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News

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How a provider overturned a published Ofsted 'inadequate' report

BILLY CAMDEN
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EXCLUSIVE

A training provider has overturned an 'inadequate' Ofsted judgment following an extraordinary decision by the watchdog to publish – and then unpublish – the damaging verdict.

UK Training & Development Limited (UKTD) has now remarkably been rated as 'good' following a reinspection just months after the provider was dealt the lowest possible grade.

The inspection saga shines a light on Ofsted's already under-fire complaints process and sets a precedent for appeals against grade four results, an outcome which usually results in contract termination from the Education and Skills Funding Agency for private training providers.

UKTD's managing director, Theresa Wisniewski, told *FE Week* she was "delighted" with the outcome after a "long and arduous battle".

"These events have come at cost both financially and personally to me, both of which there is no recompense for, however, the fight for justice is one that had to be made," she said.

UKTD, based in Hemel Hempstead, was originally inspected in July 2022 and following an unsuccessful appeal, Ofsted published an 'inadequate' report in October.

But UKTD continued to appeal the judgment with legal advice from Duncan Lewis Solicitors, arguing that it was a "flawed and inaccurate inspection" and was successful in securing a rare reinspection, which led to Ofsted removing the grade four report from its website in December.

A completely different and smaller inspection team was sent back to UKTD in April and resulted in 'good' judgments across the board.

The provider's main complaint when the grade four report was published was that inspectors had failed to consider the impact of Covid-19 on the hairdressing industry that it delivers apprenticeships to.

Several other providers, mainly in the hospitality, service and care sectors, have issued similar complaints over the past year after receiving 'inadequate' Ofsted judgments – and in some cases have tried and failed to overturn the judgments in the High Court.

Wisniewski said she was able to land a reinspection due to "perseverance and substantive evidence that the previous inspection outcome was wrong", but refused to say exactly what new

evidence was submitted.

She added: "The inspection by comparison in April was challenging but fair and as a result we were able to showcase our provision effectively and achieve the right outcome for UKTD."

"Unfortunately, many providers have suffered from an Ofsted culture and regime that in my view has failed to recognise and properly understand the intricacy and pressures in the delivery of work-based apprenticeships in what has been a very difficult few years."

"The education inspection framework has been used in some cases by inspectors to view providers without context, failing to adequately take into account sector issues, the range of employers we work with, and other mitigating circumstance such as a pandemic and economic crisis."

"As a training provider and a business, we also experienced the impact of Covid and survived whilst still providing good quality training, support and outcomes for our learners and employers. This has not been recognised adequately in some inspections and in particular those sectors that have been hit hard, such as hairdressing. Additionally, not every provider delivers the same model, and this can bring different challenges, but this does not mean we are not good at what we do."

Training providers and colleges have been successful in getting their judgements upgraded prior to inspection reports being published in the past, but it is unheard of for Ofsted to remove a report after publication and decide to carry out a reinspection.

UKTD's success comes shortly after Ofsted's senior leaders admitted their complaints policy "is not working" and will be reviewed.

Officials have been told to make the process more human and less bureaucratic, *FE Week* understands, following backlash from the education sector.

Paul Warner, director of strategy and business development at the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said his organisation is "pleased that Ofsted are taking on board criticisms of the appeals process" which will "help to ensure continuing improvements in the inspection process even more through further co-operation with the sector".

The feedback in UKTD's 'good' report is unrecognisable to the 'inadequate' report published just months ago.

The grade four report claimed that leaders had "not rectified many of the weaknesses identified

at previous Ofsted inspections", accused leaders of lacking "ambition" for apprentices who allegedly often struggled to meet the demands of work and study because they "do not regularly receive their entitlement to time away from work".

It also claimed that apprentices were "frustrated" with the training and assessment provided.

But the grade two report states that leaders "have taken effective action to improve the quality of education".

Apprentices now have "very positive attitudes to their training", "quickly gain highly relevant and up-to-date practical hairdressing and barbering skills", and benefit from tutors who "collaborate closely with employers to link the practical teaching in salons to the theory sessions that tutors teach".

Wisniewski said the report now "accurately and reflects our provision fairly", adding that the reinspection was conducted by an Ofsted team that "had the right skills, competencies, and a willingness to fully understand our provision and the issues during and after Covid".

An Ofsted spokesperson said: "We have nothing further to add to the published inspection report"

This isn't the first time UKTD has battled 'inadequate' Ofsted grades. The provider was given the judgement twice in 2017.

The two inspections were based on safeguarding failings. It is not clear why the Education and Skills Funding Agency did not terminate the provider's contracts following the previous grade four judgements, as is usual practice for independent training providers.

The agency can, however, decide not to terminate contracts in exceptional circumstances.

UKTD, which was set up in 1998, was also judged 'inadequate' in 2006 by the Adult Learning Inspectorate – Ofsted's predecessor.

The ESFA declined to comment.



Theresa Wisniewski

News

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Fast-growing adult education provider suddenly closes

BILLY CAMDEN
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EXCLUSIVE

A training provider with multi-million-pound adult education contracts across several mayoral combined authorities has suddenly closed down.

Vocational Skills Solutions (VSS) was one of the fastest growing training providers just a few years ago, but has now been forced to call in the administrators.

Managing director Phil Juniper told *FE Week* several factors led to the "heart-breaking" decision that now impacts hundreds of learners and scores of staff.

The reasons include the pandemic, a "substantial" clawback due to undeclared associate agreements, a failed legal challenge against the West Midlands Combined Authority's (WMCA) decision to deny it a contract worth over £3 million, and, ultimately, a "significant downturn in income".

VSS was a national provider that started out as a subcontractor in 2012. The company secured its first direct contract with the Education and Skills Funding Agency in 2017 to deliver adult education budget (AEB) funded courses.

It also had a brief stint delivering apprenticeships but swiftly pulled out after "making significant losses" with the programmes.

The provider went on a period of significant growth around the time of AEB devolution in 2019, securing £4 million worth of adult education contracts in the mayoral combined authorities of Manchester, London, Liverpool and the West Midlands.

VSS had around 50 adult learners in 2019 and grew this number to over 2,150 by the end of 2020.

Juniper told *FE Week* the business was then hit "very hard" by Covid-19 and associated lockdowns which forced the firm to take out several loans.

Learner numbers fell by half over the next 12 months as recruitment struggles continued, leaving the company with a "much longer period of recovery than anticipated".

"We had all the funding we could spend, but without learners coming through the door, we continued to make losses," Juniper said.

In November 2021 the provider was further hit with a clawback of over £1 million after it used associate tutors from other training pro-



viders under "associate agreements", which was determined as "undeclared subcontracting" by the ESFA and Liverpool City Region.

Juniper said: "This was a business error, and we agreed to pay the money back to keep our contracts, which we were successful in doing so in the main. However, this added further pressure to the financial position of this business."

Despite the substantial clawback with Liverpool City Region, VSS was given a boost when it was awarded a five-year contract for £1 million per year starting in August 2022 with the authority.

But the future of the business relied upon securing more contracts in other areas.

The company re-tendered for its West Midlands contract of around £3.4 million but was informed in March 2023 that it was unsuccessful, having not made it through stage one of the process.

Juniper claimed that not one current provider in the region had won the contract, or even made it through stage one, "highlighting that there had been a significant failure in their tender process".

His firm issued a legal challenge to the WMCA, requesting several documents and information about the qualifications and training of the evaluators, which was denied.

However, VSS was provided with a "different scoring methodology than the one provided in the tender specification, which caused a complete loss of confidence in the WMCA's ability to manage a procurement exercise from this point on".

A spokesperson for the WMCA responded: "Whilst we're disappointed in the outcome of the initial call, in which only a small number

of bidders were successful, we remain committed to achieving our ambition to secure provision that best supports our residents – and have recently completed a further call to secure local place-based provision for our residents. All of our procurement is conducted through a fair, robust and transparent process."

Juniper said the WMCA contract refusal left his business' financial position "at breaking point" and was forced to close the West Midlands operations down at the end of March.

He added: "Throughout April, the business suffered a significant downturn in income, and as the West Midlands response to my legal challenge was somewhat very dismissive and lacking in any accountability from them, and no future tendering opportunities seemed to be in the pipeline, with the advice of my advisory board and financial advisors, I made the heart-breaking decision to cease trading with immediate effect on April 28, 2023, paying as many staff as I could prior to closing the doors."

VSS has now handed back its other AEB contracts. The company's accounts for 2022 show net liabilities of £1.6 million.

Juniper said: "VSS has changed the lives of over 28,000 learners throughout the last 12 years and has contributed tens of millions to the economic growth of the regions we operated in. This is something I am personally very proud of.

"I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank all my staff for their hard work and dedication. I am most sorry for them, as they now try to source work in an industry that is in a significant crisis."

Nine colleges miss govt deadline for publishing annual accounts

BILLY CAMDEN
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EXCLUSIVE

Unfinished audits and reclassification to the public sector are among the reasons given as to why nine colleges missed the government's deadline for publishing their annual accounts.

Education and Skills Funding Agency rules state that colleges must publish their audited accounts in an easily accessible location on their website no later than January 31 each year to "maximise transparency and to support accountability".

However, 2022 accounts for nine of the 170-odd colleges in England are still yet to surface five months after the deadline.

Plumpton College said its delay is down to the Department for Education's new strict arrangements for capital borrowing.

Colleges have had to gain special permission – which will only be granted in rare circumstances – to borrow commercially since November 29, 2022, when the Office for National Statistics changed their status from the private to the public sector.

The overnight ruling resulted in many colleges having to put key campus projects on hold. In response, the DfE belatedly launched its own time-limited loans scheme for college capital projects, but this process is still ongoing.

A spokesperson for Plumpton College said: "Plumpton has completed its annual report and accounts, with a clean audit and approval by the corporation in December. The college is however unable to submit signed accounts until the DfE confirm a loan to replace its commercial borrowing for a capital project completed in April 2023.

"The DfE is aware of the situation and has extended the filing deadline pending their approval of the loan

facility."

As well as new rules on borrowing, reclassification to the public sector has opened colleges up to scrutiny of "novel, contentious, or repercussive transactions" such as those that are considered to be outside of colleges' normal sphere of business or may cause controversy or criticism.

Lincoln College Group is among the colleges that attract the largest amounts of commercial and international income and is one of the nine colleges to not have published accounts for 2022 yet.

A spokesperson for the college said: "As with a few other colleges, transfer to the public sector has led to a delay in the filing of our accounts. We are working closely with the DfE and our auditors to ensure this takes place as soon as possible."

Two of the other colleges with late accounts said unfinished audits had caused the delay.

South Gloucestershire and Stroud College said: "The ESFA via Mazars have undertaken a funding audit of SGS college provision of which we are still awaiting the final report. College accounts cannot be signed off until this report is received. The ESFA is aware of this, and accounts will be submitted when the report is

provided. SGS college remains in good financial health."

And Hull College said: "Hull College is currently undergoing an ESFA financial audit and is unable to submit and publish accounts until that audit process has been completed. The ESFA are aware and working with us to bring the audit to a conclusion."

Kingston Maurward College, a land-based college in Dorset, is also yet to file accounts for 2022. The college has faced financial challenges over the past few years due to a big hit on its commercial income during the pandemic and associated lockdowns.

The college received a financial notice to improve as well as an FE Commissioner visit last year.

Principal Luke Rake told *FE Week* the "continued financial challenge" means that whilst his college works through the details with the ESFA and FE Commissioner teams together, the board is "not yet comfortable signing off the 12-month going concerns just yet".

"We anticipate getting this resolved fairly soon," Rake added.

Eastleigh College – which is expected to merge with struggling City College Southampton as well as Fareham

College in August 2023 to create a "financially strong network" – is also yet to file accounts for 2022.

A spokesperson for Eastleigh would only say the college has "been working to deadlines agreed by the DfE" and that it "expects to publish accounts in due course".

The three other colleges with late 2022 accounts – South Essex College, Strode College and Wakefield College – did not respond to requests for comment.



News

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Colleges with the biggest pay gap between principals and staff revealed

ANVIKSHA PATEL
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EXCLUSIVE

Over one in 10 college boards pay their principals seven or more times the median employee salary – several of which have recently been hit by strikes over low staff pay, *FE Week* can reveal.

Experts have branded a pay multiple of this level as “high” while unions have lashed out at principals earning up to 10 times more than their workforce who can “insulate” themselves from the cost-of-living crisis as lower-paid staff reportedly turn to foodbanks to get by.

But colleges with the largest gaps have defended the so-called high multiples, explaining they are due to the college generating higher turnover than the sector norm, factoring in relocation costs, and in some cases including pension contributions as part of principal take-home pay.

‘That sounds quite high to me’

Colleges must report their pay multiples as part of their annual financial reporting to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. It is calculated by dividing the highest-paid member of staff’s basic pay (in most cases, the college principal or group chief executive) by the median pay of the rest of the full-time-equivalent workforce.

Out of 127 general FE colleges in England with published accounts and one accounting officer for the full 2021/22 academic year, *FE Week* identified 15 colleges with pay multiples of seven or more.

The average pay multiple for general FE colleges that have had one principal has sat at 5.7 consistently in the last four years. But while the sector average hasn’t moved, individual college pay gaps have.

The single biggest pay multiple hailed from Weston College, whose principal Paul Phillips earned a basic salary of 9.6 times more than the median pay of his full-time staff in 2022.

This was an increase from 8.75 in 2021, which a college spokesperson said was due to the median pay value dropping from an uptake in administrative roles in 2022, usually lower paid than lecturer salaries.

“The pay multiple is higher than that of the sector average as a result of the Weston College Group generating turnover



significantly higher than sector norms, with activities extending far beyond the traditional remit of further education,” the spokesperson added.

Phillips’ basic salary in 2022 rose by £36,000 to £258,000 and includes a £60,000 payment for external consultancy work with agencies like the ESFA. On top of that, Phillips received £75,000 in pension contributions and was awarded £29,000 in benefits in kind, the nature of which the finance director cannot reveal without permission from Phillips, a spokesperson said. His total remuneration package for 2022 was £362,000.

While the college did not explain the 16 per cent basic salary rise, its accounts praised Phillips’ accomplishments in the year at length, including receiving a knighthood and his “impressive” role as a national leader of further education.

Weston College staff planned to strike throughout late September until a last-minute pay offer from management was initiated.

“That sounds quite high to me,” said Imran Tahir, a research economist from the Institute for Fiscal Studies, when asked if pay multiples of seven, eight and nine were normal for a public sector organisation.

Tahir, who co-authored a recent report on college teacher pay, said median staff salaries in the FE sector tend to be low which will “pull the multiple up”.

“I imagine there isn’t a lot of variation in median salaries between colleges, so what is likely to be driving the difference in pay multiples between different colleges is principal salary,” he told *FE Week*.

“I think the question is better framed as why do some colleges pay their principals such high salaries? It’s these high-paying colleges which will have the high pay multiples.

“I don’t have a definitive answer to that question I suspect different colleges will have their idiosyncratic reasons for paying their leaders especially high salaries.”

The IFS report found that in 2010/11, the

median salary (adjusted for inflation) was £42,500 for a college teacher. The median dropped to £34,500 in 2022/23 – a 19 per cent fall.

University and College Union general secretary Jo Grady said: “College staff have been hit with over a decade of real term pay cuts, many now have to use food banks to survive, and pay is so low colleges face a recruitment crisis. It cannot continue.”

However, Tahir acknowledged that the “continual decline” in college funding would make it hard for colleges to find money from their existing budget to pay their staff.

Strike action over low pay

Low salaries and rejected inflation-linked pay offers in FE have been the subject of a wave of staff strikes in recent years. A country-wide ballot for college strikes is on the cards later this year.

“Principals earning up to ten times more than the average staff member are able to insulate themselves from a cost-of-living crisis that is pushing their employees into poverty,” Grady told *FE Week*.

“College principals have a small window to reallocate resources and protect their staff or they will be hit when strike ballots come.”

Three colleges in *FE Week*’s analysis with the highest pay multiples in England have been hit by such strikes in the last 12 months.

One is Bridgwater and Taunton College, whose principal Andy Berry earned a basic salary of £180,000, up from £162,000 in 2021. The college reported the second-highest pay multiple of 9.2, up from 8.66 the previous year. Last September, the college’s campuses were met with a 10-day strike over pay.

Bridgwater and Taunton College did not respond to requests for comment from *FE Week*.

Strikes engulfed Tyne Coast College earlier this week, which reported an 8.65 pay multiple for 2022, a nudge higher than 8.52 in 2021.

Some colleges such as Tyne Coast have blamed the high multiples on including pension contributions into basic principal

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CONTINUED

pay. Most general FE colleges have a separate row in their accounts for pension contributions, but several in *FE Week's* analysis have been paid as salary instead.

A Tyne Coast spokesperson explained that the £237,000 basic salary includes £45,000 of employer pension contributions and reflects Lindsey Whiterod's dual role as chief executive of Tyne Coast College and chief executive of Tyne Coast Academy Trust.

In the case of North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College whose pay multiple was 7.6, its accounts said the chief executive's pension contributions "ceased during this period and have been paid as salary".

A spokesperson told *FE Week* the "apparent change to the pay multiple relates solely to this change".

Meanwhile, the highest reported basic principal salary was Gerry McDonald from New City College, who leads negotiations on pay with trade unions on behalf of the AoC. He earned £294,000, which included pension contributions. This reflects a rise from his 2021 basic salary of £241,000 to include £57,000 in lieu of pension contributions.

The college accounts explain that McDonald became a deferred member of the Teachers' Pension Scheme in July 2021, and the college did not make any pension payments during 2021/22, so the board agreed to add it to his basic pay.

As one of London's largest colleges, New City College's pay multiple for 2022 was 8.72, up from 7.03 the year prior.

Staff at four New City College campuses went on strike last October. The college declined to comment when approached by *FE Week*.

Elsewhere, "the contribution for relocation benefits" was Coventry College's reason for the increase in its principal's basic salary increase to £156,000 in 2022. A college spokesperson said its pay

multiple rise from 7 to 8.5 was because most staff had not received a pay rise in up to 10 years.

The spokesperson explained that since the principal was appointed in 2020, all staff received a 1 per cent pay rise, there will be a review of curriculum salaries next year for almost a quarter of staff, and it paid out a 9.7 per cent national minimum wage increase early and rolled out a 3 per cent pay-rise from April 1, 2023.

On the other side, three colleges with high pay multiples reported a decline this year: Derby College Group (DCG), Burton and South Derbyshire College, and Luminate Education Group. The latter two explained this was due to pay awards given to staff during the year.

Burton and South Derbyshire College said their pay multiple of 8.32 was due to the chief executive Dawn Ward's "decades of experience in successfully leading colleges, including our overseas operations and staff".

"Inevitably, this length of experience and related remuneration would inflate BSDC's ratio in comparison to the sector average," a spokesperson added.

NCG, which has a pay multiple of 7.23, explained that it is a "complex organisation made up of seven colleges" and due to the "nature of the role and its nationwide remit, the role of CEO isn't comparable with a traditional principal's role in an FE college".

Luminate Education Group said that as one of the largest FE corporations in the country with a turnover of over £100 million, thousands of students and staff, which includes two higher education institutions, the principal's remuneration "reflects the responsibility of the operations and performance of a large and complex organisation".

TOP 10 HIGHEST PAID COLLEGE CEOS IN 2022

Source: College accounts data

College name	Principal basic salary
New City College	£294,000
Weston College	£258,000
Tyne Coast College	£237,000
Capital City College Group	£215,000
South Thames College Group	£213,000
NCG	£210,000
LTE Group	£209,000
Luminate Education Group	£201,000
Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College	£200,000
North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College	£196,000

Analysis excludes colleges with multiple postholders in 21/22

And the LTE Group, which runs The Manchester College as well as several other training providers, added: "During 2021/22 the LTE board mandated pay restraint for senior roles, and the chief executive and executive team received a lower annual pay increase than other colleagues, with the majority of employees across the group being awarded a pay rise which was at least twice as high, in recognition of their contributions in delivering high-quality training and education to our learners.

"We appreciate the difficulties colleagues face caused by the rising cost of living and, as an organisation, we will continue to lobby the government, alongside other industry bodies, for additional funding for pay."

Data blunders

On May 24, the EFSA published its annual college accounts spreadsheet.

According to publicly available data, 20 colleges had pay multiples above 7. However, after *FE Week* reached out to all of them, five claimed the calculations were wrong.

Some have even republished accounts and informed the ESFA of the miscalculation, such as North Kent College, whose pay multiple was originally 10 until a spokesperson clarified that it was a human error and its actual pay multiple for 2022 is 6.5, a drop from 6.7 in 2021.

Two colleges said the error was made by using the median salary of actual staff pay, which includes casual staff, invigilators, and part-time staff, against ESFA guidance which requires all colleges to calculate the pay multiple using the median pay of full-time equivalent staff.

FE Week did not count colleges with more than one principal in 2021/22 in its analysis.

15 COLLEGES WITH THE BIGGEST PAY GAPS BETWEEN PRINCIPALS AND STAFF

College name	Principal	Principal basic salary 2022	Pay Multiple 2021	Pay Multiple 2022	Pay multiple difference
Weston College of Further and Higher Education	Paul Phillips	258,000	8.75	9.6	+0.85
Bridgwater and Taunton College	Andy Berry	180,000	8.66	9.2	+0.54
Tyne Coast College	Dr Lindsey Whiterod	237,000	8.52	8.65	+0.13
New City College	Gerry McDonald	294,000	7.03	8.72	+1.69
Coventry College	Carol Thomas	156,000	7	8.5	+1.5
Burton and South Derbyshire College	Dawn Ward	191,000	8.48	8.32	-0.16
Richmond Upon Thames	Jason Jones	116,000	5.6	8.3	+2.7
Telford College	Graham Guest	150,000	7.6	8.1	+0.5
Cornwall College	John Evans	195,000	7.8	8	+0.2
DCG	Mandie Stravino	177,000	7.9	7.77	-0.13
North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College	Marion Plant	196,000	6.2	7.6	+1.4
NCG	Liz Bromley	210,000	7.23	7.23	0
Luminate Education Group	Colin Booth	201,000	7.4	7.2	-0.2
LTE Group	John Thornhill	209,000	7.1	7.1	0
RNN Group	Jason Austin	141,000	5.4	7	+1.6

Analysis excludes colleges with multiple postholders in 21/22



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News

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VTCT acquires logistics assessment body

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Awarding body VTCT has beefed up its apprenticeship end-point assessment (EPA) operation by taking over Skills for Logistics.

Skills for Logistics, which claims to have a 25 per cent market share in apprenticeship assessments in the logistics sector, became a subsidiary of VTCT last week.

The move adds eight apprenticeship standards to VTCT's EPA roster, taking its total to 31 and making the charitable trust the joint tenth largest end-point assessment organisation.

VTCT chief executive Alan Woods said the acquisition will help ease the process to gain Ofqual recognition for Skills for Logistics – suggesting that the latter has to date been unsuccessful in getting EPA

recognition from the regulator in its own right.

Skills for Logistics offers assessments for LGV drivers, supply chain warehouse operative and supply chain practitioners. As the UK struggles to deal with widespread and well-documented lorry driver shortages, VTCT's ability to bring "that size and scale to their operation" as part of the acquisition will be significant, VTCT chief executive Alan Woods said.

"We now have 31 EPA standards that we are responsible for, so we've got size and quality that we're bringing to the game," he added.

"But we also need to have that quality and rigour from Skills for Logistics, they have got fantastic employer relationships."

Woods said the takeover will not lead to any redundancies, adding that VTCT

will use some of the "firepower on our balance sheet" to take Skills for Logistics into new areas, which will "enable them to develop some new products and services".

VTCT's presence in the logistics sector will be expanded, as it aims to "develop itself into an organisation which is working in as large a part of the foundation economy" as is appropriate.

David Coombes, the managing director at Skills for Logistics, and Paul Spink, the company's development director, will continue to lead the business while the same board will still be in place.

VTCT meanwhile will "continually look" for acquisitions which will help them improve their provision within the foundation economy.

UCAS chief executive Marches on

SHANE CHOWEN
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Higher education admissions body UCAS is on the hunt for a new chief executive.

Clare Marchant, who has led UCAS since July 2017, will leave the role later this year to become the vice chancellor of the University of Gloucestershire.

UCAS said Marchant will remain in post during this year's clearing period but won't yet provide a firm departure date. The UCAS board will begin the search for a new chief executive "shortly".

Trudy Norris-Grey, the chair of the UCAS board, said Marchant "leaves UCAS in an incredibly strong position" and paid tribute to Marchant's role in expanding the support UCAS provides "to students making life-changing decisions".

"While we are disappointed to see her leave UCAS, we are delighted that the higher education sector will continue to benefit from her skills and passion,"

she said.

Earlier this year, it was announced that UCAS will expand its service to advertise apprenticeship vacancies in the autumn. From autumn 2024, the site will be expanded further to allow applicants to apply for apprenticeships alongside traditional degree applications.



Clare Marchant

And at the *FE Week* Annual Apprenticeship this year, Marchant said a team was working on introducing UCAS tariff points for apprenticeships by the end of 2023.

On leaving UCAS, Marchant said: "Leading the team at UCAS has been a privilege and a joy. I am most proud of the huge strides forward it has made in increasing the number of students supported each year, particularly those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.

"During my time at UCAS, I have worked closely with vice-chancellors from across the UK in our shared mission of supporting students taking their next step in education and training. I am therefore excited to help thousands of students do exactly this at the University of Gloucestershire."

Marchant succeeds Stephen Marston, who retires as vice chancellor at the University of Gloucestershire at the end of July.

News

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Apprentices to take 'integrated' EPA and mandatory qual assessment

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Apprentices will soon be unable to walk away from their apprenticeship with a qualification before passing their end-point assessment, in a move designed to reduce the large number of dropouts.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has confirmed that it will proceed with proposals to make passing an apprenticeship contingent on achieving both the end-point assessment and, if the standard has one, a mandated qualification.

This comes in response to complaints from training providers that, in some sectors, apprentices will leave their programme once they've achieved a qualification but before they take the end-point assessment.

As well as negatively impacting the provider's achievement rate, IfATE said these early withdrawals also mean there is no formal record of apprentices' competence against the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) required by their apprenticeship standard.

IfATE estimates that around 40 per cent of apprenticeships currently mandate a qualification.

Following a consultation, IfATE has now released amended criteria it will apply to new and revised apprenticeships from next month on mandatory qualifications.

Here's what you need to know:

The three mandates

As proposed, there are three sets of criteria that determine whether a qualification should be a mandatory part of an apprenticeship.

Firstly, IfATE will approve a mandatory qualification if it sees evidence of a regulatory or legal requirement for it. For example, if a particular qualification is prescribed in regulations for a license to practice.

Similarly, if a qualification is required by a relevant professional body for professional registration, IfATE will want to see evidence that the named qualification is required, that professional body registration is necessary, and that said professional body has been involved in the development of the standard.

Thirdly, if employers can prove that a qualification is widely required by their industry and that employers have helped design it, a qualification can be approved as necessary for the labour market.

Integrated assessments

A popular proposal to reduce non-completions by integrating the assessment for qualifications with the apprenticeship end-point assessment (EPA) will proceed. This is designed to reduce the number of apprentices that quit their apprenticeship after they've achieved a qualification, but before they take the EPA.

The idea is that a subset of KSBs from the standard will be identified for an integrated assessment which counts towards the qualification and the EPA.

Guidance states: "Where it is possible to do so, mandated qualification assessment(s) must be integrated with the apprenticeship end-point assessment."

It describes how the apprenticeship assessment plan should be designed so that the award of the apprenticeship and the category takes place "within the same period" and that the apprenticeship and qualification can only be awarded if at least one shared assessment has been passed.

Additional content only if IfATE is too slow

IfATE will proceed with its proposal to reject requests for mandated qualifications that simply add "structure", "stretch and challenge" or "depth and breadth" to apprenticeships.

This is because mandated qualifications must be taken consistently by all apprentices, so introducing qualifications with extra content could disadvantage apprentices in different employer contexts.

The institute also maintains that any mandated qualifications should not teach content that is in addition to the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the apprenticeship standard.

However, there will be a new process which allows for additional content in qualifications "in exceptional circumstances". IfATE highlights how this could be used for apprenticeships in occupations where technology advances faster than IfATE can update the KSBs in the standard.

In IfATE's own words: "Respondents were often critical of IfATE's agility in reviewing occupational standards."

Precise mandates

Employer trailblazer groups will have to specify precisely which qualification/s should be mandated in the relevant apprenticeship, rather than a generic high-level description.

For example, rather than simply describing a mandated qualification like 'level 3 diploma in youth work practice' as now, the new system will require each mandated qualification's title, level, awarding body, guided learning hours, Ofqual qualification number, and the sector subject area.

A new process will also be introduced so that officials can match technical qualifications approved elsewhere within IfATE to an apprenticeship with a qualification mandate, which will then be reviewed by the employer group.

If the employer group believes a qualification – such as a level 3 technical qualification of a higher technical qualification – isn't suitable for the matched apprenticeships, they'll have to explain why to IfATE.

News

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Director ban for bogus apprenticeships firm chief

SHANE CHOWEN
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The owner of an east London training provider has been slapped with a seven-year director ban after investigators found fake apprentices that earned him almost £1 million.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency investigated London College of Global Education Ltd after an Ofsted new provider monitoring visit found "examples of people on the list of apprentices who were not studying at the provider" in 2021.

Narayan Sah, the provider's owner, was paid £994,690 for 471 apprentices in 2020/21. Following Ofsted's visit, the ESFA alerted Sah that the agency would be investigating his training provider.

Shockingly, following the notification,

an "internal verification of learners" conducted by Sah led to 463 of his 471 apprentices being removed for being ineligible for funding, if they existed at all.

DfE figures record 400 starts at London College of Global Education when the company began delivering apprenticeships in 2020. None of the learners enrolled completed an apprenticeship qualification for which funding was obtained, the Insolvency Service said.

Most of those ghost apprenticeships were advanced and higher-level ICT programmes. Ofsted reported all off-the-job training was delivered remotely.

Taking away the eight apparently eligible learners, the ESFA demanded the return of £885,989. By the time the company went into liquidation in July 2021, this was reduced to £429,189.

Sah founded the company, originally

known as Sagarmatha Consulting Limited, in 2010, but is now disqualified from company directorship until May 2030.

Liquidators report that investigations with the ESFA are ongoing in their latest update, published on Companies House in September 2022.

"Meetings were carried out with the ESFA to discuss concerns that they have raised in the conduct of the company. The matters identified from these investigations are ongoing however, so as to not prejudice any potential future litigation, the joint liquidators do not intend to disclose the specifics of the investigation to date," the report said.

Among the company's £1 million-plus liabilities to creditors, including the ESFA, over £20,000 is owed to HSBC, over £18,000 to Dubai-based ed tech company Seeding Brains Education and Training, and *FE Week's* publisher, LSECT, is owed £168.



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College capacity cash splash

BILLY CAMDEN
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More than 40 colleges and sixth forms will share £140 million to build facilities to accommodate a demographic spike in 16 to 19-year-olds.

The funding comes from the Department for Education's post-16 capacity fund, which allocated £83 million to 39 colleges in 2021/22 and £8.6 million to eight others in 2022/23.

Successful projects in this latest round are "expected" to complete by September 2024.

Skills minister Robert Halfon said the funding will enable colleges and sixth forms to "add additional capacity where there is a pressing need for places for 16 to 19-year-olds in their local area, given local demographic pressures".

The Sixth Form Colleges Association estimates there will be 260,000 additional 16- to 19-year-olds that will participate in education in the coming years.

Four of the 42 winning bids in the 2023/24 list – Barton Peveril Sixth Form College, Cirencester College, Itchen Sixth Form College, and The Henley College – received allocations in earlier rounds.

The DfE does not publish the individual allocations for each college.

The fund was available to sixth form colleges, 16 to 19 academies, 16 to 19 free schools such as university technical colleges, and general FE colleges.

James Kewin, deputy chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges Association, said: "We are delighted that so many SFCAs members have been successful in the latest round of the Post-16 Capacity Fund.

"This is an excellent fund that is already helping institutions to deal

PROVIDERS OFFERED FUNDING FOR 2023 TO 2024

Post-16 provider	Local authority
Aquinas College	Stockport
Ashton Sixth Form College, Stamford Park Trust	Tameside
Barton Peveril Sixth Form College	Hampshire
Bromley College of Further and Higher Education, trading as London South East Colleges	Bromley
Cardinal Newman College	Lancashire
Castleford College	Wakefield
Cirencester College	Gloucestershire
City College Norwich	Norfolk
Coventry College	Coventry
Derby College Group	Derby
Elliott Hudson College	Leeds
Ely College, Meridian Academy Trust	Cambridgeshire
Exeter College	Devon
Gloucestershire College	Gloucestershire
Greenhead College	Kirklees
Havant and South Downs Corporation	Hampshire
Immanuel College, Bradford Diocesan Academy Trust	Bradford
Itchen Sixth Form College	Southampton
Lincoln College	Lincolnshire
LIPA Sixth Form College	Liverpool
Loreto College	Manchester
Luminate Education Group – Park Lane	Leeds
Luminate Education Group – Temple Newsam	Leeds
New City College, Havering Sixth Form	Havering
Nottingham College	Nottingham
Oakgrove School, Kingsbridge Educational Trust	Milton Keynes
Pudsey Grammar School	Leeds
Ricards Lodge High School	Merton
RNN Group	Rotherham
Rochdale Sixth Form College, ALTUS Education Partnership	Rochdale
Sir George Monoux College	Waltham Forest
Sir John Deane's Sixth Form College, The Sir John Brunner Foundation	Cheshire West and Chester
St Dominic's Sixth Form College	Harrow
Temple Moor High School, Red Kite Learning Trust	Leeds
The Corporation of NCG, Rye Hill Campus	Newcastle upon Tyne
The Henley College	Oxfordshire
The Sheffield College	Sheffield
Varndean College	Brighton and Hove
Waltham Forest College	Waltham Forest
Woolwich Polytechnic School	Greenwich
WQE and Regent College Group	Leicester
Xaverian College	Manchester

with the demographic increase in 16- to 19-year-olds.

"We'd like the fund to be available on an annual basis as it is hugely oversubscribed and many of our members are operating at or over capacity. But it is good

to have confirmation that more young people will have the opportunity to study in high performing institutions and benefit from brand new facilities."

The announcement brings the total spending from the fund to over £230 million across 89 colleges and sixth forms.



Robert Halfon

News

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Funding boost for higher technical skills injection fund

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The second round of the government's "skills injection fund" that aims to boost delivery of level 4 and 5 higher technical qualifications (HTQs) will now incorporate higher per student funding rates.

Up to £48.8 million is being made available to colleges, universities, and private providers to spend on specialist equipment, facilities, and upskilling staff to deliver HTQs across the next two financial years.

The funding is expected to ensure there are "widespread credible alternatives" to a three-year degree ahead of the introduction of the lifelong loan entitlement in 2025.

"Ensuring colleges have the space to provide students with top notch training is essential"

Skills, apprenticeships, and higher education minister Robert Halfon opened the fund for bids on Wednesday.

He said: "Boosting funding to support the delivery of HTQs and ensuring that schools and colleges have the space they need to provide all students with top notch training is essential to achieving parity of esteem with traditional degrees and plugging skills gaps in key sectors."

Round one of the skills injection fund involved dishing out £21 million to 85 providers in 2022/23 – which was £11 million short of the £32 million on offer.

The new £48.8 million pot consists of £29.8 million for capital costs such as specialist equipment, perpetual software licenses and refurbishing existing facilities; and £19

million for resources such as upskilling technician staff, curriculum planning, or learner recruitment events.

It will also involve higher per student funding rates compared to the first round.

The formula for grants will be based on predicated learner numbers, with funding capped at £6,667 per student for most applicants. The basic cap in round one was £5,000.

However, if the bid comes from an Institute of Technology, the per learner funding rate will receive a 20 per cent uplift to £8,000, while providers located in a designated "local skills area" – places where skills-based interventions are taking place as part of the government's 'levelling up' agenda – will receive a 10 per cent uplift to £7,333.

IoT and local skills area uplifts on offer in round one of the fund were 10 per cent and 5 per cent respectively.

Colleges, higher education institutions, independent training providers and IoTs can bid for the funding. Providers with an 'inadequate' Ofsted rating and those not registered with the Office for Students are not allowed to apply.

The fund is for HTQs only, and for providers preparing to deliver across all 15 occupational routes up to academic year 2025/26 when the lifelong loan entitlement will be introduced.

DfE guidance states that if a provider has already received funding through the HTE growth fund, or through the HTE skills injection fund round one, they can apply again for funding to deliver a "different HTQ within the same route or a different occupational route".

For example, if a provider received funding to deliver a network engineer qualification it could not apply for funding to deliver another level 4 and 5 network engineering qualification – but could apply to deliver a new software developer HTQ.

The DfE said there were no minimum learner numbers, but did expect a "viable cohort", and warned that funding clawbacks could be used where providers failed to reach 80 per cent of their predicted numbers.

Applications must be submitted by July 21. Outcomes are planned to be communicated in November.



DfE names 21 members of the SEND reform board

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
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The government has named the 21 members of its SEND and alternative provision implementation board who will be tasked with overseeing the roll-out of key reforms.

Association of Colleges senior policy manager David Holloway, children's commissioner Dame Rachel de Souza, and Ofsted national director Chris Russell are among the members of the board.

It is chaired jointly by children's minister Claire Coutinho and mental health minister Maria Caulfield. It met for the first time this week.

Last year's SEND green paper proposed such a board to "hold partners to account for the timely development and improvement of the system". Plans were confirmed in the government's improvement plan earlier this year.

This week, the government named members of the board, which it said would oversee the "actions government will take to improve children's outcomes, and parents' and carers' experience of the SEND and AP system in England".

"The national SEND and AP implementation board will oversee these actions and provide challenge and advice. The members will provide feedback and insight from their sector. They will also help to champion the changes we're making."

Coutinho said it was "fantastic to chair the first meeting of the national SEND and AP implementation board, and get the board members' views on how to best make sure each local area can deliver for parents and families through our new local inclusion plans".

"The board members bring a range of expertise from parents and family groups, education, health and local government that will be invaluable in making sure that the new system we are creating delivers the early intervention and better support that children need."

THE FULL LIST OF MEMBERS...

Claire Coutinho MP , Minister for Children, Families & Wellbeing (Chair)
Maria Caulfield MP , Minister for Women & Minister for Mental Health & Women's Health Strategy (Chair)
Leora Cruddas , Chief Executive, Confederation of Schools Trusts
Rachel de Souza , Children's Commissioner
Susan Douglas , CEO, Eden Academy Trust
Tina Emery & Sarah Clarke , co-chairs, National Network of Parent Carer Forums
Michael Freeston , Director of Quality Improvement, Early Years Alliance
Richard Gill , Chair, the Teaching School Hubs Council & CEO of the West Midlands MAT, The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership
David Holloway , Senior Policy Manager, Association of Colleges
Alison Ismail , Director, SEND & Alternative Provision, Department for Education
Christine Lenehan , Director, Council for Disabled Children
Nigel Minns , Strategic Director, Warwickshire local authority & chair of the Association of Directors of Children's Services Health, Care & Additional Needs Policy Committee
Sue North , Head of Children & Young People for Learning Disability, Autism & SEND, NHS England
Professor Sarah O'Brien , Chief Nurse, Lancashire & South Cumbria Integrated Care Board
John Pearce , Corporate Director of Children & Young People's Services at Durham County Council & President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services
Christopher Russell , National Director of Education, Ofsted
James Sanderson , Director of Community Health & Personalisation & joint SRO for SEND in NHS England
Alison Stewart , Head of SEND, South West London Integrated Care Board
Mark Vickers , Chair AP/SEND CEO Network & CEO of Olive Academies
Fiona Walshe , Director for Mental Health & Disabilities, Department for Health and Social Care
Simon Wellman , Director of Education and Skills, Telford and Wrekin Council

Board will take 'full account' of children's views

Terms of reference for the board, also published this week, state it will take "full account of the views and needs of children and young people with SEND and in AP, and their parents and carers".

The board will operate in a way which



"fosters co-production" with children and young people, and will use "expertise and knowledge to advise on the delivery and implementation of the SEND and AP Improvement Plan and how this impacts end users".

It will draw on the "latest data, evidence and evaluation to provide insight into the current performance of the SEND and AP system" and ensure the improvement plan "stays current and adapts to broader social changes and new challenges".

The DfE said members had been chosen to cover a "broad range of interests and expertise relevant to SEND and AP, and links across to other related key programmes across education, health and social care".

"Where possible, members will set aside any organisational or personal interests in order to drive transformational change at the national system level."

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Feature

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Are government reforms the final boarding call for travel and tourism training?

JESSICA HILL
JESSICA.HILL@LSECT.COM

High-profile workforce shortages in the travel industry haven't stopped the government's plans to defund rafts of popular courses. Jessica Hill investigates what's next for travel and tourism training.

When stories about long queues at UK airports hit the headlines last summer, travel woes were blamed on staffing shortages across the industry. But, with the government intent on removing funding for travel and tourism courses, which the sector relies on for its pipeline of future talent, its recruitment problems are only set to get worse.

The travel and tourism sector appears

to have been all but forgotten in the government's massive reforms to level 3 qualifications. You won't find it mentioned at all in DfE's guide to post-16 qualifications from 2025 – despite several courses facing the axe from 2025.

Classroom travel and tourism courses are popular with young people as well as employers.

Analysis of applied general qualifications by the Protect Student Choice campaign, led by the Sixth Form Colleges Association, found Pearson's BTEC level 3 national extended certificate in travel and tourism has 3,510 young people aged 16 to 18 enrolled in 2022/23, with 1,010 enrolled on its national foundation diploma, and 600 on its national certificate.

Combined with other qualifications offered by other awarding organisations, around 7,500 students are studying travel and tourism, according to Association of Colleges estimates.

Skills minister Robert Halfon said removing funding from these qualifications will "ensure young people can feel confident that they are studying technical qualifications which will prepare them for jobs in their chosen occupation".

But that does not appear to be the case for those young people eyeing a career in the UK's lucrative – but currently struggling – travel and tourism industry.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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CONTINUED

City and Guilds has already made the "difficult" decision to discontinue its qualifications in aviation, travel and tourism from December 2023 and to "focus [their] industry-specific qualifications on a smaller number of target sectors in the future".

"This is against a backdrop of widespread government qualification reform," a spokesperson said. "Our refocused strategy also enables us to provide better support for learners and customers in the industries where we believe we can have the most impact."

Unlike other industries, there are currently no T Levels or 'alternative academic qualifications' being planned to replace them, leaving learners, providers and the industry without any clarity or certainty over future training options.

The travel and tourism industry is worth over £250 billion to the UK economy, but it is struggling to recruit the staff it needs, especially for seasonal demand previously met by EU workers, and to replace those who left the sector when travel was disrupted during the pandemic.

A government report in March found that staffing shortages were a major factor in last summer's travel chaos, with ground handlers

struggling to recruit enough staff in time for peak season.

Travel and tourism teacher David Harvey described the industry's vacancy rate as being at an "all time high" so the "loss of these vocational courses is only going to exacerbate the situation".

'We cannot sleepwalk into this'

Similarly, BMet's travel and tourism and aviation lecturer, John Garside, believes his students are "incredibly important to the sector".

While he admits course numbers "took a hit" over the pandemic when holidaymakers' travel plans were scuppered, this year they are "up massively" and "there continues to be great interest in travel and tourism because nobody knows it is being defunded".

When he found out the news himself at the beginning of this year, he reached out to industry leaders and was alarmed to find they had no idea of DfE's plans.

The Institute of Travel and Tourism said it had been "largely unaware until recently that this was happening" and described the defunding as "short-sighted and damaging to the sector".

Clive Wratten, the chief executive of the Business Travel Association described it as "severely disappointing", and Vicki Wolf, head

of education and career development for ABTA, the Association of British Travel Agents, said it "strongly disagrees" with scrapping the courses for which there is "still high demand".

Garside said: "Sometimes the government will say, 'we've spoken to industry, we know what industry wants'. Well, it was quite obvious that nobody had."

"We cannot sleepwalk into this. The travel industry is really unhappy about it".

The alternatives

An A-level in travel and tourism already exists (courtesy of Cambridge International), but unlike the other level 3 courses it is not widely taught at colleges.

And the A-level route does not suit everyone. Garside says that for most of his travel and tourism students, "if they'd wanted to do A levels they'd be doing them already".

One of his students is 17-year-old Evie Rimmer-McLoughlin, who admitted the "academic life" of A-levels "doesn't really work" for her.

Compulsory units on the BTEC cover the travel and tourism industry, principles of marketing and global destinations with an additional 15 other optional units to choose from depending upon the course.

BMet student Gabby Birch, 17, believes the course, which involves lots of "role playing and group work", is a "really good option for people who don't want to just do exams and assignments".

"The travel and tourism course has made me enjoy learning more," she added.

Birch has since decided to go to university when she has finished her college course.

Classroom courses vs apprenticeships

The government is pitching new 'occupational-entry qualifications' as the way forwards.

Awarding organisations must map these to the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education's occupational standards to be



John Garside, travel and tourism lecturer at BMet with Gabby Birch, Harry Bailey, Lily Condley and Evie Rimmer-McLoughlin

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Feature

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CONTINUED

eligible for funding, but you won't find travel and tourism recognised as an occupational sector in its own right.

Instead, industry employers developing apprenticeships have linked travel and tourism jobs to occupational standards in other sectors. For example, the level 3 travel consultant apprenticeship falls in the sales, procurement and procurement route and the level 3 cabin crew apprenticeship comes under transport and logistics.

But to Runshaw College's travel and tourism course leader Lisa Rowbotham, many of these apprenticeships cover "front facing, low-paid jobs that don't represent the wider industry".

The apprenticeships are also nowhere near as popular.

In 2021/22, only 50 16-18-year-olds took a travel and tourism apprenticeship, and just 20 completed.

Claire Steiner, chair of education and training for the Institute of Travel and Tourism, warned that "apprenticeships are not for everyone, and are not available in all areas in the UK".

On the other hand, the travel and tourism classroom courses provide an overview of the broad range of opportunities available in the industry.

Steiner sees this broader approach as "vital".

Rimmer-McLoughlin said travel and tourism has "opened up new horizons" for her, as "every week there's a new job we find out about".

When she started the course last year, she was eyeing a career in cabin crew, but now wants to go into "planning tailor made holidays, or account management for airlines and travel companies".

The course also teaches her about "different countries, and what's going on in the world politically".

There is also concern that the defunding of level 3 courses will have a greater impact on students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Dr Shqiperim Reka, a lecturer in events management at Sheffield Hallam University,

who has previously taught tourism modules, came to England as a refugee from Kosovo in 1999 and studied tourism at FE and HE level.

He believes that tourism and related courses "give such opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds, like myself".

"I know the value of such opportunities for young people who do not see themselves in STEM degrees and need alternative routes to higher education and a successful career in the future."

Garside believes a "significant number" of travel and tourism students receive a bursary and have a household income of less than £30,000 a year.

Rimmer-McLoughlin's course hours enable her to also work part time at TK Maxx, which is "important" for her with the cost-of-living crisis.

Cause for optimism

But an industry-led campaign to save travel and tourism courses is now gathering momentum.

A petition which currently has more than 1,500 signatories was launched by Dr Peter Robinson, head of the Centre for Tourism and Hospitality Management at Leeds Beckett University. It calls for the provision of "appropriate industry-focused post-16 qualifications" for the tourism, hospitality and events sector to be "identified within the T Level schedule".

The petition claims that no awarding organisations are planning to provide the "strong evidence for the need for an academic qualification" required to introduce a sector-specific qualification for 2025/26.

However, *FE Week* understands a new level 3 technical occupational entry travel and tourism and aviation qualification for young people and adults has now been proposed by an awarding body.

But this is subject to approval from IfATE in its next approval cycle, and considerable work is required to get it over the line.

Last month ABTA hosted its first education



Claire Steiner

and skills working group on the issue, which left industry insiders feeling more optimistic.

Wolf said that while some areas still "need clarification" from the government, it "appears that there will be a route for future FE courses specific to travel and tourism".

Opportunity for change

Steiner said she has been "really impressed" with how the campaign has brought industry leaders together, and Rowbotham hopes to see similar campaigns spring up against the defunding of other level 3 courses in public services and sport.

Awarding bodies NCFE and Pearson appear to have been the most proactive in engaging with the industry. NCFE is currently running a consultation with educators and employers to understand which technical standards will be best to develop any course against.

Its technical education product manager David Rowley said: "We are standing by the travel industry. Part of our purpose as an educational charity is to ensure no learner is left behind, and we're committed to ensuring career aspirations aren't grounded because of changes in the education system."

A spokesperson for Pearson said: "While T Levels are a welcome addition to the further education landscape, we have always warned that policymakers should not lose sight of what is working well already. We are in touch with ABTA regarding the Travel and Tourism BTECs, to support and explore how we can continue to meet the needs of their industry."



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We have appointed FE Associates to support us with this crucial appointment. Interested parties should contact Jo.Johnston@fea.co.uk to discuss the role before the closing date.

Closing date: **9am Monday 10 July 2023**

Interview date: **Friday 21 July 2023**



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Competitive Salary



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We are now seeking to appoint an experienced, inspirational and ambitious Deputy Principal to join our Senior Leadership Team. We are looking for someone who is collaborative, who will bring ideas, innovation and energy. An individual who shares our values and passion in ensuring that our college and wider community thrives.

We have appointed FE Associates to support us with this important appointment. Interested parties are advised to contact Amanda.Hart@fea.co.uk to discuss the role before the closing date.

Closing date: **9am Tues 20 June 2023**

Interview date: **Mon 3 July 2023**

www.fea.co.uk/hopwood-dp/





The college of choice



An exciting time to join an exciting college!

Based on a green and spacious campus in Ewell, near Epsom in Surrey, Nescot is a leading further and higher education college teaching around 5,000 students each year.

The College is a hub for the new Sussex and Surrey Institute of Technology and launches T-Level provision this September. With a varied curriculum, on-site gym, excellent travel routes and a large free car park, Nescot aims to be an employer of choice as well as a college for choice for the region. Following a 'Good' grading from Ofsted in January 2023 and recent appointment of Julie Kapsalis as CEO and Principal, the college is now recruiting to five key new roles.



Chief Operating Officer (Competitive Salary)

This key senior role will lead on the college's finances and resources, ensuring sustainability and growth. Working closely with the CEO/Principal, Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and Governors, the COO will lead a large team and portfolio.

You will be responsible for implementing the strategic business planning process and investment and change programmes for Nescot. The postholder will ensure the legal and statutory requirements placed on the college by the ESFA and other funding bodies achieve full compliance. You will also have responsibility for: Finance, ICT, Data, Estates, Risk Management and Customer Engagement – including Sales, Marketing and Commercial.

You should be a highly skilled and motivated individual with experience in a senior management team, with direct experience in managing budgets and resources within complex organisations. The successful COO will have demonstrable success in business and scenario planning. You will have a passion for education and training and proven ability to motivate and inspire others.

Closing Date: Friday, 16 June, 12 noon

Interviews: Tuesday, 27 June

*Please note, that we reserve the right to interview candidates before the application deadline.

i For more information
and to apply visit
nescot.ac.uk/jobs

Head of Management Information Services

£52,843 to £57,660

We are seeking a dynamic and experienced Head of Management Information Services (MIS) to lead on the provision of high-quality, accessible information services to our staff, managers and governors.

This is a crucial role in facilitating efficient and effective operations, leadership and management of our college. You will be responsible for developing systems and infrastructure that support cost-effective and streamlined business services.

Closing date:
Sunday, 11 June, midnight

Interview date:
Monday, 19 June

Head of Curriculum – Building Services and Sustainable Construction

(Plumbing & Electrical)

£45,542 to £48,959

Joining our renewed management team, you will lead our well-established Plumbing and Electrical provision, ensuring that students and apprentices get a first-class experience and that curriculum and facilities are fit for the future.

You will be responsible for championing teaching, learning and assessment practices including innovative online teaching, IQA work, mentoring curriculum colleagues and English and maths engagement.

Closing date:
Monday, 12 June, 5pm

Interview date:
Tuesday, 20 June

Head of Curriculum – Construction Trades and Green Technology

(Motor & Electric Vehicles, Carpentry and Multi-Skills)

£45,542 to £48,959

Joining our renewed management team, you will lead our well-established Motor & EV, Carpentry, Plastering & Brickwork provision, ensuring that students and apprentices get a first-class experience and that curriculum and facilities are fit for the future.

You will be responsible for championing teaching, learning and assessment practices including innovative online teaching, IQA work, mentoring curriculum colleagues and English and maths engagement.

Closing date:
Monday, 12 June, 5pm

Interview date:
Tuesday, 20 June

Director of Customer Engagement

£59,734 to £63,921

The postholder will lead the development and implementation of our customer engagement strategy and promotion of our courses and services. As a dynamic, proactive and strategic leader, you will possess a creative mindset and a strong understanding of youth culture.

Your goal will be to drive the college's student recruitment, developing a network of employers, school leaders, and other influential community figures. You will develop the college's brand identity and work with the Principal to handle public affairs and raise the college's profile.

Closing Date:
Sunday, 18 June, midnight

Interview Date:
Monday, 26 June

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us on jobs@nescot.ac.uk

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?

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THE STUDENT COMMISSION ON RACIAL JUSTICE

The Student Commission on Racial Justice has published its 2023 **Manifesto for Action**. Over the next five weeks, its commissioners will set out its five key priorities and recommendations exclusively for *FE Week*

Tackling racial injustice must start with a curriculum that reflects our diverse culture


VICTORIA NYONI

Student, Barnsley College

Victoria Nyoni didn't want to go back to school after the pandemic lockdown. She explains why...

I'm 17 and study A Level French, English language and drama and theatre studies at Barnsley College. I am also part of the Student Commission on Racial Justice, which will soon publish its manifesto for action.

It focuses on five key priorities, one of which is teaching and learning. In this area, after hearing and sharing many stories from teachers and young people, our recommendation is to diversify the curriculum and improve teacher training. The young people we spoke to are clear: a lack of proper training is having adverse effects on us as students. On the other hand, some have experienced that effective teacher training can help to better our experiences.

Nobody seeks to deny that the writers centred within the English curriculum are anything other than talented. But Shakespeare and Dickens are far from the only writers who have work worth reading. We need teachers to broaden our exposure to and understanding of literature. In fact, it should be required that our curriculum reflects Britain's diverse culture and represents people of all

backgrounds.

I still recall reading *Of Mice and Men* in year 8 for English literature. Published in 1937, Steinbeck's book heavily features the use of the "n-word". As a 13-year-old black person, I wasn't too bothered about the use of the word by my teacher, since she had warned us before that slurs were involved and how we might feel if she used it (albeit only in this context).

"Teacher training in racial equity would make us feel safer"

But in spite of her warning that none of us were supposed to say it, certain pupils did – directly to me and my mixed-race friend. Why is a book with

slurs part of the curriculum? Was it necessary to say the slur at all? I didn't realise how much it upset me until a year later, trying to work out why I didn't want to go back to school after lockdown.

No matter how you present it, books with racial slurs embolden those with inclinations towards racism to express it. They normalise language that is taboo for good reason. There are better ways to explore the Depression, if that's what we want to do with our precious curriculum time.

Diversifying the curriculum means drawing from a wider variety, not just of writers, but of perspectives too. It sets the bar of expectation low to say nothing more appropriate can be found than a book with racial slurs, and it makes the inclusion of black students a lesser priority than the comfort of repeating the curriculum.

At least I can say that I don't have many experiences that I can attribute to inefficient teacher training, but I can say that the Student Commission has discussed this a lot. Too many have had worse experiences than me. Improving training would mean informing and preparing teachers on what to do if/when there is discrimination, as well as encouraging and appropriately supporting students to have conversations about race and inequalities, whether in the classroom or in tutorials.

Good teacher training in racial equity would mean students felt safer and more confident about approaching their teachers for advice. It would help to promote more trusting student-teacher relationships, and might just put a stop to the kind of verbal abuse I and so many others have been the victims of.

The evidence from our commission is clear. When it comes to teaching and learning, diversifying the curriculum and better preparing teachers to tackle racism and racial inequalities are crucial to improving education for students from minority ethnicities. That's as true for French as for English, and for theatre studies as well as any other qualification – academic or technical.



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THE STAFF ROOM

Dispatches from the frontline of FE

Local collaboration is key to delivering on equality, diversity and inclusion

Haroon Bashir felt isolated when he began his new role at Halesowen, but reaching out to colleagues in other colleges has helped him to deliver better practice, more cost-effectively

As the newly appointed head of equality and diversity, I took a moment to think where do I start? What if I made a mistake? All these questions encouraged me to reach out to colleagues at other colleges.

I was fortunate that I had made contacts across the West Midlands because of my work in safeguarding. These people pointed in the direction of others who, like me, were responsible for equality and diversity (EDI). In some cases, this was the same person.

“The hardest thing is to make the first contact”

Other EDI leads felt isolated—like me—so set up working groups that also put me in touch with the right people. Where I couldn't find anyone from a specific college, safeguarding or equality and diversity policies on their websites pointed me towards the best person.

I had never worked with other colleges before but, like sustainability, equality and



HAROON BASHIR

Head of equality and diversity, Halesowen College

diversity are among a raft of new challenges that call for a culture shift with a focus on collaboration. Everyone I reached out to was welcoming and supportive because we are travelling a similar journey. We built close relationships that have allowed us to share good practice and tried-and-tested resources.

This saved a lot of effort – and money. Arranging for EDI specialists to come into colleges can be expensive, and we have so much expertise between us. Considering the financial constraints on colleges, this is a very positive, practical and effective move.

We began with a West Midlands Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Network, meeting online two or three times a year to talk about activities and events we were proud of and then discuss areas of development we would like to work on. The experience of colleagues has sped up identifying and implementing solutions and been so effective that we now meet face-to-face and visit each other's settings to build on those benefits.

This has helped me to grow

and develop my confidence. I'm braver when introducing new ideas because I know I can trust the recommendations I work with. The result is a cost-effective and positive experience for all our staff and learners.

It's also made us want to go further. We have now also launched a BAME network that provides an opportunity for BAME staff to meet up with colleagues from across the region to share their experiences. This helps to increase the confidence of BAME staff to talk about race and ethnicity, and to give voice to their experiences. It also supports talented BAME staff who wish to progress in their careers in a sector that remains unrepresentative. Our network helps them by promoting training courses and other opportunities that they may not have known about.

We also invite guest speakers to share insights about what is

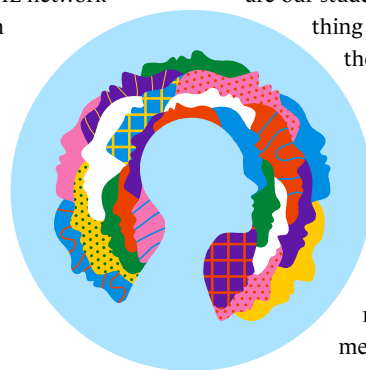
happening in FE more broadly, and how diversity is driving improvements in other sectors too. This collaborative work to amplify the collective voice of BAME staff means our own expertise is more widely recognised. We support and feed back to other organisations such as Colleges West Midlands, the Association of Colleges, the Education and Training Foundation and others.

This is a powerful approach that should be adopted in other regions. It's delivering better practice, more cost-effectively, and the ultimate beneficiaries are our students. The hardest

thing is to make the first contact, but you'll be surprised how quickly it builds from there. Promoting events and network meetings on social media is a great multiplier too. When

people see what's happening, it encourages them to come forward.

These networks are beneficial and inspiring. It is a privilege to work with talented like-minded staff from other colleges – staff I would never have had the opportunity to collaborate with in the past. Wherever you are in the country, I guarantee others are clamouring for the same experience.



Opinion

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Why we should be celebrating and spending more on degree and higher apprenticeships



DR MANDY CRAWFORD-LEE

Chief executive,
UVAC

To hear FE sector leaders you'd think there were too many degree apprenticeships. But the reality is that there are too few, writes Mandy Crawford-Lee

Reading through *FE Week* earlier this month on the growth of degree apprenticeship, I couldn't help but think that I live in some sort of parallel universe.

The article outlined how degree apprenticeship spending "hit half a billion (pounds) last year" and "swallowed a fifth of DfE's (apprenticeship) budget in 21-22". It then went on to outline how "experts" warn that: "the rapid rise in their share of the market is squeezing out opportunities for younger workers and threatens the sustainability of the apprenticeship budget".

But is this right? And shouldn't the FE sector be celebrating the growth of degree apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships at the level of a bachelor's or master's degree?

Others are pushing for more degree apprenticeships. For example, in March the government asked the higher education regulator, the Office for Students (OfS), to establish a £40 million degree apprenticeship development fund to grow capacity.

Degree apprenticeships are being used to train the police officers, nurses, allied health and adult social care professionals and social workers that the public sector and society need.

In the private sector, degree level apprenticeships are key to develop skilled engineers (of various types), digital specialists and scientists.

"UVAC would suggest doubling the spend on degree level apprenticeships"

Let's look at some of the facts:

In the list of the top ten degree level apprenticeships listed by *FE Week*, police constable is at number four, registered nurse number five, advanced clinical practitioner, number eight, teacher number nine and social worker number ten. Are we really saying police forces shouldn't spend their apprenticeship levy funds on training, through apprenticeships, new police constables, the NHS on

nurses, local authorities on social workers and schools on teachers? Surely there is no better use of apprenticeship funds.

At number two is the senior leader and at number three the chartered manager. Look at any analysis of skills gaps and shortages and the deficit in management skills will always feature. UVAC believes that the sector making most use of management apprenticeships is the NHS; which is also the organisation paying the most apprenticeship levy. With substantial pressure on the NHS, drawing on the levy to train managers and senior leaders is an excellent use of the apprenticeship budget.

Many level 3 apprenticeships are also costly to deliver. The move from apprenticeship frameworks to apprenticeships standards has raised quality – and cost. Many level 3 apprenticeships, particularly in STEM occupations, have been allocated high funding bands.

Finally, a 20 per cent spend on degree level apprenticeships means a whacking (and arguably questionable) 80 per cent of the apprenticeship budget is spent on apprenticeships at level 2 (GCSE level) to level 5 (HND/foundation degree level).

In policy terms there are two key drivers for apprenticeships: productivity and social mobility. Degree level apprenticeships are a key tool to tackle skills gaps and shortages at levels 6 and 7 – vital if the UK is to develop as a high-skill, high-productivity and high-pay economy.

If we are to use apprenticeships as a real tool for social mobility, we also need to use degree level apprenticeships to open routes to the professions, higher pay and senior level occupations. We should also prioritise apprenticeships that will support the move to a net zero economy.

The real issue that needs highlighting is why such a low proportion of the apprenticeship budget is spent on degree level apprenticeships. Indeed, UVAC would suggest a doubling of the apprenticeship budget spend on degree level apprenticeships to 40 per cent is easily justified by skills, productivity, social mobility and net zero arguments.

It's too little, not too much of the apprenticeship budget that is currently spent in this area. But, of course, some will correctly point out that it's the overall size of the pot that is the root problem.



Opinion

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Why colleges are key to re-engaging Covid's 'lost generation' – but it's not easy


KAREN JOHNSON

Deputy director of employability and enterprise, Leeds City College

Colleges are the obvious one-stop shop for re-engaging disenfranchised young people after Covid and bridging the UK's skills gap, says Karen Johnson

It's a little over three years since the beginning of a wave of Covid lockdowns. Many of us are back to business as usual, but the journey has not been quite so smooth for a whole generation of young people whose education and early career opportunities have been stifled.

According to a recent report from City & Guilds, more than 800,000 young people in the UK are not in education, employment or training (NEET). While this figure is shocking to some, we educators know all too well that young people have been among the hardest hit by the aftershocks of that period.

We need nothing less than a seismic shift in how we think about education. It's no longer a case of retaining our students, but of reintegrating them and offering them a much-needed second chance.

Implementing programmes nationally to capture the nearly 16 per cent of young people currently classified as NEET is not without its complications. The government's spring budget recognised the role that economically inactive people could play in filling the 1.3 million vacancies in our economy. However, consistent underfunding means



that existing services and programmes are already under immense strain and not at the scale required to solve the problem.

One such programme is the NEET re-engagement programme at Leeds City College. FE colleges are unique in their ability to provide a "one-stop shop" for careers advice, pastoral support, education and work experience. Other organisations offer some of these services, but it's rare to find one that has it all.

Our programme helps students aged 16 to 24 to develop skills in essential subjects, particularly maths and English, while engaging them in enrichment activities and supporting them with progression.

The move to online learning during the pandemic deepened the chasm of access to quality education. For some of our most vulnerable young people,

the amount of lost learning was substantial, leaving them wholly unprepared for FE or employment. In crafting and delivering our programme, we focus on removing such barriers.

"The pandemic deepened the chasm of access to quality education"

It's not just in the classroom that young people are facing struggles. Young Minds, the mental health charity, reported in 2021 that 67 per cent believed that the pandemic will have a long-term negative effect on their mental health. Countless young people tell me they simply don't feel up to the challenge of employment.

One of the young people on our programme dreamed of pursuing a career in creative arts, but was too anxious of being around so many people after lockdowns. This example is repeated across the country.

We often think of young people as highly social, but in reality the thought of stepping back into a classroom has been undeniably overwhelming. We are fortunate to have a smaller facility that can host our programme, and have implemented shorter session times to make them more manageable.

But by far the most common barrier is finance, with the rising cost of living meaning many young people are undertaking temporary, part-time work at the expense of their studies. Students here are offered meal cards and free bus passes to minimise cost and support with their responsibilities outside the programme.

Even in its infancy, I've seen this programme make a real difference, and with 14 new referrals already this month, it's clear there's demand.

Put simply, the UK's labour market cannot afford to disregard the potential of so many. Colleges are a natural place to invest in the multi-faceted work this challenge requires, and failure to reengage those who do not have the resources to fulfil their potential constitutes a huge missed opportunity for policymakers.

Bulletin

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Beth Curtis

**Group Vice Principal
- Strategy & Business
Development, TEC
Partnership**

Start date: June 2023

Previous Job: Director of Strategy and Business Development, Protocol

Interesting fact: Beth loves getting to know the locals whilst travelling: highlights have included swimming with whale sharks in Mexico, seeing sloths and turtles in Costa Rica and feeding elephants in Thailand

Movers & Shakers

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



George Ryan

Associate Director: Skills Policy and Strategic Communications, Public First

Start date: June 2023

Previous Job: Press and Public Relations Manager, Association of Colleges

Interesting fact: In a year 10 school assembly, George performed a lip-sync performance of Nina Simone - Feeling Good

If you want to let us know of any new faces at the top of your college, training provider or awarding organisation please let us know by emailing news@feweek.co.uk

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