needs and enable and encourage them to express and reach their

true potential. You'll also know how to monitor each step of their progress however big or small and celebrate their successes.

Whether you are a graduate, a teacher new to the profession or someone with experience of teaching maths we would like to hear from you.

We are able to offer you a final salary pension scheme, generous holidays and the facilities of a College campus set in 70 acres of green belt in a peaceful setting. The College has excellent transport links and is set in a location convenient to London and the South East and offers a large free on-site car park.

Please indicate which contract type you are interested in.

Online applications must be submitted by 10 December 2015 and interviews will be held on **8th January 2016**.



Subject Matter Experts and Contributing Authors in Functional Skills: English and mathematics

Job Purpose:

As one of a team of vocationally qualified Subject Matter Experts (SME) and/or Contributing Authors you will have an opportunity to impart your years of knowledge, expertise and understanding in helping to develop the content of i-GVS functional skills.

You will ensure materials are of a high quality, adhere to and meet compliance objectives, and can be mapped to National Occupational Standards and Ofqual. You will liaise with our script writers and SME's to produce outstanding and robust pieces of work.

Desired Skills and Experience

Duties, Responsibilities & Main Activities:

- Commitment to writing the best, dynamic, most effective materials for the Vocational Education & Training (VET) sector. Applying an innovative contextualised and creative approach to your work;
- Ensuring your materials are fully compliant with and mapped to National Occupational Standards and Ofqual.

Essential:

- Recent professional experience within vocational education and delivery of level 2 Functional Skills English and mathematics;
 - High level of accuracy and attention to details and ability to work independently and efficiently.
- Working from home you will be required to supply and maintain your own computer and have internet access. If necessary, you would be provided with all software required to undertake your work.

For further information or to apply for the role, please send an up-to-date CV to production@i-gvs.com or call 01923 431 734.

www.nescot.ac.uk

Nescot, Reigate Road, Ewell, Epsom, Surrey, KT17 3DS



NescotCollege @Nescot

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BCT IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES EMPLOYER AND POSITIVELY WELCOMES APPLICATIONS FROM ALL SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY. WE ARE COMMITTED TO SAFEGUARDING ALL LEARNERS ENROLLED ON OUR PROGRAMMES AND APPOINTMENT OF SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS WILL BE SUBJECT TO SATISFACTORY REFERENCES BEING OBTAINED, AND AN ENHANCED DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE (DBS) CHECK.

WWW.BIGCREATIVE.EDUCATION

Mathematics Lecturer

(37 hpw) temporary until July 2016 £18,688 - £31,854

An exciting opportunity has become available to join the maths team at Stockton Riverside College. If you see your future supporting learners to fulfil their potential and have the skills required to create an innovative and inspiring learning environment - then this is the place for you!

We are looking to appoint a Mathematics Lecturer on a temporary contract until 15 July 2016, with the potential to become permanent. If you feel you can make a positive contribution to our successful team then we would love to hear from you.

Appointment is conditional upon a satisfactory enhanced DBS check.

CLOSING DATE: SUNDAY 13th DECEMBER 2015

INTERVIEWS: FRIDAY 18th DECEMBER 2015

To apply, visit:

www.stockton.ac.uk/job/mathematics-lecturer-37-hpw/



www.stockton.ac.uk



JOBS



FULL TIME MATHS & ENGLISH TUTOR/ TEACHER - £35,000PA OTE

LOCATION: ENGLAND

Due to the outstanding successes of our work to date, we are looking to recruit a new team of 15 experienced Skills for Life tutors.

You will be delivering English and Maths from Entry Level through to Level 2, contextualised with a vocational award. Some delivery will be in the Health and Social Care sector, and therefore any experience in the H&SC sector would be an advantage but not essential. The role will be working on a peripatetic basis, delivering in your region. Willingness to travel and your own transport are essential.

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA - PLEASE DO NOT APPLY IF YOU CAN'T COMPLY:

- Full time ONLY with flexible hours
- Have achieved a recognised full teaching qualification - Cert ed/ PGCE/ DTLLS or equivalent
- Experience in teaching English and/or Maths
- Outstanding personal written and verbal communication skills
- A driving license and access to your own transportation

HIGHLY DESIRED CRITERIA

- Experience of working with adult learners
- Working towards or have achieved a Level 4/5 Subject Specialist qualification in literacy and/ or Numeracy
- Excellent ICT Skills

The successful candidate will also be required to have a valid DBS Clearance Check. In the first instance, please send an email outlining your recent relevant experience together with your CV. NCC Skills Ltd is an Equal Opportunities Employer.

No agencies please jobs@nccskills.co.uk

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Sunderland College

EXTERNAL VACANCY

TRAINER/ASSESSOR (MATHS AND ENGLISH) X2

POST REF: 5795, 37 HOURS PER WEEK.

FULL-TIME, PERMANENT £26,406.45 - £28,857.72 PER ANNUM

Sunderland College has a long history of employer engagement, achieved through developing the skills and knowledge that equip our learners to work in a diverse range of sectors. Today, Sunderland College works with over 400 businesses and is one of the largest providers of Apprenticeships in the region. The College is keen to continue to build on this success and expand its Trainer Assessor provision, having secured a number of significant contracts in the above areas.

We are seeking to appoint two suitably qualified Trainer/Assessors to work within the department of English and Maths. The majority of work will involve workplace delivery of Maths and English qualifications including our Apprenticeship provision. Successful applicants should hold a Degree, relevant teaching qualification (or be willing to work towards this) and a proven track record of delivering English and Maths qualifications with successful outcomes to a diverse range of learners. Applicants should also possess an assessor's qualification.

Applicants should be able to demonstrate relevant experience in their personal statement, giving practical examples of how they fulfil the person specification. Our Trainer Assessors need to be independently mobile and must be able to travel throughout the North East and in some instances may need to travel further afield.

Due to the nature of this post you will be required to undertake an Enhanced Disclosure Check. To find out more about this great opportunity visit sunderlandcollege.ac.uk/vacancies alternatively email vacancies@sunderlandcollege.ac.uk or call 0191 511 6046 to request an application pack.

ALL APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY 5PM ON THURSDAY 07 JANUARY 2016.

It is envisaged that interviews will take place the week commencing 11 January 2016.

We are working towards equal opportunities and welcome applications from all sections of the community. We are committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.



Nescot
Epsom's college of further and higher education

Teacher in English GCSE and Functional Skills

Sessional Lecturer in English for GCSE and Functional Skills £27.08 per hour

We require an enthusiastic, experienced classroom teacher to deliver English GCSE and Functional Skills to a wide range of students working on vocational programmes. This position will suit someone who has a passion for this subject as it's a vital role in further education.

We are looking for a candidate who can demonstrate a proven track record of success in delivering English GCSE and Functional Skills.

Applicants must have a commitment to excellent teaching with a primary objective of improving student achievement.

As an English lecturer, you will:

- be able to teach GCSE English Language repeat students
- prepare and delivery effective schemes of work consistent with college policy and national requirements be creative, resourceful and flexible

- work closely with vocational tutors
- have good ICT skills
- maintain comprehensive records of assessment and attendance
- monitor student progress and identify areas for learner improvement
- motivate students to achieve their full potential

The successful applicant will be a qualified teacher who can use their own initiative as well as work effectively within a forward-thinking, supportive team.

We are able to offer you a final salary pension scheme, generous holidays and the facilities of a College campus set in 7 acres of green belt in a peaceful setting. The College has excellent transport links and is set in a location convenient to London and the South East and offers a large free on-site car park.

Closing Date for completed applications is **Sunday 13 December 2015**

Interviews will be held on **Thursday 7 January 2016**

www.nescot.ac.uk

Nescot, Reigate Road, Ewell, Epsom, Surrey, KT17 3DS



NescotCollege @Nescot

LAUNCHING JANUARY 2016

FS-LIVE

nocn

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

Functional Skills Online Testing

To complement our extensive provision of hard-copy examinations and assessments in English and Maths Functional Skills, NOCN is launching **FS-LIVE** online testing.

FS-LIVE TESTS

- Mathematics Level 1 and 2
- English Reading Level 1 and 2
- English Writing Level 1 and 2

FEATURES

- Secure, locked-down browser
- Enhanced exam security
- Bespoke application
- Availability 24-7 to suit your timetable
- Multiple choice automated marking
- Paper versions available according to your needs
- Considerable time and cost savings achievable
- Created with leading educational software developers
- NOCN functional skills qualifications can be used as part of an apprenticeship

To find out more, get in touch

Call 0114 227 0500

Email fs-live@nocn.org.uk

Click www.nocn.org.uk/FS-LIVE



FE Week Sudoku challenge

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

	8		3					2
5					6			
	4			8		6	9	
1		2		6				9
7				3		1		5
	1	5		9				8
			5					4
9					4		2	

Difficulty:
EASY

		1			4			7
	8				7			5
				8				9
	7			9	8			4
8			1	4				2
	3			2				
1	5			6				7
4			3			6		

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next week

Last Week's solutions

6	7	4	5	2	1	9	8	3
8	1	3	4	9	7	2	5	6
2	9	5	6	8	3	1	7	4
3	5	2	8	6	9	4	1	7
9	8	1	3	7	4	5	6	2
4	6	7	2	1	5	8	3	9
5	4	8	9	3	6	7	2	1
7	3	9	1	5	2	6	4	8
1	2	6	7	4	8	3	9	5

Difficulty:
EASY

5	6	8	1	2	4	7	9	3
9	4	3	8	7	5	1	6	2
2	7	1	9	6	3	8	5	4
6	5	4	3	9	7	2	1	8
1	8	7	6	4	2	5	3	9
3	9	2	5	1	8	4	7	6
4	2	6	7	3	1	9	8	5
8	1	9	2	5	6	3	4	7
7	3	5	4	8	9	6	2	1

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Spot the difference to WIN an FE Week mug



Spot five differences. First correct entry wins an *FE Week* mug. Text your name and picture of your completed spot the difference to 07969 166 374.

Last week's spot the difference winner was Rotherham College governors' board chair Ken Barrass.