



FEWEEK



Exclusive FRASER WHIELDON

Ofsted concern at AAC as FE Week investigates growth of management consultancy apprenticeships

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GRADE 1 COLLEGE CEO SAYS SORRY

- Dudley College forced to give £500k back to funding agency
- Chief executive considered resigning over the dodgy data
- DfE excludes college from national achievement rate tables

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'Serious concern' as training provider cashes in on controversial management consultancy apprenticeship

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Exclusive

A member of the Commons Public Accounts Committee has "serious concerns" about the government allocating one provider up to £40 million in nine months to teach a controversial management consultancy apprenticeship.

Layla Moran, the Lib Dem education spokesperson, was responding to an *FE Week* analysis that showed the level 7 accountancy/taxation professional standard had 3,250 starts from November 2017, when it was approved for delivery, to July 2018.

As the standard has an upper funding band of £21,000, these starts would have used up to £70 million in 2017-18 from the apprenticeship levy pot.

In total, 88 per cent of the starts between November and July were delivered by four providers – Kaplan Financial Limited, BPP Professional Education Limited, Ernst & Young LLP, and First Intuition – with Kaplan delivering 59 per cent on its own, which would be worth up to £40 million.

Apprentices on this course can expect to go on to careers as management consultants, financial accountants, management accountants and business and tax advisers, according to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE).

This includes jobs at big financial

advisory firms such as Deloitte, Ernst & Young and KPMG, which helped to develop the standard.

Level 6 and 7 apprenticeships have proved controversial after the IfATE estimated the apprenticeship budget could be overspent by £0.5 billion in 2018-19, rising to £1.5 billion by 2020-21.

A National Audit Office apprenticeships progress report earlier this month warned there was "clear risk" that the apprenticeship programme was not financially sustainable after the average cost of training an apprentice hit double what the government predicted.

The problem – despite a dip in the number of starts – is the result of higher per-start funding than first predicted, largely driven by the sharp rise in expensive management apprenticeships, which *FE Week* was first to warn about in 2016.

Last week the Association of Employment and Learning Providers made the radical proposal that all level 6 and 7 apprenticeships, including those with integrated degrees, should be removed from levy funding to relieve mounting pressure on the budget.

And on Monday, the Department for Education's permanent secretary admitted to the PAC that "hard choices" would need to be made in the face of the imminent apprenticeship budget overspend.

Asked whether the government should be limiting the use of the apprenticeship levy, Moran said: "While I cannot pre-empt the

committee, my personal view is there are serious concerns about both cost and the subsidising of qualifications, such as level 7 accountancy/taxation professional, at the expense of lower-level apprenticeships that do actually need taxpayers' funding.

"This will become a greater issue when money is tight, and qualifications such as this one should be the first to be excluded."

In March last year, Anne Milton, the skills minister, told a House of Lords inquiry that fears of a "middle-class grab" on apprenticeships were valid.

The accountancy/taxation professional standard is the most popular level 6 or 7 apprenticeship, with 5,790 total starts to December 2018; about 1,000 more than the second-placed chartered manager degree standard.

But scrutiny of the providers that offer the standard is thin.

Although Kaplan was graded 'requires improvement' by Ofsted last year, it would not have been inspected on its level 6 or 7 provision, including the accountancy/taxation professional standard, as the watchdog only inspects up to level 5.

Inspectors criticised Kaplan's managers for not having "sufficient information about apprentices' progress so that they can act quickly when apprentices fall behind". They also found its "talent coaches do not always set apprentices sufficiently challenging learning targets, and as a result, too many apprentices do not complete on



Layla Moran

time".

When *FE Week* shared the analysis of the standard with Amanda Spielman, Ofsted's chief inspector, she said she "very much hopes people will see the logic in us doing level 6 and 7 apprenticeship inspections".

She also discussed her concerns about repackaged graduate programmes now being sold as apprenticeships (see box out).

When asked about its provision of the accountancy/taxation professional standard, and for comment on the AELP proposal, a Kaplan spokesperson said: "We continue to support the government's strategy on apprentices."

BPP declined to comment on its provision of the accountancy/taxation professional standard, as did Ernst & Young and First Intuition.

'Graduate schemes are completely unscrutinised'

Ofsted's chief inspector is worried that some level 6 and 7 provision, which includes "repackaged graduate schemes", is going "completely unscrutinised" because of government policy.

Speaking at *FE Week's* Annual Apprenticeship Conference this week, Amanda Spielman said these "expensive" apprenticeships were "high-cost programmes that soak up a lot of money".

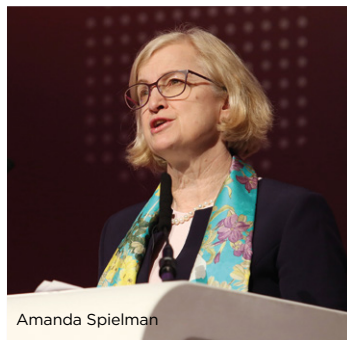
She referred to how graduate schemes were, in effect, being "repackaged" as apprenticeships, an issue she raised in her 2017-18 annual report.

She was also concerned that Ofsted could not inspect level 6 and 7 apprenticeships and if the standard did not have a degree element, it would not be regulated by the Office for Students (OfS) if the provider offering it was not on the office's register, as revealed by *FE Week* in November.

"There are places that go completely unscrutinised because they don't come within OfS arrangements and they don't come within our space."

Spielman said the first *FE* inspection she observed found a large accountancy firm had "very clearly" turned its tax graduate trainees into level 4 and 7 apprentices.

But because of a policy decision made by the government and "not us", Ofsted could only inspect the



Amanda Spielman

level 4 provision, while in another room level 7 apprentices were not being reviewed.

"It was very clearly a graduate training programme that existed for many years that had been reframed slightly to make sure it genuinely did meet the requirements, but nevertheless was the kind of training that firm would have always have been providing and paying for," she told *FE Week*.

"We were there to look at only one piece of this graduate traineeship programme, which made for an extraordinarily artificial conversation."

Asked if she would like Ofsted to inspect level 6 and 7 provision, Spielman said: "I very much hope people will see the logic in us doing it."

Higher level apprenticeships now make up more than a quarter of the number of starts, which the chief inspector said "narrows the options for the third of young people who leave school without a full level 2 qualification".

Level 7 accountancy / taxation : 22 providers in 17/18 but these 4 delivered 88% of starts	Starts
KAPLAN FINANCIAL LIMITED [Grade 3 Sept 2018]	1,930
BPP PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION LIMITED [not visited by Ofsted yet but one of their other businesses was given the lowest grade for their monitoring visit]	610
ERNST & YOUNG LLP [not in Ofsted scope for this standard]	410
FIRST INTUITION [across 7 legal entities] First Intuition Chelmsford and First Intuition Ltd got an ok monitoring visit but of course level 7 not in scope. 3 others not visited (Reading, Cambridge and Bristol)	300
FIRST INTUITION LEEDS & FIRST INTUITION MAIDSTONE joined ESFA provider register in Jan 2018	
Total starts on Level 7 accountancy / taxation between November 2017 & July 2018	3,250

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/772385/Apprenticeships_by_Provider_framework_standard_201415_to_201718.xlsx

Framework/Standard – 10 most popular L6 and 7	Level	Total starts to December 2018
Accountancy / Taxation Professional	7	5,790
Chartered Manager	6	4,250
Digital and Technology Solutions Professional (degree)	6	3,020
Chartered Surveyor (degree)	6	1,820
Senior Leader Master's Degree Apprenticeship (degree)	7	1,770
Registered Nurse (degree)	6	710
Civil Engineer (degree)	6	550
Manufacturing Engineer (degree)	6	490
Chartered Legal Executive	6	310
Product Design and Development Engineer (degree)	6	310

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/772385/Apprenticeship-starts-ach-framework-standard-tool_201415-01201819_Jan2019_v1.xlsx

News

Dudley College chief 'mortified' at data inaccuracies and manipulation

BILLY CAMDEN

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Exclusive

From front

The chief executive of a grade one college has apologised after an audit exposed data manipulation that resulted in more than £500,000 being paid back to the government.

Lowell Williams, the boss at Dudley College, told *FE Week* he even considered resigning over the "blunder", which has led to the college being excluded from this year's national achievement rate tables.

Following complaints from a whistleblower last year, the allegations of which are unknown but which have been "dismissed", the Education and Skills Funding Agency conducted a "review" of the college's data in December. This found numerous late withdrawals of apprentices and work-placed learners.

Once notified of these "concerns", the college began an internal investigation, which identified the late withdrawals in 2015/16 and 2016/17, which artificially inflated achievement rates.

It also found some learners' end dates were inaccurate, which resulted in one senior member of staff tendering

their resignation.

Dudley College then appointed auditing firm RSM to undertake an "advisory audit", in agreement with the ESFA, which confirmed the findings this month.

RSM reported that the college had "historically had a poor system for tracking and monitoring the continued activity of apprentices and adult education budget learners where delivery is offsite".

As a result, "funding has been overclaimed for both adult education budget learners and apprentices as withdrawals have not been actioned in a timely manner to ensure funding was returned in the correct year".

Williams, who has been at the college for over 10 years and led it to being rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted in June 2017, told *FE Week* he was "mortified" by this "professionally and personally".

"There's no question that the college is at fault in this matter," Williams said.

"The management of large work-based learning programmes, delivered offsite on a national basis, is complex, but it is our responsibility to get it right and we didn't.

"We have made provision to return £504,000 to the agency, which represents less than 1 per cent of our total funding claim in these years and

does not have any material impact on the college's financial health.

"I recognise the reputational damage caused by these errors to the college, our stakeholders and the wider sector. I apologise for these mistakes."

Asked if he considered his own position in the course of the investigations, he added: "The truth is absolutely yes. I'm a national leader of further education and I considered that my position was compromised.

"But advice I received from people I've worked with over a career is not to let a single mistake wipe out a lot of good work that has been done over a number of years."

Williams said the college is "extremely disappointed" to be excluded from the national achievement rate dataset for 2017/18, which was published by the ESFA on Thursday, after the agency "could not confirm the accuracy of the college's achievement rate for adult apprentices" in time.

He added that the college's website has published the unofficial data instead, which show achievement rates for all apprentices at 80.7 per cent in 2016/17 and 77.2 per cent in 2017/18.

Williams was "grateful" that the ESFA brought the dodgy data to the college's attention, and said it would be "helpful



Lowell Williams

for the sector in the future if there was a more effective system to analyse and report on late withdrawals and an automatic reconciliation of funds between Individualised Learner Record years".

"I note that we are not the only college to have fallen foul of these complexities, so it is a good time for us all to take stock and learn lessons for the future," he added.

FE Week revealed last week that Intraining, a provider part of England's

largest college group NCG, was one of several dozen providers hit with recent mystery audits, and faces not only a clawback but also being removed from the official achievement rate tables.

As previously reported by *FE Week*, this major review of apprenticeship data is expected to result in the sector being officially warned about unacceptable data practices, as was the case nearly a decade ago when the then chief executive of the funding agency published a letter to the sector.

Blow your own trumpet and shake off your victim mentality, providers told

JESSICA FINO

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Exclusive

FE providers have been urged to "blow their own trumpet more" after research found they have developed a "victim mentality" because they have been "unfairly blamed for deficiencies in a highly complicated system".

A study, conducted by the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) and the Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL), found that providers now acted in a way that minimised risk and optimised regulatory compliance to "just survive".

The study followed a series of nine roundtable discussions with 81 sector leaders across the country.

It found a "feeling within the sector that it has been held to blame for a

perceived unsatisfactory state of the system, when even the government's own evidence often doubts whether it is as unsatisfactory as it fears".

More alarming was a "realisation" that over time providers had "not been effective enough in countering this view".

They were often "too willing to accept this position instead of pushing back against it", because the market was "too risky and uncertain to do otherwise".

Dame Ruth Silver, the former principal of Lewisham College in south London and president of the FETL, told *FE Week* the sector currently had a "victim mentality" because it had been taking the blame for "inadequate policy implementation".

"People set themselves up to deliver the original design and requirements and then that changes, depending on how much money government needs to take back from the sector," she said.

"This is no way to run the future of our economy and people.

"One thing that I would wish for the sector is that there was a promise to not interfere with things for a period of five years. To let things take root, to let things have stability, to let managers and leaders have the time of perspective.

"Government officials keep changing their minds. This is due to

political incompetence and some impatience and, of course, the fact that we have ministers in *FE* who do not stay very long. I used to say that the skills brief in Whitehall is the apprenticeship for being a minister."

Silver also said ministers had tried to make public servants of employers, to change their ways and mind-sets, instead of understanding where they were coming from, what they wanted and how they saw their role.

"As a result, employers lose interest, feel frustrated or ill-served, and withdraw, at great cost to learners and the sector, not to mention the treasury and economy."

As reported last week by *FE Week*, the report also called on the government to move away from

its "unhelpful" mantra of "employers in the driving seat" in UK skills policy because this was "more rhetoric than reality".

The FETL president added that for decades politicians had "scratched their heads" about how employers could become more engaged in *FE* – and were still asking themselves the same question today.

Meanwhile Mark Dawe, the chief executive of the AELP, said that providers and colleges often knew how they should work with employers, but government red-tape, restrictions and a lack of funding did not allow them the "flexibility" to do it.

The report said there was now a "strong sense of risk aversion" among providers who felt their expertise and achievements were "under-recognised".

It concluded that the sector needed to "blow its own trumpet more and be more assertive of what its role should be".



Dame Ruth Silver



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News

Alert raised on the high volume of 'tie-breaks' in latest ESF tendering process

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Exclusive

Further questions are being asked about the Education and Skills Funding Agency's recent European Social Fund tender, after *FE Week* discovered an "unprecedented" amount of tie-breaks in the controversial procurement.

Many providers have alleged that the competition, worth around £282 million in total, was botched after the agency broke tender rules and made "errors".

One aggrieved provider even threatened legal action, as revealed by *FE Week* last week, but has since decided to drop this because of the likely cost and a fear of repercussions from the ESFA.

Now, however, this newspaper has discovered, via a Freedom of Information request, that 37 of the 95 lots, or 39 per cent, tendered in the three competitive areas of the

procurement resulted in a tie-break after the ESFA marked many bids as scoring the maximum.

One college director, who used to work at the ESFA and who wished to remain anonymous, told *FE Week* that the number is "unprecedented".

"It makes a mockery of the scoring process, or demonstrates inexperienced scorers," the director said.

"All the bidders will have scored the maximum 100 for each of the four questions to end up in a tie-break – [which is] unbelievable. And how come all these tie-breaks were resolved in an award? What's the probability of that?"

In a tie-break, the bidders were asked to "respond to a single tie-break question". Whoever the agency deemed to have scored the highest in this question would win.

Many of the tie-breaks included multiple organisations, and one lot, for the Sheffield Transition area, comprised five providers.

Overall, 87 providers were involved. *FE Week's* FOI also showed that the

ESFA employed four temporary staff, at a cost of £43,000 in total, as well as their full-time European Social Fund staff, to mark the bids.

"The use of temporary staff to mark these tenders is an insult to the providers, who spent weeks preparing their responses," said the chief executive of a provider who bid in the tender but who did not want to be named.

"The *FE Week* findings prove that this wasn't an open and competitive procurement process, given that such a high volume of providers with no infrastructure, resources or tangible track records in the specified regions were able to score 100 per cent and enter into tie-breaks in multiple contract package areas."

He added that since the results were announced, three successful bidders have "approached us to deliver their newly won contracts as they have no capacity to deliver the contracts themselves". Each of the bidders had scored 200 out of 200 on their "readiness to deliver" the contract.



The chief executive said his provider understands that the ESFA is currently undertaking "penetration audits" to test the validity of what was written in the bids.

Another provider, who wished to remain anonymous, said they are "alarmed" by the tie-break figures and "think that the procurement has not been designed to capture the best provision locally".

"Over one-third of lots going to tie-break shows that not enough due diligence was carried out in analysing the accuracy of the responses," this provider added.

"We are seeing this in the results of the awards, with, for example, providers that have no staff, infrastructure, supply chains and stakeholders in region [who] are not ready for the April 1 go-live date."

The agency has delayed issuing contracts several times, since – as previously reported by *FE Week* –

multiple providers claimed that the government broke tender rules, namely by excluding the "track record" section when marking bids, while the ESFA has admitted to "errors", such as naming Serco Regional Services Limited as a winner instead of Serco Limited.

Contracts are supposed to go live on April 1.

The European Social Fund is funding that the UK received, as a member state of the EU, to increase job opportunities and to help people to improve their skill levels, particularly those individuals who find it difficult to get work.

The three areas of the tender that had tie-breaks were "skills support for the workforce", "skills support for the unemployed" and "skills support for NEET [Not in Education, Employment or Training]".

The other part of the tender was for community grants, and it is understood there was only one application for each area, thus none resulted in a tie-break.

Lot	Total lots	Lots with a tie	Lots with a tie	Providers in a tie
1.1 (skills support for the unemployed)	25	12	48%	28
1.2 (skills support for NEET)	31	7	23%	15
2.1 (skills support for the workforce)	39	18	46%	44
Totals	95	37	39%	87

Funding clawback for college at risk of cash crisis

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A college already in financial difficulty is being forced to pay back nearly £1 million to the government as a result of working with a subcontractor investigated for falsifying learner records.

In a report published last Friday by the FE commissioner, North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College was warned that it needed to take "urgent action" to secure its long-term future after it was over-optimistic in its forecasting, with "overly complex, expensive" staffing costs to income ratio.

According to its 2017-18 accounts, the college generated an operating deficit of £2.9 million, up from £612,000 the year before.

But the accounts also reveal its financial situation could deteriorate as it faces a liability of up to £900,000 to the Education and Skills Funding Agency

(ESFA), following an investigation into its use of a subcontractor that entered into liquidation in 2017.

Before its merger with North Warwickshire and Hinckley College in 2016, South Leicestershire worked with Ambertrain Ltd, which the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMChE) bought in November 2015.

Two years later, IMChE announced it was placing the provider into liquidation after uncovering "historical practices undertaken by some individuals at Ambertrain that have given rise to claims against the company".

In May 2017 the ESFA wrote to the college about its concerns with the learning provision carried out by Ambertrain, and requested an investigation.

At the time of its insolvency proceedings, liquidators said Ambertrain had debts of £167,456 due from colleges, including South Leicestershire, which was "investigating claims against the company for falsification of learner

records".

Despite the result of this investigation being expected to translate into a large clawback to the agency, North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College did not make provision for it in its 2017-18 accounts because the sum had not yet been agreed.

However, a spokesperson for the college said it had "fully provided" in its three-year financial plan for the impact of Ambertrain's liability.

"This plan, which shows the college returned to the ESFA's financial health grade of satisfactory in the current year and moving to good in 2020-21, was submitted to the ESFA and to the FE commissioner last November," she said.

Before the merger, South Leicestershire and North Warwickshire colleges were already in a precarious financial situation. After a visit to the colleges in 2015 Dr David Collins, then commissioner, recommended that they speed up plans to merge after he saw how their recurring deficits were hitting

finances.

This week Richard Atkins, the current commissioner, said the college "should be able to avoid insolvency for the time being" only if it improved the way its "costed curriculum plan is monitored in year and adjustments made accordingly".

The commissioner's report, dated November 2018, said the college, which received a financial health notice to improve after the government assessed its monetary situation as "inadequate", was at risk of a "cash crisis" this year. However, it stressed it was "not currently in crisis".

According to the FE commissioner, the current financial situation was driven by poor forecasting, an overall decline in apprenticeship contract and provision, failure to attract enough students to deliver the adult education budget contract, an "over-dependence" on a late increase in distance subcontracting and the requirement to accommodate more than 100 unfunded 16 to 18-year-olds, which cost £1 million.



The report said the college now needed to review its organisational structure, which Anne Milton, the skills minister, said was "unnecessarily complex" in a letter published alongside the commissioner's report.

Milton agreed with the report's findings, saying it was clear "urgent actions are now required".

Marion Plant, the college's principal, said the college had since made "rapid and significant progress" against all the recommendations.



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News

Off-the-job calculation to be clarified after providers left confused by 30 hour cap

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The Education and Skills Funding Agency will shortly "clarify" what appears to be a contradiction in its off-the-job training policy, its director of apprenticeships has said.

Providers were left baffled after the agency updated its "apprenticeship off-the-job training policy background and examples" document on March 22, which for the first time stated that the 20 per cent calculation for full-time staff should be always be based on 30 hours of work per week, even where they are paid for many more.

Official funding rules for 2018/19 make no reference to a 30-hour cap in the calculation and providers have been including all "paid hours".

To add to the confusion, the first version of the off-the-job training guidance included an example of a calculation based on 40 hours per week.

FE Week sought clarification from the ESFA, who replied, "To be clear, the

published guidance does not contradict ESFA apprenticeship-funding rules.

"It was produced to complement the funding rules and to further clarify areas that have prompted questions since the introduction of the policy.

"The off-the-job section in the funding rules is not intended to be read in isolation; the 30 hours is referenced in the minimum duration section."

However, when the agency's director of apprenticeships, Keith Smith, was quizzed on this during FE Week's Annual Apprenticeship Conference on Thursday, he admitted "there is a contradiction".

"What was issued last week was guidance on the funding rules to help you interpret them," he said. "The funding rules are the definitive source, and this new guidance was intended to help you interpret the rules in the best way possible.

"In this case, there is a contradiction between the planned 30 hours and the paid contracted hours.

"The publication last week was not intended to complicate it. It was not

intended to change the rules. So that's something I am talking to the team about, to make sure we get that section of the guidance absolutely right.

"This is my message today: the rules haven't changed, the rules are the same."

Asked when an official clarification would be released by the agency, Smith added: "Over the coming days."

Mark Dawe, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said he was "pleased but surprised" by the guidance.

"We've looked for clarity all the way through and it's never been clear that it's based on 30 hours," he told FE Week.

"We're pleased but surprised because it was a very easy thing to clarify from day one, but it definitely wasn't there."

Many in the sector have been using an online forum managed by the ESFA, called FE Connect, to discuss the issue.

One person, who goes by the username of PaulB, said the 30 hours cap will "significantly reduce the number of OTJ hours required for our learners", some by "around 100 hours".

"In view of what I think is a change,



Keith Smith

and not a clarification of policy, I think most providers will need to review the OTJ requirement for all apprentices," said FE consultant Martin West.

The ESFA had already confused many in the sector with regards to the off-the-job training rule last year.

Under original rules for starts from May 1, 2017, the calculation for the 20 per cent off-the-job minimum was based on a 52-week year and included annual leave. But the agency changed this in August 2018 and stated that statutory leave should be "deducted

when calculating the requirement for all apprentices who begin their programme from August 1, 2018".

It states that the calculation to determine off-the-job hours is different for apprentices who started before August 1, 2018, compared to those who started after.

In an attempt to combat confusion, the DfE published an off-the-job training mythbusters document in January.

Apprenticeship funding rules for 2019/20, for starts from August 1, have not yet been published.

January starts up on last year, down on 2017

BILLY CAMDEN
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The number of apprenticeship starts is on the up again, but there is still some way to go to get to the levels they were at before the levy was introduced.

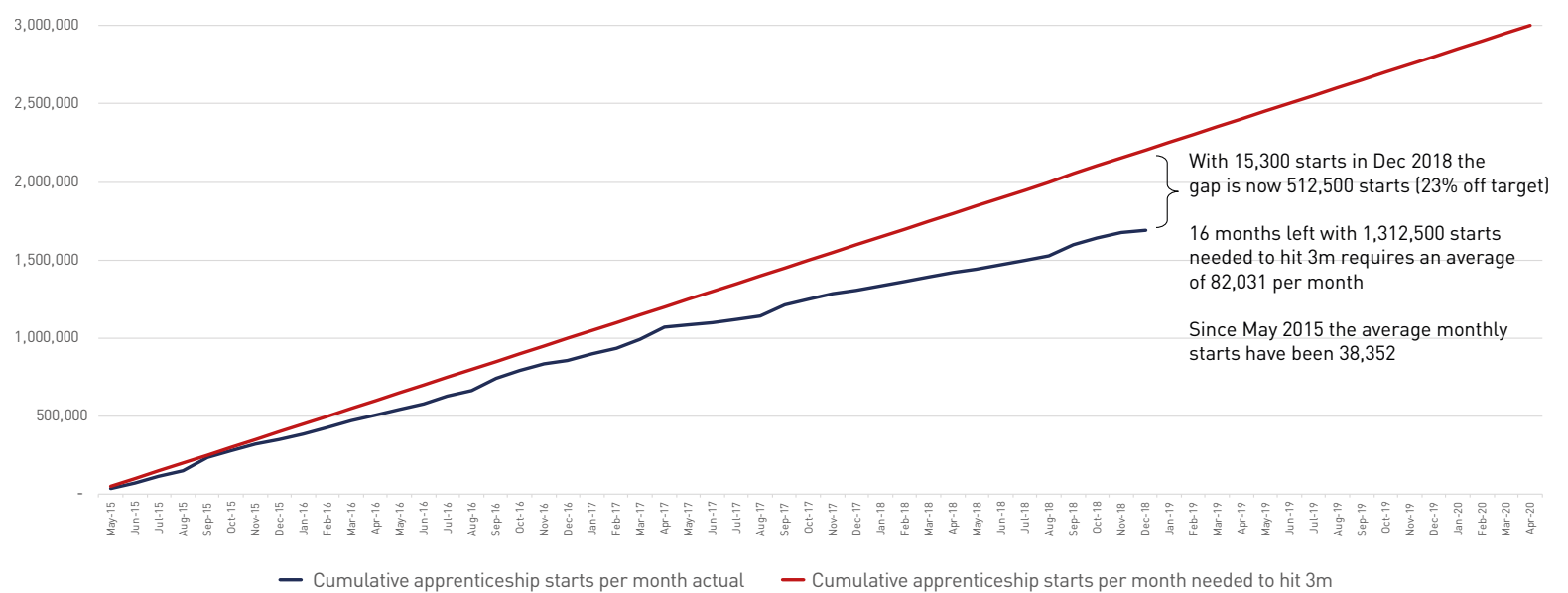
New data published by the Department for Education on Thursday shows 29,100 starts in January, which is 15 per cent up on the 25,400 recorded in the same month last year.

This will have come as a relief to the department, as numbers had dropped in the previous two months.

However, the figure for January 2019 was 21 per cent down on the 36,700 starts in January two years ago.

Meanwhile, there were 225,800 apprenticeship starts between August 2018 and January 2019 for the 2018-19 academic year.

This is up 10 per cent on the 206,100



reported in the equivalent period in 2017-18, but 16 per cent down on the 269,600 of 2016-17.

The 2016-17 year is a better comparator than 2017-18, given

that number slumped after the introduction of the levy in May 2017.

Anne Milton, the skills minister, said: "It's excellent news that the number of people starting on our new high-quality apprenticeships in the first two quarters 2018-19 increased by 10 per cent compared to last year.

"We overhauled the apprenticeships

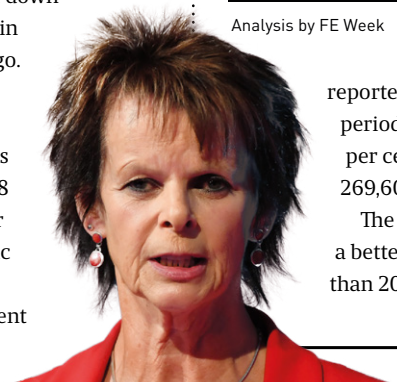
system almost two years ago to the day and we have made good and steady progress.

"I'm delighted that thousands of employers, large and small, are now embracing the huge benefits apprenticeships are bringing to their business and offering people of all ages and backgrounds the chance to

progress."

FE Week analysis shows that the government needs another 528,700 starts to reach its 3 million target by the end of March next year.

That means an average of 85,246 starts every month over the next 15 months. Since May 2015, the average has been 38,251.



Anne Milton

College of the Future reveals its 16-strong membership

JESSICA FINO

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The 16 people who will form an independent commission to set out a “new vision” for colleges in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have been revealed.

The “College of the Future” commission will be chaired by Sir Ian Diamond, chair of Edinburgh College’s management board, and also features BBC broadcaster Steph McGovern, chief UK policy director at the Confederation of Business Industry Matthew Fell, National Union of Students president Shakira Martin, and FE Week contributor professor Ewart Keep.

Other prominent names in education, industry and the media from across the four nations of the UK make up the commission.

It will be supported by key organisations in the FE and skills sector, including the Association of Colleges, Colleges Scotland, Colleges

Wales, the colleges in Northern Ireland, City & Guilds, the Further Education Trust for Leadership, Jisc, NCFE, NOCN and Pearson.

The commission will be working to answer the question – what does the college of the future look like?

“Colleges are a central part of our

“The independent commission brings together a formidable team of experts and leaders”

education systems right across the UK,” Diamond said. But with so many critical challenges facing us, nationally and internationally – from changes in technology, aspirations, jobs and climate, to name just a few – colleges must take an ever more central place

in public policy, as they are critically important for people and communities.

“The independent commission brings together a formidable team of experts and leaders to ask the fundamental questions about the role and place of colleges across all four corners of the UK.

“We will be putting forward clear recommendations, as we seek to ensure that colleges are able to play the critical role that they must – so that people have the right opportunities to get on in life, that no community is left behind, and that governments across the UK are able to meet the challenges of the future.”

The members will meet five times throughout the year, with the aim of releasing a final report with recommendations by spring 2020.

An expert panel, chaired by Amanda Melton, principal and chief executive at Nelson & Colne College, will also feed into the process.

“It is essential to take full advantage of the transformational opportunities inherent in further education in our



ASSOCIATION
OF COLLEGES

current turbulent economy and skills environment,” she said.

“Understanding and clarifying the role of colleges within a wider skills and education system will ensure appropriate investment to enable the country to compete globally at a time when the world of work is changing both socially and technically.”

The commission said it will hold a range of round-table and workshop events across the UK throughout the year, plus a number of public events.

David Hughes, chief executive of

the Association of Colleges, said: “I am delighted that the commission is being launched at such a pivotal time for colleges.

“We have worked hard to raise the profile of colleges and to make the case for their vital roles in helping deliver inclusive economic growth, stronger communities and a more tolerant and just society.

“This commission will be able to provide the compelling vision of those roles as well as the support colleges need to flourish.”

The 16 members of the College of the Future commission



SIR IAN DIAMOND
Chair,
Edinburgh College
Management Board



PETER CHEESE
Chief Executive, CIPD



**AUDREY CUMBERFORD
MBE FRSE**
Principal and
Chief Executive,
Edinburgh College



DR STEPHEN FARRY
Former Minister
for Employment
and Learning,
Northern Ireland



LESLEY GILES
Director, Work
Foundation



PROFESSOR ELLEN HAZELKORN
Joint Managing Partner,
BH Associates Education
Consultants Ireland



**ROB HUMPHREYS
CBE FLSW**
Council member, Higher
Education Funding
Council for Wales



**DAVID JONES
OBE DL**
Chief Executive,
Coleg Cambria



SHAKIRA MARTIN
President, NUS



MARIE-THÉRÈSE MCGOVERN
Principal and Chief
Executive, Belfast
Metropolitan College



STEPH MCGOVERN
BBC Broadcaster



AMANDA MELTON
Principal and Chief
Executive, Nelson
and Colne College



MATTHEW FELL
Chief UK Policy
Director, CBI



PROFESSOR EWART KEEP
Director, SKOPE,
Oxford University



PAUL NOWAK
Deputy General
Secretary, TUC



NORA SENIOR CBE
Chair, Weber Shandwick,
and Chair of Scottish
Government’s Enterprise
and Skills Board

Government's top apprenticeship officials get

BILLY CAMDEN
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'Hard choices' to avoid budget overspend

MPs on the influential Public Accounts Committee grilled the government's top civil servants on Monday on the future affordability of the apprenticeship programme, as well as on a range of other topics, including assessment and the fall in starts.

It followed the recent National Audit Office report on the progress of the programme, which warned that it is not financially sustainable, based on current trends.

Witnesses at the PAC hearing included the Department for Education's permanent secretary Jonathan Slater, the Education and Skills Funding Agency chief executive Eileen Milner, the agency's director of apprenticeships Keith Smith, and the chief executive of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education Sir Gerry Berragan.

FE Week has the main findings...

The Department for Education's top civil servant has admitted "hard choices" will need to be made in the face of an imminent apprenticeship budget overspend.

Jonathan Slater, the department's permanent secretary, was asked by Layla Moran MP if it is "right" that a bank employee who already earns a six-figure salary should have their MBA funded through the levy.

Slater said if there is enough funding in the system "there is no reason for government to get involved in that decision".

However, he quickly pointed to the National Audit Office report which warned that the apprenticeships budget will shortly be "constrained", and stated that "something is going to have to give" in the upcoming spending review.

"In 2020/21 it [the levy] could be significantly overspent if we carried on, on the basis of current trends," he said.

"One of the choices for government as resources get constrained would be to prioritise some apprenticeships over others.

"The problem with doing that is we are putting ourselves in the employers' shoes, but that sort of choice will have to be made one way or another."

Asked what the government might "prioritise", Slater said there is a "whole

range of choices", including the fact that there "isn't a requirement to collect the amount of money we currently collect" – a hint that levy contributions could be increased, or the current £3 million threshold for employers to pay the levy could be reduced.

He continued: "One could change the levy on the basis of productivity gains, fund from general taxation, or one could prioritise from within.

"It will be self-evident to the committee that if the amount of money were to be constrained at its current level, that would require choices to be made between level 2 and level 6 – the balance between one sector and another."

Last week the Association of Employment and Learning Providers made the radical proposal that all level 6 and 7 apprenticeships, including those with integrated degrees, should be removed from the scope of levy funding to relieve mounting pressure on the budget.

But many champions of degree apprenticeships, including education select committee chair Robert Halfon, strongly opposed the proposal.

Slater raised this issue during this week's hearing: "Layla Moran suggested I had given her an opportunity for a campaign against higher level



Jonathan Slater

apprenticeships, but if I was in front of the education select committee, its chair would be demanding I push harder for degree and post-graduate apprenticeships."

He continued: "Bear in mind all of this money being spent is what employers put in a pot. It's public money, sure, but they put it in, and the question about the extent to which we decide what they spend their money on is an interesting political choice – from 'let them do whatever they want', through to, 'no you can't have an MBA, no matter what'. There isn't a right answer there."

One reason the AELP wants to stop government funding for higher level apprenticeships is because of the huge drop in level 2 starts.

Slater shared similar concerns during

the PAC hearing: "We are concerned as we monitor the objectives we set out in that benefits realisation strategy that, as the NAO points out, the number of starts for the most disadvantaged has gone down from 25 per cent to 22.6 per cent.

"Clearly, we need to meet the needs of disadvantaged young people when it comes to apprenticeships, so that will be a key factor for the review we carry out later this year."

Slater concluded: "The clear challenge for us in the forthcoming spending review is that, in the year ahead, all the money will be spent and the year beyond that, more if we carry on as we are, and so there are going to have to be choices made about how to cope with that imbalance that is coming between supply and demand."

Providers will need to prove that MBAs are 'additive'

The boss of the Education and Skills Funding Agency has insisted that management apprenticeships will be "increasingly" audited to ensure they are "additive", amid fears that they offer little value for public money.

During the Public Accounts Committee hearing Eileen Milner was asked if she was concerned at the increase in levy-funded MBAs while the number of starts on level 2s continue to plummet.

She said the take-up of level 7 apprenticeships is "new and growing" but it is "still a very small proportion of the totality", before explaining how the ESFA is tackling the situation.

"Where we see MBAs, the test that we have to do, and that providers of MBAs have to do, is that what they are delivering is something that is genuinely new knowledge, skills and behaviours... equipping somebody for an occupational standard," Milner said.

"And that is something that we will increasingly be testing around, so that when

people go on to these things, and when we are auditing them, we will be checking very carefully to ensure they are deploying tests in advance to ensure that they are meeting that test that it is new, that it is additive."

Milner's comments follow a reminder from the agency last month that providers must conduct prior learning assessments.

Prior learning refers to skills, knowledge and behaviours gained by learners before they start their apprenticeship, and must be taken into account by providers when negotiating a price with an employer to ensure cash is not being used to teach an apprentice something they already know.

The repercussions for not conducting prior learning assessments are severe, as the funding rules state that funds "may be recovered" where there is non-compliance.

And last month FE Week reported that the DfE had commissioned research to review high prices for apprentices with prior learning.

Milner promises no apprentice will finish without an EPAO

No apprentice will get to the end of their training without there being an assessment organisation in place to test them, the Education and Skills Funding Agency chief executive has promised.

"I am not going to let it happen," was the stern message from Eileen Milner when questioned on the topic, adding that the issue is one she feels "very personally" about.

She told the PAC that there are currently 220 approved end-point assessment organisations (EPAO) that make an "independent assessment that apprentices are occupationally competent and can complete the apprenticeship".

Over the next 12 months, the government expects to have around 140,000 apprentices due to go through an end-point assessment, and "we have 99.96 per cent coverage for those apprentices with an EPAO," Milner claimed.

"We know where we don't have coverage, and where we don't have coverage we are looking very seriously at where we can encourage people to come in and provide that



Eileen Milner

EPAO," she added.

FE Week was first to report the issue of a lack of end-point assessments back in 2016, and has since exposed cases where apprentices had to wait more than a year for someone to test them and others who missed out on a pay rise because there was no EPA ready for them.

Asked what her contingency plans are if this should happen again, Milner said: "That's what I'm putting in place."

FE Week asked the ESFA for details of the chief executive's back-up plan, but the agency would not comment.

a grilling from the Public Accounts Committee

Government aims to 'streamline' external quality assurance

The government's apprenticeship agencies are working with England's education regulators to "streamline and simplify" external quality assurance (EQA) arrangements.

There are currently 18 approved EQA bodies that monitor end-point assessment organisations, to ensure the process is "fair, consistent and robust".

However, many in the sector have questioned why the whole job isn't given to the country's exams regulator Ofqual, which already does the EQA for 61 standards, especially after finding the other external quality assurance organisations charge prices for it that vary from a free service to a huge £179 per apprentice.

Keith Smith, the ESFA's director of apprenticeships, told the PAC he is "keen" to put a "quality regime around the whole end-point assessment process so we can be really clear about the rigour and ensure they are robust and meeting a certain quality bar".

"We're working with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education

about how to actually streamline and simplify the delivery arrangements for how that quality assurance arrangement actually works," he said.

"We're talking very closely with Ofqual and the Office for Students if it is at level 6 and above to understand how we simplify those arrangements."

Sally Collier, chief executive of Ofqual, told the education select committee earlier this month that her organisation has done a "good job in proving that as the regulator we can do this job and can do it well" and they are "ready to take on a larger role".

"It is complex and confusing in places, I think we can bring some clarity to the process," she explained, but added the regulator would "need more people and more resources to do that".

The Department for Education's permanent secretary, Jonathan Slater, said: "There is a question that we are working on, absolutely, in what is the most efficient way of doing quality assurance of end-point assessments and we will report on that in due course."

3 million starts target encourages a 'race to the bottom'

The government's three million apprenticeships starts by 2020 target only "encourages a race to the bottom", according to one provider representative, who encouraged MPs to move away from focusing on it.

Paddy Patterson, head of business development at ACE Training, was one of four witnesses from the sector who appeared in front of the PAC before the apprenticeship officials.

Asked for his thoughts on the drop in apprenticeship starts, he said: "The reality is it is an arbitrary figure. We don't know what it is based on and it's not realistic.

"The more we push people towards it, the more we are going to cut corners. It's as simple as that for me."

"The target only encourages a race to the bottom," he concluded.

ESFA boss Eileen Milner was later asked for her opinion on the target and she replied: "I am sure we will get there, I am absolutely confident of that."

But she reiterated what skills minister Anne Milton has previously said, that the government "must not prioritise quality over quantity".



"What was the problem that the reforms were put in place to deal with? It was that apprenticeships had become degraded as a term and as an approach to developing people," Milner said.

"Whilst we want as many opportunities open, we want to make sure we mustn't compromise that quality."

Jonathan Slater pointed out that to get to the three million starts target by March 2020, which is a Conservative Party manifesto commitment, employers would "need to be taking on people at double the rate they are".

"That's the way the maths works," he said. "How many apprentices employers take on is a matter for them. It's real jobs. But it looks ambitious."

Employers to lose £12m of levy funds in May

Employers are expected to lose around £12 million, or 9 per cent of what they paid in May 2017, when the first sun-setting period for the levy is reached, in May 2019.

As per the government's levy rules, big businesses that pay into the pot have a 24-month limit to spend their funds.

Once that time is up, the funds will expire on a month-by-month basis.

"Estimates suggest in May this year, the first month [in which] we get to the two years, we're looking at a loss of potentially £12 million, or 9 per cent of what they paid in May 2017 – a fairly small amount," Keith Smith said when asked about this during the PAC hearing.

"We think over this period it will probably be about 60 per

cent of the overall budget hat will be to the benefit of levy employers, with about 40 per cent for non-levy employers."

As reported in the NAO report, in 2017-18, levy-paying employers used 9 per cent of the funds available to them to pay for new apprenticeships, meaning they accessed £191 million of almost £2.2 billion.

The department had projected that levy-paying employers would actually use 13 per cent of the available funds in that year.

Explaining this to the committee, Eileen Milner said: "The original modelling came in at a figure of 13 per cent, which turned out to be 9 per cent. That doesn't take account of other things that were happening. Whilst employers were being introduced to the levy and standards, it is not surprising that it took slightly longer to get going.

"We spent £268 million on non-levy and £77 million on supporting 16-18 apprenticeships, and then maths and English. It is not a million miles away from where we thought we were going to be.

"In April to January this financial year, £465 million was spent, so it is accelerating."



DfE to publish productivity measure next month

The Department for Education will publish the details of its productivity measure for the apprenticeships programme in April.

The National Audit Office criticised the department for not being transparent about how it demonstrates the impact of the programme on economic productivity in its apprenticeships progress report.

It said the department reports a "skills index" for the programme which "takes account of the impact on earnings of successfully completing an apprenticeship, which is an established way of calculating productivity gains".

However, the DfE had "not set out how these calculations feed into the index, or what kind of increase in the index would constitute success".

When asked by the PAC how the department ensures "added value" in the apprenticeships programme, Slater said there are a "number of component parts to our measure of success".

"We bring together three questions: the number of people that do an apprenticeship, then we factor in the extent of which they get a job afterwards, and thirdly, how well paid that



National Audit Office

job is," he explained.

"That is our skills index. The NAO identified quite rightly that it would be helpful if we could put the detail of that into the public domain."

He added that they will publish this information "next month".

"The NAO didn't identify any particular improvements, they just said we should publish it and we will absolutely do that," Slater continued.

"It seems to me in principle a formula that measures those three things over time – is it going up or down. That is a decent, quantitative way to assess the health of the programme."

The permanent secretary said he would "expect" the skills index to show, "in line with the significant reduction in the number of starts, that you would see a dip and then a rise and continued rise to where it has been in the past. But we would have to see."

AAC 2019 CONFERENCE

Expensive level 6 and 7 apprenticeships top of conference agenda

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Colleges, training providers and employers flooded to Birmingham this week for the fifth FE Week Annual Apprenticeships Conference.

Across two days the conference, in partnership with the Department for Education, gave more than 1,200 delegates a chance to find out the latest policy on apprenticeships and to debate how programmes can be successfully delivered.

Discussions unsurprisingly focused on this month's National Audit Office report that warned the apprenticeships programme was not financially sustainable based on current trends, as well as a subsequent Public Accounts Committee hearing during which MPs grilled government officials on the report's findings, including value for money and future affordability.

The hottest topic was arguably the debate over level 6 and 7 apprenticeships and whether the government should continue using levy funds to pay for them, especially



after Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector, said some were simply rebadged graduate schemes.

Other keynote speakers included Sir Gerry Berragan, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education's chief executive; Keith Smith, the Education and Skills Funding Agency's apprenticeships director; John Cope, head of education and skills at the Confederation of British Industry; and Gordon Marsden, the shadow skills minister.

Look out for next week's FE Week's supplement on the conference for full coverage.

“Should government wrestle back control of how apprenticeship money is spent, or leave it with employers?”



TINA LOCKLEY
 Apprenticeship contract manager,
 Juniper

“That’s a difficult one. I think it’s got to be both. They need the input from both I think. You can’t just leave it with employers and vice versa. I think it’s important to have feedback from everybody and let everybody have an input in how the money is spent.”



ROB CRABTREE
 Head of quality, Babcock Training Ltd

“I think it should be left with employers. I think it’s given them a greater understanding of the apprenticeship system and a greater insight into how they can develop their workforce. It’s made employers sit up and listen a bit more, because it’s their money, rather than it being a government-funded programme.”



SASHA MORGAN MANLEY
 Apprenticeships lead,
 Wisser

“They should leave it with employers, but if they leave it with employers they need to respect that employers are allowed to make the decisions. The whole point of giving employers control was that employers got to say what they need. You have to let businesses do what they need to do.”



LAURA BURROWS
 Curriculum & learning technology
 manager, Babcock Training Ltd

“I think there are pros and cons on both sides, but we have seen a significant difference in employer engagement where it has been deemed as “their” money and they want to get much more involved in apprenticeships, so that makes the 20 per cent off-the-job requirement much easier to tackle. If government takes back control, employers could become disinterested in some cases.”



MARTYN LONG
 Head of project and programmes,
 Leeds City Council

“I think they probably need to take back control and give it more direction if I’m honest. I’m not sure everyone would agree with me. I think it’s gotten a bit scattergun at the moment and they need a clearer direction of where they are going with it.”



**ANNUAL APPRENTICESHIP
 CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION 2019**

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FEWEEK & AELP AAC APPRENTICESHIP AWARDS

AAC Awards 2019 winners crowned

JESSICA FINO
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The country's best apprenticeship providers, employers and champions have been honoured at the Annual Apprenticeship Awards 2019.

More than 500 people celebrated the winners at a glittering gala dinner at the Annual Apprenticeship Conference, held in Birmingham. This is the second year of the awards.

Organised by FE Week and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, there were two types of awards: Route Apprenticeship

Provider of the Year, and National Awards.

A new award to recognise employers and providers who increase diversity in apprenticeships, as well as working with apprentices who have special educational needs and disabilities, were introduced this year.

After assessing 350 entries, judges named the Royal Air Force as the Apprentice Employer of the Year, while In-Comm Training took home the Apprenticeship Provider of the Year award.

Martin Dunford OBE, chair of the AELP, received the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Shane Mann, managing director of FE Week's publisher Lsect, congratulated the winners for their "outstanding work".

"These awards are a brilliant opportunity to demonstrate and celebrate the importance of apprenticeships in England and the incredible hard work that employers, providers and individuals put into them," he said.

"The calibre of applications was tremendously impressive this year and deliberations were tough in the extreme. The volume of entries we've received was overwhelming and showcased just how much talent there is in the sector.

"A huge congratulation to all our

winners, who are truly making a difference through their work in apprenticeships."

Mark Dawe, chief executive of the AELP, said: "The second year's entry nominations for these awards underlined why it was totally right for FE Week and AELP to team up and shine a spotlight on the work that employers and providers are doing to promote apprenticeships.

"It never ceases to amaze me what fantastic training is being delivered to young people and to existing employees who need to enhance their skills in the face of current economic uncertainty. Providers, employers and the



Martin Dunford

apprentices themselves never fail to rise to fresh challenges and tonight's awards winners perfectly illustrate why."

Look out for FE Week's AAC supplement next week which will report on the winners in full.

Table of the AAC Awards 2019 winners

Outstanding contribution to the development of apprenticeships

Employer	Provider	Individual
Thatchers Cider	Skills Training UK	Steve Williams Gower College Swansea

Apprentice employer of the year

Royal Air Force

Apprenticeship provider of the year

In-Comm Training

Lifetime Achievement Award

Martin Dunford OBE

Agriculture, Environmental & Animal Care Apprenticeship provider of the year

Sponsored by



Haddon Training Ltd

Business & Administration Apprenticeship provider of the year

Sponsored by



Seetec

Care Services Apprenticeship provider of the year

Sponsored by



Qube Qualifications and Development Ltd

Catering & Hospitality Apprenticeship provider of the year

Sponsored by



Lifetime Training

Construction Apprenticeship provider of the year

Sponsored by



Fareham College

Digital Apprenticeship provider of the year

Sponsored by



Arch Apprentices

Education & Childcare Apprenticeship provider of the year

Sponsored by



Interserve Learning & Employment

Engineering & Manufacturing Apprenticeship provider of the year

Sponsored by



Uniper Engineering Academy

Hair & Beauty Apprenticeship provider of the year



Milton Keynes College

Health & Science Apprenticeship provider of the year

Sponsored by



Gower College Swansea

Legal, Finance & Accounting Apprenticeship provider of the year

Sponsored by



CILEx Law School

Transport & Logistics Apprenticeship provider of the year

Sponsored by



Outsource Training and Development

Apprenticeship Diversity Award

Sponsored by



Lookers Plc

SEND Apprenticeship Champion Award

Sponsored by



Weston College

Promoting Apprenticeships campaign of the year

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FORGING THE
TALENT OF
TOMORROW

News



IfA chief 'stepping down', claims headhunters

BILLY CAMDEN
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Exclusive

The chief executive of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) will step down when his contract is up, FE Week understands.

In an email seen by this paper, the headhunters Gatenby Sanderson said Sir Gerry Berragan would not reapply for the post he has held for the past 16 months.

He refused to tell FE Week in January whether he wanted to stay on. "It's none of your business," he said.

A job advert, posted on the Civil Service Jobs website earlier this month, says the postholder will earn an annual £140,000. Applications close on April 29.

A spokesperson for the institute said: "Nothing has changed since the job advert was published. Sir Gerry has not announced his intentions and it would not be appropriate to comment further while the recruitment is live."

He added that it was a "spurious

story".

Berragan, chief executive of the former Institute for Apprenticeships since November 2017, has overseen massive change.

In December 2017, the institute launched the "faster, better" programme to make the process of approving apprenticeship standards more efficient.

Since last year he has also been steering IfATE through the controversial funding band reviews in which the bands for a number of apprenticeship standards have been cut, some by as much as £5,000.

IfATE sparked controversy in the FE sector when it estimated the apprenticeship budget would overspend by £0.5 billion in 2018-19, rising to £1.5 billion during 2021-22.

And in February this year it took over the delivery of T-levels and the technical education brief from the Department for Education.

Berragan told FE Week in January that IfATE's increased staff numbers from about 86 in summer last year to about 150 in January to accommodate the new T-level responsibilities.



Its budget has also doubled this year from £8.6 million to £15 million, and is expected to rise to "around £20 million next year".

The chief executive's contract limits him to serving a two-year term, as he did not go through a formal recruitment process and instead volunteered for the role.

In an interview after he started the job, he told FE Week about the unusual recruitment process.

IfATE began recruiting for a replacement for Peter Lauener in April 2017. Its initial drive and a later foray by headhunters were both unsuccessful. "There was a bit of an imperative to get someone in place," he told FE Week. (Lauener was due to retire at the end of the year.)

A breakthrough came during a two-hour working dinner with two fellow board members, Antony Jenkins, the IfATE chair and former Barclays chief

executive, and Dame Fiona Kendrick, who chairs Nestle UK.

"That's when I said to the Antony Jenkins, 'well, you know, if you want, I'll throw my hat in the ring,'" Berragan said.

"The only way they could appoint me was for a two-year period because I hadn't gone through the formal recruitment process. After that, I'd have to go through another recruitment process if I wanted to stay longer."



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Apprenticeships Quality Manager



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What you'll do

As an Apprenticeships Quality Manager, your overall objective will be to raise standards across the apprenticeship provision.

- Support the Apprenticeships manager in the completion and regular evaluation of the department's Self Assessment Review and Quality Improvement Plan.
- Supporting all Subject Matter Experts in standardisation meetings and embed any changes to achieve high-quality outcomes.
- Collating, evaluating and supporting the use of stakeholder feedback to drive improvements.
- Evaluating performance data and supporting the Subject Matter Experts to use these effectively to improve provision.
- Effective line management of a small team of Apprenticeship specialists, ensuring that all of the team's KPIs are monitored via regular 1:1, setting actions plans where necessary.
- Evaluate and develop the Teaching, Learning and Assessment observation cycle, including the use of peer observations in order to drive the quality of teaching and assessment across the provision.

The experience you will need

For success in this role, it is essential that you hold a Diploma in Education and Training (Level 5), as well as the TAQA Level 4, however, an equivalent qualification is acceptable for both elements. Ideally, you will have a PGCE and Level 5 in Leadership & Management.

In terms of the previous experience; We are ideally looking for someone with excellent knowledge of Apprenticeship provision through the experience of working in FE establishments (training provider, college or large levy paying employer). You will also have experience of working with regulatory and awarding bodies such as Ofsted, City & Guilds and CMI. You will have experience of generating an accurate and robust Self Assessment Plan as well as Quality Improvement Plans which have resulted in improved outcomes. This would also include carrying out formal observations, giving high-quality feedback and carrying out audits.

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In order to be successful, you will need to demonstrate an in-depth and up to date knowledge of funding methodologies and other statutory requirements, providing expert advice to senior staff on funding issues where appropriate. You will also be able to show experience in analysing and auditing data and statistics and handling complex information accurately whilst being a strong team player, highly

organised but with the ability to show initiative and where necessary drive change.

This is a role that is likely to grow significantly over the coming years and for the right candidate we are willing to have a discussion around working times and patterns.

We are delighted to be working with Click CMS on this vital appointment. If you would like to have a confidential discussion with us about this role or to receive an application pack please call Simon Graham or Wendy Preedy on 0121 6438988 or email permanent@click-cms.co.uk

The College is committed to Equal Opportunities. Applications are particularly welcome from members of the ethnic minorities who are currently under represented at the College.

The College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. You should note that an enhanced DBS Disclosure will be required prior to taking up an appointment with the College.

THE CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS IS MONDAY 1ST APRIL AT 12 NOON.



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A quality Apprenticeship Training Provider is looking for self-motivated experienced and trainee individuals to join their Trainer-Assessor team to deliver high quality Apprenticeships. You need to enjoy developing people in a learning environment and occupationally competent in Support Teaching & Learning with a special needs background. We are looking for Trainer-Assessors in the Bromley area of South East London to work in both mainstream and non-mainstream schools/adult colleges.

Main Purpose of the Job

Responsible for managing a caseload of learners, able to organise and prioritise work to ensure that learners are motivated to achieve their Apprenticeship in a timely manner. Successful applicants will be required to work within a 50 mile radius of their base and attend the main office in Ferndown, Dorset at least once a month or as required.

Key Tasks:

- Teach and assess all aspects of the Apprenticeship framework.
- Record learners progress using

- OneFile, an online ePortfolio and online tracking platform.
- Self-generate starts to maintain and maximise caseload.

Education, Experience and Skills Required:

- You should hold a relevant A1 - D32/D33 - TAQA qualification or equivalent or be willing to undertake a qualification as a trainee Assessor.
- You should occupationally competent in Support Teaching & Learning.

Other Requirements:

- DBS check as appropriate
- Mobile and flexible working is required

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Full Time
Salary: £15000 - £19000 p.a.

An experienced Administrator is required to support a quality Apprenticeship Training Provider.

Main Purpose of the Job

Responsible for carrying out general administration duties in a timely manner, adhering to compliance and meeting targets as directed by the Director of Funding & Compliance. The successful applicant will work from the main office in Ferndown, Dorset and the role will primarily be office based.

Key Tasks

- Preparing start packs and training materials
- Inputting new learner starts, updates and achievements onto the Learner Management System (PICS) and other systems
- Protecting funding at all times ensuring forms (paper & electronic) are fully compliant prior to processing
- Ensuring learner files and employer files are secure at all

- times, including robust archiving
- Distributing incoming post and ensuring that outgoing post is dealt with timely
- Maintaining stocks of stationery and other materials as appropriate
- Providing an effective telephone service, dealing with enquiries and taking messages

Education, Experience and Skills Required

- General administration skills
- Data input skills with experience of PICS
- Knowledge of Government funding requirements
- Experience of working in a training provider setting

Salary

- £15000 - £19000 p.a.

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To apply, please visit: <http://www.quest-vocational-training.co.uk/information/careers/>

EDITORIAL



Apprenticeship off-the-job calculation change? Wait for further clarification

There has been some confusion about the off-the-job training funding rule since it was introduced for all apprenticeship starts on frameworks and standards since May 2017, particularly how to calculate the minimum 20% hours.

The ESFA has worked hard to help providers understand what counts as eligible activities and the associated calculation of the minimum hours, by publishing additional guidance and myth busting documents.

Last Friday afternoon the ESFA updated the guidance, and to their

credit it includes a helpful spreadsheet which employers can use with providers to agree a compliant delivery model.

Unfortunately, however, paragraph 69 has left employers and providers scratching their heads, as it says: "For funding purposes 30 hours represents a full-time role and should be used in all calculations, even if the apprentice works more than 30 hours."

The reference to a 30 hour per week cap in the calculation has never been said before. In fact, in the first version of the guidance there was even an example

based on a 40 hour cap.

But far from being a mistake or even a change, when *FE Week* asked the Department for Education for clarification they said: "To be clear, the published guidance does not contradict ESFA apprenticeship funding rules".

Accordingly, providers have begun revisiting training plans and associated commitment statements, recalculating the minimum off-the-job hours.

One provider on the ESFA message board for data staff, feconnect, wrote:

"The 30 hours cap will significantly reduce the number of off-the-job hours required for our learners, some by around 100 hours."

Another wrote about the 30 hour cap: "I've managed to create and negotiate a plan with senior managers to put this to delivery staff, learners and employers."

When I asked the Director of Apprenticeships at the ESFA, Keith Smith, about the 30 hour cap in a question and answer session at *FE Week's* Annual Apprenticeship Conference, he agreed there was now a "contradiction" between

the funding rules and this updated guidance.

He told delegates the ESFA would provide further clarification shortly, within a few days.

So my advice (at 18:54 on 28 March 2018) would be to ignore the latest guidance that includes reference to a 30 hour minimum calculation and wait for another ESFA clarification.

Nick Linford, Editor
news@feweek.co.uk

Readers' reply



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Degree apprenticeships must be funded through the levy

Those offering level 6 and 7 are not abusing the system, because individuals are getting good-quality qualifications, but they appear to be taking advantage of it. The quality of the lower levels 2 and 3 need to be regulated to ensure they are a worthwhile alternative to school.

Tracy

The truth behind plans to cull 300 staff at England's largest college group

Yet another example of the problem of inspection. If you read Ofsted's 2016 report, then the subsequent one, it's hard to believe there was no evidence in 2016 of the problems that were likely to be highlighted in the 2018 report less than two years later.

Peter Ford

This makes me sad and angry in equal measure. Should not have

been allowed to happen and something the poor staff, who now find themselves out of a job either now or last summer, had seen unfolding for the past year. Why could NCG not see it and why did it not intervene before it got to this? People in senior leadership posts allowed to make dreadful decisions one after the next, each putting another nail in the coffins.

Jayne Shannon

The numbers expose the truth - level 6 and 7 is mostly 'dead weight' and unaffordable

I couldn't agree more. Apprenticeship funding should be spent where it's most needed - levels 2, 3 and 4 for young people in the early years of their careers.

David Harbourne

Stop levy funding for all level 6 and 7 apprenticeships, demand training providers

I have some sympathy where



funding is poorly targeted, but I think the issue is occupation and not level. Levels are much less important than occupations and larger employers that benefit versus demand from young people and SMEs.

Chris Cherry

AAC 2019

Completely agree with Mark Dawe's sentiment that it is the on-the-job training that makes apprenticeships what they are. BUT, to be more robust, as per Richard review, work-based learning needs to be underpinned by focused knowledge development AND academic rigour.

Derrin Kent



Great speech from @David Gallagher from the NCFE at #FEWeekAAC19. Good to hear his views on the importance of collaboration to ensure the best outcome for apprentices.

Zac Aldridge

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Degree apprenticeships must be funded through the levy



Degree apprenticeships, in my opinion, should be funded by the Student Loans Company, just like all other degree-level education. Levy funding should support level 1 to 5 only. This would make it a fairer system. Alternatively expand the levy to support all post-18.

Tom Bewick

Experts

KIRSTIE DONNELLY

Managing director,
City & Guilds Group



Creating a quality apprenticeship system that will work for all

City & Guilds wants a universal framework for quality standards applied throughout FE inspections, says Kirstie Donnelly

As all of us working in technical and vocational education know that apprenticeships provide a key skills solution for employers and an important route into work. Seemingly, the government agrees and often talks about apprenticeships in glowing terms, using phrases such as “gold standard”, “world class” and “quality first”.

What does it actually mean, though, to create and deliver a quality apprenticeship system that provides the right returns for businesses and people? This is a question we asked ourselves five years ago, alongside our new Industry Skills Board (ISB).

In the intervening years we’ve seen huge change in the apprenticeship system with the introduction of new standards, end-point assessment and, of course, the apprenticeship levy.

Political and economic turmoil has also forced businesses to think differently about recruitment. Given it’s such an important time for apprenticeships, it feels like the right time to reflect on whether the system is working as it should and what needs to change to make it better.

This week, to coincide with the Annual Apprenticeships Conference, we are launching the latest version of our Making Apprenticeships Work report. This builds on the quality framework we developed four years ago and provides updated recommendations for all involved in delivering apprenticeships.

There have been some wins since 2014 when we advocated for an independent employer-led body to have central oversight of apprenticeships. What actually materialised is the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE), which is a step in the right direction, if not quite the arm’s-length independent-from-government body that we hoped for.

We would also have liked more change and still find ourselves calling for better promotion of apprenticeships in schools and through recruitment channels, as we all know that there simply aren’t enough people being signposted towards apprenticeships.

The central theme of our first and

“It is the right time to reflect on whether the system is working”

latest report, however, is the quality framework for apprenticeships.

The recent National Audit Office (NAO) report quite rightly highlighted a real concern with the system as it is today, and recommended a greater government focus on outlining the success measures against which an

apprenticeship programme should be measured, as well as a clear indication of how it brings value to employers and individuals.

This value attached to an apprenticeship is at the core of our quality framework. We believe that for an apprenticeship to be of high quality, it must be deemed intrinsically demanding and worthwhile by employers and employees.

Not only that, but new apprentices must have the support of existing employees, who provide feedback within a defined learning programme. Apprenticeships are also subject to reliable, valid and robust independent end-point assessment, and apprentices should be aware of a clear career progression route beyond their apprenticeship.

To support this, we are recommending that a universal framework for quality standards is applied throughout all Ofsted, Education and Skills Funding Agency and

external quality assurance organisation inspections.

Our report has coincided with IfATE’s publication of its Quality Strategy, which appears to express an intention rather than outline concrete actions. In this time of uncertainty, I would hope that the institute will call for a common quality framework that will match its rhetoric.

First, however, there needs to be more meaningful engagement with employers to understand how the system is working for those who invest in it. We know that there are big issues stopping many employers from benefiting from apprenticeships and until these are tackled, no matter how high-quality the system, it won’t have the desired impact unless businesses actually engage with it.

It is only by working collaboratively with education providers and employers, and making changes that unlock the power of apprenticeships, that the government will be able to fully deliver the “world-class” quality system that we so desperately need.

NICOLE GICHEVA

Researcher, Social
Market Foundation



Incentivise the apprenticeships that actually boost productivity

Apprenticeship funding mechanisms should be weighted to favour those standards that boost employability and earnings, argues Nicole Gicheva

The best apprenticeships provide an alternative entry route into employment to academic education. They make it easier for people to reskill and change career. High-value apprenticeship programmes also increase skill levels, enhance productivity in firms and in the economy and increase the wages of workers.

But our new Social Market Foundation report, Making Apprenticeships Work, highlights a huge variance: some apprenticeships deliver these outcomes. Some do not.

The recent reforms have aimed to improve the quality of apprenticeships offered and undertaken across the economy. Yet the ten most popular standards in 2017/18 include hairdressing, care work, customer service and hospitality; historically, these fields lead to lower returns to both

apprentices and the economy.

The new funding mechanisms and incentives should go a step further than their current scope (to cover the cost of provision of standards) and reflect the outcomes that would be most useful to society now and in the future.

Employers should be encouraged to offer apprenticeships in sectors and occupations with a history of delivering good returns in the form of employment opportunities and productivity-enhancing skills. Introducing apprenticeship value premiums for each occupation could help achieve this.

Apprenticeships that perform well when evaluated by their productivity gains (measured principally by the average wage returns to apprentices), the level of employment or progression into higher-level training, and the degree of transferrable skills associated with the programme would attract an additional financial grant (a premium), deposited into the digital accounts of employers.

Conversely, schemes that systematically perform poorly on those

metrics should see a cut in the maximum contribution to training and assessment costs provided by the government and be moved to a lower funding band.

In 2017, only a minority of apprentices undertaking training in education (33 per cent), leisure (37 per cent), health (40 per cent) or retail (42 per cent) reported receiving a pay rise afterwards. This

“Are apprenticeships being sufficiently future-proofed?”

compares to 71 per cent in construction and 65 per cent in engineering. Under our proposed reform, employers in the construction and engineering industries who hire apprentices could receive more funding to encourage more such training.

We accept that this course of action is likely to make some schemes less attractive to employers and providers, and to make some uneconomic.

However, if schemes are not delivering the skills that improve the employability or productivity of apprentices, then it is right that we question whether alternative training or jobs should be pursued instead.

While the role of employers in determining the nature of apprenticeships is vital, the employer-led approach could entail a risk of apprenticeships being created with short-term needs of businesses in mind rather than future skills requirements and the changing nature of the economy. That is especially important as robotics and artificial intelligence become increasingly commonplace.

The high take-up of apprenticeships in lower-skill fields – which Bank of England analysis suggests are highly at risk of automation in the future – raises questions around the extent to which apprenticeships are being sufficiently future-proofed. As the risk of automation is much higher in lower-level occupations, there is significant crossover between the sectors of the

economy where apprenticeships are most prevalent and the occupations that are most likely to have been made redundant by technology. In other words, there is a significant risk that some individuals who undertake apprenticeships could find that their training soon becomes redundant.

In this context, the government’s industrial strategy is unambiguous about the implications of automation for the economy and low-skilled jobs, as well as the need to ensure workers have the right skills to maximise their earning potential.

Employers and prospective apprentices might not be aware of the risk of automation for each occupation. So this risk should be reflected in apprenticeship value premiums. Unless alterations can be made to each specification, funding for apprenticeships at a high risk of automation should be reduced, or these schemes can be discontinued altogether.

The best apprenticeships do not just offer skills and pay, they also prepare their holders for the economy of the future. This is where we should focus support and resources.

JASSIEM MOORE

Higher and degree apprenticeships officer,
Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Collaborative
Outreach Programme (DANCOP)



How to move more school-leavers towards degree apprenticeships

Key stakeholders must understand that apprenticeships are as valuable as any other degree, says Jassiem Moore

The Department for Education is making worrying noises about having to make “hard choices” to avoid an overspend of the apprenticeship levy. Jonathan Slater, the department’s permanent secretary, told the Public Accounts Committee this week that if funding were constrained at its current level, “that would require choices to be made between level 2 and level 6”.

Removing funding for apprenticeships at levels 6 and 7 would, however, impact their potential to support social mobility. Degree apprenticeships have already proved they can increase female participation in male-dominated subjects (34 per cent compared with 29 per cent in similar traditional degree courses) and a higher percentage of learners from low participation areas access degree apprenticeships (30 per cent) than go to

university (26 per cent), according to the Office for Students’ analysis of degree apprenticeships.

While we do not want to promote degree apprenticeships as a tick-box exercise for widening participation, they do open up another route to higher education for those who may be traditionally disengaged.

At DANCOP, we present degree apprenticeships and university as different sides of the same coin. However, when working in schools and colleges we regularly see the lack of parity. So where are we missing the mark, and what can we do to address the misconceptions?

It can be difficult for young people in schools and colleges to get accurate information and guidance about apprenticeships. In sixth forms and colleges, pupils are still steered towards the traditional university route.

Knowledge within schools can be lacking and there may be other pressures on teachers and advisers to

promote university. Schools often see it as a badge of honour when many of their pupils progress to university – end-of-year newsletters are filtered with images of young people who have won places at prestigious universities. Degree apprenticeships do not receive the same attention.

“It is a badge of honour when pupils progress to university”

However, this lack of knowledge and encouragement could also be for practical reasons – teachers and advisers now have less time to support learners with their apprenticeship applications, which can be an unknown beast. With no centralised system or standardised procedure, proofreading personal statements for university courses is a piece of cake compared with

supporting prospective apprentices with assessment centres, psychometric tests and reference requirements.

Of course, support is not limited to that provided in school. Parents/carers and friends are key influencers in a pupil’s decision of what to do post-school. Peer pressure, for example, remains key for young people: when all your friends are preparing their personal statements it may be difficult to consider a different higher education experience.

Parents/carers may still hold views that stigmatise higher-level apprenticeships by conflating them with traditionally vocational routes. If a young person is surrounded by these views, as well as being influenced by their school or college’s heavy promotion of the traditional university route, it is easy to see where their preference comes from.

If we hope to achieve parity between apprenticeships and university, we need to focus on raising awareness among key stakeholders so they understand

apprenticeships are as valuable as any other degree. We should also work towards a centralised platform for accessing information about apprenticeships and enforcement of legislation to provide information to young people. If Ofsted had the powers to assess compliance of the Baker clause, it’s likely there would be an increase in the uptake of information sessions from employers and training providers, so increasing the awareness of the opportunities apprenticeships can offer.

There is a long way to go until degree apprenticeships are viewed in the same light as university. At DANCOP we always try to reframe the conversation from choosing “one or the other” to applying to “both together”. Removing funding for degree apprenticeships, as Robert Halfon, the chair of the education select committee, has warned, would be a “retrograde step” and would only increase the difficulty in accessing degree apprenticeships for young people.

SIR IAN DIAMOND

Chair of the Independent Commission
on the College of the Future



This much-needed focus on colleges must be capitalised on

The chair of the new Independent Commission into the College of the Future sets out his agenda

Colleges for far too long haven’t received the recognition that they deserve. Happily, amongst policy wonks at least, this is starting to change.

The post-18 education review led by Philip Augar is yet to publish its recommendations, but it has been tasked with looking at developing a better-balanced post-18 system and has had significant discussions over the past year of the role of colleges. Damian Hinds’ speech in December set out plans to develop a new quality level 4/5 pathway to run parallel to undergraduate degree options – with much of this anticipated to be delivered through our colleges.

The state of play is much more advanced in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, where colleges

are better recognised as the central community anchors that they are. And yet there is still a great deal more to be done in these contexts

“Colleges must be given more than their rightful central place within education policy”

too – addressing inequities in esteem, inadequate articulation between different parts of the system and between colleges and other parts of public policy-making, including, crucially, in terms of the welfare system.

This growing and much-needed focus on colleges must be capitalised

on, including learning lessons from what is happening across the different corners of the UK. From changes in technology, attitudes, demography and climate, we face clear national and global challenges to which colleges – as dynamic institutions rooted in their communities, with expertise in engaging with a diversity of people at all ages and stages, and with often excellent relationships with businesses of all sizes – must be a key part of the answer.

If colleges are to play that role, then we have a lot of work to do to ensure that they are not just given their rightful central place within education policy, but beyond the traditional edu-chatter. They must come to be a critical part of conversations on industrial strategy and regional growth, welfare policy, health and social cohesion and integration.

There are, of course, critical questions as we ensure the colleges of the future are best suited to meet these challenges. This must involve questions of their role, scope and purpose and how they relate to other parts of the education system, to employers, to people and to governments.

“We face challenges to which colleges must be a key part of the answer”

Who should they teach, how and what should they teach? How do we ensure that we have the properly supported staff in place to deliver this

work? Finally, questions on the role of colleges in enabling all people to have a life of learning and, for some, for learning to give them the skills to escape in-work poverty.

For me, this agenda is pivotal. And that’s why I am so pleased to be leading a new Independent Commission into the College of the Future, which will undertake precisely this work. We will look at what we all need from our colleges right across the UK, and what this vision for the college of the future can be.

We will be using this process to ensure that as many people as possible who have a stake in the agenda are able to engage and have their say. And we will use this process to ensure that many of those who don’t yet realise the relevance of colleges to questions they are looking at come to see new connections and possibilities.

Bulletin



Ellen Thinnesen

Chief executive, Education Partnership North East

Start date March 2019

Previous job

Principal and chief executive, Sunderland College and Hartlepool Sixth Form College

Interesting fact

She is a qualified nurse.



Nigel Harrett

Principal, Northumberland College

Start date March 2019

Previous job

Deputy principal and deputy chief executive, Sunderland College

Interesting fact

He enjoys walking his West Highland Terrier.

Movers & Shakers

...

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



Christine Ricketts

Principal, Brooklands College

Start date May 2019

Previous job

Deputy principal, Brooklands College

Interesting fact

In an earlier career, she was a successful sculptor.



Shereen Sameresinghe

Chief executive, Brooklands College

Start date May 2019

Previous job

Vice principal, Brooklands College

Interesting fact

She was the captain of the ladies' cricket team at university

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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

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

Difficulty:
Easy

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

Difficulty:
Medium

Solutions: See right

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Last Edition's winner: Nicola York

Solutions

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

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