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FROM NO 11**

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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2019
EDITION 271

ACCOUNTING IRREGULARITIES AT HADLOW GROUP COLLEGES



Image credit: Manu Palomeque

L-R: Mark Lumsdon-Taylor, deputy group Principal with Paul Hannan, group principal in a photoshoot for Kent Life last year

- FE Commissioner steps in to investigate land sales between West Kent and Hadlow College
- Group principal steps down due to ill health just days after deputy principal resignation
- Cash crisis as ESFA seeks to claw back cash following funding investigation
- Future of colleges in doubt without quick property sales or government bailout

Exclusive

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Government agency in hasty search to avoid gap in apprenticeship quality assurance

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Exclusive

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) has been forced into hastily finding “interim” arrangements for its apprenticeship external quality assurance service for April.

Open Awards has held the contract to monitor end-point assessment organisations on the institute’s behalf since August 2017, but this deal comes to an end in March.

A procurement was launched at the end of January for a new organisation to take on the job, which would run until March 2021.

However, tender documents, seen by *FE Week*, show that “service commencement” will not be until May 2019.

FE Week asked the institute what this meant for the month of April, and a spokesperson confirmed that external quality assurance “will continue during April”.

However, it has had to come up with “interim arrangements” for the month, which haven’t been finalised yet.

This is likely to cause some concern, considering that the institute is the nominated EQA provider for 191, or 55

per cent, of 345 approved standards.

Under its contract with Open Awards, the IfATE, like Ofqual, doesn’t charge end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs) for the quality assurance service.

But this will change when its new contract comes into play.

Tender documents for the institute’s new contract state that “legislation allows the institute to charge EPAOs a fee per apprentice that undertakes an end-point assessment and it is these fees that will pay for the EQA service”.

They add: “The institute’s budget is limited and we are seeking to work with a supplier who will deliver a high-quality service at a price that offers strong value for money.”

The bidding organisation is asked to “confirm what price they would charge per end-point assessment”, and would receive a minimum payment of £20,000 a month for the duration of the contract.

The winning bidder can therefore expect to earn at least half a million pounds over the two-year contract period.

A spokesperson for the institute said EQA is to be delivered on a “cost-recovery basis and not for profit” and this has “been made clear to potential bidders”.

The institute’s tender documents said it anticipates that up to “67,000 (approx. 19,000 in year 1; 47,000 in year 2) apprentices will undertake end-

point assessment across standards which have nominated the institute to provide EQA”.

Mark Dawe, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, has labelled charging for EQA as the “biggest mistake yet”.

The ESFA sets a funding band for each apprenticeship standard, which is usually the value given to providers to deliver the training.

Up to 20 per cent of the total funding is available to fund the end-point assessment. The EQA cost is paid by the end-point assessment organisation and is factored into the EPA price.

There are currently 18 approved external quality assurance bodies that monitor end-point assessment organisations, to ensure the process is “fair, consistent and robust”.

FE Week revealed the “ridiculous variability” in approved external quality assurance charges last week, which were criticised by sector leaders for ranging from a free service to £179 per apprentice.

Tom Bewick, chief executive of the Federation of Awarding Bodies, representing many of the 199 currently approved EPAOs, said: “These practices run the risk of bringing the entire reforms into disrepute.”

The closing dates for bids to IfATE’s tender is February 26.

DfE opens up options for GCSE resits

The Department for Education has announced a slight change to its condition of funding rule for English and maths GCSE resits.

Under the old policy, students with a GCSE graded two or below in maths or English had to resit until they got between a grade four and a nine.

Now, full-time students with a grade two or below in the subjects will be able to pass just a functional skills qualification to meet the condition of funding rule.

This also applies to part-time students who have a grade three or grade D GCSE or equivalent.

Full-time students with a grade three must still study an eligible GCSE qualification to meet the condition of funding.

Studio school closures on the horizon

A studio school has confirmed it will close this week and another announced it is “strongly considering” shutting.

The Bath Studio School will not admit any new students this September and will close for good in August 2020 after operating at 47 per cent or less capacity since opening in 2014.

Studio@Dayes in Liverpool said on Wednesday it had “reached a point where it is only right and proper to stop and look at what the future holds” after running up a £600,000 deficit due to low student numbers.

More than half of studio schools have shut or announced they are looking to shut since the scheme was introduced in 2010.

No studio schools opened in 2018.

Arts and media ITP challenging Ofsted

Arts and media provider Sheffield Independent Film and Television (Shift) has said it will appeal after receiving a grade four from Ofsted.

The education watchdog said provision at Shift had declined since its last inspection, when it was rated grade two, and criticised it for not moving enough students, who study creative subjects, on to further study or employment.

In November, chief inspector Amanda Spielman spoke out about the “mismatch” between the numbers of students taking arts and media courses and their “future employment in the industry”.

Bridget Kelly, chief executive of Shift, said: “We don’t agree with the judgment and we are going to challenge it through the complaints procedure.”

Mysterious apprenticeship provider judged ‘insufficient’ by Ofsted following *FE Week* exposé

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A provider that received more than £16 million in three years from college subcontracting deals has been exposed by Ofsted for delivering ‘insufficient’ apprenticeships that exclude employers and lack scrutiny.

FE Week revealed in November the mysterious way in which SCL Security Ltd has operated as a subcontractor for many years, delivering hundreds of apprenticeships for mostly 16- to 18-year-olds for Brooklands College despite employing fewer than 10 people.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency acted following our exposé, and starts were suspended at the provider last month while it carries out an investigation.

FE Week’s findings also triggered an Ofsted monitoring visit to SCL Security, and its report, which resulted in two ‘insufficient progress’ ratings, was

published on Wednesday.

“Leaders and managers do not ensure that the programme they offer meets the requirements of an apprenticeship,” the education watchdog found.

“Apprentices do not receive sufficient off-the-job time to complete their studies and do not know what progress they are making.

“SCL staff do not plan apprentices’ training programmes of study well enough to meet individual apprentices’ needs. All apprentices are currently expected to complete their apprenticeships in the same timeframe irrespective of their previous experience, skills or level of training.”

SCL Security is run by Andrew Merritt and began to receive public funding in its own right in May 2017.

At the time of Ofsted’s monitoring visit in January, it had 27 apprentices on programmes including health and social care and IT, with a further six on breaks in learning. Most are aged over 24.

The report said that SCL Security

employs three part-time external quality-improvement consultants to manage the provision.

But leaders at the provider “do not check the quality of provision effectively”, and their evaluation of it is “overly positive”.

Quality assurance of the apprenticeship programme is also “not effective”.

“Managers do not have a good enough oversight to hold staff to account or to know what progress apprentices make,” Ofsted’s report said.

It also revealed that the provider does not allow for prior learning for individual apprentices.

“Managers and staff, including assessors, do not take into account the skills, knowledge and behaviours that apprentices already have prior to starting their programme.”

Apprentices are also not made aware of the “requirements of the end-point assessment or the different grades they could achieve in their qualifications”.



FE Week’s front page about SCL Security Ltd from November

As a result, they “do not aim for higher levels of achievement”.

SCL Security’s leaders do not involve employers and line managers “sufficiently in apprentices’ training”, Ofsted found.

“Employers are not included in the planning or delivery of training. In most cases, employers are not aware of the progress apprentices make and are not able to support them to develop new skills and knowledge at work.”

Inspectors also reported that the planning and delivery of training to improve apprentices’ English and maths skills “is weak”.

Ofsted did, however, find that leaders at SCL Security have made sure that the apprentices they enrol are “suitable for an apprenticeship and select them with integrity”.

Safeguarding is also effective.

Mr Merritt said: “Highlighting areas where improvement is needed is always sound advice.”

He added that with this “sound basis and Ofsted’s support, we are confident for the future”.

News

FE Commissioner praises John Ruskin College for positive action prior to merger

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A sixth-form college that has fallen into trouble in recent years has been commended by the FE commissioner for turning itself around before a merger.

Richard Atkins' team visited John Ruskin College in October after it emerged its financial health had declined rapidly, and it had dropped two Ofsted grades to 'requires improvement' in 2017.

The London-based college appears to have worked tirelessly to get back into shape, and the FE commissioner praised leaders for doing "well to maintain healthy cash balances and manage down external debt".

The college has also tackled shortcomings in the quality of provision, according to the FE commissioner's report.

A quality improvement board has been established and meets every term, and there is now "scrupulous tracking and monitoring of learners at risk of underachieving".

The governors that the

commissioner's team met were said to be focused on the challenges facing the college in terms of both quality, finance and the wider FE landscape.

As a result, there was an 11.1 per cent increase in overall achievement rates between 2016/17 and 2017/18 at John Ruskin.

Apprenticeship provision has also improved, with overall achievement at 78.5 per cent, almost 10 per cent above the national average.

Outcomes in GCSE English and maths increased to 93.1 per cent in 2017/18, a 16 per cent increase on the previous year.

"There is clear evidence that the actions they've taken are having a positive impact on the quality of provision and on student outcomes," the report said.

It added that students "demonstrated a strong sense of ambition and cited an extensive range of opportunities for engagement and student voice with enthusiasm".

Governors are also "optimistic" about the prospects of the merger to improve student numbers and expand the range of curriculum on offer.

The college merged with East Surrey

College on February 1 to form Orbital South Colleges.

The commissioner's report said that, given both colleges' "strong balance sheets", the Department for Education's transactions unit concluded that "no restructuring funds should be necessary to support the merger".

In a letter to John Ruskin College's chair of corporation, Alec Stow, skills minister Anne Milton said: "I welcome the positive work the college has already undertaken to prepare for the planned merger with East Surrey College."

A spokesperson for the college group said: "The merger generates a wealth of opportunity for us to grow and achieve together.

"It presents excellent opportunities for both colleges and we are already seeing growth potential."

Furthermore, the college has confirmed that the commissioner's recommendations – actions to improve budgetary control and to progress the merger with East Surrey College – are either complete or under way.

Despite the positives, the college is



expected to run a deficit of 15 per cent of turnover in 2018/19.

The commissioner's intervention was triggered after its financial health declined from 'outstanding' in 2015/16 to 'satisfactory' in 2017/18.

The London-based college's 16-19 learner numbers have fallen "rapidly", by 12 per cent, since 2016/17, with a further decline in 2017/18; and Ofsted had downgraded it from grade one in 2013 to grade three in 2017.

The college had become dependent on delivering apprenticeships for small businesses, but this came to a

halt last year after it failed to secure a non-levy allocation for starts post-March 2018.

Its deficit increased by 1,756 per cent between 2016/17 and 2017/18, rising from £26,629 to £494,234.

In his report, the commissioner warned the college still faces "significant" financial challenges.

"Governors and senior leaders rightly recognise the need for structural change as a result of the significant decline in turnover, substantial operating losses and the gradual erosion of cash reserves."

Government announces awarding organisations for first three T-levels

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The awarding organisations that will develop, deliver and award the first three T-levels have been revealed by the government.

Following a competitive tender, NCFE has been awarded a contract to deliver the education and childcare pathway, and Pearson has been awarded contracts to deliver T-levels in design, surveying and planning, as well as digital production, design and development.

The contracts are worth £17.5 million in total and give the awarding organisations exclusive rights to deliver each T-level subject.

Stewart Foster, managing director of NCFE Awarding, said his organisation is "excited to be at the forefront of the implementation of T-levels".

FE Week was first to predict who was in the running for the digital pathway back in June, as we anticipated it was

going to be the most hotly contested, with the likes of City & Guilds, OCR, BCS and Pearson likely to bid.

Pearson, who came out on top, already has a BTEC level three national diploma in computer science, as well as level five qualifications in professional software development.

After winning the contract, Rod Bristow, president of Pearson UK, said: "The award of these licences recognises our longstanding collaboration and partnership with employers of all sizes to design, develop and deliver world-class qualifications in these industries."

He added: "T-levels represent a significant opportunity to strengthen the recognition and value of technical education in England.

"We look forward to continuing to work with the government, employers and providers to ensure their successful implementation, and to support learners as they begin their programmes of study from next September."

The government's decision to have



a single awarding body per T-level has proved to be highly contentious.

It was one of the reasons that the Federation of Awarding Bodies threatened the Department for Education with legal action in the summer, but the department has held firm with the policy.

Education secretary Damian Hinds said this week: "This is a major step

forward in our work to upgrade technical education in this country.

"T-levels are a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create high-quality technical education courses on a par with the best in the world, so that young people gain the skills and experience they need to secure a good job, an apprenticeship or progress into further training.

"We have made significant progress to implement these vital reforms, which are on track for delivery from 2020."

Sir Gerry Berragan, chief executive of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, which took over the running of T-levels this month, said: "I am really pleased with the pace the work has developed and the institute will continue to build on the work of DfE.

"Technical education offers a real and exciting alternative to A-levels for young people, with T-levels now sitting alongside apprenticeships."

A total of 52 providers were expected to deliver the first three T-levels from 2020, but two of them dropped out this week.

The DfE said the London Design and Engineering UTC would no longer be part of the first wave after it received a 'requires improvement' rating from Ofsted in November.

Meanwhile, Big Creative Training, a private provider also based in London, has been removed after the DfE said that the digital pathway available in 2020 does not "fit with the specialist nature of their current provision".

A spokesperson for the DfE said the government "always expected the list of providers to fluctuate as we progress towards September 2020".

Halfon's call to replace GCSEs and A-levels with 'holistic baccalaureate' denounced as 'reckless'

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Exclusive

Calls to replace GCSEs and A-levels with a "holistic baccalaureate" have been branded a "non-starter" by an advocate of a similar model.

Tom Sherrington, a trustee of the National Baccalaureate Trust, warned that "headline-grabbing" comments made this week by parliamentary education committee chair Robert Halfon and a number of other high-profile leaders were "reckless".

He added that any move to create a baccalaureate for English students must be based on the existing exam system.

During a speech on Monday, Mr Halfon, a former skills minister, said current exams for 16- and 18-year-olds should be replaced with one qualification that recognises academic and technical skills and personal development.

His comments were backed by Lord Baker, a former education secretary

and the creator of GCSEs, and Carolyn Fairbairn, director-general of the Confederation of Business Industry, who both agreed the qualifications had had their day.

But Mr Sherrington pointed to the 2004 Tomlinson review, which called for GCSEs, A-levels and vocational qualifications to be replaced with a single diploma.

"It didn't get implemented because, at the end of the day, A-levels are strongly supported, both across the sector and politically," Mr Sherrington told FE Week's sister paper Schools Week. "They have this brand identity that is almost unshakable. Anything that says scrap A-levels is doomed – it's a non-starter."

"The only hope is that A-levels will morph into a wider framework, a baccalaureate structure, but you don't achieve that by saying scrap A-levels and scrap GCSEs. It's reckless, it's just something to say."

The National Baccalaureate Trust advocates the creation of a "national baccalaureate for England", a framework for 14- to 19-year-olds which comprises core qualifications such as A-levels

or vocational equivalents, a personal project, and a programme of character and skills development for all students.

Mr Sherrington said an English baccalaureate system would have "a lot of benefits", but insisted it has to be "based around things people already trust".

There have been calls for GCSEs to be scrapped since the participation age for education and training was raised to 18 in 2015, meaning far more students stay in full-time education beyond the age of 16.

But opponents of the proposal argue that due to the high numbers of learners who move to new institutions at the age of 16, there is still the need for testing at that stage.

Mr Halfon, speaking on Monday, said: "We must remember that since 2015 all young people have been required to participate in some form of education and training up to 18."

"Yet GCSEs remain just as much the high-stakes tests that they were when many young people finished their education at this age."

He said an IB-style qualification for



Robert Halfon

18-year-olds in England would "act as a genuine and trusted signal to employers and universities of a young person's rounded skills and abilities."

"Schools would then be measured on two things – completion of the baccalaureate at 18 and the destinations of their pupils in the years after leaving, with apprenticeships explicitly counted

as a gold standard destination."

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said there was "a lot of merit to the idea of scrapping GCSEs and having a single set of exams for 18-year-olds", but warned of "significant practical problems which we would need to overcome".

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News

Unis 'concern' at lack of assessment organisation for nursing apprentices

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Exclusive

There is “serious concern” among universities that the government has still not found an organisation to assess more than 1,000 nursing apprentices who have six months left on their course.

New FE Week analysis shows there are currently 17 apprenticeship standards ready for delivery with no end-point assessment organisation (EPAO) in place, nine of which have starts.

There is particular concern around the level five nursing associate standard, which had 1,417 starts in 2017/18 and 820 in the first quarter of 2018/19.

The typical duration for the programme is 24 months – meaning the first cohort of apprentices on this standard should complete their course by August.

“We recognise the current lack of end-point assessment organisations is problematic and this is of concern to us,” said Denise Baker, head of the school of allied health and social care at the University of Derby, which, at 130, had the highest number of starts on the

nursing associate standard in 2017.

She added: “There is an even greater issue surrounding the incentives for nursing associate apprentices to undertake end-point assessments as, following the successful completion of their foundation degree, it confers eligibility to apply for registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council, which gives them the accreditation they need.

“This reflects the growing concern among education providers about the end-point assessment process for pre-registration qualifications, and the associated risks this brings to education providers and employers, alike.”

A spokesperson for the University of Central Lancashire said the lack of EPAO for the nursing associate apprenticeship is a “serious concern for the university as we wish to ensure apprentice completion and, where relevant, the appropriate professional qualification or licence to practice”.

But not all universities are worried about the lack of EPAO, yet.

“The Nursing and Midwifery Council have set the regulatory standards for this programme and we are awaiting the ratification and final agreement on the apprenticeship standard regarding end-point assessment,” said a University of Bolton spokesperson.



“Once confirmed we are confident that providers will come forward as EPAOs.

“We do have large numbers of students but are confidently preparing the students.”

The Nursing and Midwifery Council told FE Week it has “no role in the apprenticeship, specifically, in securing an EPAO”.

A spokesperson for the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE), claimed that for all standards that currently have no EPAO, including the nursing associate, “we or ESFA are engaged with an organisation who has declared an intention to

become the EPAO for the standard”.

He added: “We work with the ESFA and trailblazers to ensure that there is appropriate coverage of end-point assessment organisations across all standards.”

The Department for Education said: “It is a priority for us to make sure that an end-point assessment organisation is available to every apprentice when they are ready to undertake one.”

In 2016, Dr Sue Pember, a former top skills civil servant and now director of policy and external relations of adult and community learning group Hoxley, said it was “morally wrong to start an apprentice on a programme when you

don't know how they are going to be tested at the end”.

“I am still concerned, if anything more so,” she told FE Week after finding out about the situation for nursing associate apprenticeships.

“I have heard sad stories from apprentices who feel they can't look for a new job or even apply for promotion because they haven't had it confirmed they have met the standards.

“This is sad for the individual and it is not helping secure a premier brand image for apprenticeships.”

In April last year, FE Week was first to expose the EPA crisis. We found nine would-be dental practice managers who began their apprenticeship with Barnet and Southgate College in November 2015 and should have completed the programme in May 2017, still couldn't be tested because the assessment plan was unworkable.

This newspaper also found the shocking example of a blameless apprentice on a level two large goods vehicle driving standard, who missed out on a pay rise because there was no EPA ready for him.

Despite FE Week's findings, the IfATE rejected concerns about apprentices being unable to graduate – accusing people who raised the concerns as simply “inflammatory”.

DfE confirms ban on recruitment of apprentices at BPP University months after Ofsted warning

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Exclusive

The government has finally confirmed that a huge private university has been stopped from recruiting new starts months after an Ofsted monitoring visit warned it was making ‘insufficient progress’ in its apprenticeship provision.

Managers at BPP University faced criticism for being “too reliant on subjective information from assessors on the progress of their apprentices, which at times misrepresents the slow progress that apprentices make” in a report published on October 31.

The university, which has around 15,000 students studying law, business

and technology, nursing and health, received two ‘insufficient’ ratings from Ofsted during the inspection of its level two to five provision.

Despite this, it is the only provider to receive an ‘insufficient’ rating that has not been listed as temporarily banned from recruiting new starts on the register of apprenticeship providers, prompting concerns that it was receiving special treatment.

However, the Department for Education has now confirmed BPP University is no longer advertising apprenticeship vacancies for courses at level five or below, and said it had not appeared on the official pause list because it also offers level six and seven training, which are not inspected by Ofsted and so not affected by any ban.

The DfE said that if they were included on this pause list then it would

wrongly appear to employers that they were unable to recruit apprentices at any level, as it is still free to recruit apprentices at level six and seven.

These higher levels are regulated by the Office for Students, but the OfS did not respond before going to print on whether it would be monitoring BPP University's degree-level provision following Ofsted's findings.

BPP University is part of the global BPP Professional Education Group. BPP appears on the register of apprenticeship training providers four times, as BPP University, BPP Holdings, BPP Professional Education and BPP Actuarial Education.

Like BPP University, both BPP Professional Education and BPP Actuarial Education are new apprenticeship providers and in line for a monitoring visit. However,

no inspection reports have been published for either, and Ofsted would not comment on if or when these would take place.

BPP can continue to recruit apprentices at levels two to five through these other branches, and it is not clear if it can switch BPP University's allocation of apprenticeships to one of its other providers.

BPP refused to comment or confirm any ban when approached by FE Week.

This week, six more providers were banned from recruiting new apprentices after receiving ‘insufficient’ ratings. There are currently 23 providers on the barred list, not including BPP University, while four have been fully removed from the register of apprenticeship training providers.



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Accounting irregularities in

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From front Exclusive

Hadlow Group is under intense scrutiny from the FE commissioner for accounting irregularities relating to land sales, FE Week can reveal.

The deputy principal, Mark Lumsdon-Taylor, resigned from the group at the end of January, and this week it was announced that the group principal and chief executive, Paul Hannan, is on sick leave following the first of two FE commissioner visits this month.

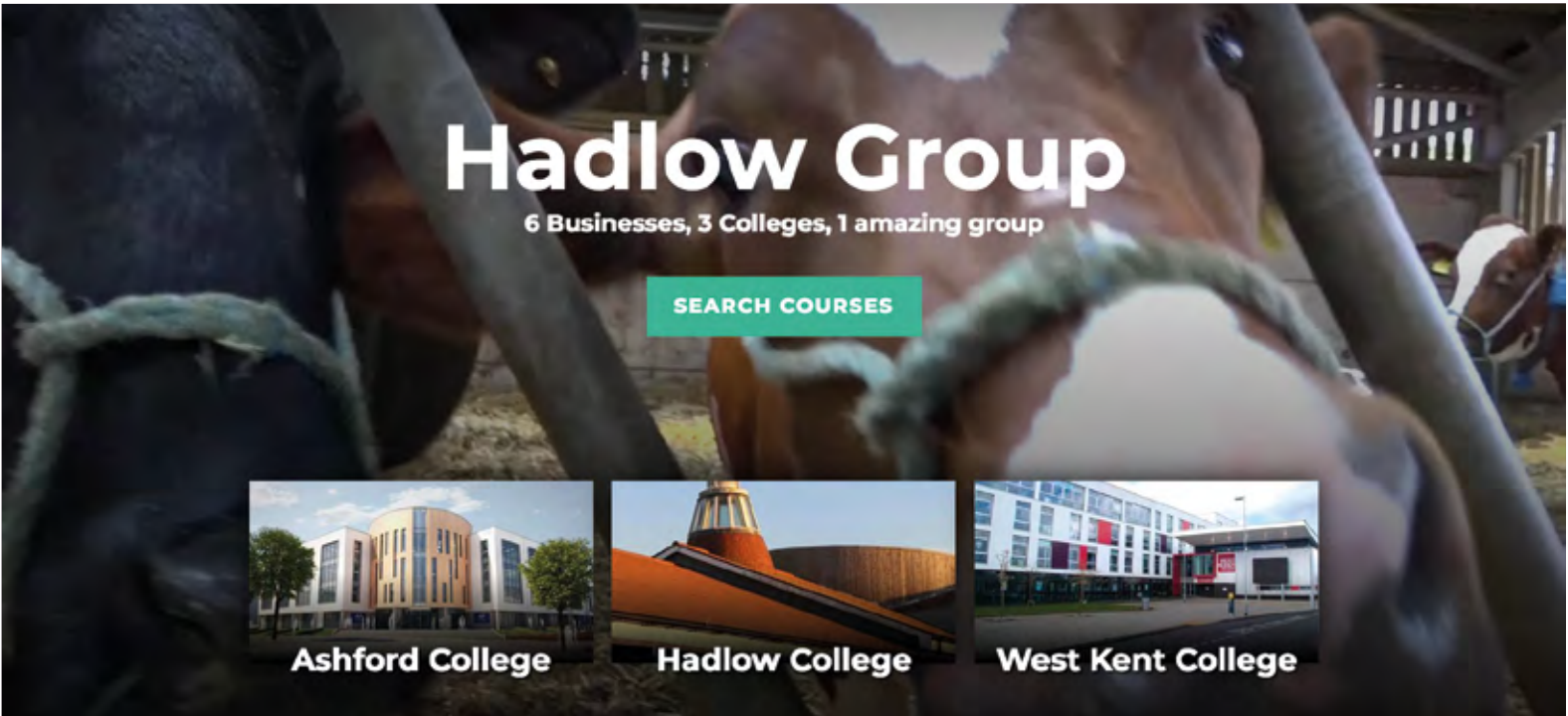
The investigation, FE Week understands, was triggered after a request for restructuring funds to the Department for Education's Transactions Unit, which raised questions about a series of land purchases between Hadlow College and West Kent and Ashford College (WKAC), which make up the Hadlow Group.

Meanwhile, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is said to be looking to reclaim significant sums of funding from the Hadlow Group after concluding their own investigation.

It is understood the group was claiming funding they were not permitted to, but which Mr Lumsdon-Taylor said they had permission to claim, as part of the K College transition -- something the ESFA disputes.

All of this comes at a sensitive time for both the group and the Department for Education as it is mere days after the new insolvency regime came in. If the college has to give the funding back to the government, it may need to rely on a short-term bailout and quick sale of property to avoid going into administration.

A week before the first FE commissioner visit, Mr Lumsdon-Taylor left Hadlow College after an award-



winning 15-year tenure, for much of which he was finance director.

A group spokesperson said the organisation had appointed an interim chief financial officer to handle some of Mr Lumsdon-Taylor's day-to-day duties while it looks for a permanent replacement.

This week, the Hadlow Group announced its chief executive, Mr Hannan, had gone on sick leave.

A college spokesperson said: "Governors are working proactively with the FE Commissioner and ESFA. "The outcomes from the current commissioner visits are still ongoing and not yet finalised, and, as such, we cannot comment further at this time.

"The board can confirm the group principal and CEO is on leave due to ill health. In his absence, the board is in the process of putting in place interim senior leadership arrangements.

"The board will provide further information as soon as it's in a position to do so."

The ESFA claw-back remains

unresolved and the Hadlow Group has been granted an extension to submit its 2017/18 accounts by the end of February.

On Thursday 7 February, the FE commissioner visited WKAC and is likely to visit Hadlow College today.

A DfE spokesperson said: "The ESFA and the FE commissioner are working closely with the governing bodies of Hadlow College and West Kent and Ashford College.

"As part of this, the FE commissioner and his team are visiting the colleges."

Although they are both part of the same group, Hadlow College and WKAC are not merged and, therefore, file

separate financial accounts and operate separate boards.

Hadlow College adopted WKAC from K College, which collapsed in 2014, despite the government spending around £40 million trying to keep it afloat, and formed the Hadlow Group.

The 2017 Kent and Medway area review of colleges, led by FE commissioner Richard Atkins, recommended WKAC and Hadlow College merge, but both boards rejected the recommendation, according to minutes from March 2018.

However, the WKAC board did agree to take a meeting with the Transition Unit to see if there would be any

financial support if they decided to merge.

It is believed the ESFA questioned why the group needed support funds for the merger, considering the Hadlow Group had already benefited from transitional support.

On closer inspection of the management accounts for 2017/18, related-party transactions between the colleges are now at the centre of the FE commissioner's enquiries.

When asked about the crisis engulfing the Hadlow Group, a DfE spokesperson said: "We do not routinely comment on ongoing investigations."

West Kent and Ashford College		Hadlow College
Accounts 2016/17		
Income	£23.7m	£21.7m
Bank loans and overdrafts	£14m	£8.9m
Staff	381	396
Campuses	2	11
Ofsted inspection	Grade 3 October 2018	No Ofsted inspection in nearly nine years
	Grade 3 February 2017	
	Grade 4 November 2013	
	Grade 3 December 2011	
		Grade 1 June 2010

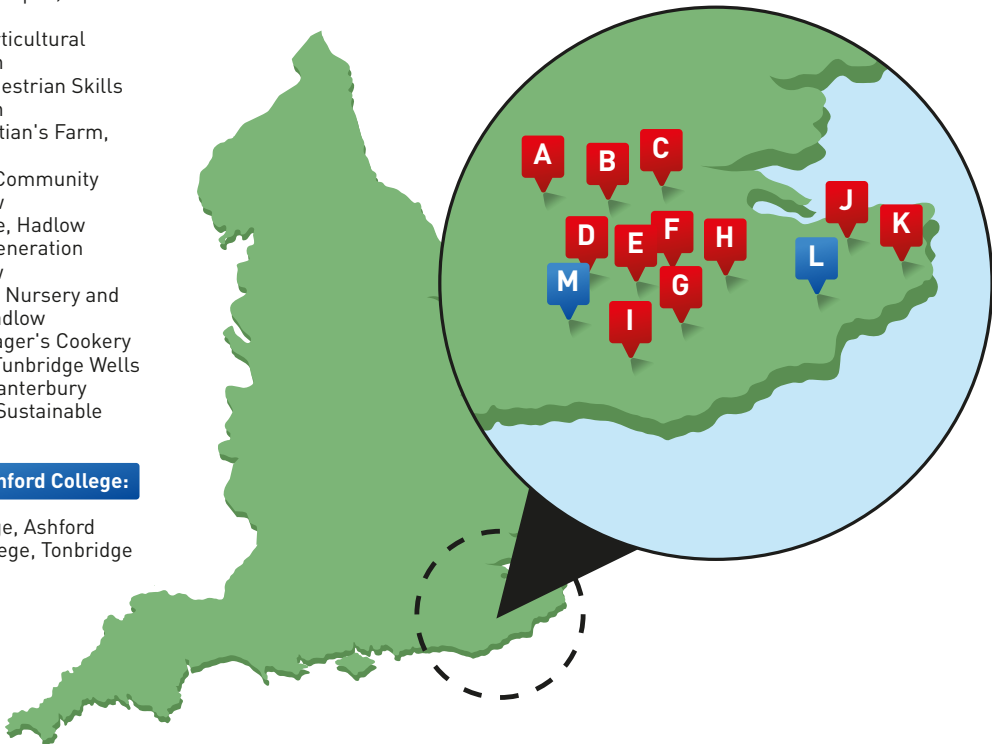
Hadlow College campuses:

- A - Mottingham Campus, Mottingham
- B - Greenwich Horticultural Centre, London
- C - Greenwich Equestrian Skills Centre, London
- D - Princess Christian's Farm, Hildenborough
- E - Hadlow Rural Community School, Hadlow
- F - Hadlow College, Hadlow
- G - The Rural Regeneration Centre, Hadlow
- H - Saplings Rural Nursery and Pre-School, Hadlow
- I - Rosemary Shrager's Cookery School, Royal Tunbridge Wells
- J - Spring Lane, Canterbury
- K - Betteshanger Sustainable Parks, Deal

West Kent and Ashford College:

- M - Ashford College, Ashford
- L - West Kent College, Tonbridge

Hadlow Group's businesses scattered across Kent



Investigated at Hadlow Group

Leadership pair ‘united by their passion for the empire they have created’

The close relationship between Mark Lumsdon-Taylor and Paul Hannan, the two men at the top of the Hadlow Group, was on full display in a Kent Life interview and intimate photoshoot published last June.

Marking Hadlow College's 50th anniversary, the pair were interviewed about “the land-based college's journey from zero to hero”.

According to Kent Life: “Fifteen years on and the two men, both from the north-east but very different personalities, are still working side by side, united by their passion for the empire they have created, and a solid friendship underpinned by mutual respect.

“They even live opposite one another on campus and joke with each other with the ease of long-standing mates and neighbours.”

But it is Mark who does all the talking, very much the face of the college group, several people close to the duo have told

FE Week. Mark describes how, in 2002, Hadlow College was one of his clients when he was director of audit at chartered accountants MHA MacIntyre Hudson in London.

He says it was Paul's “inimitable charm” that persuaded him to join the college to help “sort it out”.

Mark tells the magazine: “I’ve always been the City boy, very corporate in my outlook, and what I knew about rural in 2002 you could write on a postage stamp and still have space!”

After joining as a short-term ‘trouble-shooter’ he was “formally appointed to the Senior Management Team in 2003 with responsibility for finance, commercial and global operations”, and, in 2004, became corporative transformation officer and group director of finance and resources.

Mark went on to become the deputy principal and chief executive for the group following the creation of West

Kent and Ashford College in 2014. In the interview, he describes Paul as “a family man, a teacher by training and ... a brilliant individual with no airs and graces. “He says it as it is and has an approach that is very engaging, whereas mine is slightly more corporate, more business focused. Together we make a really good team.

“Paul has also drummed into me over the last 14 years that the most important thing is our students – who we refer to us as our clients and treat with the utmost respect – and he’s right.”

Mark continues: “And we do have a bit of a giggle on occasions [the photoshoot takes ages, they’re laughing so much] while making core commitments that we’ve never swerved away from, like the investment in horticulture and agriculture. They are our two pillars and fundamental to the business moving forward. It’s governor ratified that we would always focus on those twin pillars. You never sell your silver.”



Mark Lumsdon-Taylor (left) and Paul Hannan

Image credit: Manu Palomeque

NOT TO BE MISSED

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College leaders apply pressure on chancellor for a raise on Valentine's Day

BILLY CAMDEN
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The chancellor was urged to show that he does love colleges on Thursday after representatives from a campaign group demanding more FE funding delivered him a Valentine's card.

FE unions joined the Association of Colleges in paying a visit to the Treasury to hand-deliver the card, which aimed to raise the profile of the Love Our Colleges campaign.

It read: "Dear Chancellor, show your love for colleges with: increased college funding for students and fair pay for staff #LoveOurColleges."

Matt Waddup, head of policy at the University and College Union, said: "The government speaks a lot about the importance of skills, but massive cuts to further education funding have left staff and students worse off.

"It's time for the chancellor to show his support for the vital work of colleges by funding them properly

and investing in the further education workforce."

The Love Our Colleges campaign, along with the Raise the Rate campaign, is calling for all 16- to 19-year-olds to increase to £4,760 in the imminent spending review.

Funding for 16- and 17-year-olds has been frozen at £4,000 per student since 2013, while per-student funding for 18-year-olds was cut to £3,300 in 2014.

A report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies in September found government funding for 16- to 18-year-olds has been cut "much more sharply" than funding for pupils in pre-school, primary, secondary or higher education.

The campaigns have been gathering momentum in recent weeks and led to more than 50 MPs taking part in a Westminster Hall debate in January, when members from all sides of the House of Commons called for an end to six years of real-term FE funding rate cuts.



The Valentine's card was the second time Philip Hammond has been urged to up college funding in a matter of days.

A cross-party letter signed by 164 MPs was handed to the chancellor last Friday demanding an above-inflation increase.

It was given to Mr Hammond by Conservative MP Richard Graham and Gloucestershire College principal Matthew Burgess, and said "while government policy has protected the

incomes of schools and universities, colleges have been dealt an average funding cut of 30 per cent over the last 10 years".

"We believe this constraint on FE resources has had an impact on the teaching, courses and, above all, opportunities for young people and skills of all ages," it added, and described FE as the "Cinderella" of education spending.

David Hughes, chief executive of the Association of Colleges, said: "There is

now very strong cross-party support for the 2.2 million people who study and train in FE colleges each year. It's vital the government helps those tasked with helping to solve the skills gap."

James Kewin, deputy chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges Association, which leads on the Raise the Rate campaign, said: "This year's spending review is a pivotal one for colleges so we are pleased that so many MPs are backing calls for an increase in funding.

"If the government is serious about improving social mobility and increasing productivity, raising the funding rate for 16- to 18-year-olds should be one of the chancellor's main priorities."

The Love Our Colleges campaign is supported by the University College Union, Unison, Unite, GMB, National Education Union, National Union of Students, TUC, the Association of School and College Leaders and the Association of Colleges.

PETROCTM

COLLEGE OF FURTHER & HIGHER EDUCATION

PRINCIPAL & CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Full time, permanent
Location: Barnstaple, Devon
Salary: Competitive
Relocation package
Closes on: Noon on 8 March 2019
Assessment Centre: 27 & 28 March 2019

An exciting opportunity has arisen to lead Petroc into the next decade. Our Principal and CEO is retiring after 8 successful years.

It's a thrilling time to join Petroc... Rated as the best college in the country 2018*, Petroc is committed to driving forward educational success in further and higher education. We are extremely passionate about raising the aspirations, knowledge, innovation and skills of individuals, communities and businesses in Devon and beyond.

*Ranked no 1 in NICDEX league table, published by *FE Week*

From stunning scenery to cutting edge technology, Devon, has so much to give. Positioned in the south west of the UK, Devon covers an area of 2,590 square miles and is bordered by Cornwall, Somerset and Dorset. Its popularity lies predominantly in the beauty of its countryside and coastlines, which offer an enhanced quality of life.

Year after year our students produce exceptional, record-breaking results and progress onto the country's leading universities, further training or employment.

We have three campuses in North Devon and Mid Devon, and are proud to offer an exceptional range of curriculum with provision ranging through further education to higher education including A-levels, apprenticeships, vocational training, degrees and professional programmes both full and part time, and including a wide range of recreational and short courses. We are committed to serving our whole community and live by our values of: Professional, Trusted, Ambitious and Inclusive.

The College has a strategically significant campus in Tiverton, which will require regular travel and on-site presence from the Principal & CEO.

We are seeking a strong leader; one who is visible and aspirational. Our new Principal and CEO will have a track record of success as a further education leader. We seek someone who is values driven, innovative, forward thinking with an emphasis on curriculum, quality and learners. We are looking for an inspirational leader, someone who is business and community focussed and someone who will continue to inspire staff and students alike and take Petroc from being Ofsted 'Good' to 'Outstanding'.

Petroc remains in good financial health, despite the reduction in real-terms funding for the FE sector from the Government

Our Successes:

Number One College 2018 in the FE Week NICDEX league table
Petroc in top 20% in country based on value added (ALPs) (based on 3 year trend data to 2017/18)
'Good' Ofsted December 2015
Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Silver
AoC Beacon Award: commended 2018-19
STEM Assured
'Good' financial health
Matrix
Disability Confident Employer
Dying to Work Charter

Benefits:

39 days holiday, plus 8 bank holidays.
Competitive salary
Relocation package
On-site parking
Comprehensive staff benefits scheme

If you would like an informal chat with the Governance Advisor, Jane Barton, please contact **01271 852456**.

For further information and to download an application pack, please visit our website www.petroc.ac.uk/jobs. Please note it is not College policy to accept CV's

Head of Curriculum - Construction, Engineering & Motor Vehicle

Are you passionate about improving students lives?

West London College (WLC) is looking for a skilled and industry experienced Head of Curriculum - Construction, Engineering and Motor Vehicle to join the College to deliver an excellent service and continue the strengthening of our specialisms in Construction, Engineering and Motor Vehicle. If you are driven, enthusiastic and committed to ensuring an outstanding experience for the learners we serve and provide opportunities to our communities, we would love to hear from you.

The successful candidate will be prepared to have a significant impact upon local and regional skills development within the construction, engineering and motor vehicle areas. This includes playing a leading role in our innovative partnership with Berkeley Homes, which has already established a training academy at one of Berkeley Homes' largest building projects, on the site of Southall Waterside.

This role will also be crucial in the development of Park Royal College which is located at the centre of economic activity on the largest business park in London on the border of Ealing and Brent local authorities.

We are seeking to recruit a talented and capable individual who would be joining us at a key time, with the College ready to maximise the opportunities that our vibrant local economy provides. Can you develop, manage and continuously improve

an education and training offer that meets the local and regional needs, contributes to growth and ensures high standards are exceeded?

The Role

The successful candidate will be an active member of the Directorate Management Team, providing inspirational leadership to staff, encouraging innovation and excellence and ensuring the learner experience is of the highest quality. Key aspects of the role will be developing and maintaining high quality learner experiences and outcomes as well as embedding the College's core values of Excellence, Ambition, Focus, Accountability, Inclusion and Integrity.

The post holder will also be responsible for securing growth as well as continuous improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

To Apply

For more information and to apply please visit our website and send a CV with supporting statement to hrresourcing@wlc.ac.uk quoting the post you are interested in.

Tenure: Permanent
Salary: Competitive
Closing Date: 10th March 2019



Apprenticeship Skills Trainers

In addition, as our provision is rapidly growing we are looking to recruit talented and industry experienced **Apprenticeship Skills Trainers** for the following areas:

- Brickwork
- Carpentry
- Electrical
- Property Maintenance
- Plumbing

To Apply

For more information please email hrresourcing@wlc.ac.uk.

Hammersmith & Fulham College

Gliddon Road,
Barons Court,
London
W14 9BL

Ealing Green College

The Green,
Ealing,
London
W5 5EW

Southall Community College

Beaconsfield
Road, Southall,
Middlesex
UB1 1DP

Park Royal College

Unit 1, Nucleus
Park, Central Way,
Park Royal, London
NW10 7XT

West London Construction Academy

Southall Waterside,
170 Brent Road,
Southall
UB2 5LE

TEC Partnership

Training • Education • Careers

Director of Finance - TEC Partnership circa £85,000

The closing date is 12 noon on Monday 11 March 2019

The TEC Partnership (made up of the Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education, Scarborough and Skegness College's, the 14-16 Academy and Modal Logistics) is a successful and ambitious educational organisation offering excellent education at all levels to our learners.

We have a forecast turnover of over £42 million this year. Our main campus is at Grimsby together with other locations throughout Lincolnshire and in North Yorkshire and a growing network of National Employability Training Centres. We were judged to be "Outstanding" in 2017 and continue to build on this accolade aiming to be the leading Further and Higher Education provider in the country, in addition to our growing services to industry. We operate within a diverse and supportive Group structure and take great pride in our innovation and search for new opportunities in education, training and development.

Our current Director will shortly be moving to a new role outside the Partnership and we are now seeking a new Director of Finance to join us.

This exciting opportunity will suit an individual with a strategic perspective together with the intellectual and technical capacity to undertake the diverse needs of this role, which will also include responsibility for Purchasing, Management Information Services, Refectory Services, Legal and Risk Management. You will also actively explore new opportunities for funding and diversifying our income streams and play a key role in our investment and commercial strategies.

We are looking for a qualified accountant with a successful track record in setting business direction and converting long term objectives into action. You will thrive in a fast paced and challenging environment and demonstrate proven ability to lead and advise colleagues on all financial matters. It is likely that your career to date includes significant experience of leading a broad resources function within a large and complex organisation. Further Education experience would be a distinct advantage but this should not deter outstanding candidates who are able to quickly get to grips with the sector.

If you wish to have an informal telephone discussion with our Chief Executive, Gill Alton on this role please email goodhewp@grimsby.ac.uk to arrange a convenient time.

A formal assessment day for invited candidates will be held on Friday 5 April.

The Job Description and Person specification for this role can be found on our website <http://www.vacancies.tecpartnership.com/grimsby-institute-vacancies.php>

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per annum

St Helens Chamber is a first class training and business support company, employing 110+ people and recognised through quality marks including : Queen's Award for Enterprise, Investors in People Gold, Ofsted Good; Chamber of the Year 2016 and Matrix Accreditation.

We are seeking an experienced senior manager to lead our highly successful Training Services department and join our Senior Management Team.

With responsibility for 50 staff and a budget of £3m, you will have demonstrated an ability to lead a high-performing team, coupled with the technical knowledge this role demands.

Our Training Services department delivers Apprenticeship training to over 600 Apprentices across Merseyside, in addition to delivering Adult Education programmes and a range of projects to improve the skills of local people and businesses.

Our implementation of the Apprenticeship reforms has been highly successful, strongly supported by

both levy payers and smaller businesses, and we have progressed well in making the switch from Frameworks to Standards. We deliver across a wide range of Apprenticeship sectors including Health & Social Care, Business, Leadership & Management, Logistics, Construction and Hairdressing.

We pride ourselves in maintaining high quality delivery – evidenced by our achievement rates, employer and learner satisfaction rates and Ofsted grades of Good, with Outstanding for Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare.

If you share our passion for training and development and have a proven track record of managing Apprenticeship delivery, then we want to hear from you. This role suits a proactive, market-orientated person inspired by the opportunity to develop outstanding training for local people and our business community.

Whilst being based in St Helens you will be required to travel across Merseyside and surrounding areas so the use of your own car is essential.

If you would like to apply for this vacancy please forward a copy of your CV with a covering letter stating your current salary to **Louise Johnson, HR Assistant, St Helens Chamber, Salisbury Street, St Helens WA10 1FY** or to vacancyinfo@sthelenschamber.com

Further information can be found on our website www.sthelenschamber.com
Closing date for receipt of applications is 26th February 2019.
An enhanced DBS check is a requirement for this role.



Chief Finance Officer Permanent 37 hours per week

The College is looking to appoint a new Chief Finance Officer. This role will be a senior post-holder with responsibility for the overall financial management of Tyne Coast College and the Tyne Coast Academy Trust, which is sponsored by the College. The post-holder will report to the Chief Executive of the College.

As a multi-million pound organisation with international reach and reputation, we are committed to ongoing investment in the north east, the local communities we serve, our facilities, our staff and our students' experience.

This role would suit an inspirational and innovative leader, able to meet the challenges facing the Further Education sector while

ensuring the College delivers value for money, and adheres to comprehensive and rigorous financial controls.

This is an exciting but demanding period of growth for the College and as such will require a dynamic Chief Finance Officer who is committed to continuously improving the financial service provided to the College and Academy Trust.

If you would like to discuss the role in more detail please contact Catherine Donnelly, Executive Director of Human Resources on **0191 427 3905** or email Catherine.Donnelly@stc.ac.uk

Closing date for applications Monday 25th February 2019

Interviews to be confirmed but expected to be held w/c 18th March 2019

To apply and to view details of further exciting opportunities, please visit www.stc.ac.uk or contact the HR Department, email on hr@stc.ac.uk or Tel: **0191 427 3583**. Please quote the appropriate post reference. All positions at the College are subject to DBS clearance.

Please note if you are successful at the shortlisting stage interview details will be sent to the e-mail address you applied from.

The College is an Equal Opportunities employer. All employees have a responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

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EDITORIAL



‘High quality’ apprenticeships at risk from policy blind spots

This week we expose four oversight gaps that have emerged since the implementation of apprenticeships. They each put the credibility of the programme at risk, and need sorting, and fast.

Blind spot 1: Office for Students has still not committed to monitoring the quality of the rapidly expanding level six and seven ‘non-degree’ apprenticeships. Incredibly, because Ofsted are not permitted to step in, this means some providers simply fly under the inspection radar.

Blind spot 2: When new

providers fail an Ofsted monitoring visit the ESFA policy is that they pause new starts until a full inspection. Yet providers like BBP University can continue starts at level six and seven as it is not inspected by Ofsted (see above). They can also continue the paused level two to five apprenticeships by switching it to a different legal entity. Surely Ofsted and the Department for Education need to close this major loop-hole that makes a mockery of their intervention regime?

Blind spot 3: Apprenticeship standards

are approved for delivery by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) before end-point-assessment bodies have been approved by the ESFA. And in one case, for the nursing associate apprenticeship, thousands have been on the course for a year or more despite there still being no assessment body in place.

Blind spot 4: The IfATE has responsibility for overseeing the apprenticeship external quality assurance (EQA) bodies. Yet the IfATE is itself an EQA body, therefore overseeing itself.

This is something the National Audit Office is likely to question in their forthcoming report. At present the IfATE contract out their EQA responsibility, but as we report this week it remains unclear who will do the work in April. In what appears to be a hastily arranged tender, the IfATE cannot get a new contractor in place fast enough.

These are all technical areas but combined they highlight significant policy failure that needs fixing.

But who to fix them? The alphabet soup of acronyms neatly highlights a more general blind spot over who

is actually responsible for overseeing quality: DfE, ESFA, Ofsted, OfS, IfATE, EQAs or EPAOs?

Nobody should pretend policy implementation is easy, but it’s been more than four years since the first apprentices started on a standard.

To put it in Ofsted terms, apprenticeship quality oversight it is still ‘inadequate’ and there has quite clearly been ‘insufficient progress’.

Nick Linford, Editor
news@feweek.co.uk

Readers’ reply



ESFA bans six more providers from taking on apprentices

Unfortunately, on the previous RoATP (register of apprenticeship training providers) the obligations around quality and compliance weren’t made clear enough. A lot of employer providers who already did training thought they could become apprenticeship providers, not understanding the safeguarding, Prevent, E&D and compliance: all the work providers put into these required areas and the resources these need. Delivering compliant apprenticeships isn’t easy, it’s more than just vocational training. We don’t undertake building, sell clothes etc. We just do apprenticeships and training well in England and Scotland.

Judith Jackson

DfE publishes indicators for potential fraud in education providers

For an organisation tasked with looking after a nation’s education, the ESFA don’t seem capable of actually learning anything themselves. Seem to hand out contracts without application of common sense or check on track record.

Marches Skills Providers Network

Why are providers charging the maximum apprenticeship price?

Because employers want quality delivery and that is how much it costs to recruit suitably qualified tutors with relevant high-level industry experience. Reduce the cost and you end up with a bums-on-seats mentality just so providers can break even, as seen with

SASE (specification of apprenticeship standards for England) frameworks.

Emma Guy

Because in writing a standard, a trailblazer group has to obtain three quotes and submit. The bandings are based on this because that’s how much it was quoted to deliver and that’s what is needed to provide a suitable service.

Nick K Maidment

Scrap GCSE in favour of holistic baccalaureate, Halfon says

How can you bring in vocational subjects when schools are frightened to death of learners cutting themselves? Teach children metalwork and woodwork, ha ha, there’s a radical idea.

David Hilton

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Providers turning apprentices away as non-levy cash dries up

‘Non-levy paying’ doesn’t mean insignificant. Small and medium-sized employers are the backbone of our economy and we’re witnessing an increasing demand from employers for skills training through apprenticeships.

We’re entering a new, and as yet unknown, period in our history. One that will undoubtedly require more home-grown talent to meet employer needs. Am I missing something?

Come on, increase the budget and we’ll satisfy the demand!!

Noel Johnson

Experts

SIR GERRY BERRAGAN

Chief executive, Institute for Apprenticeships



We recognise we can improve how we work with employers

In the wake of the recent CBI report that criticised some of the work of the Institute for Apprenticeships, Sir Gerry Berragan says he recognises that there are improvements to be made

The Institute for Apprentices has welcomed the Confederation of British Industry's recent report Getting Apprenticeships Right. It reiterated our central role in driving quality in apprenticeships and T-levels. We welcomed many of its recommendations, particularly those that highlighted the role of employers leading the development of standards to plug the skills gaps in our workforce.

The institute is an employer-led organisation and how we engage our core stakeholders – particularly employers – is a key element of how we function. One of the main themes of the report was a need for the institute to engage more closely with employers over funding decisions.

This is not new feedback. As we are in regular contact with employers, we understand their desire for greater transparency on funding decisions. As

“The CBI report highlighted that some of our staff lack commercial awareness”

a result, we have launched a review into how we engage employers and how we might be more transparent about our funding band process.

Our funding band recommendations are about balancing the cost of delivering high-quality apprenticeships with ensuring value for money for the taxpayer. The purpose of the review is to ensure employers better understand how

those decisions are made and where in the process they can have most influence. We will welcome feedback from employers, training providers and awarding organisations in support of this review through the consultation phase.

The report also suggested that the institute could be faster at approving standards. We launched our Faster and Better programme in February last year with the aim of working more closely with employers to refine our processes so that standards could be identified, developed and approved more quickly and effectively.

This programme has already demonstrated success as we approach the publication of our 400th standard. We are now looking to a second wave of improvements and to having 500 approved standards before the end of this year – and I am confident that we will achieve this. We will seek to achieve similar pace and momentum in developing T-levels.

I was gratified that the CBI report noted that employers largely had positive relationships with our staff, particularly our relationship managers (RM) who work with employers throughout this process. But the report highlighted that some of our staff lacked commercial awareness, which can put a strain on this relationship.

We have already taken action on this and have committed to developing the commercial expertise of our

“We will always strive to review and improve”

RMs. It is possible for them to build considerable knowledge and insight over time across a caseload of often up to 40 or 50 different occupations.

We are still a relatively new organisation, learning, growing and

taking on new responsibilities. Reports such as the one published by the CBI are essential to hear, understand and respond to employers' perspectives. We recognise that we can improve how we work with employers, as well as streamlining our processes and improving transparency. This is a journey of continuous improvement that has no end; we will always strive to review and improve.

The clear message from employers is they value the institute and the work we do. The CBI report recognises the integral and long-term role the institute has at the heart of technical education and wants to see more. I am confident that we can deliver the reforms needed in technical education to support learners today and in the future. We are very grateful for the continued support of employers and conscious of the significance of the work we are doing collectively to address the nation's productivity challenge.

TARA BLISS-APPLETON

Head of welfare and support, Saint Edmunds Society, Norwich



A holistic package of support can improve students' outcomes

Building welfare support into post-16 provision is crucial to improving retention and achievements, says Tara Bliss-Appleton, who has some tips on how to make the funding work

The Saint Edmunds Society has offered vocational training since 2012 to young people who have struggled in mainstream education, to help them to develop meaningful trade-specific skills that will open doors to further training and employment.

We soon realised, however, that skills training was not enough. Disengagement from mainstream education is often driven by personal circumstances such as permanent exclusion, bullying, family breakdown and sometimes substance misuse. Our students presented with a range of barriers to learning, including anxiety, low income, and limited literacy and numeracy skills.

Our response was to build a strong welfare team, under the theory that a holistic package of support can improve

learning and life outcomes. I'm a level 2 social worker with 14 years' experience working across frontline crisis and therapeutic intervention teams, and I now manage a welfare team of seven with multiple specialisms in special educational needs, advocacy, mentoring and behaviour support.

The central focus of our welfare support team has been to work in partnership with students, parents and all professionals within an individual's support network – from the NHS wellbeing service to children's services or supported housing in the voluntary sector – to design a student support plan around short and long-term career goals.

We all know this kind of support for vulnerable learners is desirable, but the key question is, how do you make it work in practice? And how do you fund it?

The simple answer from an FE perspective is to pay careful attention to how support is allocated on an individual learning record and not just go through the motion of adding “x hours” in tutorial and enrichment support without the

intent to deliver. It is best practice to allocate each student a link welfare worker, but have them get to know the entire team. Face to face contact – rather than an electronic survey to monitor support needs – is essential, and contributes to confidence, retention and achievement.

“Many students are restricted by their postcode or trade”

Some of our funding comes from schools commissioning us for alternative provision. For the post-16 study programme, additional learning support funding is allocated from our prime Education and Skills Funding Agency provider and local authority high needs top-up funding (where support funding is more than £6,000), which is agreed at the local authority

SEN panel.

Further funding is allocated to projects from charitable trusts, European Social Fund short courses and employers such as Pentaco Construction and Taylor Wimpey, who see investment in young people and support services as part of their corporate social responsibility.

When the welfare team concept was first introduced to St-Eds, I was fortunate that a grant was awarded from a local charitable trust to fund my post for 18 months in 2014.

For students accessing our 16-19 study programme, specific time is allocated to each enrichment and support aim displayed on their individual learning plan (ILP), in addition to our flexible “drop in” support service.

Our growth in post-16 numbers from 20 in 2014-15 to 96 in 2017-18 reflects the impact the welfare team has had on our retention strategy. In the past academic year, 96 per cent of service users reported that the welfare support they received had a positive impact on

their experience, motivation and overall achievement.

Spending for each full-time equivalent 16-19 student (eg, sixth-form colleges and general FE colleges) has fallen significantly from £6,208 in 2010-11 to £5,698 in 2017-18. It appears the gap in tutorial and enrichment support stemmed from the cuts in entitlement funding used to fund tutorial and positive enrichment activities for all students between 2010-11 and 2012-13. With less funding, many students who receive disadvantage and sector skills uplifts are often restricted by the postcode they live in or vocational trade they choose. For example, construction students receive a 20 per cent sector skills uplift whereas students on a horticulture and forestry course could receive up to 75 per cent.

What needs to change at policy level is the amount of funding uplift available for all young people with additional support needs, not just those with the right postcode or sector skill, or those eligible for top-up funding through their education health care plan.

STEVE SMITH

Project manager, outside of the classroom learning, Preston's College, Preston



How we made virtual reality part of our students' learning

After a poor Ofsted inspection, Preston's College worked out how technology could boost student and staff performance, says Steve Smith

Everyone knows what 360-degree footage is – it's everywhere, from intrepid Go Pro users wrestling great whites to "twerking" on the world's highest peaks. Our role, as educators, however, is to go beyond entertainment and use technology to create a distinctive learning experience. At Preston's College we think we have worked out how to do it – on a small budget.

After our last but one Ofsted visit our college dropped to a grade 3. We were criticised for not providing enough formative assessments for our learners and needed to provide more "stretch and challenge" for our more able ones. The college made a variety of improvements and following our last inspection in October last year we became a strong grade 2 college. Our augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) work was definitely part of the picture.

This is the difference I think they have made to our formative assessment.

Reflection and review is more compelling

Learners in performing arts are continually on the move – how can fleeting movements be captured to evaluate how they use their space and interact with each other? By placing a 360-degree camera in the middle of a set of dancers or actors, they can look at the footage and set any angle of view to show how they move through space and relate to one another. They can "freeze-frame" to look at their backs or three-quarter views – any angle that is inaccessible in practice. The clarity and richness of information astonishes and stimulates learners to reach beyond what they thought was possible.

Learners can now create and publish their own AR and VR resources that were almost impossible just two years ago

Our sport tech learners used

scanning software to design their own football boots and shirt tops for a group assessment. They could project and rotate their design and show a person wearing their top in 3D. It was just a whole step beyond what they thought was possible, and it stimulated them to explain their products in greater depth, which, in turn, improved their assessment grades.

"It was a step beyond what they thought was possible"

Students have value-added workplace skills

We have encouraged learners to use 3D scanners and 360-degree cameras to create resources and widen their skill-set to annotate and publish what they make. Imagine the impact on employers when a learner

produces e-portfolio evidence using 3D objects and virtual images. With more investment in industrial hand-held scanners, any learner could link their work to CAD CAM and 3D printing. For instance, hairdressing students could design and prototype their own range of styling equipment, or civil engineering learners could convert their architectural structural designs into three-dimensional models.

It's also re-energised our teaching staff.

Expensive resources are better used and shared in new ways

We bought our first mobile 3D scanner for £399 and practised on an expensive plastic model of hair follicles and skin dermis layers, placing the 3D object on a free platform. We used free software to "layer" information on the object to give a fuller explanation of the subject.

We'd seen its potential for teaching in biology but on a professional development day, teachers from hair

and beauty said: "that's fantastic, we can use that!" Another teacher from auto vehicle said: "that's really useful to show how oil affects the skin and hair and why it's important to wash your hands correctly". Thus a model that had spent too much time sitting on a shelf in a classroom ended up reaching across three curriculum areas.

It stimulates teachers to change what they do

We hold our AR and VR resources centrally, although teachers can book them out and use them inside and outside the college. The skill-set is modest so CPD effort is minimal (but we always give help when needed!).


The key to it all

Technology needs to be an answer to a specific problem: in our case how we improved formative assessments and stimulated learners to exceed their personal expectations. Having a clear objective will make it easier to see what difference, if any, AR and VR can make.

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Bulletin



Colin Davey

Performing and production arts subject leader, Plymouth College

Start date January 2019


Previous job
Performing arts lecturer, Exeter College

Interesting fact
Colin was born with a vocal defect that meant he couldn't speak until after undergoing surgery and speech therapy, aged five. Now as an adult Colin specialises as a vocal coach

Movers & Shakers

...

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




David Turner

Assistant principal for quality and HE, Walsall College

Start date October 2018

Previous job
Director of quality and HE, Walsall College

Interesting fact
David exhibits collections of his photos at regional galleries and events




Dr Philip Wright

Director general, Joint Council for Qualifications

Start date March 2019

Previous job
Chief executive at Textile Services Association

Interesting fact
Philip trained as a marine biologist studying seaweed in the UK and USA




Richard Brennan

Assistant principal for curriculum, Walsall College

Start date December 2018

Previous job
Assistant principal for curriculum, Warwickshire College Group

Interesting fact
The first band he was in was called 'The Great Naked Guitar Scandal' and he was the guitarist



Simon Ashworth

Future ready skills commissioner, West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Start date January 2019

Previous job
Chief policy officer, AELP (remains in post)

Interesting fact
Last year, he led a UK delegation to share best practice and create new commercial partnerships around apprenticeships in the USA

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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

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

Solutions: See right

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Last Edition's winner: Chris Rowland

Solutions

Turn the paper around to check if your answers match - but no cheating!

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

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