

FE Week

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Exclusive

BILLY CAMDEN @BILLYCAMDEN

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IfA in standoff over teaching standards funding bands

JUDE BURKE
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EXCLUSIVE

The group developing three long-delayed FE teaching standards is in a bitter stand-off with the Institute for Apprenticeships, claiming the funding bands on offer represent just half what these standards would cost to deliver.

The three standards, ranging between levels three and level five, have been in development since 2015. They were recently assigned funding bands of £5,000 to £9,000.

But the education and training trailblazer leadership group has rejected the IfA's offers – insisting they are between 50 and 57 per cent lower than lowest estimate submitted.

Ian Grayling, the director of CETTAcademy who vice-chairs the trailblazer group, told FE Week the situation is “extremely frustrating”.

“Any decision on a funding band needs to be based on evidence and on a formal, transparent process by which it's arrived at,” he said.

“I don't believe there is any quantitative process of scoring or metrics being applied here.”

The group has

lodged an appeal with the IfA, but Mr Grayling admitted they weren't confident it would succeed – not least because they were only allowed to appeal the process, not the funding band, “and there is no procedure we can appeal”.

For its part, the IfA has insisted the way it assigns funding bands to standards is “fair”.

A spokesperson for the body did not say why it had appeared to ignore the trailblazer group costings, or why they won't share details of their new indicative rate setting methodology.

She said “a range of factors” are considered when making funding band recommendations, including “information supplied by trailblazers and providers” and “advice from industry-led route panels”.

“We are satisfied that our process is fair, and that the recommendations we make are appropriate for each apprenticeship standard,” she added. The level five learning and skills teacher standard was first published way back in August 2015, while the level

four assessor/coach and level three learning mentor standards were published in October the same year.

Assessment plans for the level three and four standards were only published last month, while the plan for the level five standard has yet to appear.

According to correspondence shared with FE Week, the standards were allocated final funding bands on April 20.

They were set at £5,000 for the learning mentor, £6,000 for the assessor/coach and £9,000 for the learning and skills teacher.

But they were rejected by the trailblazer group on May 3, based on the “unanimous decision” of its members, which included colleges, universities, training providers and the Education and Training Foundation, along with feedback from the sector.

Mr Grayling told FE Week the group had submitted a range of employer-delivery costings for the three standards, based on estimates from different providers.

“They clearly do not feature in the funding band decision – because if they did how could they award a funding band at 50 per cent below the lowest cost?” he said.

The 24-month level five standard included a teaching qualification, which in itself would cost almost as much as the entire funding band, Mr Grayling said.

In contrast, the equivalent school teacher

apprenticeship, at level six, was also given a £9,000 funding band – even though it doesn't include a qualification, and is only 12 months long.

The IfA's website lists a number of factors it considers when recommending funding bands, only one of which relates to information provided by employer groups.

However, four relate to comparisons with other apprenticeships, and wider affordability.

Mr Grayling questioned both the openness of this process, and how it was possible to make a comparison when – as in this case – the standards are wholly new.

“Who's comparing it? How is it being compared? How can we be sure of the validity of that comparison? How can you compare something that doesn't exist?” he asked.

FE Week reported in December that 13 standards with approved assessment plans had been left in limbo for months as their costs hadn't been agreed.

Shortly after that the IfA revealed plans to make its processes “faster and better” in 2018, and in February announced changes to the process for allocating funding bands.

This would align it with proposal and assessment plan approvals, and give employer groups an indicative funding band much earlier in the process.



Ian Grayling

NAO slams DfE's oversight of the Student Loans Company

JUDE BURKE
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The Department for Education has been heavily criticised for its oversight of the Student Loans Company during the tenure of its disgraced former chief executive in a new report from the National Audit Office.

The watchdog looked into how the DfE monitored the company while Steve Lamey, who was dismissed for gross misconduct last November, was in charge.

The report has identified a catalogue of monitoring shortcomings at both the DfE and the onetime Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

“There were many changes in the company during 2016,” the report stated. These included changes to its governance and senior leadership, “but the department did not consider whether its oversight arrangements were sufficient”.

Furthermore, “accountabilities, roles and responsibilities for the department's oversight of the company are not up-to-date and lack clarity”.

The report also revealed that the DfE is reviewing its oversight and governance arrangements with the SLC. In fact, it will cover all its arms-length bodies, including the Institute for Apprenticeships, Ofsted and the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

A spokesperson said the department had “reviewed and introduced changes to our oversight measures, including quarterly shareholder meetings to discuss performance and risk management” after it assumed responsibility for the SLC in 2016.

The current review will look at “how we can build on those measures to ensure that the SLC is well-supported” in the future, she added.

Mr Lamey was appointed chief executive of the SLC in June 2016, despite concerns from BIS about his suitability for the role, according to the NAO report.

He was suspended in July 2017, following allegations made by two whistleblowers. He was subsequently dismissed without compensation in November, to be replaced by former Education and Skills Funding Agency boss Peter Lauener.

The report identified a number of areas where the DfE and BIS had fallen short in its oversight, including failing to update the framework which set out its relationship with the SLC for almost 10 years.

“We welcome the NAO report and have already implemented a number of changes to strengthen governance in the areas they identified,” a spokesperson for the SLC said.

Meg Hillier, chair of the Commons Public Accounts committee, said the report was a “story of the failure of two departments to effectively monitor a public body under their watch”.



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NEWS

Provider explosion forces ESFA to bolster audit team

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

The Education and Skills Funding Agency is beefing up its audit team amid mounting concerns about new providers entering the sector.

It has launched a recruitment drive for a “newly created market oversight unit”, including an advert for four auditor vacancies posted on the civil service jobs website.

They will operate directly under the leadership of Matt Atkinson, the ESFA’s director of provider market oversight.

The newcomers will not be replacing departing staff, and the recruitment drive is part of wider plans to plough more resources into audit and oversight.

Considerable numbers of untried and untested providers have hit the market recently, for example through the register of apprenticeship training providers.

“Matt Atkinson is leading a newly created market oversight unit,” a Department for Education spokesperson said.

“This highlights the critical role the agency plays in oversight of the education and skills landscape.”

The advert for “assurance officers” states

that the agency is looking for candidates with a “background in audit and financial assurance – to support the delivery of assurance activity at providers of education and training”.

Their team is expected to review “financial statements and management reports to ensure funds are used for the proper purposes and potential areas of irregular expenditure is identified”.

RoATP has been controversial since its launch just over a year ago.

Amongst the initially accepted providers,

FE Week reported on three new companies with no track record on government apprenticeships, all run by one man from a rented office in Cheshire.

The proliferation of new providers has been criticised by Ofsted’s chief inspector Amanda Spielman, who spoke to FE Week about the impact that this would have on the inspection service.

“It is clear there are a lot of would be new entrants, a lot of people with very limited experience and potentially quite a lot of fragmentation,” she said.

She and Paul Joyce, Ofsted’s deputy director for FE and skills, both admitted to being concerned about how they would keep tabs on everyone.

“I am worried about the number of providers that we may have to inspect,” admitted Mr Joyce. “I’ve had conversations with the DfE about our resource.”

Ofsted subsequently embarked on a drive to keep more careful tabs on such newcomers to the apprenticeships market, through a series of early-monitoring visit reports.

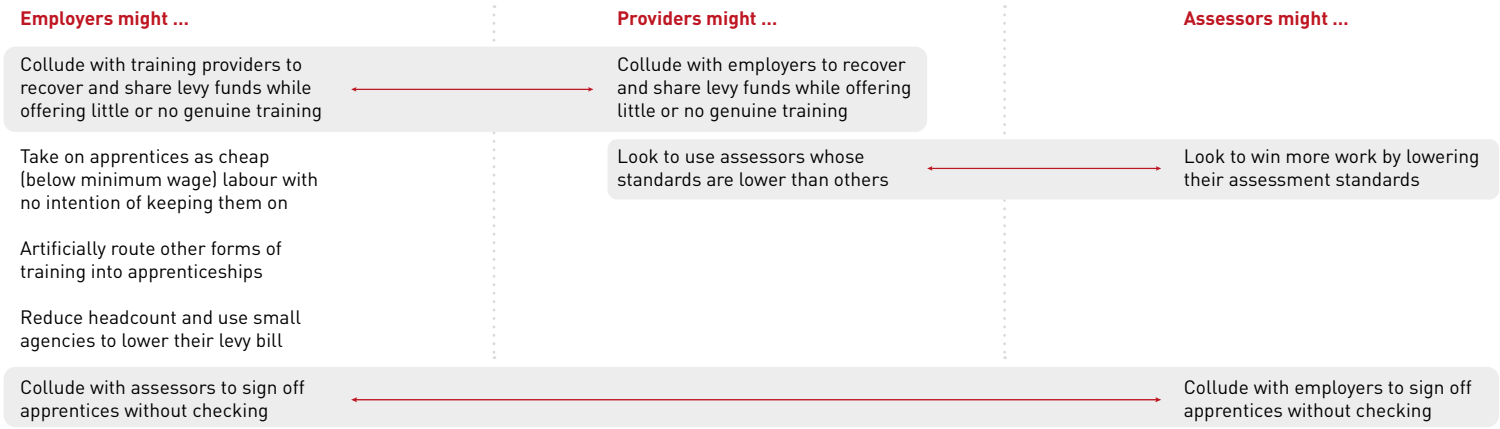
The first of these published in March was brutally critical of training that is “not fit for purpose” at Key 6 Group, as reported below.

The National Audit Office also expressed concern at the potential for abuse of the apprenticeship system back in 2016.

“DfE and the SFA are yet to establish what information they will need to monitor key behavioural risks and spot signals that these risks may be maturing,” its report said.

“While they might reasonably expect the vast majority of employers, training providers and assessment bodies to act properly in response to apprenticeship reforms, a small minority may behave in unintended ways”.

Examples of behavioural risks relating to the reformed apprenticeship system - as identified in the 2016 NAO report on ‘delivering value through the apprenticeships programme’



RoATP newcomer’s apprentice ban lifted after just 2 months

JUDE BURKE
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EXCLUSIVE

An apprenticeship provider whose training was branded “not fit for purpose” just two months ago has been allowed to continue recruiting apprentices.

Key6 Group was the subject of Ofsted’s first early monitoring report on newcomers to the apprenticeship market, published in March.

The inspectorate’s criticism of a provider new to government-funded apprenticeships when it joined the register of apprenticeship training providers in March 2017 was particularly brutal.

Its apprenticeships were “not fit for purpose”, and most people received “a poor standard of training” according to inspectors who visited the provider in February.

Despite this damning verdict Key6 Group was suspended for just two months – and it is now allowed to take on new apprentices once more.

A spokesperson for the Department for Education said it had stopped the group from “taking on new apprentices until it addressed the concerns outlined in Ofsted’s report”.

“The suspension was lifted in April after it provided a robust improvement plan,” she said.

Key6 Group has not explained how it

managed to turn things around in such a short time period, despite multiple attempts by FE Week to get in contact.

And its website gives no clue as to its activities, as it simply says “currently updating our website – back soon!”

The treatment of Key6 Group is in marked contrast to that meted out to existing providers given a grade four for their apprenticeship provision.

Under rules published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency in January, an ‘inadequate’ provider should be given five days’ notice of removal from the register.

Furthermore, they must not take on any new apprentices, and any existing apprentices would be able to stay on only at the employers’ discretion.

To date, one college and at least 10 independent training providers have been removed from the register as a result of a grade four rating for their apprenticeship provision.

But Key6 Group has remained on the register throughout its suspension, as the date it was added, March 13 2017, is unchanged.

Ofsted’s early monitoring visits, announced by chief inspector Amanda Spielman last November, were intended to sniff out “scandalous” attempts to waste public money.

Their introduction is believed to be a result

The screenshot shows the Key6 Group website. At the top, it says "THE GOLD STANDARD GLOBAL EDUCATION & TRAINING UNDISCOVERED". Below this is the "KEY6 GROUP" logo and a navigation menu with links: HOME, ABOUT US, LEVY, SECTORS, PARTNERS, NEWS, CONTACT.

The main banner features a collage of diverse people's faces and the text "APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING by sector specialists".

Below the banner are three images: a close-up of a "999 Emergency call" button, a night view of the London Eye, and two people in high-visibility work clothes.

Text on the right side of the page reads: "of growing concerns around the number of untested training providers that had made it onto the register, and therefore had access to potentially huge sums of public money."

Text on the left side of the page reads: "of Apprenticeship Training were both subcontractors before the introduction of the levy in April last year, while North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust is an employer provider."

Union fury as college boss gets 31 per cent pay rise

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

EXCLUSIVE

The boss of a college that saw its turnover slashed last year was given a huge 31-per-cent salary increase in 2016/17 – taking his wage to £260,000.

Garry Phillips' whopping pay rise made him the fifth highest-paid principal in the country last year, at a time when Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College's turnover dropped from £41.1 million to £34.6 million.

His salary went from £198,000 to £260,000. On top of this, he took home £37,000 in pension contributions – taking his overall pay packet to £297,000, according to the college's financial statements.

His salary was more than double the second-highest paid person at the college, which declined the opportunity to justify the figures involved this week.

In March, Mr Phillips, who has been at EHWL since 2014, announced plans to leave this role at the end of this academic year, as he prepares to take up the chief executive position at City College Plymouth.

EHWL did not respond to repeated requests for comment on the pay package.

The University and College Union, on the other hand, which is currently in the middle of a huge national pay dispute with colleges across the country (see page 6), was not shy of slamming the raise.

"Bumper pay rises for college principals are an embarrassment to the sector, especially at a time when staff pay is falling in real terms," said Andrew Harden, UCU's head of FE.

"We urgently need to improve the transparency on how decisions about senior pay in colleges are made so leaders can be held properly accountable to students, staff and taxpayers."

Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College is one of the largest colleges in the capital.

Its turnover dropped by £6.5 million last year, mainly because of the closure of one of its campuses.

Under Mr Phillips' leadership, the college has risen from the depths of a grade four Ofsted report to a grade two, which was published in May last year.

However, his attempts to secure a controversial merger with Kensington and Chelsea College, to make it one giant group, were scuppered in January amid outcry from local campaigners.

The activists insisted the resulting super-college would not have allowed the local council to redevelop KCC's Wornington Road campus, situated close to Grenfell Tower, which was devastated by fire over the summer killing 71 people.

It took interventions from both the FE Commissioner Richard Atkins and skills minister Anne Milton before a decision in favour of the campaigners was made.

Principals' pay has been under a microscope in recent weeks, ever since the Department for Education released the college accounts for 2016/17.

The UCU has lambasted many principals as "greedy and hopelessly out of touch" after new analysis showed a third enjoyed raises of more than 10 per cent last year.

Seventeen enjoyed annual salaries of over £200,000.

These massive raises are all the more controversial, given that college staff across the country have been driven to strike action after they were offered a measly a one-per-cent increase of their own.

The figures also confirmed FE Week's exclusive story from March, which revealed Matt Hamnett, the former principal of North Hertfordshire College, was the highest-paid principal last year.



Garry Phillips

He was paid £294,000 on top of a £47,000 pension contribution and benefits in kind worth £1,000 last year – or just over one per cent of its entire turnover of £30 million.

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NEWS

Shock leadership change at London sixth form college

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

The principal of a London sixth-form college with a history of financial problems has been very suddenly replaced.

It is understood that Ken Warman left BSix Brooke House Sixth-Form College yesterday.

The grade three Ofsted-rated college would not comment on the reasons for his departure, but announced that his replacement Kevin Watson has been appointed “with immediate effect”.

“BSix Brooke House Sixth-Form College announces that Kevin Watson has today been appointed principal with immediate effect. Kevin has been director of learning at BSix since September 2017. He has almost 20 years’ experience as principal of Leyton Sixth-Form College, Richmond-Upon-Thames College and Winstanley College, Wigan.”

BSix was issued with a government notice to improve its financial health in March last year, which occasioned a visit from the sixth-form commissioner.

Further evidence that BSix was in danger of running out of cash emerged six months later, after the commissioner’s report uncovered grave financial issues.

He demanded an immediate recovery plan, after a governors meeting revealed a huge deficit for 2015/16.

“The finance committee had drawn to the corporation’s attention that the financial outcome for 2015/16 was far worse than forecast; a deficit of £492,000,” the report said of the minutes. The SFC’s financial performance latterly appeared to have improved according to the ESFA’s accounts, which showed a surplus of £52,000 in 2016/17 on an income of £9,482,000.

The SFC was rated ‘requires improvement’ in 2016, and ‘good’ three years before that. Mr Warman was in charge at the time of all three inspections.

The governors section of BSix’s website, which quotes from the more impressive 2013 report, still listed Mr Warman as principal at the time of publication.

But Stephen Blackshaw, the chair of governors, welcomed his replacement in a statement issued to FE Week.

“I am delighted that Kevin has agreed to become principal at BSix,” he said.

“His record of achievement during his years as principal at three separate institutions speaks for itself.”

Mr Watson for example led Leyton Sixth Form College from 2009 to 2017. It was rated as ‘good’ by Ofsted in 2010, 2013, and 2016.

“I very much look forward to steering the continued forward momentum,” he said. “The aim is to consolidate BSix as the destination of choice for 16- to 19-year-olds in Hackney and beyond.”

Government mental health plans ‘ignore’ apprentices

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

Apprentices have been ignored in the government’s plans to improve support for learners with mental ill-health, according to a critical report from two influential committees of MPs.

The education and social care select committees were full of criticism for proposals laid out in December in a green paper on beefing up mental health provision for young people, which does not mention apprenticeships once.

“The government should take action to ensure that apprentices also have access to mental health provision under the green paper’s proposals,” said the committees’ report, published this week.

The criticism didn’t stop there. The chair of the education committee Robert Halfon wants to know how plans for a “designated senior lead for mental health” will work in practice.

Resources are already stretched, he pointed out with backing from the Association of Colleges, which wants a review of 16-to-19 funding “which recognises the additional costs of supporting large numbers of those with mental health needs”.

“The green paper wants schools and colleges to deliver the ‘designated senior lead’ role from within their own ranks,” Mr Halfon said. “This will only make worse the pressures of the existing high-accountability system, combined with a stretched teaching

workforce.

“Staff need support within their school or college to ensure that their role is balanced with their normal duties.”

FE Week reported more than a year ago that a pledge made by the prime minister to roll mental health training out for staff working with young people would not cover the FE sector, at least in the short-term.

In an update, a spokesperson stressed that “£300 million of additional funding that will also provide significant additional resources for all schools”, but they did not mention extra cash for FE.

The select committees also warned in their report that the government had failed to recognise how “schools and colleges offer different environments and different challenges for implementing the green paper’s proposals”.

The government “often referred to schools and colleges interchangeably”, and did not “adequately recognise” the substantial differences between the two.

“We recommend the government utilise the potential of a further education sectoral approach in implementation alongside other approaches,” the MPs wrote.

David Hughes, the chief executive of the Association of Colleges, welcomed the “opportunity to get involved” in the planning process, and asked for a review of 16-to-19 funding “which recognises the additional costs of supporting large numbers of those with mental health needs”.

“As the report outlines, it is very difficult

for colleges currently to find adequate resources to support young people and help build their resilience,” he added.

“Post-16 education is funded significantly less per student than 11-to-16 schools or universities, and colleges have a higher proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds who, as the report indicates, are more likely to develop mental health challenges.”

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, claimed the “confirms ASCL’s concerns”.

“The government’s green paper fails to address the critical problem facing schools and colleges, which is the fact that real-terms funding cuts are forcing them to cut back on existing counselling and support services at exactly the time that mental health issues are rising,” he continued.

“The proposal for a designated senior lead for mental health in every school doesn’t address this problem, and may actually add to workload.”

The government spokesperson did not address FE funding concerns, but mentioned trials for apprenticeships.

“We will trial a number of approaches to improve mental health intervention, including how apprentices and other young people aged 16-to-18 in work-based learning can access the new mental health support teams,” they said.

In the green paper, the government said it would “incentivise every school and college to identify a designated senior lead for mental health to oversee the approach to mental health and wellbeing”.

“All children and young people’s mental health services should identify a link for schools and colleges,” it added. “This link will provide rapid advice, consultation and signposting.”

IfA defends slowdown on standards approval

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

EXCLUSIVE

The number of new apprenticeship standards approved for delivery declined dramatically in March and April, FE Week analysis has revealed.

The Institute for Apprenticeships only cleared four standards in April and 10 in March, down from 21 in February.

The agency’s chief executive Sir Gerry Berragan only launched its Faster and Better initiative in December to “streamline the approvals process”.

A spokesperson claimed the figures are not surprising, as the IfA expected recent reforms to slow things down temporarily ahead of an anticipated upturn.

“The Faster and Better programme is made up of a number of different initiatives that are being introduced over time,” she said.

“The impact of such initiatives will take time to be fully felt. However, we anticipate they will help to speed up the development process and improve the overall customer experience significantly in the second half of this year.”

She explained standards applications are

“reviewed on a six-week cycle”, and a “range of factors can affect how many are approved for delivery in a particular month, such as fluctuations in the volume of submissions”.

“We piloted our new online template for proposals and standards in February and rolled it out for all submissions in March, and we published completely overhauled and simplified guidance in March.”

The number of standards approved in total so far this year was said to be “a marked improvement”, as “between July and December 2017, we approved 37 apprenticeship standards for delivery”.

Apprenticeship standards, which are developed by groups of employers, are gradually replacing the old frameworks. Each contains a list of the skills, knowledge and behaviours an apprentice will need to have learned by the end of their apprenticeship.

The IfA website showed 271 had been approved at the time FE Week went to press.

There are, however, 268 more in development, of which 29 have assessment plans that haven’t been approved for delivery.

Sir Gerry launched Faster and Better to address complaints from employers and providers that the approvals process was far too

slow and bureaucratic.

The Confederation of British Industry’s head of education and skills John Cope described the March and April figures as “disappointing”, but backed efforts to speed things up.

“Businesses support the IfA’s strategy to speed up the standards process and improve support for trailblazer groups – something the CBI has long called for,” he said.

“We need more rapid progress, but it’s also crucial we get them right,” added Stephen Evans, the chief executive of the Learning and Work Institute. The IfA needs to set out when they expect numbers to pick up so we can see if it’s on track.”

Shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden pledged to monitor progress over the rest of 2018 “very carefully”.

“It is of course concerning that the approval of standards has slowed down. However I have personally spoken to the chief executive of the IfA who is confident the process will speed up in the second half of the year.

“This is a situation we will be monitoring very closely, not least because of the government’s track record in failing to deliver the resources and capacity the Institute has needed from day one.”

Beleaguered NCG faces full Ofsted inspection

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

FROM FRONT

EXCLUSIVE

It is crunch time at the nation's largest college group, which is cutting staff and faces the return of Ofsted for a full inspection over its achievement rates.

NCG will receive visits from two teams of inspectors on Monday, FE Week can reveal.

One team will examine four of its colleges – Newcastle College, Newcastle Sixth-Form College, Kidderminster College and West Lancashire College.

The other will focus on its troubled training provider, Intraining, which is in the process of slashing staff numbers.

Both will be full inspections, suggests alarm bells are ringing at the inspectorate. It would only be expected to carry out a short inspection, if there were no concerns that NCG's rating could drop from grade two.

The group was rated 'good' in September 2016, following a five-month standoff during which it is understood they successfully overturned Ofsted's plan to award a lower grade. Intraining was also given a grade two in June that year.

However, overall achievement rates at NCG are well below the national average.

In 2016/17, the combined overall apprenticeship achievement rate for NCG's colleges was just 55.6 per cent, while Intraining's was 58 per cent.

Both are 10 percentage points lower than the national average of 67.7 per cent, and lower than the minimum standards threshold of 62 per cent, according to the latest government data.

And for the all-important 16-to-18 study programmes, NCG was 4.4 points below the national average of 81.5 per cent.

It is understood that Ofsted wanted to reinspect NCG last year, but it was unable to analyse the group's achievement rates because of "data glitches" which led to it being absent from the 2015/16 tables.

At the same time as dealing with these inspections, NCG is cutting staff numbers by up to a fifth at Intraining and its other private provider Rathbone Training, in an effort to save £3 million.

More than 100 of the 500 employees who work at the two providers face possible redundancy.

The group claims to have run into financial trouble as a result of new rules which restrict subcontracting apprenticeships, as well as the sudden downturn in the uptake of apprenticeships since the introduction of the

NCG's college achievement rates in 2016/17

NCG apprenticeships in 2016/17	Overall cohort	Overall achievement rate %
NCG	1,880	48.2
Newcastle College	780	65.9
Kidderminster College	310	65.1
Carlisle College	240	71.5
West Lancashire College	230	50.7
Total	3,440	55.6

Source: Department for Education apprenticeship achievement rate tables 2016/17

levy.

"We anticipate a reduction in fewer than 70 roles," Ian Webber, the managing director of both providers, told FE Week on behalf of NCG.

Intraining and Rathbone Training have had their combined ESFA contracts to deliver apprenticeships cut by more than half this year (from £35.8 million to £16.2 million), and the amount it is subcontracting out has reduced by nearly two thirds (from £11.9 million to £4.2 million).

They are now planning to stop apprenticeship delivery in the south-east and west of England.

Both providers "are currently in consultation with colleagues as part of a process to transform our operations and achieve cost savings," Mr Webber said.

"We need to realise around £3 million savings to align the cost base of both organisations with anticipated income."

The lower level of subcontracting is a "reflection of government changes in funding" and the "success of several partners" who are now on the register of apprenticeship training providers and able to deliver directly.

The introduction of the levy hasn't helped matters.

As of March, there were 206,100 starts recorded for 2017/18, which represents a 24-per-cent drop on the same period last year.

Intraining had already shed more than a third of its 1,200-person workforce back in 2015.

The group was further shaken last month when staff at Lewisham Southwark College, which was involved in a long-distance merger with NCG, voted to strike over pay.

NCG will have Peter Lauener in its corner to deal with the challenges it faces, after the former ESFA boss joined the group as chair earlier this year.

He will work closely with Mr Webber who, when asked if either of his providers were likely to go bust, insisted that "the review of our operations is part of normal business processes to ensure sustainability".

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Baker defends University Techn

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

EXCLUSIVE

Lord Baker has mounted a robust defence of university technical colleges, despite the growing list of setbacks to befall the 14-to-19 programme he helped build. In an exclusive interview with FE Week’s Billy Camden, he refutes claims from other major players who once backed it, including George Osborne, that the movement is in serious trouble.

Lord Baker has come out fighting. “Neither of my main critics have ever even visited a UTC,” he claims, when asked what he thinks about George Osborne and Michael Gove’s recent condemnations. Of the former chancellor, he adds: “He is not in the picture any more. He has no idea what has happened.”

In fact, this week Lord Baker has even written to Mr Osborne, inviting him to visit a UTC to “show him their success”.

The latter told the Commons education committee last week that he would consider scrapping the UTC starting age of 14 if he were still in charge at the Treasury, after coming to the conclusion that they are in need of radical reform.

Many people from across FE agree that the model “clearly hasn’t worked”, given that eight have so far closed and six of the 30 inspected by Ofsted are rated ‘inadequate’.

But Lord Baker refuses to accept any of this. The former education secretary has also invited Mr Gove, who in fact visted at least one with him in 2014, to check what they are like now. He doubts he will take up the offer though. Mr Gove, himself a former education secretary, was always “against” the movement because he was “dug in his own philosophy” of academic education and “did not like or understand” technical education.

Lord Baker believes there is outstanding evidence that UTCs are successful, and reveals that two new ones are in the pipeline, to be based in Newcastle and Doncaster.

“Our recruitment went up last year by 20 per cent,” he claims, adding: “Our destination data is incredible. Last year we had 2,000 leavers and only 23 NEETs. That



is an unemployment rate of one per cent whereas nationally it is 12.2 per cent.” He puts this recent recruitment success down to two factors: the new legal requirement on local authorities to write to all parents of year 9 students telling them about other types of education providers, and the Baker Clause, named for the intervention he made in the passage of the recent education bill, which forces schools to open their doors to colleges, training providers and UTCs. But not all councils and schools are complying, and Lord Baker wants strict action enforced on them. The department appears to have listened.

On May 10, a senior DfE official travelled to Cumbria to have face-to-face showdowns with headteachers who are not letting the Energy Coast UTC speak with pupils.

“Some schools postpone and are awkward, which is outrageous,” he said, though the academies minister Lord Agnew is “prepared to instruct them to comply”.

“The DfE needs to make a physical presence and ministers need to instruct specific schools.”

What action would he like to see taken against these rogue schools? It would be “a very good idea”, he says, for Ofsted to “condemn them” in inspection reports.

In terms of local authorities, the Baker Dearing Trust, which oversees UTCs, is compiling evidence of non-compliance to show the DfE. Once passed on, ministers are expected to write to rebel councils to demand they comply with the law.

If at this point the LAs still do not play ball, Lord Baker says the whole weight of the DfE “should descend upon them”.

Regarding the historic low Ofsted grades at UTCs, Lord Baker believes the inspectorate’s current regime is unfair.

“A UTC is not a school or a college, it is a hybrid animal,” he says. “Ofsted takes no account of employability in inspections and that is a big test for us.”

He hopes that the watchdog’s new common inspection framework, expected in 18

months’ time, will go some way to taking into account “the special nature of our offer”.

Some leading FE figures, namely former skills minister Nick Boles, have suggested that UTCs should function as part of multi-academy trusts to make them “stronger”.

“
We would absolutely be happy to change to starting at 13 instead of 14

However, Lord Baker insists they must approach MATs with caution, because it endangers them of “watering down” the principles behind UTCs [see story right].

Some UTCs have started to recruit at 13 – a year earlier than the standard recruitment age of 14 – because schools in local areas are beginning key stage 4 learning at year 9.

Lord Baker is a fan of this idea, and says if the whole country evolves to this model, then so will UTCs.

“We would absolutely be happy to change to starting at 13 instead of 14,” he confirms.

Gone too soon? The eight UTCs to have closed

UTC name	Year opened	Year closed	Ofsted inspection date	Grade
Black Country UTC	2011	2015	Mar-15	4
Hackney UTC	2012	2015	May-14	3
Central Bedfordshire UTC	2012	2016	Mar-14	4
Royal Greenwich UTC	2013	2016	Mar-16	3
Daventry UTC	2013	2017	Apr-15	3
UTC Lancashire	2013	2017	Jan-16	3
Greater Manchester UTC	2014	2017	n/a	n/a
Tottenham UTC	2014	2017	n/a	n/a

Technical Colleges as problems pile up

Struggling UTC rebrands and joins academy trust

Another struggling university technical college has denied distancing itself from the UTC movement despite a rebrand now that it has joined a multi-academy trust.

Once known as “Sir Charles Kao UTC”, the 14-to-19 technical training provider has changed its name to “the BMAT STEM Academy”. It is joining the Burnt Mill Academy Trust, based in Harlow in west London.

The trust’s chief executive insisted the institution “remains” a fully-fledged UTC, there are “significant changes” to its curriculum.

The UTC had paused recruitment of new students and was forced to join BMAT this academic year after it ran into major financial troubles as a standalone institution.

It opened in 2014 and specialises in computing, science and engineering, and had just 143 students in total on roll throughout 2016/17, despite a capacity of 500.

FE Week previously revealed that the college’s cashflow forecast for the year until August 31, 2017 predicted that it would run out of funds this June.

A balance sheet from May 31 also indicated that £769,974 was owed to the EFA. An operating deficit of £511,150 was forecast for the full year.

But instead of throwing in the towel

and closing, like eight other UTCs have done so far, it opted to join BMAT in September.

The college’s report on student numbers said that “joining BMAT will increase potential students at year 10 and year 12 from 2017/18 onwards”.

It is expected to start taking on new students in years 10 and 12 from September.

“BMAT STEM Academy, which remains a university technical college sponsored by Anglia Ruskin University, has already seen significant changes in curriculum and quality of teaching,” said Helena Mills, BMAT’s chief executive.

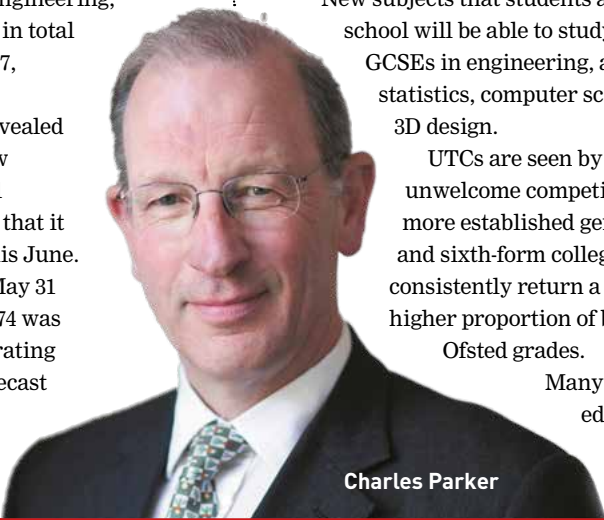
“We are looking forward to supporting this small academy to provide young people with a bespoke education in science and engineering and hope to encourage more women to go into this field in the future, in particular.”

New subjects that students at the school will be able to study include GCSEs in engineering, astronomy, statistics, computer science and 3D design.

UTCs are seen by many as unwelcome competition to more established general FE and sixth-form colleges, which consistently return a much higher proportion of better Ofsted grades.

Many leading education figures, namely

Charles Parker



the former skills minister Nick Boles, have suggested that UTCs should function as part of multi-academy trusts to make them “stronger”.

However, in an interview with FE Week, Lord Baker, the main architect of the UTC project, insisted they must approach MATs with caution.

“We don’t want UTCs watered down, and that is the danger if they get into a MAT,” he said.

“We have a unique model and the reason why UTCs have survived is that we actually patented the model so the government and companies and universities can’t mess us around.”

He added that the Baker Dearing Trust, which looks after UTCs, have “worked out an arrangement” with MATs so that when a UTC joins, it will continue to have an independent chairman and board.

Charles Parker, the chief executive of BDT, said that taking the word UTC out of the name is “not a red line for us”. The only red line is “if what goes on inside a UTC changes”.

He wanted to point out that the BMAT STEM Academy will have a strapline under its name that says “university technical college”.

Sir Charles Kao is the latest UTC to show signs of stepping away from the UTC brand.

In November last year UTC Cambridge rebranded as the Cambridge Academy for Science and Technology after joining Parkside Federation Academies, another multi-academy trust.

The college had clawed its way up from ‘inadequate’ to a ‘good’ Ofsted rating in just eight months.

Its principal insisted the college was not trying to “take away from the UTC movement” but the decision had been made because “so many people in our local community didn’t know what UTC Cambridge stood for”.

“There is such good evidence that we are successful”

In terms of closures, the peer confesses that he knew starting the movement was a “high-risk strategy and any entrepreneur will tell you that you always lose 10 per cent, which we have lost”.

He realises that every child “only has one education”, but for those at UTCs that have closed, he claims that not one of them became a NEET, “so we gave them something”.

Asked if he would send his own child to a UTC, even if it was severely under capacity like many currently are, Lord Baker says he “certainly would” if they were technically inclined. Many critics of the UTC movement have labelled it as a “failed Baker pet-project”. He refutes this.

“My last pet project was academies, so I want this pet project to be as successful as that,” he remarks. “It might not happen in my lifetime but I am sure it will eventually.”

In the Conservative Party manifesto there was commitment to have a UTC “within reach of every city”. Lord Baker believes this was a “rather strange objective”, but one that has mostly been fulfilled as “we have them scattered around all the big cities”.

He finishes with a joke and a smile: “I have a high regard for them and there ought to be a statue of me in every FE college because I was the minister who removed them from local authority control and gave them the chance to grow.”

The chequered history of UTCs

Since the first wave of university technical colleges launched in 2010, FE Week has been there to report on their troubles.

The first and most pronounced sticking point has been the constant battle to convince students to transfer school at the tricky age 14.

At this age pupils are not only just about to enter the critical GCSE learning period, but they’re also embedded in their school community and friendship groups. UTCs are also still a relatively new concept, and most parents are put off taking a punt on them for fear of ruining their child’s education with the unknown.

Most UTCs have severely struggled with recruitment as a result. As FE Week revealed earlier this year, almost every UTC missed their recruitment targets and were overpaid by the government in 2016/17, leaving them with a combined debt of over £11 million.

They’ve also struggled to retain students. Learner numbers dropped at around two thirds of the colleges that had been open for three or more years in 2016/17. Further to this, in April 2017 over half revealed they were still at less than half capacity.

On top of this, schools have come out fighting whenever a UTC has attempted to poach their technically gifted pupils, creating unhealthy competition in the education sector.

Established general FE and sixth-form colleges, which consistently return a much higher proportion of better Ofsted grades, also view UTCs as unwelcome.

Many have become financially unviable due to low student numbers, and eight have closed as a result.

Most of the 14-to-19 technical providers have also run into trouble with Ofsted. A grade four report into South Wiltshire UTC published

last month brought the total number of UTCs inspected so far to 30 and the number rated ‘inadequate’ to six.

Eight others are rated ‘requires improvement’. Just one is ‘outstanding’.


What has made matters worse is that the government has continued to judge UTCs by school standards, despite being totally different.

UTCs have attempted numerous different ways of improving Ofsted results and easing recruitment woes.

Some have rebranded after opting to join multi-academy trusts, and others have lowered the recruitment age to 13 to fit in with local schools who start the key stage 4 period in year 9.

Despite the mounting list of setbacks, the man behind them, Lord Baker, is convinced they will be a success. Only time will tell if his dream comes true.

EDITORIAL



DfE ignores Ofsted's warnings

There appears to be a worrying disconnect between the DfE and Ofsted over their approaches to substandard apprenticeship provision from newcomers to the market.

Ofsted came down hard on Key6 Group in the first of its early monitoring reports on these types of providers.

It was unambiguous in saying that the training was “not fit for purpose”.

It is therefore hard to understand why the DfE allowed the provider to take on new apprentices again on the back of a mere recovery plan.

There’s no way that Ofsted or the ESFA could have been truly confident things had turned around within such a short space of time after the inspection.

At the very least Key6 should have had Ofsted back in to check what’s now happening with the hundreds of apprentices it is already training, before this provider with no track record was allowed to recruit more.

The DfE completely undermined the role of the inspectorate in this process, and rendered its monitoring report obsolete.

It is letting learners, employers and the many high-quality providers down by failing to maintain what ought to be extremely high standards.

Paul Offord, Deputy editor

news@feweek.co.uk

CORRECTION:

A quote in last week’s investigation into the fallout from mass exam reversal was mistakenly attributed to Ofqual rather than the Department for Education.

The line appeared on page nine under the heading “The rules explained and what has changed”. It should have said that the Department for Education, not the exams regulator, “is insisting that its rules haven’t changed”.



College staff to strike for up to 7 days in exam season

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

FROM FRONT

Staff at a host of colleges across the country will walk out on strike for up to seven days over exam season, in the latest action in an ongoing dispute over pay.

Ten colleges, nine of which are in London, will be affected in the latest round of action in May and early June, organised by the University and College Union.

The latest announcement follows two previous rounds of strike action by UCU members over a “disappointing” pay offer of just one per cent made by the Association of Colleges last September.

UCU general secretary Sally Hunt said that her members were “resolute” in their fight for better pay and conditions.

“Strike action is always a last resort, but in the face of repeated below-inflation pay awards staff feel they have been left with no other option,” she said.

“The colleges need to urgently address members’ concerns if they want to avoid further disruption to students in the coming weeks.”

But AoC boss David Hughes said the action was “regrettable” and warned that it risked “disrupting students during the vital exam season”.

Strike action would “negatively impact students” rather than the government, which

he said was responsible for the “chronic under-funding of further education” that had led to colleges being “unable to offer their staff the pay rise requested”.

“We will continue to pressure government to recognise the value of the workforce, and will continue the constructive dialogue taking place between AoC, colleges and UCU,” he said.

Staff at the affected colleges have already walked out twice, with an estimated 1,500 taking part in the first wave of strike action at the beginning of March.

UCU said in a statement that staff are taking action over pay, but at some colleges disputes also include concerns over working conditions such as workload.

It insisted that none of the colleges affected had yet made what it considered to be an “acceptable” pay offer.

A spokesperson said that what would be considered acceptable would vary from college to college, but it must “represent a significant improvement on the one per cent offer and go some way to addressing the falling value of pay”.

She added that “with the exception of Lewisham Southwark College, the local claims at affected colleges are all for at least RPI plus three per cent”, so around six per cent overall before they are likely to agree to settle.

“Some of these claims also include additional elements relating to working

conditions including workload, holiday entitlement and observation policies. At Lewisham Southwark College, the claim is asking for incremental pay progression and the London weighting to be restored. The strikes will mean significant disruption to course delivery and exams at affected colleges.”

The National Joint Forum, made up of the unions representing college staff, had submitted a claim for an across-the-board rise of around six per cent in April.

But the final offer from the AoC last September was just one per cent, or the sum of £250 “where this is more beneficial”.

AoC boss David Hughes expressed regret at the time that it was unable to offer more, but “current funding levels for colleges do not allow us to do so”.

Last week UCU members at Lewisham Southwark College voted for strike action, to take place on May 22 and 23, in a dispute over their pay and conditions, which they say have got worse since the college’s merger with Newcastle-based NCG.

And staff at Hull College walked out earlier this week in protest at plans to slash jobs at the college.

Up to 231 full-time jobs are at risk as the college attempts to balance the books, prompting an angry response from UCU members and a vote of no-confidence in college chief executive Michelle Swithenbank.

COMMENTS

Studio schools to cut ties with FE colleges

Moving the deckchairs on the Titanic... daft idea, appallingly implemented, at excessive cost. Time to admit that the flaws are so significant that there is no point in flogging this dead horse any further. As always, vanity projects fail.

LRoding

College with huge bailout debt pays principal over £265k

These huge taxpayer-funded bailouts infuriate me. As an independent training provider, if I run my business as inefficiently I would go bust without access to such safety nets. There is not a level playing-field between FEIs and ITPs – particularly with FEIs getting an automatic annual allocation for AEB without having to retender. Corporations and governing bodies seem incapable of effective and robust governance while pay at the top does not match performance.

Ian Ross

UTC architect George Osborne says 14 start age ‘hasn’t worked’

“There is an argument that I was digging into before I left office that moving school at 14 is not always the easiest thing and people are reluctant.”

It’s that kind of analytical brilliance that got Osborne where he is. Who could possibly have imagined that would be the case? Rumour has it he is also “digging in” to the intractable questions of the religious affiliations of the pope and what bears do in the woods.

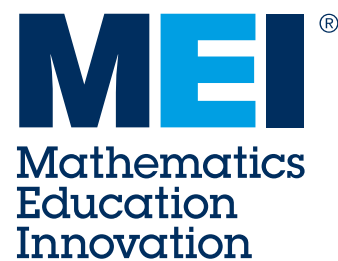
Dave Spart



MEI, working together with Tribal, has recently been awarded the contract by the DfE to run the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme (AMSP). The AMSP aims to increase participation in A level Mathematics, A level Further Mathematics and Core Maths. The AMSP will support schools and colleges throughout England, delivering professional development for teachers and providing enrichment and tuition for students.

MEI is a charity, committed to improving mathematics education for all. It is at the forefront of all aspects of mathematics education including professional and curriculum development. MEI has managed the national Further Mathematics Support Programme (FMSP) and its predecessor, the Further Mathematics Network, since 2005.

Tribal delivers educational improvement by providing tools, services, insight and support processes that increase the accessibility, range and quality of educational opportunities and in doing so seek consistently to improve the outcomes of learners. Tribal is the lead consortium partner of the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM).



Tribal is seeking to appoint the following roles:

The AMSP Priority Area Lead role will involve leading a team of regional improvement leads, providing guidance and support on mathematics school improvement and professional development. The post-holder will coordinate, organise and lead support for schools/colleges focusing on the AMSP Priority Areas (Opportunity Areas, Low Participation in Level 3 Maths Areas and AMSP Priority Institutions) in order to increase participation and improve provision for level 3 mathematics.

The AMSP Regional Improvement Lead will provide credible, recognised mathematics school improvement and professional development to facilitate a coherent strategy of support for level 3 mathematics in each region. There will be 8 Regional Improvement Leads, and each post-holder will coordinate AMSP support for schools/colleges within their region.

The AMSP - NCETM and Maths Hub Link role will coordinate links between the AMSP, NCETM and Maths Hubs, and will hold responsibility for gathering and disseminating information on provision for level 3 mathematics in order to support schools/colleges to improve participation.

The contracts for all posts will commence on 1 Sept 2018 and run until 30 April 2020

in the first instance, although there may be opportunities for extension, subject to continued government funding.

Salaries for all posts are highly competitive, depending on skills and experience.

These are full time posts but applications from individuals seeking part time, or flexible working arrangements, are welcome. Secondments from teaching posts on a part-time basis will also be considered.

The posts are home-based and will involve frequent travel nationally.

All offers of employment will be subject to an enhanced DBS check, as well as other appropriate clearances.

For further details and an application form for these posts please visit:
<http://www.tribalgroup.com/careers>

The closing date for applications is noon on **17th May 2018**.

Interviews will be held during the week beginning **21st May 2018**.



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For more information on these sector leading roles see our microsite:
<https://leadwestlondon.fea.co.uk>

We have retained the services of FE Associates to support us in these crucial appointments.

Interested parties are encouraged to have an initial conversation with our lead consultant Matt Atkinson and this be arranged by contacting Samantha Bunn on 01454 617707 or Samantha.Bunn@fea.co.uk.

Closing date: **Monday 4th June 2018**

Interview dates: **To be held in mid-late June 2018.**



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(Teaching, Learning & Assessment and Technology)

Salary: £45,128 - £60,670 per annum

Hours: 37 Hours per week / 52 weeks per year

Due to recent promotion we are looking for an outstanding person to join the senior leadership team and create greater capacity to drive rapid improvement and increase business development.

You will be an effective leader who will successfully motivate and inspire individuals and teams to deliver a responsive, innovative and efficient curriculum. As an Assistant Principal, you will uphold professional internal and external networking and engagement with key stakeholders and partners in order to promote and further enhance the reputation of the College locally, regionally and nationally.

You will form an Assistant Principal team of three and the specific areas of cross college responsibility for this Assistant Principal vacancy is to lead teaching, learning and assessment, and teacher training across College. In addition to these cross College responsibilities you will lead the faculty of technology which consists of 16-18, adult, apprenticeship, full cost, 14-16 part time, and higher education provision types.

We are committed to the continuous professional development of our Assistant Principals and this vacancy is a significant opportunity for effective leaders who are ambitious for their learners, their staff and their own careers. In turn you will be committed to the continuing development and succession of your direct reports

including the Technology Programme Area managers to whom you are responsible for.

Eastleigh College is more than a place for learning; it is a community. We are a highly successful “Outstanding” Ofsted graded, Further Education College employing approximately 500 staff. We offer a wide variety of technical and professional courses, which gives our learners the specific skills that employers are seeking. This includes a wide variety of full-time courses, part-time professional courses and Apprenticeships.

As an Employer we have a host of people with individual skills and knowledge who play an integral part in making our successes happen.

The closing date for this post is 25th May 2018

Interviews to be held during the week beginning 4th June 2018

For further details and an application form, please contact:
The Human Resources Department, Eastleigh College on email recruitment@eastleigh.ac.uk

We pursue a policy of promoting equality and diversity. Applications are particularly welcome from people with disabilities. Eastleigh College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Appointment is subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. If you have not heard from us by 2 weeks after the closing date, please assume your application has been unsuccessful.



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Our people make us different and make us stand out, and now we are looking to strengthen our team with a number of consultant appointments across Finance, MIS and Curriculum. These employed consultant roles are within our interim leadership and management team and successful candidates will be placed in interim roles throughout the UK.

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More information can be found on our microsite: <https://joinus.fea.co.uk>

Closing date: Friday 8th June 2018 at noon



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SIXTH FORM COLLEGE



LOWESTOFT SIXTH FORM COLLEGE PRINCIPAL

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For more details see our microsite: <https://lowestoftleadership.fea.co.uk>

We have retained FE Associates to support us with this important appointment.

Interested parties are encouraged to have an initial conversation with our lead consultant, Matt Atkinson, and this be arranged by contacting Samantha Bunn on 01454 617707 or Samantha.Bunn@fea.co.uk

Closing date: **Friday 25th May 2018**

Interview dates: **Tuesday 5th and Wednesday 6th June 2018**



We currently have the following exciting opportunities available:

Head of Department – Construction and Building Services - Corby

Essential criteria

Degree or Level 4 or 5 qualification in relevant Construction or Building Services discipline, Level 3 Construction or Building Services Trade Qualification, English and Maths or similar at GCSE grade A-C or equivalent, Recognised teaching qualification (PGCE, Cert Ed or equivalent)

Head of Department – Engineering - Corby

Essential criteria

Degree level in the relevant discipline, English and Maths or similar at GCSE grade A-C or equivalent and a recognised teaching qualification (PGCE, Cert Ed or equivalent)

Head of Department – Computing and Science - Kettering and Corby

Essential criteria

Degree level in the relevant discipline, English and Maths or similar at GCSE grade A-C or equivalent and a recognised teaching qualification (PGCE, Cert Ed or equivalent)

The ideal candidates will lead the management of all aspects of the operation and development for the department working within the College's management framework to deliver high quality learning programmes with high levels of student success and an unbeatable student experience and to proactively contribute to achieving the College's Strategic Plan.

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37 hours per week / 52 weeks per year

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Salary: £80,350 - £85,850 (depending on experience)

Benefits: Local Government Pension Scheme, generous leave allowance, relocation package, inclusive access to personal development programmes

Furness College is a vibrant, innovative and fast-paced college based in Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria. Judged to be good with outstanding features by Ofsted in March 2015 and with outstanding financial health, the College is ambitious about its future. Following a merger with Barrow Sixth Form College in August 2016, we are the largest FE provider in Cumbria. The College is based on two campuses: the £42 million Channelside campus which opened in 2013 and the Rating Lane campus which provides the largest choice of A' levels in Cumbria. We have a first-class reputation for our work with local employers, including BAE, and we have an exceptionally strong STEM curriculum.

With its long history of ship building and the presence of a large number of international employers, Barrow-in-Furness is a vibrant place to work and live. Only 12 miles from the Lake District National Park and 30 miles from the motorway network, the quality of life is second to none, with a relatively low cost of living. There are good schools, superb leisure opportunities and ready-made holidays on the doorstep.

The Corporation is looking to appoint an ambitious and forward-thinking individual to this senior post. The Deputy Principal, Finance and Resources, is a crucial member of the Executive Leadership Team, contributing significantly to the future success and development of the College. She/he will provide strategic leadership and direction across the finance, estates, human resources, IT and other associated support areas, ensuring that the College meets the challenges faced by the FE sector. The post holder will provide long-term financial stability and effective resource management, enabling



the College to take advantage of future opportunities and work effectively with employers and other stakeholders.

The successful candidate will be a qualified accountant with a strong, successful track record of strategic financial leadership and financial planning/control at an executive level. She/he will be a talented leader and will demonstrate strong management skills, motivating and inspiring the wider college team whilst understanding the complexities of delivering education and skills training in an FE environment. Knowledge of the FE sector and funding methodologies would be beneficial; however, applications are welcome from high-calibre individuals from a diverse range of sectors.

If you would like to discuss the role in more detail with Andrew Wren, Principal and Chief Executive, please contact **Karen Johnson**, Clerk to the Corporation, on **01229 844805**, or email karen.johnson@furness.ac.uk.

Timeline: advertised Friday 27 April

Closing date: Monday 14 May 5pm

Shortlisting: Tuesday 15 May

Interviews: w/c 4 June





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Sponsored by NCFE, the AELP National Conference 2018 takes place a year into the apprenticeship levy reforms and just before the T Level work placement pilots start



AELP's Mark Dawe comments...

This is shaping up to be the biggest and best AELP conference yet with a fantastic line-up of speakers who have the pulse on the sector reforms. Not only does it give our members a great opportunity to debate how the reforms are going, but we can help influence the next stage of the apprenticeship changes after April 2019 and the roll-out of T Levels. It couldn't be a more exciting time to hold a conference."



As usual, we will have a top line-up

of plenary speakers, including the new Chief Executive of the Education and Skills Funding Agency, and an excellent range of workshop presentations. The popular exhibitor space is always sold out where you can find the latest supporting technologies and other services which help make your organisation and programme delivery more efficient.

We are delighted to announce that the Rt Hon Anne Milton MP, Minister of State for Apprenticeships and Skills, will address the Conference on Day One.

Delegates will hear the government, employers and providers debate the impact of the apprenticeship reforms in the light of the start numbers since and the issues surrounding the introduction of standards and end point assessment. They will also have plenty of opportunity to make their views known too.

Full AELP members receive one complimentary place for both days and with two days of networking and an entertaining gala dinner, attendance at the AELP National Conference offers **great value to AELP members and other stakeholders.**

Full Members taking advantage of their complimentary place may choose to book a different delegate for the second day. This has been incorporated into the booking journey.

Various Sponsorship and Exhibition opportunities are still available

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EXPERTS



MINISTERIAL MUSINGS

Anne Milton,
Minister for skills and apprenticeships

It's up to colleges and providers to sell apprenticeships to parents

Parents are still sceptical about high-quality technical education. The entire FE sector has a duty to change their minds, writes Anne Milton

As exam time approaches and lots of young people will be thinking about their futures, I want to talk directly to colleges and providers about what they should be letting parents know about apprenticeships.

I've spoken to lots of fantastic and talented apprentices who said the support from their parents was really important in helping them make the decision to do an apprenticeship.

For lots of parents, a university education is still seen as the Holy Grail for their children, and apprenticeships as the second-class option to a traditional academic qualification. Perhaps that's down to the fact that apprenticeships suffer from a long-held PR problem; if you ask most people about an apprenticeship they still think of plumbers and electricians.

This is exactly what needs to change. Many parents don't know that apprenticeships can lead to lots of different jobs in a wide range of industries – from cybersecurity, to banking, fashion and more. You can also now do an apprenticeship to become a teacher or even a solicitor.

So I want to change the way apprenticeships are seen in the eyes of parents for good. And to do that I need your help, because as providers and colleges you play a fundamental role in letting parents know about the various options and routes that are out there for their children.

Parents need to know that an apprenticeship is a real, paid job, and a young person on an apprenticeship will receive at least the national apprentice wage of £3.70 per hour. Most employers pay more than the minimum – the latest pay survey estimates the average gross hourly pay received by apprentices in England was £6.70 an hour at level two and three, and £9.83 for higher level apprentices.

We are also rolling out more and more degree apprenticeships, combining a high-quality degree with an apprenticeship. These degree apprenticeships are a great way to earn while you learn at some of the UK's top universities and get a head start in long-term careers. And with the training completely paid for, no student loan is needed. Degree-level apprenticeships are available in a variety of sectors, such as engineering, digital, aerospace and nuclear. They are also available across England, with universities including Newcastle, Salford, Derby, Birmingham,

Bristol, Plymouth, London and Bournemouth offering them.

The lifetime benefits associated with gaining an apprenticeship at levels two and three are very significant, standing at between £48,000 and £74,000 for level two and between £77,000 and £117,000 for level three. Those who gain a higher-level apprenticeship could earn £150,000 more on average over their lifetime compared to those with level three vocational qualifications.

These are really important messages that we need to get across to parents, so I'm calling on you as providers and colleges to reach out to them to help them navigate and understand the options available to their children. To help with this the Education and Skills Funding Agency is investing £2m in the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge in Schools programme which provides schools and colleges with material on apprenticeships.

“**These are really important messages that we need to get across to parents**”

Providers and colleges can also point parents towards the National Careers Service's job profiles, which can help their child consider what sort of career they'd like to pursue. There's also the 'Find an apprenticeship' service on gov.uk, where up to 28,000 apprenticeship vacancies from employers across England are advertised. And there's also the 'Amazing apprenticeships vacancy snapshot', where they can find out when applications open for apprenticeships at top companies and view employer profiles. The National Apprenticeship Service has also produced a guide: 'How to write an award-winning apprenticeship application'.

It's so important that we all do everything we can to make parents aware of the amazing opportunities that apprenticeships can bring their children, and encourage them to see apprenticeships as a first class option. If you have any questions then do get in touch with the National Apprenticeship Service by visiting <https://bit.ly/1irh4b0> and <https://bit.ly/2jNG8kc>

PROFESSOR EWART KEEP

Director of SKOPE,
Oxford University



I am not sure that we can fix all the problems with T-levels

With the 2020 start date for the first T-levels fast approaching, Ewart Keep lays out just a few of what he sees as their biggest problems

It is apparent that T-levels are now yet another in a long line of government projects that have been deemed too important to fail, despite the long and failure-strewn history of reform to vocational qualifications. Does anyone (not least at the Department for Education) remember the 14-to-19 diplomas, to which T-levels bear a strong family resemblance? “This time, it will be different” and “we will make it work” are phrases I hear repeated by officials. But will it be different, and will it work?

There are lots of reasons to worry about T-levels, but I only have space for a couple here. First, there is the issue of what might be termed “critical mass”. This has two aspects. Will there be enough students, particularly at colleges outside large urban areas, to make some of the pathways viable? I am curious if anyone has run the numbers on this. Colleges report they need an intake of 18 to 20 students to make a course/pathway “wash its face” financially. How many colleges will get 18 to 20 applicants for some of the pathways?

This in turn reflects a second, much broader issue about student numbers. T-levels will operate at level three. In many colleges, the bulk of their 16-to-18/19 students are studying at level two or below. Thus in 2016/17 the enrolments at 16 to 18 at different levels were as follows: entry/foundation level – 119,450; level one – 198,830; level two – 427,780; level three – 620,650.

In the new world, large numbers will be on their transition year before T-levels. Official assumptions seem to be that the majority will ultimately move up to level three and onto T-levels. If current patterns of labour market demand and student achievement hold good this is unlikely, however. At many colleges, especially in less prosperous areas, the majority of students will not be on T-levels, or at level three. Some will be doing applied general courses (if this category continues to exist) and A-levels rather than T-levels.

Moreover, so much 16-to-18/19 FE provision is remedial – it is trying to get students to achieve at level two (and

sometimes the maths and English) after their schools failed to equip them during their lower secondary phase. This means that for many students there is the danger that the money will run out at the cut-off point at age 19, before they have completed the combination of the transition year and a T-level.

“**Selling T-levels to employers is going to be a major task**”

The other area for concern is one that other contributors to FE Week have already been highlighting: the willingness and ability of employers to deliver what is needed. T-levels are founded on the notion of co-creation and co-delivery, with employers acting not as semi-detached customers, but as full partners in the process. It is an admirable ideal, but making it work will be very hard.

There are at least two problems. First, will the T-level standards devised by small panels of employers be recognised by the wider employer community in the relevant sector/occupation? Evidence from the apprenticeship standards process suggests this may not always be the case.

Second, the work placements are a major ask. Employers are still adjusting to the demands of the levy and the associated apprenticeship reforms. They are also being bombarded with multiple and uncoordinated requests from education (schools, colleges and universities) for more work experience and work placement opportunities.

For example, in higher education, the Wakeham Review of STEM, and the Shadbolt Review of computer science provision have both stressed the need for more and better work experience provision to ensure employability and the relevance of courses to working life. Multiple demands on employers may lead to stress and disengagement. Policy on work placements needs to look at demand from education holistically rather than in discrete blobs like T-levels.

Selling T-levels to employers is going to be a major task.

EXPERTS

The marketplace is changing rapidly, and it's awash with new standards and providers. Stefano Capaldo explains how to sort the wheat from the chaff

Twelve months ago, the levy gave employers control of apprenticeship funding in England. While this is welcome in lots of ways, it has become increasingly difficult for employers to identify a training provider able to support the delivery of these skills – and much of this is down to their methods of procurement.

The move to employer-led standards from the old-style frameworks, the introduction of the register of apprenticeship training providers (RoATP) and key requirements such as 20 per cent off-the-job training have left many employers unsure what apprenticeship delivery now involves, and consequently with little idea of what good provision looks like.

Learning development and procurement teams have fallen back on what they view as reliable indicators of performance, or “cultural fit”, in competitive scenarios. The problem is that many of these indicators are no longer relevant, or even available.

On price, procurement teams still expect providers to reduce costs in return for higher delivery volumes – but this makes a mockery of the fee-cap structure, and quality is harder to achieve. Fee caps for standards are based on experienced providers' estimates of the resources needed to deliver a quality programme; asking them to deliver for less significantly reduces the quality of the offer.

Recent months have seen a trend towards



STEFANO CAPALDO

Managing Director,
Firebrand Training

How can employers know which providers are good?

lower price-weighting in tenders. But when the government claims it wants higher-quality delivery and increased market diversity – particularly more SME providers – why ruin it by continuing to weight price at all?

Meanwhile, according to FE Week's latest analysis, only around 25 per cent of current RoATP members have a grade one or two from Ofsted, and the majority of the remainder are unable to provide any grade at all.

Just 32 per cent of RoATP organisations were even in scope for inspection in Ofsted's 2016/17 schedule, but in a tender exercise, an Ofsted grade is the first thing requested by employers to demonstrate quality. Providers without Ofsted ratings are asked to give “alternative evidence of quality” or (in some cases) are excluded from tendering altogether.

This vague requirement for alternative evidence is difficult for providers to fulfil and

equally hard for procurement teams to score, as it relies on evaluators having a specialist knowledge of the sector and bidders providing comparable evidence. Employers need to identify additional benchmarks of quality that can be fulfilled by all those providers accepted onto RoATP – ideally with the help of the ESFA, which set the original RoATP criteria.

Standards were introduced in 2015 and take an average of two years to complete. As a result very few providers have any substantial achievement data – and what data they do have only goes back one year. In the digital sector, the British Computer Society's statistics show that of 4,205 registered apprentices on digital standards in March, just 196 had undertaken end-point assessment.

Employers, however, are continuing to ask for results data going back at least three years. Providers may substitute achievement

data from previous frameworks, but given the differences in structure, content and assessment requirements between frameworks and standards, it's unwise to assume that this is any guarantee.

“**Many employers are unsure what apprenticeship delivery now involves**

So, when it's time to find a provider to deliver your apprenticeships, ask yourself: what are our key needs as a business, and can the provider's apprenticeship delivery specifically accommodate them? Does this provider understand they're not just a phone to support an individual, but a platform to support the employer? Can they give us a framework in which the three components of the learning journey – apprentice, employer and training provider – work harmoniously? And can they explain this to the rest of my organisation so that every single employee gets how to support apprentices?

Making these the foundation of your procurement process will help you identify the right provider for your needs, for every apprenticeship, in every sector, every time.

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CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*



From left: Tim Smith, CEO, Thames Valley Berkshire LEP, Gillian May, Principal, BCA, Theresa May MP, Mark Lebus, Managing Director, LC Energy

The conservation of energy

The UK's first renewable energy training facility based at an FE college has been declared open by the prime minister. The Energy Centre at the Berkshire College of Agriculture was officially opened by Theresa May on April 27. The facility has been developed by the college in partnership with biomass company LC Energy, and will offer students aged 16 to 19 a range of technical qualifications in areas such as biofuel engineering and renewable energy. During her visit, Ms May had a tour of the facilities, including the first training biomass

boiler at a UK FE college, and met with students and staff. "I was pleased to be able to meet with students who, through using the new energy centre, will be given the training and opportunity to make a real difference to help protect our planet for future generations," Ms May said. "We already have two biomass boilers and engine rooms on campus, and the addition of this new centre provides the facility for the development of professionally recognised training for this sustainable energy provision," added Gillian May, principal of the college.



Another brick in the wall: The restoration team

Building a solid career

Level two brickwork students have been learning how to restore and rebuild medieval dry-stone walling. The team of learners from Lancaster & Morecambe College have been working on a five-mile stretch of dry stone walling at High Hampfield Farm in Lindale, which has sections that date back to the middle ages, including a lime kiln. Students have been rebuilding the sections of the wall using traditional techniques, as well as restoring the bricks, all under the

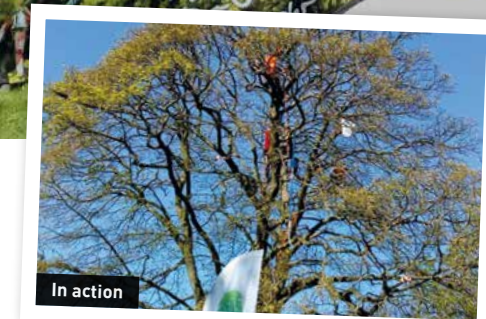
watchful eye of Bill Pimblett, who runs the farm. "It's great for them to learn more about what's on their own doorstep and how we can all help to preserve it," he said. "This has been an excellent opportunity for Bricklaying students to add something extra to their CVs and is a great introduction to walling techniques, which will hopefully enthuse students to want to follow this traditional skill further," added Liz Smith, a tutor at the college.

Barking up the right trees



The winners

Arboriculture students from Myerscough College's Preston campus have won prizes in the 2018 Northern College Climbing Competition. The team of level three BTEC students won £500 of arboriculture equipment for their college, impressing judges with their speedy tree-climbing in both of the competition's categories: climbers with less than one year's experience, and climbers with less than two years' experience. Students from the agricultural college's Preston and Croxteth campuses took part, going up against learners from Reaseheath College. The challenge is run by the Arboricultural



In action

Association, to give students an introduction to industry-standard tree climbing, building on their experience from college. "Students from both our sites made superb times on their climbs and showed the north what awesome climbers they are. We're proud of everyone who competed," said Andy Taaffe, head of greenspace and creative studies at Myerscough College.

Chairman of the board

A student's skateboard design will go into production after she won a graphic design competition. Yang Hang, a first-year graphics student at Halesowen College, won after learners were asked to design something that raised awareness of an ongoing global issue, from plastic waste to equality, to animal experimentation and diversity. The competition was run for graphic design students in partnership with SkateHut, a local company which will make the winning skateboard. Seventeen-year-old Hang's winning design was voted for by the public after SkateHut posted all 26 of the students' creations on its social media channels. "It was fantastic for the students to present their ideas to a real-world client. Their concepts are great and show that young people have real concerns about the world they live in," said Gillian Dunkerley, BTEC course leader. The students' skateboard designs will form part of a display at the college's end-of-year summer show. "The students' ideas were amazing. Many of them would work commercially as a real board," added Amy Lou Holland from SkateHut.



From left: Ellie, winner Yang and Karolina show off their designs

Herb for heroes: Sparsholt College hits the Chelsea Flower Show



A team of horticulture students are working alongside war veterans to create a garden for this year’s Chelsea Flower Show, reports Samantha King.

The ‘Force for Good’ garden is being designed and created by learners from Sparsholt College in partnership with the charity Help for Heroes. It will document the journey of recovery faced by ill or injured British Armed Forces personnel and their families, represented in three sections: surviving, stability and support.

A soundtrack of white noise will convey chaos and confusion in the surviving section, with visitors then experiencing nature sounds and music as they progress through the garden. The positioning of plants and landscaping will be used to convey the theme of rehabilitation.

Former members of the military who are a part of the Help for Heroes’ gardening club at Tedworth House are working alongside the students to bring the design to fruition, with many having used gardening to aid their own recovery.

“The students interviewed the veterans, and we asked the wider veteran community to submit ideas for the garden,” explained Chris Bird, a horticulture lecture at Sparsholt, who is leading the team.



Rooting for them: The student and veteran team

“We then welded everything together with things that will work in a Chelsea environment.”

The garden has been in the planning for around 10 months, and the team of nine students and six veterans will start building it on May 15 ahead of the official public opening of the RHS Chelsea Flower Show on May 22.

Discussions are currently underway

between the college and Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital about siting the garden as a permanent feature in their grounds after the show.

“We’re very keen that the garden doesn’t just finish when the show finishes. The hospital has a ward which is for serving military personnel, and they have a courtyard space which is a bit of rough grass at the moment,” added Mr Bird.



Party thyme: Getting started on planting



The garden design

Do you want to be in Campus Round-up?

If you have a story you'd like to see featured in campus round-up, get in touch by emailing samantha.king@feweek.co.uk



Dan Shelley

Executive director for strategic partnerships & engagement, East Sussex College Group

Start date March 2018

Previous job
Vice-principal, Sussex Coast College Hastings

Interesting fact
Dan has run three marathons with his dad and hopes to make it four in 2019 to celebrate his dad’s 70th birthday.



Peter Lawrence

Commercial director, ITS Group

Start date April 2018

Previous job
Head of business development, Barnsley College

Interesting fact
Peter’s goal is to visit every country in the world. He’s managed 52 so far.



Ann Turner

Interim principal, Moulton College

Start date April 2018

Previous job
Principal, Myerscough College

Interesting fact
As a six-year-old, Ann was pinned in the corner of a farmyard by a vicious flock of geese – not a good start for the future principal of a land-based college.



Martin Rosner

Chair, Epping Forest College

Start date March 2018

Previous job
Director, Martin Rosner Associates (ongoing)

Interesting fact
In his spare time, Martin enjoys building Lego Star Wars models.



James Sharpe

Principal, Sussex Coast College and University Centre

Start date March 2018

Previous job
Vice-principal, Sussex Coast College Hastings

Interesting fact
To relax, Jim enjoys surfing the warm, tropical waters of Hastings.

Movers & Shakers

...
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SCHOOLS WEEK

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

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next edition

Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

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Spot five differences. First correct entry wins an FE Week mug.
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Last Edition's winner: Ian Taylor