



Monday 11 June 2012

90%

Where will it end?

90% of colleges believe there is a success rate credibility problem [See page 3 for our survey](#)

80%

70%

60%

50%

40%

30%

20%

10%



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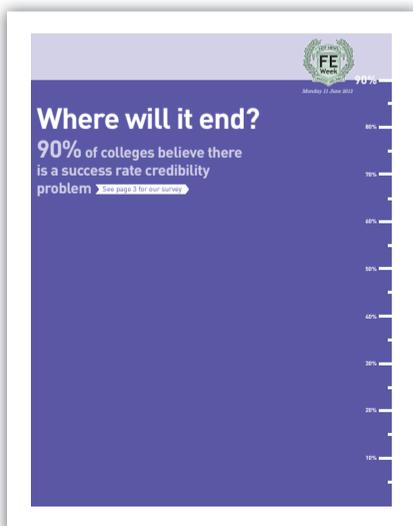
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'Massive' error in success rates

Nick Summers
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The National Success Rate Tables (NSRT) for 2010/11 will need to be republished after significant errors were identified.

More than 23 per cent of all qualifications are showing an 'unknown' level, up from just 2 per cent in the earlier Qualification Success Rate (QSR) report (see table below).

Members of the College Management Information Systems (CMIS) network say the "massive" anomalies include BTEC qualifications and Access to HE courses. Values also vary for similar qualifications from different awarding bodies.

One example given is a Diploma in Complementary Therapies (QCF) from City & Guilds, displayed as a level 3, while the equivalent qualification from VTCT is an 'unknown' level.

Comparisons to the 2010/11 QSR reports show a difference of 672,123 'unknown' starts across all age groups and providers.

The number of 'unknown' starts has also risen from 8,777 in the QSR to 546,295 in the NSRT for learners of all ages in general FE colleges.

Jerry White, head of planning and performance at City College Norwich, told *FE Week*: "The 2010/11 tables provide national averages (benchmarks) which clearly differ from those published within the 2010/11 Qualification

Success Rate reports.

"As these national averages play a major role in college self-assessment and the judgements made on our performance by bodies such as Ofsted, it is vital that there is accuracy and reliability in this national performance data.

"I would hope that the Data Service would explain why there has been a variance and make the corrections necessary to produce a definitive, reliable dataset against which providers can measure themselves."

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA), on behalf of the Data Service, has since told *FE Week* the NSRT has been removed and will be re-published within the next two weeks.

"The NSRTs that were published on May 24 had an unusually high number of unknown notional levels in the 'other' qualification type category," said an SFA spokesperson.

"Our investigation into this issue has determined that there is an error and we have therefore removed the reports temporarily.

"The revised reports, with details on the revision, are expected to be available by mid-June."

The retraction differs drastically from the Service's original response last month.

"Unfortunately this is due to the classification in the LARA tables," it said then.

"You are correct that this is an issue. Unfortunately the 2010/11 tables cannot be changed, but measures are in place to address this so this will not happen in the 2011/12 tables."

Level	QSR		NSRT	
L1	1,105,353	35%	831,153	26%
L2	857,094	27%	586,387	19%
L3	1,114,778	36%	992,473	32%
Unknown	54,998	2%	727,121	23%
Total	3,132,223		3,137,134	

Stafford and Franklin challenge Ofsted

Nick Summers
 @SummersNicholas

Two colleges in the FE sector are considering appeals after receiving 'inadequate' or 'satisfactory' inspection grades from Ofsted.

Stafford College, which received a grade four at the end of last month, has confirmed it will be submitting an appeal because of "crucial factual errors" in its inspection report.

Steve Willis, principal of the college, has also said the informal feedback from inspectors gave a "misleading picture of the quality of work that takes place at this college".

A statement issued by the college said the poor inspection grade can be attributed to a measure of student performance called 'Outcomes for Learners' that, under new weighting, has forced its teaching, management and value for money to be downgraded.

The inspection report, which follows a "good" grade two rating in 2009, said lessons at Stafford College are "uninspiring" and fail to challenge learners.

"Teachers know their subjects well but the quality of lessons across the college varies too much," the report said.

"Inspectors found good teaching and learning in over half the lessons observed but too much (of) that was satisfactory and did not challenge learners enough to reach their full potential."

It later said the college's success rates have declined and are particularly low for learners on advanced courses.

The statement from the college, however, refers to a report by Tenon Education Training and Skills Limited, which was written on behalf of a secret group of colleges.

The report, seen by *FE Week*, suggests "widespread" methods artificially inflate success rate data and inspection grades.

Mr Willis says: "There are many ways in which we could have reported entirely different levels of student success.

"We decided to be entirely rigorous and transparent in our data collection, adhering to national guidelines.

"Colleges are under enormous pressure to find creative ways to measure their success rates and we knew that our own approach could lead to us falling below the national average.

"Once that happened, a poor inspection outcome was inevitable."

Franklin College, which also received an 'inadequate' grade from Ofsted in May, said it too is considering an appeal.

The sixth form college in Grimsby, which received a 'good' rating in 2008, has been criticised for "not driving improvements with urgency".

Inspectors said that the leadership and management of the college requires improvement, and that strategic priorities need to be communicated more effectively to staff.

They also say that the success rates for students on AS level courses is "consistently and significantly" below the national average.

"Since the last inspection there has been no trend of improvement in poor success rates in AS level and on intermediate courses."

Using new pilot inspection guidelines, Ofsted said that too many courses at the college have poor retention rates, although they admit that in the current year "retention rates have improved".

Barnfield College, which has fallen from "outstanding" to "satisfactory", said it had decided not to appeal an Ofsted report that said a significant number of lessons did not challenge students and were unclear about what they should be learning.

It later said the college is "over-generous" when judging its own performance, and also has declining success rates for students on long courses.

Pete Birkett, Chief Executive of the Barnfield Federation said: "The college takes all audits very seriously and uses them to raise our game, which we are doing so."

An Ofsted spokesperson told *FE Week* it did not comment on individual inspections "over and above the published reports".

When questioned about the appeals, the spokesperson added: "Ofsted does not comment on whether a complaint or concerns have been received about individual providers."

Colleges 'fixing' the figures. Where will it end?

FE Week Exclusive

Nick Summers

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An overwhelming majority of staff working in FE colleges have concerns with the credibility of success rate data.

A survey conducted by Lsect, publisher of *FE Week*, revealed that after excluding those who responded 'don't know', 90 per cent said "yes" to the question: "Across colleges, do you think there is a problem with success rate data credibility?"

Becky Dowst, CIS manager at Totton College, said: "The artificial inflation of college success rates causes the national rates to rise, putting colleges under greater pressure to improve their own success rates still further...where will it end?"

Angie Tithecott, head of funding and performance review at Canterbury College, added: "Over the years I have had other staff within my college come back and tell me how other

colleges improve their rates; this has been using methods I would have said were not acceptable, like changing end dates and removing fails."

The survey, which had 106 responses from 94 colleges, followed a confidential report, seen by *FE Week*, from Tenon Education Training and Skills Limited. The document, which *FE Week* reported in its last edition, was written for a secret group of FE colleges and suggested headline success rates could be improved by up to 10 per cent by adopting unfair practices.

Jon Brown, MIS manager for Loughborough College, said: "There is certainly pressure within colleges to find ways to maximise success rates (other than by making sure the data is correct).

"This is unhelpful to say the least and in discussions with colleagues in the sector, there is definitely a spread of views as to whether this is acceptable.

"Given this, it is highly likely that a significant number of colleges 'fix' the success rates.

"The problem is that most of the information is anecdotal, but there is a growing unease that some colleges have knowingly decided to take

actions that disguise the true picture."

The Tenon report claimed: "the use of practices to improve success rates is widespread within FE colleges."

Seventy-per cent of respondents to the Lsect survey agreed when asked if they thought this was true. Dean Carey, head of MIS at South Nottingham College, said: "I've worked in four colleges in an MIS role and there has always been pressure applied to the MIS/data teams to 'sort' the data out either with individual department heads or cross-college.

"It requires these teams to maintain a strong stance and make managers aware of the risks and ultimately providers can be setting themselves up to fail by artificially inflating success rates."

He added: "We've all seen the letters from the funding agencies warning us not to adjust data and there will be tighter checks done, etc."

Mr Carey said the reality was that resources were being squeezed at the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

However, 24 survey respondents disagreed that the practices were "widespread".

Neil Reeves, MIS team leader at City College Brighton & Hove, said: "There may be some instances where the practices outlined are occurring, but I feel they may be looking for a scandal that isn't there."

A spokesperson for the SFA told *FE Week*: "The Agency does not use overall success rates as a means of managing and regulating funds, or as a trigger for formal intervention.

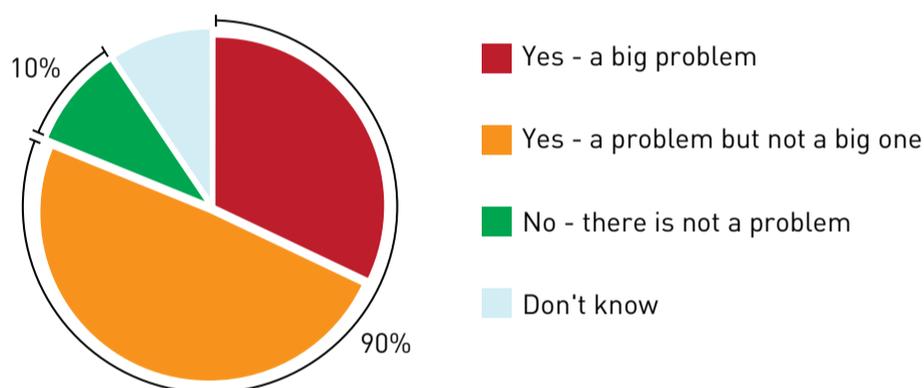
"If we receive reliable intelligence about any provider manipulating their data the Agency will investigate fully."

The Tenon report also said colleges were using specific practices "to support in the manipulation of inspection grades."

However, a spokesperson for Ofsted told *FE Week*: "Ofsted is confident of the reliability of the national success rates data for this purpose.

"Ofsted also uses a range of other sources of evidence when arriving at inspection judgments including the provider's own in-year performance data, the provider's self-assessment report, previous inspection findings, observations of teaching, training and assessment and the views of staff, learners and employers."

Across colleges, do you think there is a problem with success rate data credibility?



Flaws in the agency model

Nick Summers

@SummersNicholas

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) has questioned the way learners are employed by Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs).

An article in the association's weekly briefing, written by Graham Hoyle, chief executive of AELP, said there had been "simmering disquiet" from members about the legitimacy of the ATA model.

"For many the capacity allowing the ATA to employ the apprentice is seen simply as a device to get round the dictat, supported by AELP, that all apprentices must be employed.

"It is perceived as a concession to a few to circumvent what is otherwise seen as a rigid stipulation, one which merely legitimises the continuation of the now outlawed programme led apprenticeships," he said.

Mr Hoyle suggested in his article, which was sent to David Way, chief executive of the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), that ATAs be forced to deliver pre-apprenticeship or access to apprenticeship programmes until the learner was hired full-time by the employer.

He said providers would then be encour-

aged to develop a mixture of programmes aimed at progressing learners on a full apprenticeship "at the earliest opportunity".

However, in a written response Mr Way said these concerns had been addressed with the introduction of the ATA Recognition Process.

The process, managed in partnership with the Confederation of Apprenticeship Training Agencies (COATA), meant colleges and training providers could only work with ATAs approved by NAS from 2012/13.

"All ATA apprentices are employed from day one of their apprenticeship by the ATA and undertake their apprenticeship programme with a host employer in real sustainable employment where they are able to complete their apprenticeship," Mr Way said.

Peter Pledger, chairman of COATA said: "Graham Hoyle, he's thrown in all the ATA manifestations all into one pot and damned the lot of them.

"It seems to me to be a fundamental misunderstanding about what an ATA actually is.

"An ATA is not a training provider, an ATA is an employer and it seems to me that he has missed that point."

Mr Pledger said COATA would meet with NAS, AELP and the Association of Colleges later this month to discuss any issues.

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FE Week investigates

Green light for another 15 UTCs

Holly Welham

@HollyWelham

A further 15 University Technical Colleges (UTCs) are to be funded by the government and rolled out over the next two years. The announcement will nearly double their number to 34.

The government is investing £8 to £10 million for each UTC to help them get started, including building costs, and will then give the same amount of money per pupil that other secondary schools receive.

Lord Hill, the Schools Minister said he was “very pleased” to be announcing the approval of more UTCs. “Right around the country there is a lot of enthusiasm from employers, universities, pupils and parents for high quality, rigorous technical education.

“They provide more choice for children as well as helping provide the kind of highly skilled technicians our economy needs.”

The UTC model is the brainchild of Lord Baker and the late Lord Dearing, who decided four years ago that the one thing missing from the education system was technical colleges.

The institutions are for 14 to 19 year-olds and each has one or two specialisms – ranging from engineering, to manufacturing, to construction or bio-medical sciences.

The technical course is taught alongside a core GCSE curriculum, and some pupils go on to A Level subjects.

Students spend about 60 per cent of their time on academic study and work the business hours that would be expected of them in industry (for example, 8:30am to 5pm).

All UTCs are supported by a university, a range of local employers and very often an FE college.

One of the two UTCs currently open, the JCB Academy in Staffordshire, is backed by a multinational construction company, and the presence of big business is felt strongly in the upcoming UTCs.

The owners of Heathrow, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic are backing one of the colleges, which will specialise in aviation engineering, and Jaguar Land Rover is a stakeholder in Warwick UTC.

Overall, 300 companies are supporting the 34 UTCs.

The other college currently in operation, Black Country UTC in the West Midlands, works with more than 50 high profile companies, including Siemens UK.

Chris Hilton, the principal, said that its relationship with employers is critical to ensuring that students have the best chance of finding work after they leave school.

“The curriculum is actively shaped by employers and industry stakeholders, ensuring the knowledge and skills pupils gain fully meet the demands of industry,” he said.

“The College supports the Black Country regeneration agenda by addressing the need of more relevant and current educational and training opportunities for young people in engineering and manufacturing.”

He added: “We also utilise our industry links to ensure students are able to work on live briefs set by employers and have real exposure to industry through company visits and work experience opportunities.”

“The growth of the economy is not going to come from bankers or real estate developers”

Technical colleges look set to become a prominent aspect of the educational landscape. Since the first two opened two years ago the number has snowballed and Lord Baker hopes to see 100 set up.

He believes the colleges are crucial for this country’s financial health: “The growth of the economy is not going to come from bankers or real estate developers.

“It’s going to come from innovation and technological design.”

Speaking exclusively to *FE Week*, he added: “We’re training engineers and technicians, which this country is desperately short of.

“We can’t have nuclear power stations and high speed rail, tunnelling and broadband communications, unless we have lots of engineers and technicians.

“That’s what keeps the economy going today.”

Ed Miliband spoke recently about the “snobbery” that exists towards vocational courses, arguing that higher education should not be the only catalyst for social mobility.

Lord Baker echoes this and describes UTCs as “agents of social mobility”, highlighting that 23 per cent of children at the Black Country UTC in Walsall are on free school meals.

“[UTCs] fulfil a very important social obligation of engaging the disengaged. [There are] lots of 13 and 14 year olds who are very fed up and we have to switch them on again.”

He believes that the technical colleges that existed in the 1950s closed because of “snobbery” and that this attitude is still present.

“We have to beat that snobbery and recreate real opportunity,” he said.



Kenneth Baker, Baron Baker of Dorking and founder of the Baker Dearing Trust

Name of UTC	Specialism
Birkenhead UTC (Merseyside)	Engineering
Bluewater UTC (Dartford/Thameside)	Engineering Integrated Computer Science
Cambridge UTC	Bio-medical Science & Technology Environmental Science & Technology
East London UTC (Thames Gateway)	Mechanical (manufacturing) engineering Product Design and Development
Energy Coast UTC (Cumbria)	Energy
The Elstree UTC (Hertfordshire)	Electronic Engineering and Digital Technologies Entertainment Technologies and Crafts
Harlow UTC	Environmental Engineering Medical Technology
Heathrow Aviation Engineering UTC (Hillingdon/Northolt)	Aviation Engineering
Lincoln UTC	Core Science Engineering
Liverpool Low Carbon and SuperPort UTC	Engineering Logistics
MediaCityUK UTC (Salford)	Creative and Digital Industries Entrepreneurship
Norfolk UTC (Norwich)	Advanced Engineering Energy Skills
Swindon UTC	Engineering with Business, Enterprise & Entrepreneurship
WMG Academy for Young Engineers (at the University of Warwick)	Engineering with Digital Technology
West Midlands Construction UTC (Walsall)	Construction & the application of IT in the Built Environment

FE Week profile

Penny Wycherley ~ her story

Janet Murray

@jan_murray

The principal and chief executive of Great Yarmouth College talks to *FE Week*

“By any standards, it was a dysfunctional childhood,” says Penny Wycherley, principal of Great Yarmouth College, of her early life. Born in Stoke, and raised in Oxford, where her father ran a successful chain of electrical shops, Wycherley was educated at an independent school, where she jokes the only thing she learned was “how to carry a handbag properly.”

The death of her father, who was killed in a car accident when she was just 11 years old, turned her life upside down. The family moved to the New Forest, where her mother ran a business “extremely badly” and struggled to make ends meet, and just two years after her father’s death, Wycherley herself was involved in a car accident, which left her with serious injuries. “When you have a badly scarred face – which is what I was at that point – people don’t look at you...they look past you,” she recalls.

But those early experiences toughened her up, making her more determined to succeed, she says. “For many people, when a parent dies, they fall backwards. That didn’t happen to me. When my father died, I knew there were a range of opportunities open to me and I suppose I chose to start working at education at that point.

“I realised that life wasn’t going to be handed to me, so it was a wake-up call... I know it’s a cliché, but I realised that life is not a dress rehearsal.”

Wycherley went on to study history at Kent University, where she got involved in student politics, most notably, she says with a grin, on the issue of overnight guests. “They had a rule that members of the opposite sex couldn’t sleep in your room overnight, but they wanted to encourage discussion about it... I can remember sitting there and saying, ‘So if I keep my boyfriend awake at night with insatiable demands, that’s fine – but if I let him go to sleep I am committing a breach of discipline?’”

What motivated her back then – giving students a voice – is what continues to drive her now, she says. “It was the 1960s...everyone was involved in student politics, everyone wanted to change the world...now I just settle for making a difference.”

But it took a further 20 years for her to find her vocation in further education. After university, Wycherley joined the NHS, on a human resources management programme, and over the decade that followed, combined high-level management roles – including the tough job of closing hospitals – with bringing

up small children, surviving for many years on little more than four hours sleep a night.

In the early 1980s, having just had her third child, and keen to spend more time with her family, she quit the NHS and went into business with her then husband, buying up failing businesses (mainly post offices) and turning them around.

But while the business was ticking along nicely, Wycherley yearned for another challenge and when an opportunity came along in the early Nineties to teach history part-time at her son’s college, she jumped at the chance. Within three years, she was running a large access and basic skills provision at Chichester College in West Sussex.

“There were some governors who were... difficult. I got fed up of being accused of lying to them”

While she admits to being “terrified” by her first session in the classroom, Wycherley was immediately hooked on teaching. “I loved seeing the light in people’s eyes, particularly adult returners, people for whom education hadn’t worked first time around,” she says.

She recalls one student, who had recently been discharged from a psychiatric hospital. “She had never passed anything, was clearly bright but she couldn’t sit in the classroom for more than 20 minutes at a time, so all the teaching had to be structured down to 20 minutes,” she recalls. “She did go on to university and get a first, she now teaches psychiatrists and she is one of the country’s leaders on research around user voice in mental healthcare.”

Having taken on a senior leadership role in 1998, Wycherley became an Ofsted inspector in 2001, where she says she saw many failing colleges. And back at her own college, she was regularly being given the job of turning round departments with difficulties.

It was then she began thinking about taking on a principal’s role, and after her experience as an Ofsted inspector, what interested her most was doing “turnaround” work with colleges. She took up her first principal’s post at Eastleigh College in 2003, which “wasn’t quite turnaround but was on its way up”, and under Wycherley’s leadership, became a Beacon college.

South Kent College in Folkestone – where she took up a post in 2006 after a vote of no confidence in the outgoing principal – did



Picture by Nolan Donoghue for *FE Week*

offer a turnaround challenge, but feeling unable to gain support from some members of the governing body, she decided to move on after just a year.

“I was being stymied,” she says. “There were some governors who were supportive but there was a big tranche who were... difficult. I got fed up of being accused of lying to them. I stuck it out for a year, at which point I resigned with nothing to go to and no money in the bank.”

After a spell as director of provider services at Tribal, Wycherley decided to set up her own consultancy, specialising in quality improvement for colleges.

But at the end of 2011, she was asked to take on the principal’s role at Great Yarmouth College, which having had three notices to improve from Ofsted was at the time “the worst college in the country by quite a long way”.

It was a “catastrophic” situation, says Wycherley. “The executive team wasn’t speaking to one another, there was a fight in front of Ofsted between the students when they were in...it was endemic.”

What was clear from the outset was that staff did care about the learners, but as Wycherley set about rebuilding the college,

there were difficult decisions to make, and inevitably, casualties. “Doing redundancies is always hard,” says Wycherley. “It’s people’s lives. It’s their mortgages, their families and their futures... and yes, of course I lose sleep about it. In that round of redundancies, we took out £600,000 from management. I have a motto: [for carrying out redundancies] ‘Do it quick and do it clean.’”

When Ofsted inspectors visited the college in April, they found “remarkable” improvements, with all areas judged satisfactory and some areas good, including the advice and guidance students get in choosing the right course for them.

But there is still work to be done, says Wycherley, who is contracted to stay at the college until the end of next year. Her ultimate aim is to ensure Great Yarmouth continues to have its own further education provision. The college is currently in discussion with nearby Lowestoft College about closer collaboration, she says, but that is not the only option available. “What it has to do is to match what the community needs – and by community, I mean the local employers, the businesses, the North Sea... all those people who need support. I want to leave something sustainable.”

FE Week Experts

All forms of learning can have a positive impact



She started in learning as a single parent by joining a belly-dancing class and is now about to start her teacher training after graduating with a BA in history from Sussex University.

Hers is an inspirational story and she is going to make a great teacher. I have no doubt she will inspire hundreds of children to discover the joys and benefits of learning through her new career.

Another of our award winners is Anne Wallace who took over the running of her family's fish and chip shop in Woodley Precinct near Stockport.

The precinct was suffering because a number of shops and businesses had shut down. Anne tried to sell the shop but had no buyers.

In an attempt to find a solution she asked her staff for suggestions of what to do and they all wanted training. The training went so well they started winning awards.

Every time they won an award they were featured in the paper and the publicity meant more customers. Anne decided that to help boost trade further she would take on two of the empty units and convert them into a café.

With money from the NIACE Transformation Fund the café put on all sorts of training and learning opportunities for the local community – IT, card making, knitting etc. Anne has now converted the upstairs of the fish and chip shop into the 'School of Fish' where they run training for local businesses. They also now run a book group.

Business is booming in the precinct and there is now a waiting list for retail units. The community has been reborn and creative, exciting, enticing learning has been a central part of the story.

“It really does not matter what entices people into learning in the first place”

The new CLIF fund will support lots more people like Amanda and Anne. Both of these women are exceptional but the journeys they took are less incredible – the new funding will result in more learning which entices and excites, engages and inspires because that is the type of learning which can help people become lifelong learners and go on to achieve so much.

David Hughes, chief executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

At one level this is a simple story - we are delighted to be managing a new fund on behalf of the Skills Funding Agency which will support fantastic learning for thousands of people in all sorts of settings and with diverse outcomes.

And yet the real story is much more than that - this is an opportunity to showcase how all forms of learning can have incredible impacts.

The projects which are supported will be part of a concerted effort we are making to find ways of measuring and proving the impact of learning of all kinds; trying to reach that Holy Grail of having Treasury accept measures of social return on investment alongside and in the same regard as economic returns on investment.

Nobody who works in adult education can overlook the many different ways in which learning has a positive impact.

We have all seen people blossom, gaining self-esteem and confidence, developing new understanding and skills, being able to support their children and grandchildren to learn, inspiring others to get involved, getting a new or better job and so on.

We have stories from Adult Learners' Week which really do bring tears to your eyes in awe and respect at the ways in which people have overcome all sorts of challenges and achieved so much through learning.

The impact for individuals and communities is clear and it really does not matter what entices people into learning in the first place. Two people who won Adult Learners' Week awards help show this.

Take Amanda Scales, for instance whose story shows that the initial subject and motivation for learning is irrelevant to the outcomes and positive impacts.

Ofsted inspections - why are the grades dropping?

The decrease in colleges' Ofsted grades has been well documented in *FE Week*. In 2009-2010, about a quarter of colleges that were previously judged to be good or outstanding saw their grade decline.

Sir Michael Wilshaw, the head of Ofsted, has been vocal in his concerns, claiming that colleges were “using the complexity of FE as a cover for not doing what they should be doing, which is monitoring the quality of teaching”.

If we are to comprehend and reverse this trend, we must understand what is happening. It is too early to be definitive. Some say that Ofsted inspections are now strongly focused on teaching and learning, and this will be even more true with the new Common Inspection Framework.

Therefore, it could be argued that if a college broadens its horizons too far from that focus, it could diminish its ability of attaining a good grade.

“Under a normal distribution only a small number of colleges will achieve an outstanding grade at any one time”

Risk analysis is a factor that many have raised. Ofsted focus their inspections on the basis of risk, with colleges in the lower bands, or where analysis of data suggests there is an issue, being more likely to be inspected – and more likely to gain a lower result than the true average of all colleges.

Another theory is that there may be a tendency for a college's self assessment to be optimistic rather than realistic, which can result in it failing to identify its weaknesses and so underperform during inspection. Over-confident self assessment could also indicate inadequate management.

This is the speculation. But we do know that when provided with the support to develop impartial self assessment and to improve teaching and learning, colleges can improve their learner success rates and inspection grades.

The colleges who have received help from LSIS to avoid or resolve issues of concern have, on average, improved by one grade at their next inspection.

There is also a strong demonstrable link between working with LSIS and success rates.



On May 30, Ofsted announced its new inspection regime: from September this year, providers will need to demonstrate outstanding teaching, learning and assessment to be judged outstanding overall (note, not *all* teaching must be outstanding).

This reinforces the message to colleges that they need to focus on the learner experience and success. Inevitably, under a normal distribution only a small number of colleges will achieve an outstanding grade at any one time.

In March, LSIS set out its three priorities for 2012-2013 in *Refining our Strategy 2012 to 2015*: to drive forward outstanding teaching and learning, to forge excellent leadership and management, and to move with powerful intervention to avoid and resolve cases of failure. LSIS offers help to colleges in these vital areas to help them to improve and, in doing so, serve their learners best – and attain good inspection results.

As to the third priority – “to move with powerful intervention” - LSIS offers services pre- and post-inspection; the new LSIS Escalated Intervention Service is being set up for those found inadequate twice in a row (under the new Ofsted rules, the number of times a provider can be judged as “requires improvement” will usually be limited to twice).

There does not appear to be a single explanation for the decline in Ofsted grades. However, the need for a strong focus on teaching and learning is a recurrent theme. It will be interesting to see the impact, positive or negative, of the new regime.

LSIS will continue to be guided by the sector to provide what it requires, whether it is help to improve Ofsted grades, striving for excellence in teaching and learning, or supporting strong college leadership, management and governance.

Rob Wye, chief executive, Learning and Skills Improvement Service

FE Week Experts

Data management - abuse or inadequacy?



The recent *FE Week* headline about the leaked Tenon report once again brings to the fore accusations of manipulating data in order to boost success rates.

Originally highlighted by Geoff Russell's infamous 'cease and desist' letter whilst Chief Executive of the LSC in December 2009, it's also the reason we developed our ADaM software, allowing providers themselves to quickly and simply identify any data management issues and take remedial action where necessary. More

than two years on, it seems the issue just won't go away.

Just this week, the latest *FE Week* survey shows over 80% of respondents still think there's a problem with the majority seeing it as widespread amongst colleges, seemingly reinforcing this argument.

So, are the dramatic headlines true? Are you being cheated or are you a cheat? Perhaps a good question to ask is why the number of providers using ADaM continues to grow (it's currently well over 100).

If they thought or even knew they were manipulating their data why would they continue to pay for a piece of software whose specific purpose is to bring any bad practice into the light? In our experience, yes there is a problem but the truth behind it is normally far more ordinary and less clear-cut than feared or portrayed.

It doesn't mean that data is never wrong (a next to impossible task with large datasets, a highly flexible curriculum and complicated rules) but making the jump from bad data to cheating is a huge one to make and somewhat simplistic.

What we've consistently found since 2010 is that, where they do arise, most data issues that could be interpreted as impacting on success

rates are due to inadequate data management practices or processes. That's to say, the significant number of in-year data changes which we do see are largely representative of corrections to data which shouldn't have been wrong in the first place.

The report makes reference to a number of data issues which certainly concur with our own findings, including: enrolments being removed from later ILRs; enrolments becoming non-funded; learners being enrolled late; and planned end dates being changed. However, whilst it seems to imply that there are underhand motives behind these in-year changes, our extensive experience is very different - generally, the data was wrong so they corrected it.

That said, it's certainly not unusual to come across isolated pockets of inappropriate behaviour, but even these tend to reflect plain ignorance of the rules rather than a deliberate attempt to flout them. However, their generally isolated nature means that they're typically not large enough to have a significant impact on a provider's success rates.

We look at provider data every day and rarely (if ever) come across one which doesn't have issues but I can count on one hand the number of instances we have encountered that could be termed systematic abuse. Whilst that doesn't

mean the rest are acceptable, what I can say with confidence is that there is quite obviously a great desire across the sector to self-improve and the year-on-year data we see bears this out.

So where does all this leave us regarding the latest headlines? Do we agree that data management practices still leave plenty of room for improvement - yes.

Do we understand that the scale of in-year data changes could be interpreted as smelling fishy? - yes. Do a small number of providers occasionally do stupid things which tarnish the reputation of the many - yes. Do we see any widespread evidence of systematic abuse? - very little.

In our experience, most people are just trying to 'do the right thing' and are using tools like ADaM to help them identify data issues and go on to improve procedures, staff training, workflow and efficiency. Ultimately it's in their best interest so why wouldn't they?

Looking at the raw data only raises questions, it doesn't provide answers. Only by working hand-in-hand with providers, in examining their practices and the motives behind them, can one hope to jump to the right conclusions.

Mark Smith, Development Director, Drake Lane Associates

UTCs – a revolution in technical education



This week the government approved a further 15 University Technical Colleges (UTCs). This raises the total number of projects to 34. Two UTCs are open, three more will start this September, with the rest opening in the following two years.

The concept of UTCs was the brainchild of Lord Baker and Lord Dearing, who won the support of the then Education Minister, Lord Adonis. The first two UTCs were agreed by the last government and the coalition government embraced the idea. The number of UTCs in the pipeline now exceeds the government's ambition to create 24 by 2014.

For the past four years, the Baker Dearing Educational Trust (BDT) has been working with

the Department for Education, local employers, universities and further education colleges to develop a national network of UTCs.

UTCs are new, state funded, full-time secondary schools for 14-19 year olds of all abilities. They are being established under the government's academies programme and they have strong cross-party political support. They offer highly regarded, technically-orientated courses of study and are equipped to the highest standard.

A UTC must be supported by a university and local employers who are involved with governance, who help with student teaching and mentoring, and who shape the specialist curriculum. FE colleges are playing a crucial role in many UTCs as they recognise the need for this specialist offering. UTC leavers at 19 will be well prepared to make the best of either higher education or proper apprenticeships. This will give them a flying start for a great career.

UTCs typically operate a longer school day from 8.30am until 5.30pm. For 40 per cent of the time, or two days each week, pre-16 students follow a technical curriculum and for 60 per cent - three days - they pursue the academic study needed to support the technical, including English, maths, science, a working foreign language and the history and geography of industry, invention and innovation. These ratios are reversed post -16, with the technical curriculum taking up three days a week. The

whole curriculum is designed to link the hand with the mind. A wide range of extra-curricular activities completes the picture. UTCs have five 8 week terms amounting to 40 weeks per year rather than the usual 38. The extended day and the shorter holidays mean that over a four year period a whole extra year and a half of teaching is provided.

There is a severe shortage of capital in the current recession. We realise that we can no longer afford glamorous school buildings with splendid atriums. But what matters is that teachers can teach and students can learn in facilities that work and with modern technical equipment.

BDT has secured the government's agreement to a capital expenditure programme that allows UTCs to be developed along these lines, often by remodelling existing redundant educational buildings. Our business partners are proving to be most generous with the supply of equipment as they believe in what UTCs are doing. UTCs will be housed in business-like buildings doing a business-like job. They should be fit for purpose and affordable to maintain.

The successful UTC applications announced this week are linked to over 200 employers. They have a wide geographical spread: from Warwick UTC, supported by Jaguar Land Rover, specialises in engineering with digital technology; to MediaCityUK UTC on Salford Quays, supported by The Lowry, BBC, ITV

and The Aldridge Foundation, specialises in creative and digital technologies, and entrepreneurship, to Cambridge UTC, supported by Cambridge University Hospitals and Napp Pharmaceuticals, which specialises in bio-medical and environmental science and technology. Norfolk UTC in Norwich, supported by East Anglia Offshore Wind, specialises in energy skills; Heathrow UTC, supported by British Airways, Virgin Atlantic and the RAF, specialises in aviation engineering; and Elstree UTC, supported by The Meller Educational Trust and Elstree Studios, specialises in entertainment and digital technologies and crafts.

These projects have all been backed by local employers who need the skills that the students will acquire and a university which will ensure academic rigour and a high status.

We are constantly told of the need for growth in our economy. We must produce enough of our own engineers to staff the businesses that will generate this growth. Employers up and down the country tell us that they cannot get enough work-ready, energetic, skilled young people to become highly valued technicians and engineers. UTCs will not plug this gap overnight, but this programme is a great start. Our intention is that young people leaving our UTCs will all have the potential to become the CEOs of the future.

Charles Parker CEO, Baker Dearing Educational Trust

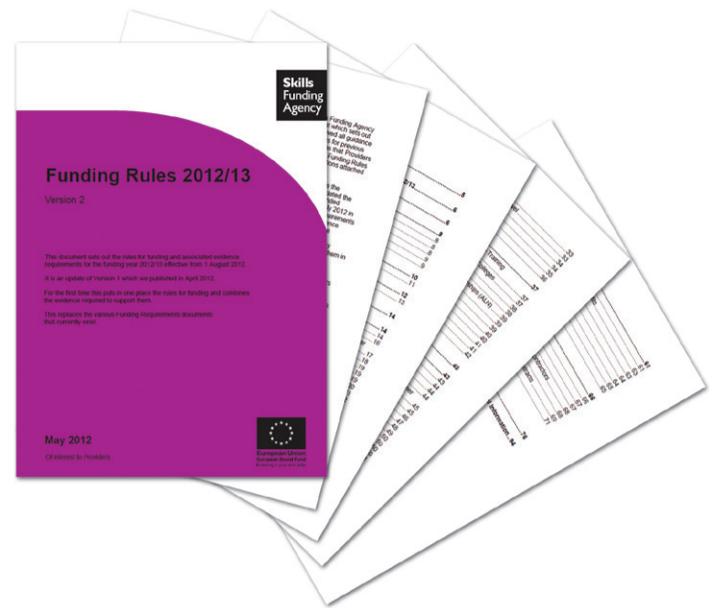
FE Week gets technical

Update to SFA Funding Rules for 2012/13 ~ part 1

On the 31 May the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) published the final version of the Funding Rules 2012/13, along with a revisions document. Below is the first in our two part summary of some of the main revisions. Note: The SFA also say in this 'final version' they "will be issuing a final document in July 2012 in order to make adjustments where areas of clarification on evidence requirements are needed."

Official source: <http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/providers/fundingrules/>

Principles of Funding <i>Addition to Para 3</i>	<p>Version 1: "Providers can offer a qualification providing no more than 50 per cent of the qualification is offered through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Providers must discount the funding for the proportion of the qualification assessed as being delivered through RPL. This will be subject to review in advance of 2013/14 and subject to monitoring during 2012/13." Footnote: "Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) refers to uncertificated learning and will involve providers in making an offer of assessment in order to confirm achievement and the award of credit."</p> <p>Version 2: "Where more than 50 per cent of assessment for a learning aim is achieved through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Providers must discount the funding for the proportion of the qualification assessed as being delivered through RPL by 50 per cent. However, if 50 per cent or less of assessment for the learning aim is achieved through RPL, there will be no reduction of funding for the proportion of assessment achieved through RPL. This will be subject to review in advance of 2013/14 and subject to monitoring during 2012/13." Footnote: "Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) refers to uncertificated learning and will involve Providers in making an offer of assessment in order to confirm achievement and the award of credit. In all instances Apprenticeships of less than 12 months for adults will involve the recognition or accreditation of prior learning and an accompanying funding reduction."</p>
Principles of Evidence <i>Additional chapter</i>	<p>Version 1: Not included</p> <p>Version 2: New chapter. Some interesting sentences include: "The Agency is eager to use as much naturally occurring evidence as possible as this reduces both bureaucracy and cost to the Provider" "Providers are able to hold evidence in an electronic format. This includes holding data on electronic platforms and in scanned format, which includes, but is not restricted to, digital signatures. The Agency accepts that where a provider collects a learner's signature that it may be captured either in handwriting or electronically." "Where the Learner achieves their learning aim, the Agency will not require the provider to keep evidence of activity that has taken place, unless it is linked to a learning aim with an unlisted rate."</p>
Financial Contributions <i>Correction to para 12</i>	<p>Version 1: "Where the Agency has made a full contribution to the costs of a Learner's programme, Providers must not make compulsory charges to employers or Learners for any delivery of the learning activity funded by the Agency."</p> <p>Version 2: Removal of reference to employers and addition of a footnote: "Charges made to an apprentice's employer are at the discretion of the Provider."</p>
Basic Skills <i>Removal to para 35</i>	<p>Version 1: "Providers must undertake the following steps for each Learner:" Including: "skills checks by a practitioner trained to deliver such tools to identify if a Learner's basic English, Maths and ESOL skills are already at Level 2."</p> <p>Version 2: Removal of this requirement from this section.</p>
Basic Skills <i>Addition to para 36</i>	<p>Version 1: "Providers must use up-to-date assessment tools which are based on the National Literacy and Numeracy Standards and core curriculum. The tools must place a Learner's current skills levels within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)/QCF levels."</p> <p>Version 2: Addition of: "The tools must be administered by suitably qualified individuals including, for the diagnostic assessment, a practitioner to structure the Learner's Learning Agreement."</p>
Job Outcomes Payments <i>Addition in box</i>	<p>Version 2: "Payments made will be within the envelope of each Provider's allocation and any adjustments made as part of the Agency's in-year performance management process."</p>
Job Outcomes Payments <i>Removed from box</i>	<p>Version 1: "The Agency will base future years' funding allocations on the performance of each Provider in getting unemployed people into work." Version 2: Sentence above has been removed (although SFA revision document only refers to "addition").</p>
Job Outcomes Payments <i>Addition of para 40</i>	<p>Version 2: "Job outcome funding is claimed by reporting an employment outcome in the ILR field Employment Outcome. Data must be reported to the Agency within the ILR for the current year in which the Learner leaves."</p>
Formal First Steps <i>Addition of setence</i>	<p>Version 2: "If Formal First Steps (FFS) providers have an existing Adult Skills Budget they cannot use these funds to increase their FFS allocation but they can reduce their FFS allocation."</p>
Apprenticeships <i>New Quality Statement</i>	<p>Version 2: "An Apprenticeship is a job with an accompanying skills development programme as defined by the Specification for Apprenticeship Standards in England (SASE) and approved by the relevant Issuing Authority. It allows the apprentice to gain technical knowledge and real practical experience, along with personal and functional skills required for their immediate job and future career. These are acquired through a mix of learning in the workplace, formal off the job training and the opportunity to practise and embed new skills in a real work context. This mix differentiates the Apprenticeship experience from training delivered to meet narrowly-focused job needs.</p> <p>On completion of the Apprenticeship the apprentice must be able to undertake the full range of duties, confidently and competently, in the range of circumstances appropriate to the job, to the standard set by the industry.</p> <p>To see the Statement on Apprenticeship Quality in full and for a list of Agency funded frameworks, see the Apprenticeships website."</p>
Apprenticeships <i>Correction</i>	<p>Version 1: "In order to receive funding providers must link every Apprenticeship to an eligible individual undertaking a new or changed job role"</p> <p>Version 2: "In order to receive funding Providers must be content that the apprentice is undertaking a new job role, or if in an existing job role, that the individual requires significant new knowledge and skills and that an Apprenticeship is the most appropriate learning programme for them"</p>



Apprenticeships
Removed sentence

Version 1: "Provider usage of the Apprenticeship Vacancy website will be taken into consideration when allocation growth requests are considered"

Version 2: Sentence above has been removed

Apprenticeships
Removed reference to unsuccessful candidates

Version 1: "enter on the Apprenticeship vacancy website the details of the successful and unsuccessful individuals who applied, in order to complete the data entry for that vacancy."

Version 2: "enter on the Apprenticeship Vacancies website the details of the successful applicants, in order to complete the data entry for that vacancy."

Apprenticeships
Addition of 'new employment status record'

Version 1: "When the individual becomes employed and starts as an employed apprentice, this must be reported in the ILR."

Version 2: "When the individual becomes employed and starts as an employed apprentice, this must be reported in the ILR by completing a new employment status record for the Learner."

Apprenticeships
Revised ATA section

Version 1: "If a Provider operates an (Apprenticeship Training Agency) it must establish a distinct ATA business so that apprentices are contracted employees of the ATA, not the Provider. An ATA's income must not be derived from allocated funds intended for the delivery of training from the Agency."

In order to safeguard the quality of Apprenticeship provision Providers must only contract with NAS-recognised ATAs (or an organisation registered with NAS as working towards being a NAS-recognised ATA)."

Version 2: "If an organisation operates as an ATA, for example, their main business is employing apprentices which are made available to employers for a fee, then they should clearly identify themselves as such and comply with NAS ATA regulations."

Where a Provider in receipt of Agency funding operates an ATA it must establish the ATA as a distinct business so that apprentices are contracted employees of the ATA, not the Provider. An ATA's income must not be derived from allocated funds intended for the delivery of training from the Agency. ATAs must record the location (host) employer details in the delivery location field of the ILR.

In order to safeguard the quality of Apprenticeship provision Providers must only contract with NAS-recognised ATAs (or an organisation registered with NAS as working towards being a NAS-recognised ATA). This only applies to organisations operating as an ATA and organisations whose business is the provision of labour and who are required to comply with the Employment Agency regulations; organisations whose business is not the provision of labour/apprentice (for example those who are providing consultancy services).

Unless a Group Training Association (GTA) is a hybrid model also providing core ATA-type functions (including employing apprentices who undertake their Apprenticeships with host employers) is it not considered an ATA, and does not need to comply with ATA-specific rules."

Apprenticeships
Addition of six month maximum

"The Government has agreed that in certain circumstances, apprentices will not need to be employed under an Apprenticeship Agreement, as follows: apprentices made

Version 1: "redundant prior to completion of their Apprenticeship (through no fault of their own)"

Version 2: "apprentices made redundant, up to a maximum time of six months, prior to completion of their Apprenticeship (through no fault of their own)"

Calling Independent Learning Providers



SFA Funding Rules 2012/13 Briefing

A business critical briefing delivered by Nick Linford

Date: Monday 9 July
Location: Central Hall Westminster
Time: 10:30 - 12:30

To book your place visit www.lsect.com

Calling FE Colleges



SFA Funding Rules 2012/13 Briefing

A business critical briefing delivered by Nick Linford

Date: Monday 9 July
Location: Central Hall Westminster
Time: 13:30 - 15:30

To book your place visit www.lsect.com

FE Weekend: Where Next for Apprenticeships?

Friday 13th July **AT** Morley College, London

& Saturday 14th July **FREE ONLINE**

With the latest news on apprenticeship quality & policy this is *A MUST ATTEND*

Friday Speakers:

Karl Bentley - Lead Funding Auditor, RSM Tenon

Matthew Coffey - National Director of Learning and Skills,

David Hughes - Chief Executive, NIACE

Nick Linford - Author of *The hands-on guide to post-16 fun*

Victoria Taylor - Education Solicitor, Eversheds

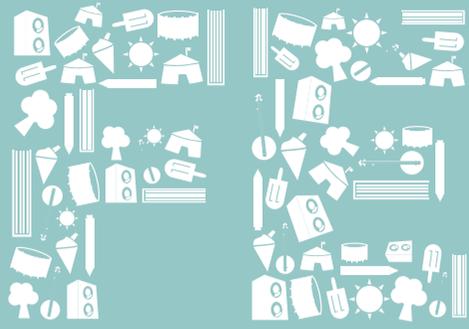
Karen Woodward - Divisional Director of Apprenticeships,

Saturday Speakers (live internet broadcast):

Adrian Bailey MP - Chair of BIS Select Committee

Barry Brooks - Group Strategy Director, Tribal

Book your place at www.feweekend.com



WEEKEND



www.feweekend.co.uk

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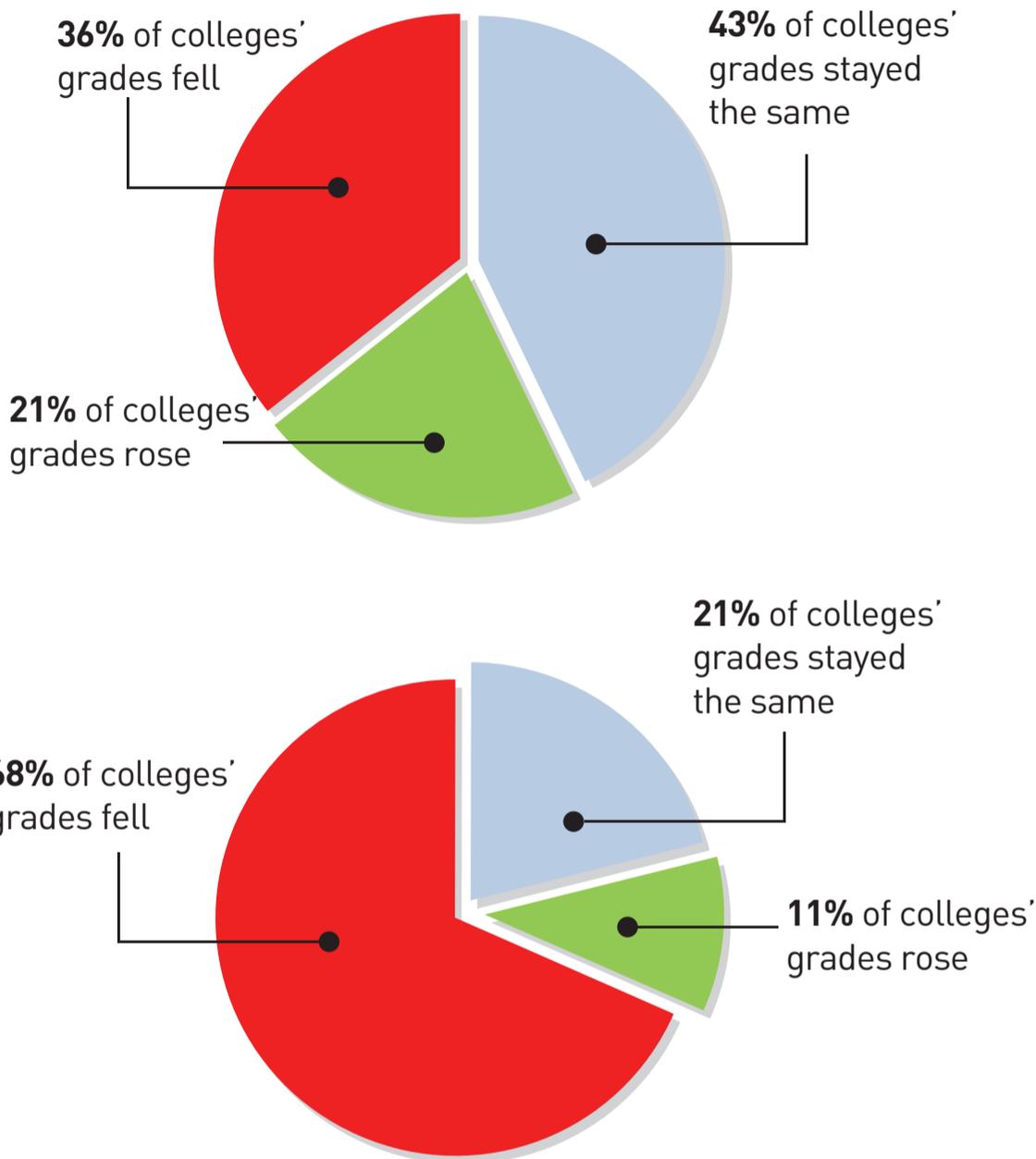
NAS



nd.co.uk

FE Week gets technical

There has been much interest in FE Week's analysis of recent college inspection grades. Here we bring you an updated version, including Barnfield College, Stafford College and Yeovil College.



October 2011 - December 2011

14 college inspections
Average Ofsted ratings fell by

0.07 of a grade



and 2012

January 2012 - April 2012

19 college inspections
Average Ofsted ratings fell by

1.00 of a grade

#FEdebate

On the first Monday of every month FE Week host a 30 minute twitter debate. On Monday 4 June the topic was Ofsted inspections in the last few months. Here are just a small selection of the tweets.

Bob Harrison @bobharrisonset
@SummersNicholas OFSTED inspectors need to catch up with the Digital Learning revolution the learners are demanding #FEdebate

AELP @AELPUK
@SummersNicholas Ofsted reforms should be considered in tandem with SFA intervention policies #FEdebate

Chris Hick @hick_mis
i wonder if lower Ofsted grades are to discredit the current FE sector. Aim is to justify greater private sector involvement... #FEdebate

157 Group @157Group
DfE & Ofsted must take into context the consequences of Raising Participation Age on retention and attendance issues for colleges #FEdebate

Len Tildsley @lentildsley
Inspectors arrive with pre-conceived ideas about performance and it's almost impossible to move their opinion from that. #FEdebate

Shane Chowen @shanechowen
@FEQUALITY Research by @IfL_members shows teachers are fine with the principle of no-notice inspections, managers appear otherwise #FEdebate

Quality Improvement @FEQUALITY
Ofsted inspections not focused on what really matters, the learner! Over reliant use of inaccurate data to inform judgements #FEdebate

College	Current grade	Inspection date	Previous grade	Inspection date	Total increase or decrease
Barnfield College	3	23-Apr-12	1	04-Jun-12	-2
Stafford College	4	16-Apr-12	2	09-Nov-09	-2
Yeovil College	2	16-Apr-12	3	03-Nov-08	1
Derby College	3	30-Mar-12	2	16-Nov-07	-1
Petroc	2	19-Mar-12	1	09-Oct-07	-1
Derwenside College	2	19-Mar-12	2	22-Sep-08	0
Great Yarmouth College	3	16-Mar-12	4	12-Nov-10	1
North Warwickshire & Hinckley College	2	16-Mar-12	1	29-Oct-07	-1
Kensington & Chelsea College	3	09-Mar-12	2	26-Feb-07	-1
Stratford-upon-Avon College	3	02-Mar-12	2	05-Mar-07	-1
Lewisham College	3	02-Mar-12	1	24-Apr-06	-2
City of Wolverhampton College	4	20-Feb-12	2	10-Dec-07	-2
Lambeth College	4	20-Feb-12	2	25-Feb-08	-2
Macclesfield College	4	20-Feb-12	1	25-Sep-06	-3
Knowsley Community College	4	06-Feb-12	2	25-Feb-08	-2
Brooklands College	3	06-Feb-12	3	05-Oct-09	0
Canterbury College	3	30-Jan-12	3	01-Oct-07	0
South Essex College of Further and Higher Education	3	30-Jan-12	2	12-May-08	-1
Wiltshire College	3	16-Jan-12	3	08-Oct-07	0
Peterborough Regional College	2	12-Dec-11	3	14-Apr-08	1
Southwark College	4	05-Dec-11	3	15-Mar-10	-1
K-College	3	05-Dec-11	2	27-Feb-06	-1
Askham Bryan College	2	05-Dec-11	3	01-Oct-07	1
Burton and South Derbyshire College	2	05-Dec-11	2	26-Nov-07	0
Henshaws College	2	22-Nov-11	2	21-Mar-06	0
Sussex Coast College Hastings	4	21-Nov-11	3	12-May-08	-1
Stephenson College	3	21-Nov-11	2	04-Dec-06	-1
Bishop Auckland College	2	21-Nov-11	2	26-Nov-07	0
Plumpton College	2	21-Nov-11	2	04-Jun-07	0
Kidderminster	3	14-Nov-11	2	30-Mar-09	-1
Farnborough College of Technology	1	14-Nov-11	3	26-Nov-07	2
Central Bedfordshire (Formerly Dunstable College)	3	07-Nov-11	3	28-Apr-08	0
Shrewsbury College	3	31-Oct-11	3	28-Jan-08	0

FE Week campus round-up



MidKent College students flash mob dance

Flashmob dancers electrified MidKent College's Medway Campus by showcasing their talents to staff and students.

From modern day hits to 19th century classics, the talented students carried out an expertly choreographed performance before leaving just as suddenly as they had arrived – albeit this time to a standing ovation.

Students performed the dance routine unexpectedly during a mid-morning break.

"We were terrified at first but once the music came on our bodies just took over," said 17-year-old Hannah Davis.

"It was an amazing experience and the adrenaline rush was brilliant, but it was the reaction of the audience that made it all

worth it. The exciting performance was the brainchild of performing arts lecturers Katie Gray and Luke Wells – the latter of whom starred in the famous T-Mobile flashmob commercial.

Katie said the students learned the routine in about 13 hours of lesson time.

"They were all first-years and some of them had never danced in public before," she added. "But they did brilliantly considering how little time they had to rehearse.

"Most flashmob performances are used to promote a product or raise awareness of a good cause, but we just wanted to help brighten people's day and I think they succeeded with that."

Kensington and Chelsea College student beats off competition for Adidas contract



A former Kensington and Chelsea College music student has been snapped up by Adidas to produce a soundtrack for an international advertising campaign.

Kayvon Razavi was among a handful of music producers exclusively invited to pitch for the contract.

The talented 22-year-old was given a strict brief by the sportswear giant, tasking him with producing "something youthful, with attitude, a strutting pace and rhythm" to accompany their advert.

Kayvon, from Fulham said: "When I found out I had got the contract I felt quite numb – I don't think it sank in until I saw the final advert

with my music on it. I felt really proud at that point."

His love of music developed at a young age whilst playing computer games. "As I grew up I became more aware of the sounds around me and realised I wanted to go into music production. I have dedicated myself to it ever since," he said.

Speaking about his college course, Kayvon said: "The tutors are also fantastic and very well connected to the music industry. I learnt a lot from them."

Since his success Kayvon has been asked to produce a soundtrack pitch for BlackBerry and Audi.

Chichester College students crack record



Hospitality and catering students at Chichester College have broken the world record for the world's biggest smoothie.

Preparations for the challenge began with the arrival of bananas, strawberries, yoghurt and fruit juice donated from local suppliers, which the students chopped, blended and poured into a huge vat. Kenwood supplied the College with 20 food blenders which were worked hard to create the 1,280 litres of smoothie needed to break the record.

The work to break the world record began

at 7am and was monitored by adjudicators from Thomas Eggar Solicitors.

Visitors to the College's Food and Travel festival, staff and students all agreed the record breaking smoothie was delicious.

Student Chloe Wilkinson said: "It's been really hard work but we all worked together to break the record. It was a really good experience but I'm not in a hurry to peel any more bananas soon!

"We are all really happy to have been involved in this challenge and proud to have broken the world record."

Plumbs up for Derby College partnership



Rags to riches at South Birmingham College

Students studying fashion and textiles at South Birmingham College were set the challenge of turning £30 of material from the famous Birmingham Rag Markets into an outfit that could be sold in Harvey Nichols.

Fifteen of the 80 students that took part in the competition have been shortlisted to showcase their designs on the catwalk in a bid to be crowned the Rags to Riches winner.

Judges included Constantine Tziambazis, retail manager at Harvey Nichols, and Kat Keogh, a correspondent at the Birmingham Mail and Post, which sponsored the event.

Eileen Simons, assistant director of fashion studies at the college said: "This is a great achievement, especially for those in their first year of the course who are just learning these skills."

Bricklayers, plumbers, joiners and electricians from the housing association, Futures Homescape, celebrated completing a diploma in maintenance operations as part of a training partnership with Derby College.

The team provides a repairs and maintenance service to tenants living at Futures Homescape properties in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

Among the students were Richard Rawlings and Paul Hodgkinson, whose combined service totals 60 years. Mr Rawlings, who is a bricklayer by trade, said: "We are now able to handle a wider range of repair jobs and complete the work much more quickly."

Mr Hodgkinson, whose background is in plumbing, added: "I have been able to teach the other lads about my work and have learnt other skills from them. Doing this structured programme through Derby College has made us work much better as a team."

Canterbury College students get fashion fix



Thousands of clothes, shoes and accessories went on sale at Canterbury College's fashion show to raise money for charity.

The Fashion Fix raised more than £300 for The British Red Cross, Pilgrims Hospice and The Children's Trust Tadworth.

The catwalk show was followed by a giant indoor one stop charity shop, with raffle and tombola stalls.

The show featured contributions from several other College departments. Hair and

beauty students designed the models' hair and make-up and dance students warmed up the catwalk crowd with an energetic routine to music provided by the music department.

Julia Joslin, section manager for Business and ICT, said: "I'm really proud of the students for staging this year's fashion show. They worked incredibly hard and it looks as though the Business Fashion Fix will become an annual fixture in the College calendar. The event has given them some fantastic skills that they will eventually take into the workplace."



Green building at Norton Radstock College

Visitors to the Royal Bath and West Show were able to step inside a sustainable house created by carpentry students from Norton Radstock College.

The timber framed house showcased simple initiatives that households can introduce to help save the planet, from insulation to draught proofing. Lorna Crouch, marketing manager at Norton Radstock College, said: "By 2020 EU directives require a 20 per cent reduction in carbon use and by 2050 an 80 per cent reduction.

"As a result of the Government's Green Deal we have come up with a range of courses and qualifications which are suitable for those working in the industry and looking to increase their knowledge and upskill in order to work in this area.

"The sustainable house at the show will be surrounded by a water-free garden. Created by horticulture students, the garden will demonstrate how water can be used effectively and sustainably and in certain cases, with the right planting, not at all."

Coleg Gwent students go the whole hog

Three complementary therapy students from Coleg Gwent's Pontypool campus were in need of some well-earned rest and relaxation of their own after taking part in a great outdoors challenge for Marie Curie Cancer Care.

The Whole Hog Race saw Emily Smith, Jodie Dupplaw and Sian Williams cross country running, negotiating obstacles, wading through a river and walking up a small waterfall in the Brecon Beacons.

The team, who named themselves The Ballistic Holistics, completed the 10k course in less than two hours, raising £300 for the charity.

"We are proud of each other and ourselves for completing it," said Jodie, who plans to work as a holistic therapist on a cruise ship after her course. "We're used to working together to help others relax, so this was a totally different, but very fun experience!"



"Sian came up with the idea, and we all decided to take part to set ourselves a new challenge and to raise money for a great cause.

"All of our friends, family and work colleagues sponsored us very generously!"



Road safety campaign at Writtle College

Writtle College has hosted its second annual Roadster road safety awareness.

With the help of Essex police, fire and rescue, county council and local driving schools, 250 students were taught about the importance of road safety.

The aim of the Roadster event was to place students in challenging scenarios, to aid them in understanding and rectifying situations they could encounter as drivers.

There were given driving lessons in the College car park and off road tuition in a

Subaru Simulator.

PC Deborah Gray Farrer, Partnership and Community Engagement Officer from the Central Roads Policing Unit said: "Four of the most common factors that can have a big impact in RTCs are drink/drug driving, excessive speeding, using a mobile phone whilst driving, or failing to wear a seat belt.

"Police Officers will continue to tackle this offending behaviour through education, engagement, enforcement and engineering in an effort to save people's lives."

City of Bath College stonemasons' rock

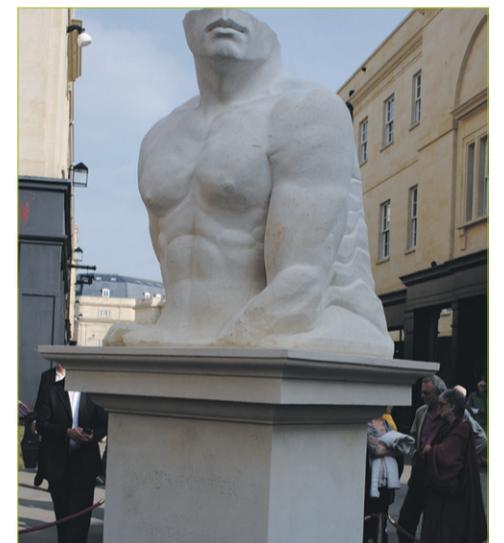
Trainee stonemasons from City of Bath College helped unveil the stunning statue of swimmer Mark Foster in Bath city centre.

The students created the plinth that the piece of art – a twice life-size sculpture of the champion swimmer's torso – sits on.

Students at the College's Construction Skills Centre spent weeks working on the plinth and the ceremony was attended by the swimmer.

Nigel Bryant, the stonemasonry lecturer at the College, who project managed the plinth design, said: "It's been a great experience for our stonemasons to be involved in such a high-profile project like this."

"City of Bath College has an excellent reputation for consistently producing talented stonemasons."



Olympic opening at West Cheshire College

More than 400 guests attended the spectacular opening ceremony of West Cheshire College's Ellesmere Port Campus with Olympic hero Sir Steve Redgrave.

The Olympic-inspired event featured a parade and show-stopping performance from performing art and dance students, with fire eaters and stilt walkers.

The Wired Aerial Theatre were also part of the celebration, with a specially choreographed performance involving the five Olympic rings and aerial wired artists dropping down from a

88 foot high rotunda.

Guests made their entrance on a red carpet and were greeted by students holding Olympic torches before being served canapés created by hospitality and catering students.

Sir Steve Redgrave, Five-time Olympic Gold medallist said: "The Opening Ceremony put on by the College to officially open the Campus was spectacular."

Sara Mogel, Principal of West Cheshire College said: "It was an evening that our guests and the College will remember for a long time."

FE Week events...

Great Debate on Teaching and Learning

Holly Welham

@HollyWelham

Apprenticeships were fiercely debated at the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) conference, with a diverse panel of experts exploring how to improve standards.

Central to the debate was the question of quality. Members of the panel suggested that the government's drive to increase quantity has been detrimental. They said that companies have felt pushed into increasing numbers and have achieved this by providing shorter apprenticeships that cost less.

John Hyde, who helped found Hospitality Industry Training (HIT), said: "It is the tightest time I have ever known and I have been in this business a long time now (...) I think we're almost at the bottom of where the unit costs can go."

Mr Hyde said that HIT had managed to increase quality, despite costs coming down year on year, but that a lot of qualifications were no longer delivered.

The problem of substandard delivery was discussed in detail. Sarah Benioff, from the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), said that there was "always going to be" a small percentage of "rogues" and that the focus needed to be on working together to drive them out.

Nick Linford, the managing editor of FE Week, pulled Ms Benioff up on this and said that "we shouldn't rewrite history".

"We wouldn't be introducing minimum durations, you wouldn't have a high quality strategy, you possibly wouldn't be in the role that you're in, and David Way (interim chief executive of NAS) wouldn't possibly be responsible for quality, if there wasn't a problem," he said.

"It is really important we don't take our eye off the ball and we do increase quality.

You cannot do that without investing more resources."

Mr Hyde, who is a director of AELP, drew attention to the poor level of assessors' pay – on average below £20,000.

He said he found it "quite alarming" that assessors were only worth this amount, questioning how the government valued apprenticeships, when other people in the education system were paid more.

The employer's role in financing apprenticeships was discussed. Chris Starling from Virgin Media believed that if the quality was correct then employers "will pay".

The differing attitudes of employers, however, was emphasised by Mr Hyde, who described a recent invitation he received to tender from an international hotel company. "They wanted £50,000 for the privilege

"What are we doing as a society if at the end of the qualification we're saying [goodbye], good luck?"

of tendering, then they wanted a £50,000 kickback, and then they wanted 5 per cent each year of the total money the SFA pay as a kickback. Is that legal? Is that right?" Mr Hyde exclaimed.

How to define an apprenticeship kicked off the debate, with Ms Benioff reading out NAS's definition. Jonathan Ledger, from the National Skills Academy Strategic Network,

questioned why the government was so determined to label all work based training as an apprenticeship.

"Why don't we just deliver what employers want?" he said. "If that's a bag of units that make no coherent sense to you or I, what does it matter? It's their business, they're the ones trying to make the crust for tomorrow and pay the wages next week."

Mr Hyde said the confusion stemmed from when modern apprenticeships were introduced by the previous Conservative administration.

"Suddenly we moved away from traditional apprenticeships and we went into retail and the service sector.

"But we forgot to tell the public that's what we'd done and the civil service didn't tell each other, and we certainly didn't tell the minister. So suddenly John Hayes, the skills minister, gets the tabloids chasing him about short delivery.

"Does it honestly take as long to train an electrician as it does to train a chamber maid? "Suddenly we've got this 12-month rule imposed on us because of the wrong perception from three generations of parliament ago, in explaining what a modern apprenticeship is."

What needs to change about the current programme was a recurrent topic. Mr Linford found it "phenomenal" that the government had not made it mandatory to record whether an apprenticeship was job creation or not. He also argued that it was vital to know how many apprenticeships were on fixed-term contracts.

"What are we doing as a society if we're creating apprenticeship roles for people, and at the end of the qualification we're saying [goodbye], good luck?"

"Why is the government not collecting information at the end and incentivising on the basis if necessary? They're obvious things to me, I don't understand why they're so hard to implement," he said.

Mr Hyde called for a register of corrupt assessors. He stated that currently when a fraudulent assessor was sacked they simply went to another company, "so the bad practice moves from one provider to another provider".

"We're almost at the bottom of where the unit costs can go"

"Somebody has got to take responsibility that there is a register of qualified practitioners," he said.

Responsibility was a term that kept being referred to by panellists. Ms Benioff said NAS "cannot be in charge of quality".

"We have to do it with all of you, with all our stakeholders, our partners, with AELP, AoC, Ofsted, LSIS, everybody," she explained.

"I would argue that we all have a responsibility (...) to make it known if there is poor quality." Sector skills councils had a massive role to play, she said.

This was picked up on by Mr Linford, who said: "Let's be absolutely clear, in July last year Vince Cable gave the chief executive of the NAS responsibility of quality and value for money.

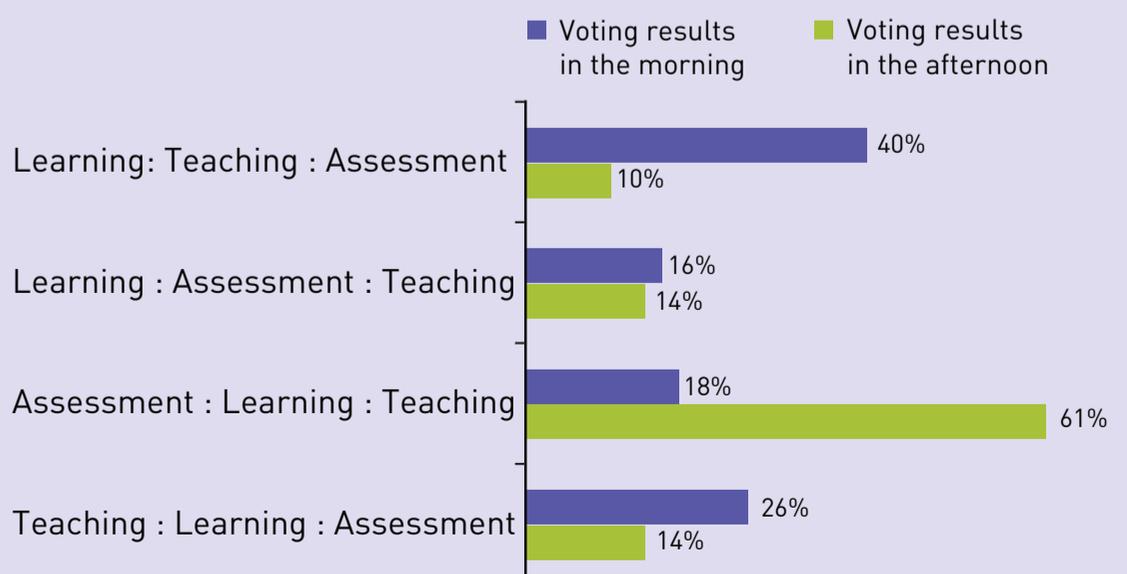
"The question is, is NAS the right place, given they are a marketing organisation?"

The editor argued that the debate should now move on to Ofsted.

"If we can't self-regulate, and I'm not convinced that we can, I think that's been proven, then do we need to revisit something like we had under the adult learning inspectorate?"

A before and after electronic vote

Which of the following best reflects your view of priorities?



The morning session considered priorities



Pictures by Nick Linford and Holly Wellham

A series of questions set off the conference, with the audience asked to vote on topics such as how they would prioritise teaching, learning and assessment. You can see some of the results in the graph on page 16.

The event was chaired by Dame Ruth Silver, who said: "We're going to listen, we're going to think, we're going to respond, we're going to question."

The audience listened to five panel members give their views on teaching and learning. Here are some highlights.

Dr Susan Pember, the director for further education at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, said that the "hot topic" for government at the moment is ensuring pupils raise their aspirations.

"That is where you're actually changing somebody's whole being, which to me is often the value of teaching". The director said that it is something that is currently

not assessed, because "we haven't got the tools to do it."

Fiona McMillan, the president of the Association of Colleges, said that teaching is about enabling students "to strike out on their own, to survive in what can be a pretty cut throat world, and most importantly, to have the confidence to be innovative."

She added: "I think one of the ways to encourage people not to be self-confident and self-learn is to straight jacket in them into a curriculum, the relevance of which is not always clear to them."

Matthew Coffey, the national director of learning and skills at Ofsted, spoke about no notice inspections, describing a teacher who during the pilot was stood on a chair with a captivated classroom, but stepped down as soon as the inspector walked in.

"There's a lesson in there for all of us, for us, about the messages that we send out," he said.

Joy Mercer, AoC and Bob Powell, Hoxe, offered opinions and views from the floor



Fiona McMillan, AoC



Matthew Coffey, Ofsted



Professor Lorna Unwin, IoE



Dame Ruth Silver, debate chair



Dr Susan Pember, BIS



Graham Hoyle OBE, AELP

Speakers for the afternoon session on apprenticeships



Jonathan Ledger, NSA



Chris Starling, Virgin Media



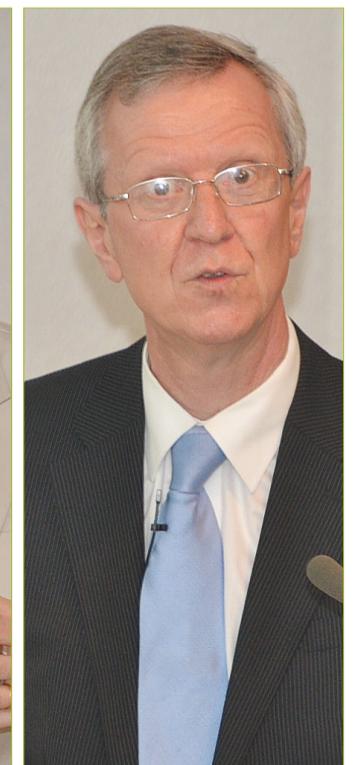
John Hyde, HIT Training



Nick Linford, FE Week



Sarah Benioff, NAS



Ian Nash, debate chair

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Full Job Description, Person Specification and an application form can be downloaded from college's website, www.sandwell.ac.uk

Sandwell College is committed to safeguarding children, young people, and vulnerable adults. All appointments are subject to a satisfactory enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure.

To apply please send your completed application form to employment@sandwell.ac.uk, or to Human Resource Department, 1 Spon Lane, West Bromwich, West Midlands, B70 6AW. Please ensure you quote the reference number for this post when completing your application form.



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Director of Employer Engagement

Circa £45k

(12 month maternity cover contract from 1 September 2012)

Nescot is a forward-looking College of Further & Higher Education that serves a large area of South East England with a wide range of vocational and academic courses, both full and part time. The College is situated in Ewell, close to Epsom in Surrey, and is located in the green belt near Epsom Downs. The college was inspected in September 2010; all areas were graded 'good' or 'outstanding'.

This is an excellent opportunity to contribute to Nescot at an important time in continuing the College's drive towards outstanding, initially to cover a 12 month maternity leave, but with a possibility of the role continuing further as a part time or job share.

Reporting to the Deputy Principal the Director of Employer Engagement will be responsible for the following areas:

- Employer Engagement
- Full cost and bespoke provision responding to employers' needs
- The College's Gas and Electrical Academy
- The College's Apprenticeship Contract
- A large Distance Learning Unit
- Partnership development, monitoring and working including ensuring all subcontractors adhere to audit requirements and meet projected profiled starts and achievements

The successful candidate will hold a degree, or equivalent qualification and have extensive experience of working within the further education sector or for a training provider. A leadership and management qualification is also desirable.

It is anticipated that you will have significant experience in a similar role, incorporating strategic and operational management skills. A proven track record of strong financial planning and management are essential to the post.

You will have excellent communication and interpersonal skills and have the ability to lead others with energy and enthusiasm and to delegate effectively.

Applications should be made on line by **25 June 2012**.
Please go to <http://www.nescot.ac.uk/careers/current-vacancies/>
and follow the link to view this and other current vacancies.

Business Development Manager (England & Wales) - Business Development & Customer Support



Salary £30,653–£34,228

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Due to our continued growth in the English and Welsh markets SQA are recruiting an additional Business Development Manager to grow brand awareness through engagement with Colleges, Training Providers, employers and Stakeholders. Promoting our substantial range of qualifications, the successful candidate will be expected to meet and exceed their sales target by offering SQA products and services to existing and potential customers within a given geographical area. They will also be expected to support the development of market/customer intelligence for their region along with taking responsibility for leading on certain products and key national accounts.

You should be educated to degree level or be able to demonstrate direct relevant experience for this role. You should be a confident presenter and have strong negotiation skills. You will have a winning approach and a strong focus on providing the best customer experience. Knowledge of the education market is desirable but not essential as training will be given. This post is being offered on a permanent basis and is home based (location flexible, geographical region to be confirmed). Substantial travel and regular overnight stays are required.

We offer the following benefits: Final salary pension scheme; staff well-being and health assistance programmes; development opportunities and 27 days annual leave in addition to 14 days public holiday.

For full details, an application pack and further qualification equivalents of SCQF levels please visit our website at www.sqa.org.uk/careers. Alternatively write to our Human Resources Department, SQA, Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow, G2 8DQ quoting the appropriate reference.

Remember to quote Ref 023.12 in all correspondence.

The closing date for this post is 25 June 2012.

Walsall College is one of the largest further education colleges in the West Midlands, with an annual turnover of £35 million. We are rated 'Good' by Ofsted and our success rates are in the top 10% across the country for 16-18 year old level 3 learners.

We are a dynamic institution with a lot to celebrate, including a £64million campus and two prestigious AoC Beacon Awards. The College is also the proud sponsor of the new Black Country University Technical College (UTC) and The Mirus Academy.

Director of Information Services

Salary: circa £56K

The Director of Information Services will provide excellent innovative approaches and solutions to the College's Information Services, with detailed knowledge of all aspects of FE/HE funding streams and the associated future changes.

Your analytical and resourceful attitude will allow you to translate knowledge into practical support for all teams across the College, supporting our future financial growth strategy. You will lead, motivate, and develop an excellent team, ensuring customer centric approaches in all aspects of Information Services.

Over recent years Walsall College has experienced transformational changes through effective use of technology, winning an AoC Beacon Award in 2010 for technology. You will be joining the College at a very exciting time and will be instrumental in our ambition to achieve world class Information and e-Business solutions.

This position is a real career opportunity, bringing together strategic influence and practical operational methods.

Closing date for this application is **Monday 18th June 2012 at 5pm.**

For further details and to apply online please visit www.walsallcollege.ac.uk or telephone **01922 651177.**

Walsall College is passionate about promoting equality of opportunity and creating a working environment where diversity is recognised and celebrated, giving everyone the chance to reach their full potential. Our environment is diverse in character and student population. We positively welcome applications from candidates from Black Minority Ethnic origin and those with a disability. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people / vulnerable adults is at the heart of all we do. This is reflected in our rigorous approach to the recruitment and professional development of our staff.



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To teach on BTEC, AS/A2 Health and Social Care and Access to Social Work. Other possible areas of teaching include: Sociology, Equality and Social Policy.

Applications from suitable candidates will be considered for a combined full time role.

If you would like to apply for this post please visit our vacancies section at www.totton.ac.uk and download an application form. Alternatively contact the HR Department on 02380 874874 or email hr@totton.ac.uk for an application pack. Totton College requires all staff to have an enhanced CRB check and a minimum of two references. Totton College is committed to creating and sustaining a positive and mutually supportive working environment for all. We value the diversity of our staff and students.



Closing Date for this application is Friday 22nd June 2012

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL: CURRICULUM

Salary scale: £54,966 - £61,854

Mid-Cheshire College is an Outstanding, grade 1 Beacon College with success rates in the top 10% of the sector and strong finances.

We are looking for an outstanding person who will provide visible leadership to curriculum areas as diverse as Motor Vehicle, Care, Construction, Computing, Catering, Science, Engineering and SLDD. We invite applications from strong managers regardless of their curriculum backgrounds.

Interviews are scheduled to take place on Friday 6 July 2012.
The closing date for completed applications is Friday 29 June 2012.

For more information on this post, phone human resources on **01606 720665** or log on to our recruitment website at www.midchesh.ac.uk.

Mid-Cheshire College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. We undertake medical clearance checks and Criminal Records Disclosures for all employees. Mid-Cheshire College is an equal opportunities employer and exists to provide education and training for the community.



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FE Week Sudoku challenge

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Solutions: Next week

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

FE Week mini-mascot

Follow the adventures of *FE Week's* biggest and smallest fan!



"Mostly this week I have been driving daddy's new family car"

You can also follow our *FE Week* mini-mascot on Twitter @daniellinford