

'WE'RE EXPERTS ON PEDAGOGY, NOT VIRUS CONTROL'



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£400K PAYOFF FOR FORMER UCU BOSS



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PROFILE: COLLEGE 'ALLOWS PEOPLE TO FLOURISH'



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FEWEEK

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FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2020 | EDITION 326

STRIP COLLEGES OF AUTONOMY TO CHOOSE COURSE OFFER SAYS FORMER DFE ADVISER

'It's not about what's best for colleges – it's about what's best for learners'



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OFSTED WINS DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP BATTLE

- OfS will be forced to hand over all level 6 and 7 inspections
- University of Cambridge: We'll 'adjust to meet the requirements'



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EXCLUSIVE

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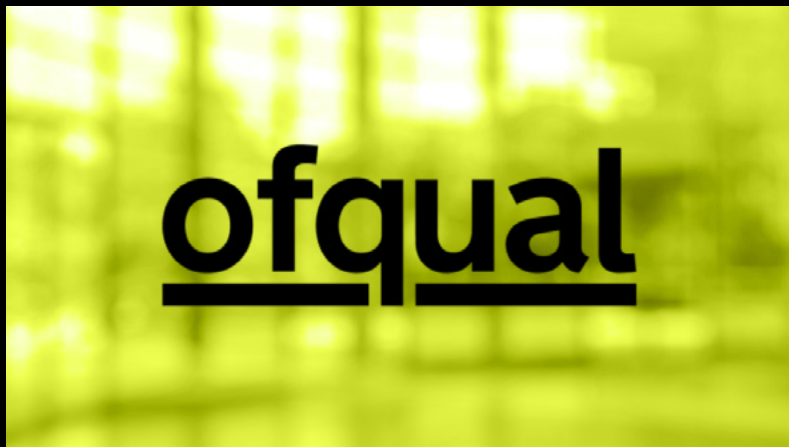
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Apprentice quality assurance charges to end from October

FRASER WHIELDON
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Exclusive

Controversial £40 charges for the external quality assurance of apprenticeship end-point-assessment will start being phased out as soon as October, it has been confirmed.

The fees will end as the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education hands over EQA responsibility for over 300 apprenticeship standards to Ofqual.

Federation of Awarding Bodies chief executive Tom Bewick has welcomed the news, but said the IfATE "must get better" at communicating how the transition will work so that "we avoid any further unnecessary complexity and confusion".

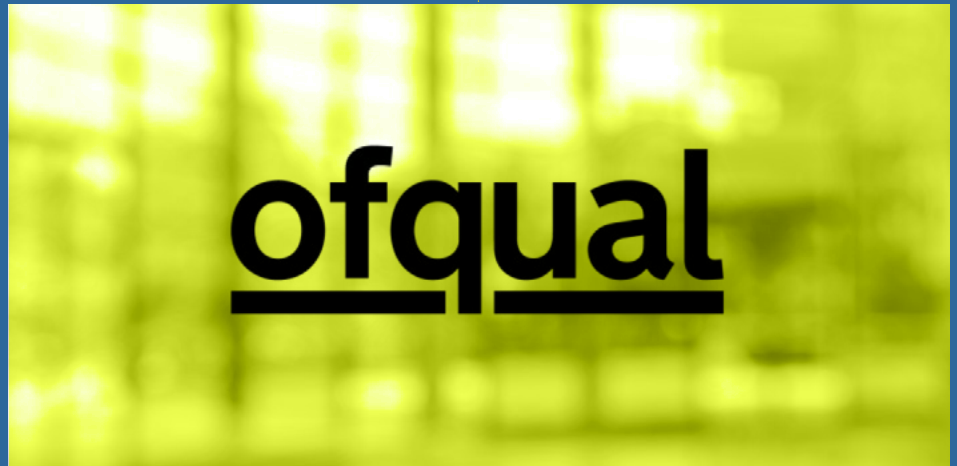
In two Ofqual letters to EPA organisations seen by *FE Week*, 69 standards overseen by IfATE will transition "by November", with a further 54 from January 2021 and the remaining standards by next summer.

Currently, Ofqual splits EQA duties with the IfATE and around 20 other employer bodies.

But under a new system confirmed last month, all quality assurance of apprenticeships without an intergraded degree will transfer to Ofqual and all EPA organisations will need to be "recognised" with them. The Office for Students is taking over EQA for integrated degree apprenticeships only.

The existing complex EQA system has come under heavy criticism for the variability in approaches. *FE Week* analysis last year found other EQA organisations were charging up to £179 per apprentice for the service, leading Bewick to liken the quality assurance market to "the Wild West".

A spokesperson for IfATE, which runs EQA through contractor Open Awards and charges £40 for the job per apprentice, has confirmed Ofqual "will not charge for external quality assurance, so as



standards transition the existing charge will be turned off".

They added that the charge will cease for each apprenticeship standard on the day that they are transferred over to Ofqual.

The institute's own delivery of EQA, originally conceived as a back-stop in the event of failure to secure a different organisation, is currently in use across around half of the nearly 600 standards.

The full transitioning of standards to Ofqual is planned to take two years, and those EPAOs starting with Ofqual from November have been given until the end of this month to apply to carry on doing EPA for their existing standards.

An awarding organisation being recognised by Ofqual means their qualifications can be considered for public funding to be taught in schools, colleges and other FE providers, and its certificates can carry the Ofqual logo.

Bewick, the boss of the Federation of Awarding Bodies which has many members as EPAOs, said: "I welcome the clarification about Ofqual not charging from as soon as October for the standards now in the process of migrating to them.

"However, the Institute must get better at communicating with the sector about how the EQA transition will be handled, so that we avoid any further

unnecessary complexity and confusion."

This, he added, should include the Treasury, which issues the charge, agreeing to end it all together by the end of March 2021.

Standards which are not assured by IfATE will be transferred over in the second transition year.

Ofqual has said it is "starting to engage with EPAOs who want to apply for Ofqual recognition" but, faced with a wave of applications, the watchdog has put up an advertisement for an "immediately available" financial and markets analyst to scrutinise the "financial suitability" of EPAOs.

The job, which will run on a fixed-term contract until March with a salary of up to £44,660 per year, involves analysing financial records and business proposals to "reach judgements about the overall financial suitability of applications".

Candidates should be an "experienced analyst with a strong financial or accounting background who can review company business plans and finances from day one".

Organisations applying to be recognised by Ofqual have to be able to prove they have "adequate financial reserves which will support the organisation through the lifecycle of a qualification" as well as accounting and financial monitoring systems either in place, or in development if it is a new awarding organisation.



Tom Bewick

5 things that make a brilliant 16-19 employability programme



By Zac Aldridge, Director of Technical Education at NCFE

[Join us for our virtual event on tackling youth employability and building bespoke 16-19 programmes, on Tuesday 22 September from 1-2pm. Click here to sign up.](#)

1. Employer engagement

A brilliant 16-19 employability programme should start with the end in mind: which jobs are learners intending to get when they complete?

• Involve employers in curriculum design

Employers welcome the chance to contribute to curriculum content. This way, they know that what's being delivered will be relevant to their business. Don't worry if your curriculum is heavily influenced by just one employer; learners who can showcase specific, practical skills for one, prove that they are capable of doing it for others.

• Employer interviews

Ask employer representatives to come along and interview your learners, and not just at the end of their course. Unfamiliar faces wearing uniforms or suits don't help learners perform at their best. Exposing learners to interviews from strangers, just like the strangers who will be interviewing them for a real job, will help them to relax and give their best at the right time.

• Employer sponsorship

A large local employer may provide enough job opportunities every year to recruit significant numbers of learners. An excellent employability programme acts as a pipeline of talent for employers and, as such, they may be willing to 'sponsor' a course.

2. Competitions

Generating a healthy and balanced sense of competition among peers can improve learning. Entering learners into organised competitions is an obvious benefit and looks great on a CV. However, using Worldskills UK to drive the content of a curriculum can provide learners with the edge over their counterparts. Set up competitions with local providers or intra-provider competitions. It could be vocationally-relevant or applicable to a whole cohort – the sense of achievement young people gain simply from taking part, enhances their studies and employability.

3. Enrichment

A recent article by David Hughes, AoC CEO, talked about the fact that, in

any learning activity, we often learn as much about ourselves as we do about our qualifications. It is as important to focus on these aspects as it is on exams and assessments. And employers know this; David's article points to the fact that employers look as much at behaviours and attitudes when it comes to recruitment as they do at qualifications. Ofsted also recognises this and split the previously single headline judgement of personal development, behaviour and welfare into two: personal development, and; behaviour and attitudes.

4. Teaching and learning

The success of any course depends on the quality of learning. If teaching is excellent, learners are more likely to stay on the course, be engaged, achieve, and secure a job. Professional development is key and we'd advise a focus on two central facets:

• Industry experience:

This is relevant for teachers as well as learners - the specific provision that employers have helped to design is further enhanced with specific professional development. Engaged employers will readily support placements for teachers.

• Peer observation

Peer observation is non-judgemental, aids self-reflection, builds trust and allows greater collaboration between colleagues. Teachers delivering on employability programmes may be teaching only part of that programme – it is important to link learning support staff very closely with vocational teaching to help improve learners' job outcomes.

5. Careers education, information, advice and guidance

Weaving careers support into employability curriculum, in addition to scheduled 1:1 careers guidance sessions, is a great way of adding tailored provision that will differentiate your employability programme from generic offerings. For example, ask careers advisors to take over lessons on your timetables. It's an excellent way of meeting Gatsby benchmark 4 – there are resources to help with this from a number of sources, including the Gatsby website. Many providers have Enterprise Advisers, industry professionals linked with the providers to support with careers guidance. Enterprise Advisers are ideally placed to support you to make links with industry and to use those links effectively to support employability.

NCFE's 'go the distance' bundles will help you quickly build and deliver brilliant, outcome-focused 16-19 employability programmes, deploying these initiatives.

[Join us for our virtual event on tackling youth employability and building bespoke 16-19 programmes, on Tuesday 22 September from 1-2pm. Click here to sign up.](#)

Colleges should sacrifice autonomy for students' sake, says new report

FRASER WHIELDON
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Colleges should be forced to surrender their powers to decide what courses they run to new, local FE directors, a report by a former adviser to education ministers has said.

Think tank EDSK's director Tom Richmond has today launched 'Further consideration: Creating a new role, purpose and direction for the FE sector', which says new FE directors should arrange provision "in line with local social and economic needs, as well as eliminating duplication of courses and promoting specialisation among nearby colleges".

Colleges would retain responsibility for their day-to-day running, but would have to hand FE directors, based in every local enterprise partnership or mayoral combined authority, final say on "important strategic decisions such as the courses and specialisms that each college offers".

The directors would also decide how the adult education budget is distributed among their colleges.

Writing for FE Week, Richmond, who is a former senior adviser to previous skills ministers Nick Boles and Matt Hancock, said: "Ultimately, this is not about what is best for colleges – it's about what is best for learners. With this prize in mind, the loss of some autonomy for individual colleges is a step in the right direction."

EDSK's report has been funded by the Further Education Trust for Leadership, and a trust spokesperson said: "We think the time has come for a fresh and open discussion about the state of the sector alongside the pros and cons of college autonomy."

It comes ahead of the FE White Paper due for publication this autumn, with one option of giving the government greater control over colleges being considered.

Other recommendations in Richmond's report include splitting colleges into separate institutions (community, sixth-form and



Tom Richmond

technology colleges) focused on different qualification levels, increasing the base rate of funding for 16 to 19-year-olds to £5,000 by 2024/25, and giving learners a new "lifetime loan limit" of £75,000 to spend on education and training.

'Further Consideration' seeks to build on findings and recommendations made in last year's post-18 education Augar Review, which found examples of both over-capacity and a lack of specialism in colleges.

The review recommended the government use capital funding to create partnerships, group structures and specialisation to deliver a "national network of colleges".

EDSK's new report's recommendations were drawn up after interviews with 21 academics, policy experts and stakeholders, including Hartlepool College principal Darren Hankey, HOLEX policy director Sue Pember, and Bedford College chief executive Ian Pryce.

It found that "excessive competition" among colleges has done "more harm than good".

"Often in response to financial pressures, colleges have chosen to focus on what is best for them rather than what is best for their learners, employers and their local area," Richmond says.

"This has resulted in duplicated courses, a lack of specialisation among colleges and unnecessary

confusion for learners and employers – all of which make the sector less financially secure."

Colleges have previously come in for high-profile criticism for how the courses they provide do not tally with their areas' economic needs or students' job prospects.

Earlier this year Ofsted chief inspector Amanda Spielman called out a number of colleges for "flooding a local job market with young people with low-level arts and media qualifications," while there is a large demand for skills in areas such as green energy.

And last week, skills minister Gillian Keegan and Association of Colleges chief executive David Hughes both said colleges ought to be judged, and funded according to Hughes, on the outcomes for their learners, rather than their enrolment.

FE Week asked the AoC whether they supported the idea of final course decisions being taken by an FE director, which would result in the "loss of some autonomy for individual colleges" as Richmond says, but they dodged the question.

Instead, AoC deputy chief executive Julian Gravatt said it "isn't that colleges should lose their autonomy to decide what courses they should run, but rather have a collective responsibility and autonomy to agree a coherent strategy across the local system".

"This sort of collective approach allows for much more strategic interventions – which if we get right should see colleges feel empowered and able to act more freely together than they do currently alone," he added.

One key option being considered by the government in its upcoming FE White Paper is taking back greater control over colleges, and in February it handed £2.7 million to 36 skills advisory panels to identify and tackle local skills gaps.

This intelligence, the EDSK says, will be useful for FE directors as they arrange provision to meet the needs of small and large employers.

A Department for Education spokesperson said EDSK's report "outlines a range of interesting recommendations to achieve our aims", and their White Paper will detail plans to "build a high-quality further education system".



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Ofsted finally wins battle to inspect ALL apprenticeships

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From front **Exclusive**

Ofsted will soon be handed powers to inspect all universities that offer apprenticeships – including the likes of Cambridge, FE Week can reveal.

In a controversial move, the education watchdog is set to take on responsibility for overseeing all apprenticeships, including those at the degree levels of 6 and 7, for the first time.

Only the Office for Students can police higher apprenticeships under current policy, while Ofsted's remit goes up to level 5 – a position that has frustrated the inspectorate for many years.

Plans have been drawn up to strip the OfS of this role amid concerns the higher education regulator is not up to the job. It is understood that the switch to Ofsted will be announced imminently.

A spokesperson for the Department for Education said they are working “closely with the Office for Students and Ofsted to consider carefully what the most appropriate quality assurance arrangements should be for level 6 and 7 apprenticeships” and will “provide further updates in due course”.

The Russell Group, which represents the 24 “leading” universities in the UK including Cambridge, did not pour cold water over the plan for Ofsted to inspect their members.

But a spokesperson said the group will continue to work with government on delivery and expansion of the apprenticeship route, including how to avoid “overburdensome or disproportionate regulation”.

The University Vocational Awards



Amanda Spielman

Council, which also represents a number of universities, has previously voiced its opposition to such a move and questioned Ofsted's expertise to inspect degree-level fields such as registered nurses, social workers and architects.

FE Week analysis of the latest DfE data, which covers the first three quarters of the 2019/20 academic year, shows there were 231 providers offering level 6 and 7 apprenticeships – with over 26,000 starts between them.

Of those 231 providers, 47 (20 per cent) are currently completely out of Ofsted's scope of inspection as they deliver no provision at level 5 or below.

Included in this 20 per cent are many prominent Russell Group universities such as the University of Manchester, University of Nottingham and the University of Warwick.

The most well-known redbrick university

that delivers higher apprenticeships but has been out of scope for Ofsted visits to date is the University of Cambridge.

Cambridge currently delivers two level 7 apprenticeships that have a combined cohort of 120 apprentices: applied criminology and police management, which commenced in 2019; and architecture, which launched this month.

A University of Cambridge spokesperson said they would “welcome scrutiny from relevant bodies” and should Ofsted begin to oversee all levels of apprenticeship provision, “we will necessarily adjust to meet the requirements in the best interests of our student apprentices and their employers”.

Oversight of degree apprenticeships has

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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sat with the OfS since their launch, but monitoring of the provision is not official inspections of the type Ofsted conducts.

A decision was made in June 2019 for the higher education regulator to oversee all level 6 and 7 apprenticeships, including those without a prescribed HE qualification delivered at providers not on the OfS' register, which had gone years without any oversight.

This was against the recommendation of the post-18 education review conducted by Philip Augar, who had called for Ofsted to inspect all apprenticeships.

Frustration has been building over the pace of the OfS' work in this area. The regulator has so far only completed "pilot reviews" to a small number of providers not on its register of HE providers in late 2019 and concluded an evaluation of the pilot before lockdown hit.

OfS previously said they would publish these reports, but has now gone back on that promise. A spokesperson explained that they have paused their oversight of level 6 and 7 apprenticeships until HE providers are able to return to "a more normal operating environment", as is the case for its other regulatory activity.

Being handed oversight of all apprenticeships will mark a big win for Ofsted, which has been clamouring for the

Training providers with degree-level apprenticeship starts

	Providers	
On Ofsted 'in scope' list for below level 6 but no full inspection yet	68	29%
Not on Ofsted 'in scope' list	47	20%
Already have an Ofsted grade for provision below level 6	116	50%
Total providers with L6 and L7 starts 2019/20 Q1 - Q3	231	

Provider Type	Sum of L6 and L7 starts 2019/20 Q1 - Q3	
General FE and Tertiary College	914	3%
Other Public Funded (incl. HE)	15174	58%
Private Sector Public Funded	10145	39%
Schools	2	0%
Sixth Form College	11	0%
Total L6 and L7 starts 2019/20 Q1 - Q3	26246	100%

FE Week analysis of DfE apprenticeship data for 2019/20

job for over four years.

Chief inspector Amanda Spielman has voiced concerns multiple times that some universities and training providers are getting away with offering level 6 and 7 apprenticeships which are simply "repackaged graduate schemes".

In an interview with FE Week in March

2019, 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 the inspectorate's remit only extends to level 5, Ofsted could only inspect the 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."

Last week, Ofsted's deputy director for FE, Paul Joyce, said he would welcome the power to inspect all apprenticeships and it is something "that I think we could do, absolutely".



Madingley Hall, built in 1543 by Sir John Hynde, part of Cambridge University and home to the Institute of Continuing Education where apprenticeships are delivered

NAO reveal £726m in college bailouts and loans with 'nearly half' in intervention

FRASER WHIELDON

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Nearly three-quarters of a billion pounds in public funds has been spent on bailing out and restructuring colleges, while the government is intervening in nearly half of them, a new report has revealed.

The National Audit Office this week released its 'Financial sustainability of colleges in England' report, which details how the Department for Education has spent "significant amounts" on keeping colleges open, while core funding for the sector has fallen.

As of February 2020, the government was intervening in 48 per cent of all open colleges – with more than a tenth being in formal intervention.

FE Week has also calculated that £725.8 million has been spent on bailouts and restructuring funding, based on NAO figures – with £431 million alone being provided to 45 colleges for mergers and other structural changes.

The chair of the influential Commons Public Accounts Committee, Meg Hillier, said the report "paints a stark picture of the college sector's plight".

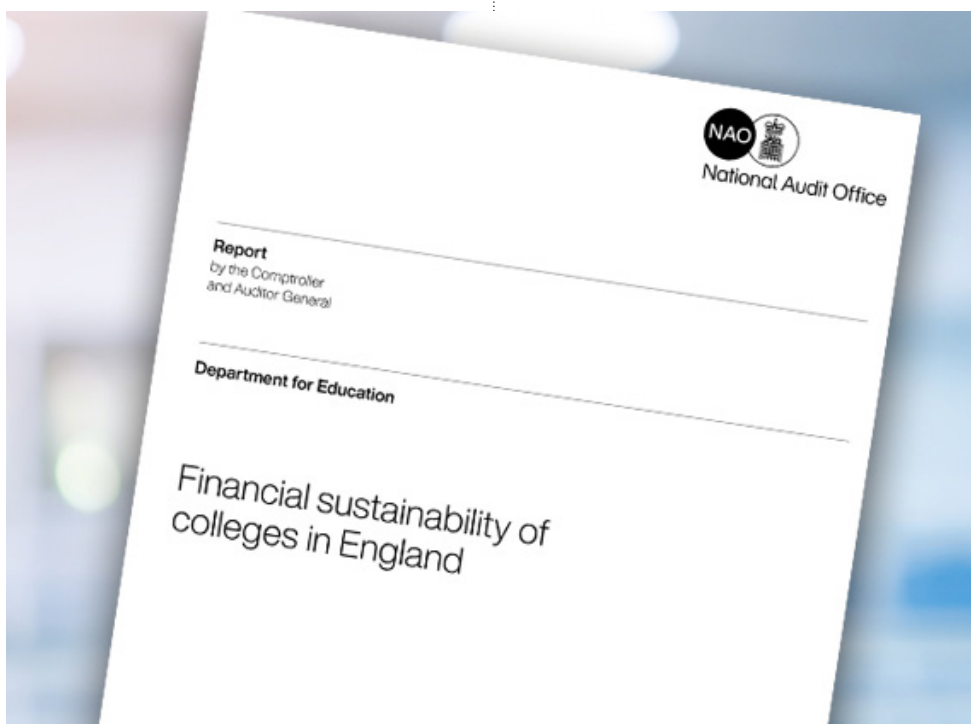
"The government has propped up some colleges at great expense, but this has only papered over the cracks in the system," she continued.

The DfE has promised its "forthcoming White Paper will strengthen our colleges" but refused to reveal how.

As first reported by *FE Week* in May, it is believed changes to legislation will enable the government to take greater control of failing colleges rather than force them into insolvency.

The government also spent £253 million on 36 colleges which had "serious cashflow options" under the Education and Skills Funding Agency's 'exceptional financial support' scheme.

However, the NAO has now found the ESFA has given up on getting back almost half – £99.9 million – of the funding, which was originally meant to be repayable. The scheme was discontinued in March 2019.



Colleges in, or near to being in, education administration swallowed £41.8 million of ESFA emergency funds, the NAO reports, with £26.6 million being spent on the insolvency of Hadlow College and West Kent and Ashford College, both of which were placed in administration in mid-2019.

The report did say the DfE's area review programme was "likely to have helped limit the financial deterioration of the sector", citing DfE projections that a fifth of colleges would have inadequate financial health in 2020 without the reviews, as opposed to 11 per cent of colleges that are in that category.

But while the DfE has been financially propping up colleges that would otherwise have been forced into education administration, funding for students has tumbled down.

Funding for 16 to 19-year-old students fell by seven per cent in real terms between 2013/14 and 2018/19, with the funding rate for 18-year-olds being directly cut in 2014/15 from £4,000 to £3,300.

Adult education and support services (excluding apprenticeships) fell by 35 per cent

between 2013/14 and 2018/19, says the NAO.

The watchdog found that financial constraints have led to colleges narrowing their curriculum and reduced broader support for students, such as careers advice and mental health services.

The NAO has recommended the government evaluate and improve the effectiveness of its intervention regime, which was also criticised by Dame Mary Ney's 2019 report into government oversight of colleges.

The government has also been urged to "learn lessons" from the two college insolvencies, and evaluate the cost, timeliness and impact of the education administration process.

A DfE spokesperson highlighted how the report notes standards in the FE sector are high, with 82 per cent of colleges being 'good' or 'outstanding' in 2019, "but we recognise the issues facing colleges and other providers".

They pointed to the £400 million funding boost for 16-19 students which came into effect this academic year and actions taken to stabilise the sector during Covid-19, such as guaranteeing grant payments and providing extra investment through the 16 to 19 bursary fund.

REVEALED: £26.6m cost of Hadlow Group transfer

FRASER WHIELDON
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The eye-watering £26.6 million cost of the first two education insolvencies, and how five colleges were bailed out by the government to avoid the same fate, has been revealed by a new report.

The National Audit Office this week published a report into 'Financial sustainability of colleges in England', which revealed colleges in or close to being in education administration have cost taxpayers over £40 million in total.

Since Hadlow College and West Kent and Ashford College (WKAC) became the first to be placed into education administration, in mid-2019, the government has spent £26.6 million on keeping the doors open and "facilitating a long term solution".

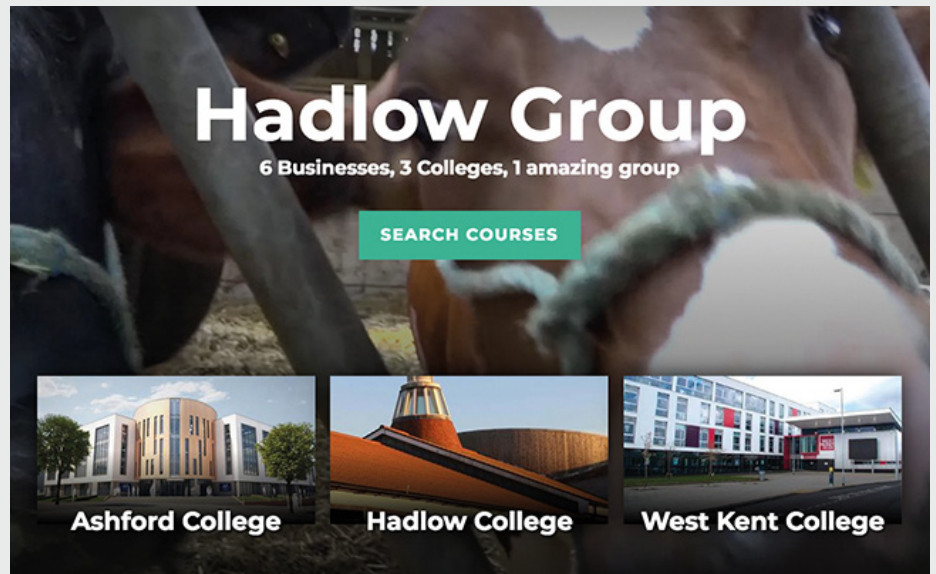
The government does expect to receive some money from the sale of assets which are no longer required for educational provision, however.

The figure includes £18.1 million spent on financial support related to secured creditors and £2.3 million in payments to administrators BDO.

FE Week reported in May BDO had come under increasing pressure from the Education and Skills Funding Agency to keep their costs down, as they had been running the colleges for far longer than had originally been planned.

The NAO has also reported the ESFA has provided £14.4 million in emergency funding to five other colleges in "serious financial difficulty", which the agency wanted to keep out of the insolvency regime.

The agency, the report reads, has recognised that the cost and effort of handling colleges in education administration means "it may need to limit the number of colleges in the insolvency



regime at any one time," depending on each case.

The Department for Education said protecting students is "the over-riding priority for colleges that have entered education administration," and the "most significant costs" from the two insolvency cases were related to "supporting the operation of the colleges while they were in administration and in facilitating a long-term solution by enabling the transfer of the provision to other local providers".

The department declined to name the five colleges on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

It is expected the department's upcoming FE White Paper will include changes to legislation to enable the government to take greater control of failing colleges rather than force them into insolvency.

Hadlow and WKAC became the first FE colleges to become insolvent after, as revealed by FE Commissioner Richard Atkins, it fell into an "extremely serious financial situation".

Both colleges' boards, Atkins reported, failed in their fiduciary duty and put "the

sustainability of both colleges and learners at risk", having only found out about the financial situation at the college shortly before Atkins arrived to intervene in the colleges, despite the situation being so dire the college had to ask the ESFA for exceptional financial support.

The commissioner also found the colleges' principal and deputy principal, Paul Hannan and Mark Lumsdon-Taylor, had cut the boards out of decision-making, and Hadlow College's financial health score was only 'good' because it did not take information about loans into account.

Hannan and Lumsdon-Taylor, as well as a swathe of governors at both colleges, resigned after the college was placed into intervention.

Hadlow and WKAC's provision has now been split between three neighbouring colleges, with North Kent College, Capel Manor College and EKC Group each taking a slice.

Betteshanger Park, a country and business park owned by Hadlow College, was also sold off for an undisclosed sum last December.

Ofsted looks to inspect all FE subcontractors

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For the first time Ofsted is exploring a move to directly inspect all FE subcontractors, something until now it has ruled out.

Subcontracting in FE is big business, with 2,221 subcontracting arrangements at 856 subcontractors accounting for "around 14 per cent of the spending on apprenticeships and adult education" in 2018/19, according to Ofsted.

The inspectorate told *FE Week* that the Education and Skills Funding Agency has responded positively to resolving issues with the data they supply and discussions will now take place with the Department for Education to consider this major change.

The news comes alongside the publication of Ofsted research into FE subcontracting, which began in November last year.

Researchers found their own inspectors were being hampered by a lack of "access to timely and accurate data on the number and size of subcontracting arrangements held by a directly-funded provider".

And "the current approach to inspection means that some subcontractors are visited more than once [as part of an inspection of a direct contract holder], while others are not visited at all".

Ofsted is only funded to inspect the direct ESFA contract holder and will sometimes consider the quality of their subcontracted provision but even then, only if they have access to reliable data from the ESFA.

An Ofsted spokesperson told *FE Week*: "One of the best things to come out of the research report is the dialogue that researchers have had with the ESFA colleagues and the acknowledgement and understanding of how the data issues hamper inspection, and the agreement to do whatever they can to improve and enhance the data."

And the DfE told *FE Week*: "Better-quality subcontracting data will provide a great range of benefits to the FE sector so we welcome Ofsted's report. We are improving the data that we have about subcontracting and, as part of our reforms, the ESFA will develop



improved tools for collecting better and more timely data.

"We will continue to work with Ofsted about what data we can share with them to assist them in their work."

This positive response from the DfE and ESFA appears to open the door to a major change to the inspection regime.

Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector, said: "We are open to exploring how we could directly inspect subcontractors in the future, but that would need significantly more financial resource and better data."

In the meantime, Ofsted has also committed to:

- increasing awareness among inspectors of Ofsted's available inspection resource, in order to investigate more subcontractors
- changing the way evidence is recorded to systematically and consistently include information about all subcontractors visited
- where appropriate, highlighting more subcontractors in inspection reports.

The research does not appear to include any analysis of 16 to 18-year-old study programme subcontracting. It invited 25 apprenticeship and adult education budget funded subcontractors to participate in interviews but only proceeded with the 14 that agreed to participate.

And the researchers do not pass judgement on the overall quality of subcontracted delivery compared to provision directly delivered.

A spokesperson for Ofsted told *FE Week*:

"We found elements of good and poor practice, but what the report is not doing is giving a state of the nation report on subcontracting quality."

The government has for many years been concerned about the lack of oversight, risk to public funds and value for money of subcontracting.

Subcontractors typically pay the direct contract holder a significant management fee for the privilege of access to public funds. Without direct inspection, little is publicly known about the quality of what they deliver on the reduced funds.

There have also been high-profile cases of colleges being caught up in multi-million pound subcontracting scandals.

In February 2018 the founders and owners of Luis Michael Training were sentenced to a total of over 25 years in prison for defrauding colleges out of £5 million in apprenticeship funding.

And in November 2018, *FE Week* revealed Brooklands College had paid close to £17 million to a mysterious subcontractor. The college's principal subsequently resigned and an investigation into the relationship with SCL Security Ltd resulted in the ESFA demanding the college return millions of pounds.

FE subcontracting has been on the decline in recent years following a series of funding rule changes and in recent months the ESFA has been consulting with the sector to introduce further policies to shrink its use.

Union to 'name and shame' unsafe colleges

BILLY CAMDEN
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A union has threatened to "name and shame" colleges that are "not doing enough" to keep staff and students safe from Covid-19.

The University and College Union this week launched a new system to allow its members to directly relay their fears about institutions' "failings".

The union said the action was prompted after it was revealed that the Department for Education does not hold information on the number of confirmed cases of coronavirus in schools.

While a "lack of clear guidance" from the government had not helped matters, the UCU insisted that colleges could not "hide behind the failings of ministers" and had to "demonstrate their commitment to keeping people safe".

The union cited data released by Downing Street last week which showed the infection rate among 17-to-21 year-olds – the main age group found in colleges – is at 50 in 100,000 and increasing sharply.

UCU members will now be encouraged to complete questionnaires about their college's plans if someone is taken ill on campus or



how a college would shut down in the event of an outbreak.

The union will also seek greater information about testing systems in place and will demand to know what support there will be for staff and students who need to self-isolate.

Earlier this week, ministers were warned that a lack of testing could force schools in England to grind to a halt because students and staff would have to stay at home following a suspected case.

UCU general secretary Jo Grady said: "The evidence suggests that colleges and

universities will be hit with further Covid outbreaks and any institution not preparing for how it deals with one is in denial and failing staff, students and the wider community.

"We will be monitoring what comes in from members and will name and shame institutions that are not up to scratch. Our main objective is to help avert a preventable public health crisis. But if our members are concerned with how their college or university is behaving we will back them if they vote to move into dispute, which could result in ballots for industrial action."

Former UCU boss handed £400,000 pay-off

FRASER WHIELDON
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The general secretary of a leading college union who lambasted colleges for how much their principals earn was handed a £400,000 pay-off, according to published accounts.

The "post-employment" payment to University and College Union boss Sally Hunt, as referred to in the UCU's accounts, was in addition to salary, pension

contributions and a car benefit. For the full year to 31 August 2018, Hunt's basic salary was £107,448, according to the financial statements.

A UCU spokesperson told *FE Week* they could not comment on the settlement.

In 2018, after analysis showed a third of principals enjoyed a pay rise of more than 10 per cent in 2016/17, Hunt said those leaders who "pocket huge pay rises while pleading poverty on staff pay

look greedy and hopelessly out of touch".

And in response to *FE Week* analysis in 2017 showing 71 college leaders had earned salaries of £150,000 or more in 2015/16, Hunt said the pay awards "show it's one rule for staff and another for those at the top".

Hunt resigned from her post at the UCU in February 2019 on health grounds.



Sally Hunt

Pearson Teaching Awards 2020: Silver winners unveiled

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
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Inspirational teachers from across the country have been honoured this week for their outstanding commitment to changing the lives of children.

A total of 76 winners have scooped silver awards in the annual Pearson National Teaching Awards.

The winners (full list right and overpage) will now be shortlisted to win just one of 14 gold awards at the final – known as the UK’s ‘Oscars for Teachers’ – which will be broadcast on the BBC next month.

Author Michael Morpurgo, president of the Teaching Awards Trust, which runs the event, said: “Over the past year, we have, all of us, come to appreciate and respect the value of teachers.

“They have so often been taken for granted. Not any more. Parents know now what it takes to teach, and teach well, and how much commitment, dedication and enthusiasm and knowledge and understanding, yes – and patience.”

Rod Bristow, president of Pearson UK, said: “Congratulations to all of our silver award winners for their commitment, dedication and passion for their work. Despite the incredible challenges they have faced over the past few months, school and college staff have risen to the occasion time and again.”

Education secretary Gavin Williamson added: “My warmest congratulations go to all this year’s silver award winners. They should be proud to receive this recognition of their commitment to the profession, and the outstanding education and guidance they provide for their students.

“Teachers and school staff up and down the country consistently go above and beyond for their students, and this is especially true over the past few months.



It is down to their hard work that schools and colleges have been able to open their gates to all pupils again for the start of the new term, and I cannot say thank you enough for everything they have done.”

Last year, Brian Banks from City College Plymouth won FE lecturer of the year while the sport, PE and dance team from Wkye Sixth Form College, in Hull, won FE team of the year.

The full list of silver award winners

The Award for Digital Innovator of the Year

Stefanie Campbell, South Eastern Regional College, Lisburn, Northern Ireland
Becki Lee, Hopwood Hall College, Manchester
Laura Stephens, Barton Peveril Sixth Form College, Eastleigh, Hampshire
Ben Whitaker, Burnley College Sixth Form Centre, Burnley, Lancashire

The Award for Excellence in Special Needs Education

Helen Harris, Kensington Primary School, Newham, London
Lynn Kerr, Glengormley High School, Newtownabbey, Antrim
Paul Morris, North West London Independent

Special School, London
David Swanston, St Vincent’s School for Sensory Impairment, Liverpool, Merseyside

The Award for FE Lecturer of the Year

Misk Sharif Ali, United Colleges Group, London
Phil Brooks, Dudley College of Technology, Dudley, West Midlands
Mazar Iqbal, Burnley College Sixth Form Centre, Burnley, Lancashire

The Award for FE Team of the Year

The Prince’s Trust Team, Stockton Riverside College, Stockton-on-Tees, Teesside

The full list of silver award winners continued

The Senior Management Team, New College Pontefract, West Yorkshire
The Sport & Public Services Team, Stafford College, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire
The Sports Academy Team, Newham Sixth Form College, London
The Holistic Team, Victoria College, Birmingham, West Midlands

The Award for Headteacher of the Year in a Primary School

John Bryant, Arthur Bugler Primary School, Stanford-Le-Hope, Essex
Lisa Lazell, Cardwell Primary School, Woolwich, London
Sophie McGeoch, Meadlands Primary School, Richmond, Surrey
Bavaani Nanthabalan, Netley Primary School & Centre for Autism, London
Raminder Singh Vig, Khalsa Primary School, Slough, Berkshire
Michael Wade, Quilters Junior School, Billericay, Essex

The Award for Headteacher of the Year in a Secondary School

Simon Gilbert-Barnham, Ormiston Venture Academy, Gorleston, Norfolk
Matt Gauthier, Samuel Ryder Academy, St Albans, Hertfordshire
Cherry Tingle, Energy Coast UTC, Workington, Cumbria
Rob Williams, Malton School, Malton, North Yorkshire

The Award for Impact through Partnership

The City of Norwich School – an Ormiston Academy, Norwich, Norfolk
The Outwood Grange Academies Trust, Wakefield, West Yorkshire
The CORE Education Trust – Echo Eternal Project, Birmingham, West Midlands
The Derby Teaching Schools Alliance, Derby, Derbyshire
St Vincent's School for Sensory Impairment, Liverpool, Merseyside
The Boleyn Trust, London

The Award for Lifetime Achievement (Supported by the Department for Education)

Tony Bennett, Balcarras School, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire
David Horn, Beckfoot Trust, Bradford, West Yorkshire
Dr Paul Phillips CBE, Weston College, Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset
Dr Andrew Szydlo, Highgate School, Highgate, London
Catherine Taylor, Aspire Federation, Wigan, Greater Manchester

The Award for Making a Difference – Primary School of the Year (Supported by Future First)

Delamere School, Flixton, Manchester
Diamond Wood Community Academy, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire
Kensington Primary School, Newham, London
Whitefield Primary School, Liverpool, Merseyside

The Award for Making a Difference – Secondary School of the Year (Supported by Future First)

Ark John Keats Academy, Enfield, London
Energy Coast UTC, Workington, Cumbria
Hazelwood Integrated College, Belfast, Antrim
St Cecilia's College, Derry, Northern Ireland
Villiers High School, Ealing, Middlesex

The Award for Outstanding New Teacher of the Year (Supported by the Department of Education)

Kirsty Gaythwaite, Goodwin Academy, Deal, Kent
Adam Higgins, The Royal Liberty School, Romford, Essex
Oliver McIntyre, Hillcrest Shifnal School, Shifnal, Shropshire
Ashleigh Sinclair, Northern Counties School, Newcastle, Tyne And Wear
Kate Woodward, Lyndhurst Primary and Nursery School, Oldham, Greater Manchester

The Award for Teacher of the Year in a Primary School (Supported by Randstad)

Shamshad Azad, Horton Park Primary School, Bradford, West Yorkshire
Alex Bramley, Spire Junior School,

Chesterfield, Derbyshire
Melissa Bryan, Margaretting CofE Primary School, Ingatestone, Essex
Sakara Foot, Khalsa Primary School, Slough, Berkshire
Joshua Freeland, New City Primary School, London
Robert Harrison, Perryfields Primary Pupil Referral Unit, Worcester, Worcestershire
Sarah Kennedy, Brington CofE Primary School, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire
Rebecca Price, Diamond Wood Community Academy, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire
Beth Raggett, St Hilda's CofE Primary School, Trafford, Lancashire
Peter Simons, Thornhill Junior and Infant School, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire
David Stirzaker, Stawley Primary School, Wellington, Somerset

The Award for Teacher of the Year in a Secondary School

Jacqueline Bream, Huntington School, York, North Yorkshire
Richard Harris, Raynes Park High School, Merton, London
Andrew Hartshorn, Finham Park 2, Coventry, West Midlands
Sammy Kempner, The Totteridge Academy, London
Nicola Ponsonby, Challney High School for Girls, Luton, Bedfordshire
Kirsty Ralston, The Royal Liberty School, Romford, Essex
Deb Simmons, Winterbourne Academy, Bristol, South Gloucestershire
Rebecca Topps, St Georges Academy, Sleaford, Lincolnshire
Katie Warmer, Q3 Academy Tipton, West Midlands
Kerryann Wilson, Energy Coast UTC, Workington, Cumbria

The Award for Teaching Assistant of the Year

Michelle Bland, Ingoldsby Academy, Grantham, Lincolnshire
Lucy Brotherhood, Charnwood College, Loughborough, Leicestershire
Maria Gallagher, Ashmount School, Loughborough, Leicestershire
Rebecca Skinner, Sarah Bonnell School, London



Director of Finance

Job reference: REQ00273

Location: Hammersmith & Fulham College

Package: Pension scheme Eye care vouchers Designated CPD (development) days On-site Canteen and Restaurant (staffed by students) On-site Hair and Beauty Salon (Staffed by students) and much more...

West London College (WLC) strives for excellence for our students and staff through incorporating our values of Ambition, Accountability, Inclusion and Integrity in everything we do. The post holder will strive to improve lives through education, training, skills and development, fostering social and economic success, in line with the College's overall mission.

Are you passionate about improving students' lives? If so, we at WLC are looking for an outstanding Director of Finance to join our Senior Leadership Team. You will be an experienced and successful manager with demonstrable experience of leading a finance function through organisational change and challenge, whilst driving improvement. Working closely with the Chief Operating Officer, you will

help to keep everyone focused on our key priorities, support innovation and strategic development and lead the College's drive to become financially outstanding.

Experience of working within the education sector is not essential, however what is paramount is that the successful candidate must be a team player, who can manage competing priorities and meet deadlines.

Tenure: Permanent

Hours: Full Time

Salary: Salary Up to £80k per annum, possibly more for the right candidate

Closing Date: 12.00 noon on Wednesday 23rd September 2020

Interviews to be held: TBC

Candidates are shortlisted on the basis of their written application and the extent to which they meet the specified criteria. Please see the Job Description/Person Specification for the essential criteria and further information on the role.

Our aim is to recruit the best staff possible and to deliver first class teaching to our learners. We are committed to equality and diversity and expect our staff to share this commitment. The safety and welfare of our staff and learners is extremely important to us and this is why we pride ourselves on our safeguarding procedures.

We are:

Working towards our Investors in Diversity accreditation

Investors in People

Stonewall Diversity Champions

All positions are subject to an enhanced DBS check (including barred list information, for those who will be engaging in regulated activity) and your start date will be dependent on receipt of satisfactory DBS clearance.



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Coleg Cambria has rapidly established itself as a leading UK education provider. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to add to our management team.

Assistant Principal of Employer Engagement

Salary - £54,132 - £59,466 per annum

As an Assistant Principal of Employer Engagement you will have overall responsibility for building the Employer Engagement strategy, developing programmes across multiple Directorates and the provision at the business school in Northop and setting and receiving all commercial targets.

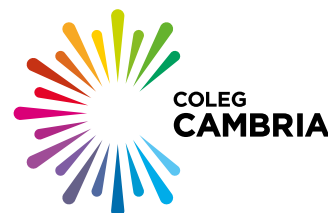
We are looking for someone who has substantial experience working with employers across multiple sectors and leading and managing a team in order to achieve strategic, operational and commercial targets.

The ideal candidate has to be passionate about generating new employer relationships by innovating and being creative with engagement plans but also has the ability to nurture and develop existing relationships.

The individual will be committed to leading and developing a team who are continuously improving the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and quality across the Directorate and wider College.

This is a high profile role that will be integral in driving the employer engagement offering across both the Directorate and wider College.

We are looking for those individuals who are able to clearly demonstrate selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership, as well as observing the principles of the Code of Good Governance for Colleges in Wales of being respectful, professional, prudent and committed, and enthusiastic about good governance.



For further information and to apply visit <https://colegcambria.ciph-irecruit.com/applicants/vacancy>

Welsh language skills are desirable. **Closing Date for applications is 09/10/2020.**



Director of Data Management & Examinations

£42,835 per annum

East Durham College is looking to recruit to this senior role within the college, due to the retirement of the current incumbent of the post.

The Director of Data Management and Examinations role will have management responsibility for the effective operation of Learner Information Services, in accordance with the strategic direction of the College. They will ensure the College's Individualised Learner Record (ILR) returns are completed in a timely fashion, ensure all management information is readily available

and accessible and ensure the examinations department is run in a timely efficient manner and take responsibility for learner examination and qualification entries and certification.

Qualified to degree level with management experience in a similar role, preferably evidenced through a level 3 qualification or above. Extensive knowledge and understanding of ESFA funding requirements would also be beneficial in the role. Experience of working in an education setting is desirable but not essential.

For more information and to apply, please visit <https://www.eastdurham.ac.uk/job-vacancies>

Closing Date: Tuesday 29 September 2020



Curriculum Manager – English

Job Reference: REQ0286

Competitive Salary

Do you enjoy sharing your knowledge and expertise, have a desire to make a difference and want to be involved in educating young people?

We are seeking to recruit a highly motivated, forward thinking individual as our Curriculum Manager for English, to join our dedicated English and Maths team at our Aylesbury campus.

What you need to be successful in this role:

- To have a drive, determination and a clear focus on high quality teaching and learning that will lead to high levels of achievement for learners
- To provide leadership and direction, giving team members

clear responsibilities and accountabilities that align to college strategies and values

- Although this is a management role you will be expected to lead by example and teach your students to a high calibre

Benefits include:

- Competitive holiday entitlement
- Pension scheme
- BCG Altitude Plus Membership scheme
- CPD to develop new skills and expand your opportunities
- Plus many more....

For more information or to apply for this role either visit our website www.buckscollegigroup.co.uk or email hr@buckscollegigroup.ac.uk.

Finance Director

Post Reference: MAN36

Hours: 37 hours per week Monday – Friday with flexibility to meet business needs.

Salary: £55,789 - £60,701 per annum which is Point M21 – M25 on the Management Salary Scale.

Job Purpose: To provide a comprehensive and professional financial management control service to Kingston Maurward College.

Vision: We are looking for an enthusiastic, self-motivated Finance Director to support the Principal in the strategic financial and risk management of the College. The post holder will work closely with the Strategic Management Team, Head of Estates, Marketing Manager, and Heads of curriculum departments. The role will lead the Finance Manager and Finance team to play a significant role in ensuring effective financial control and seek opportunities to improve processes and enhance services across the College. The person will be a confident, successful qualified accountant with a broad range of financial experience particularly in areas of management accounting, budgeting and cost control. FE experience is desirable and the post holder will be expected to have an understanding of the public sector.

Status: Permanent

For an informal discussion about the post, please contact Luke Rake on 01305 215123 during normal working hours.

The Closing Date for Applications: Friday 25th September 2020 at 9:00am
Proposed Interview Date: Thursday 15th October 2020

To Apply:

Please visit the KMC website for a College Application Form and a full Job Description.

Please return the completed Application Form by email to recruitment@kmc.ac.uk.

Applicants for this position must complete a College Employment Application Form. CVs will not be accepted.

We are not accepting CVs at this stage from Recruitment Agencies.

For further details on application forms or the recruitment process, please go to our website kmc.ac.uk. Alternatively contact the HR Department by emailing recruitment@kmc.ac.uk.



Profile

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Introducing...

VICTORIA COPP- CRAWLEY

Principal, Ashford College,
East Kent Group



**'When I became a sports
teacher in Hastings, I thought
I'd conquered the world'**

JL DUTAUT
JL.DUTAUT@FEWEEK.CO.UK

**JL Dutaut meets a college leader with a healthy
disregard for the academic/vocational divide**

When your path through life and career isn't a straightforward one, it's easy to be jealous of someone like the new principal of Ashford College, Victoria Copp-Crawley – someone

for whom what to be 'when you grow up' was clear from early on and who has achieved it. Is achieving it.

"I always wanted to be a teacher," she says. "I was very passionate about teaching from primary school age. My teachers, especially my PE teachers, they were everything really. When I became a sports teacher in Hastings, I thought I'd conquered the world."

And nobody is more aware of the privilege that represents than Copp-Crawley herself. In

fact, that awareness is what seems to drive her ever on. "I had a fantastic education. I felt very privileged to have that. I loved learning, and it's nice to be able to do that for young people. And you know, being a leader of a college, you can really influence those practices, and make sure we give the best education we can possibly give to young people."

Principal of her third college within the EKC Group (formerly East Kent College) with a stellar record of college improvement, Copp-Crawley

Profile

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has been entrusted since September with overseeing EKC Group's acquisition of Ashford College. An experienced and effective leader, her belief in the transformative power of the vocational sector transcends simply getting the 'right bums on the right seats'.

Having risen through the ranks as a learner manager at West Kent College, then as a head of enterprise and director of curriculum with East Kent College, it's not so much that those experiences shape her perspective now, but that the roles she's held reflect a philosophy that has always underpinned her professional life. "When young people have had challenging times, and they've really flourished in technical or vocational training and they get a job and you can see the development they've made – that is the best reward for me."

Where her sense of further education's unique role comes from is difficult to trace, but it's clear that it is far more than 'something you say when you're a principal' to her. There's genuine passion in her voice as she tells me that "there's a lot of people out there that don't realise the talents they've got, and they've often not had the best support possible." So far, so Ken Robinson, you might be tempted to say. But Copp-Crawley has little truck with the idea that the system needs substantial reform. Her emphasis is telling. It's not that school hasn't



Aged 17 with the England squash team, 1997

suiting such students, but that "They haven't suited school." "You can see them come alive, you know," she adds. "The number of students that go on to apprenticeships and go into jobs that hadn't achieved anything when they got to us is really amazing. You can see a student's life really starting from college."

Copp-Crawley is someone who suited the GCSE–A level–university–profession route very well indeed. Three years after her first degree in sports science from Brunel, she went to Brighton for a PGCE in post-compulsory education. Three years after that, she was back at Brighton for a master's in education. So what is the source of her deep commitment to the FE sector? That may be down to the subject she excelled in and that propelled her through school.

Physical education sits in that sometimes-uncomfortable overlap between the academic and vocational spheres. Students who excel at sports and dream of a future playing for

England are often advised – rightly – that sporting careers are high-risk and short-lived. "Have a plan B," they're told. All well and good for those, like Copp-Crawley, for whom an academic plan B is a comfortable pathway, but a tougher ask for those whose abilities lie elsewhere.

"You can see a student's life really starting from college"

In reality, Copp-Crawley's path into and through a career in education hasn't been quite a straight line, precisely because of her sporting prowess. Introduced to squash by her brother, four years her senior, who played competitively, she was, she tells me, "the girl who follows her brother around."

"And then I started playing when he was playing." By the age of nine, she had won the



With her 'greatest supporter' and two children last year

Profile

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Sussex county championships in the under-10s category. She won again in the under-12s, under-14s, under-16s and under-19s! Among other tournament successes around the country, she captained the under-16s and under-19s Sussex teams to three consecutive inter-county championship victories. More than that, from the age of 14 to the age of 21 she played for the England squad and with them won the home countries championships three consecutive years.

“You feel quite pressured when you’re in a full-time job as a mum”

Aged 21, from coach to the Sussex team, Copp-Crawley took her first step into a formal education role in 2002 as a part-time sports lecturer – sans qualification – at Bexhill college. But even years after completing her PGCE and master’s degree, she stepped out of a promising career in the sector for a year as the coaching and leadership programme lead for the English Table Tennis Association,

demonstrating a healthy disregard for the boundaries between academic and vocational routes to progression.

Born and raised in the Hastings area, Copp-Crawley has never strayed far from the region. It’s where she has made her family – she is a married mother of two, whose husband, she says, is her biggest support and whose nine-year-old can’t get enough of college-branded pens to show off at school. “You feel quite pressured when you’re in a full-time job as a mum,” she says, but goes on to explain how important being a role model to her children is.

And there’s real passion for giving back to the community that drives her too. It’s part of recognising those privileges she enjoyed as a child – a supportive family, supportive teachers and local squash coaching talent, all aligned to give her an experience like no other.

And that’s why system reform isn’t on her agenda. For Copp-Crawley, the solutions are local and the means to find and develop them are already at hand. “Part of EKC group is that we’ve got all of our colleges and we’re now developing our EKC Trust of schools as well. We’ve got four schools as part of our trust and we engage them with community

activities because it’s really important for young people to be engaged with a range of different things, and all of education has got a part to play in that.”

This cross-over stewardship of schools and colleges means that within existing frameworks and legislation, Copp-Crawley is certain that the tools already exist to improve the chances of those less fortunate than she was, to create the types of life-affirming opportunities she had, not just through sport but through access to technical and vocational learning. “At our Broadstairs and Folkestone campuses, we’ve got our junior college that allows students to access vocational technical education at the age of 14. That enables a student to come from school and, if it’s not suited to them, to start their technical and their vocation journey earlier.”

“Given the pandemic, the country needs the FE world more than ever”

If there’s a challenge for policy makers still to tackle, as far as Copp-Crawley is concerned, it is about the representation of the further education sector. “A lot of people think college is a place where people go because they haven’t achieved. It’s not about that. It’s a place that actually allows people to flourish in the things they’re going to be talented in. Given the pandemic we’ve just gone through, the country needs the FE world more than ever.”

With school-college partnerships like those EKC Group are developing, and leaders at the helm like Copp-Crawley, there’s hope that the institutional divide between academic and vocational education can finally be tackled, one sometimes-uncomfortable overlap at a time.



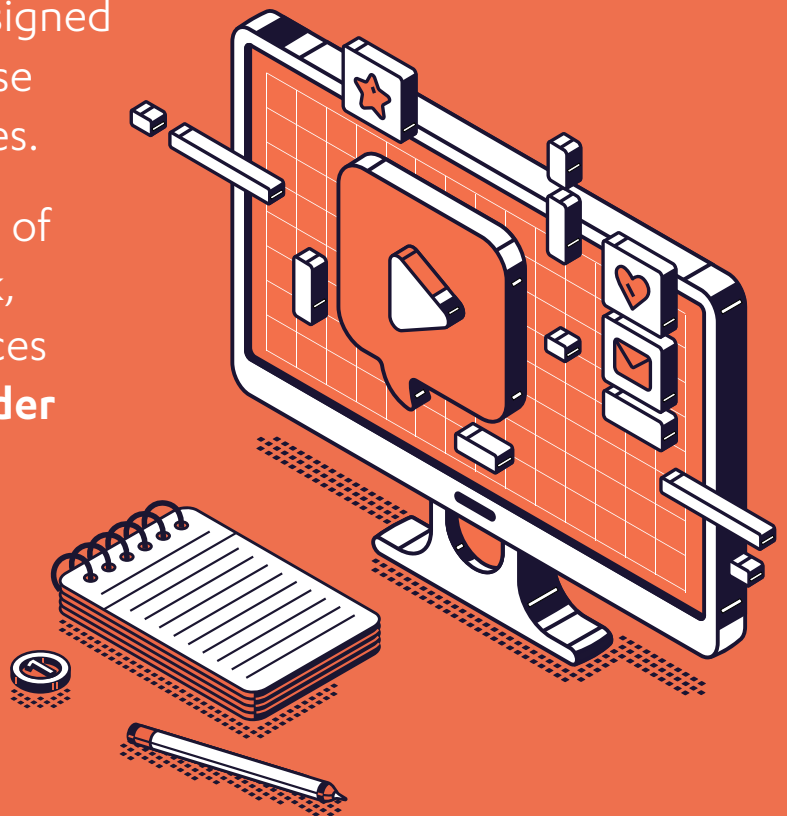
With her parents at her graduation from Brunel University, 2001

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CHRIS
MALISHDeputy chief
executive,
Bradford College

How can we be deemed not eligible for Covid relief funds when we're in financial intervention?

Being turned down twice for relief funding feels like we are losing out partly because of our hard work, writes Chris Malish

As lockdown began to really bite in April, the announcement of the ESFA's post-16 provider relief scheme was welcome. The aim of the extra cash was "to continue to retain capacity within the apprenticeships and adult education sector to deliver the skills needed to support economic recovery post-pandemic".

But as always, the devil was in the detail. Our college has been turned down twice, and I'm going to explain what that was like.

The requirements for applications included proof of eligibility for the scheme, "proof of financial need" and proof of eligible costs which make up the financial need.

Among other requirements, a transitional plan also had to be in place that demonstrated the ability to operate without any further relief on or before October 2020.

To its credit, the guidance on the scheme was clear and gave a template on how to provide the information, including cash flow information.

But there were other issues. The application timescales were tight and originally set at around five working days for the April submission.

That's before you consider the wider context of Covid-19, which was causing us and other colleges



to struggle to deliver courses to our students.

Many of our staff had home schooling commitments for their own children, while at the same time adjusting to working from home. Most colleges would also have been deep into business planning for the next academic year.

"The impact of this was demoralising for the college"

We were unsuccessful with the first application as we were not classed as "at risk", mainly, I feel, because of our cash position and were perceived to be able to cope without the funding in the short term for the activity that was required. It was frustrating, but we

persevered.

By the second round of applications, gathering the data became much smoother and the original plan was still relevant; the finances just needed updating.

But what wasn't clear at the outset was exactly what the threshold was for receiving these funds. Again, the applicant's cash position seemed to be the biggest factor. If you had cash in the bank, you weren't deemed in need, and if you didn't have cash in the bank, you were.

But the money we had in the bank was already earmarked for other activities and ensuring bank covenant compliance. We needed the funds for additional activities as yet unfunded. Nevertheless, we were turned down a second time because of our cash position.

This suggests to me that there was a fixed amount of money available for the Covid relief scheme (although a fixed figure was certainly never announced

for it); the ESFA was unsure about how many applications would be received and the level of funding that would be requested; and the criteria might even have been formulated after applications had been received.

This is very different to other initiatives such as the Job Retention Scheme and Eat Out To Help Out. It makes me question where education funding ranks in the government's priorities, especially as education will be central to rebuilding the economy.

It's especially confusing not to receive the funds since we are under financial intervention and our finances, under the ESFA's own health score metric, are judged to "require improvement".

The impact of this was demoralising for the college, as over the last three years we have been working hard on improving finances. To have funding for much-needed activities declined, to the detriment of our financial position, has left us feeling let down. It feels as though we have lost out partly because of our hard work.

However, it was not unexpected and enforces the feeling in the sector that we are undervalued and underappreciated.

So now, all the plans put forward in the application have been continued, but unfunded. Bradford College is not driven simply by finances, but by a vision of creating a better future for all through education and training.

SAM PARRETT

CEO, London South East Colleges



Sending home around 100 students so early in the term is a reality check

One case of Covid-19 among the staff had an immediate impact on how we could run the college, writes Sam Parrett

With great anticipation and excitement, last week saw the re-opening of all our college campuses and schools. After months of forced closure, staff have worked tirelessly over the summer break to prepare sites for the safe return of staff and students.

The risks and concerns have been uppermost in all our minds, but so has the determination to get our students back into the classroom.

All our schools and college campuses are following every Covid-19 guideline; from staggered starts to having fewer people on site, mask-wearing in communal areas and encouraging hand hygiene. Yet the reality is that we will see cases of the virus across sites as we move into the autumn and winter months.

At the end of our induction week, we had notification that one of our college staff had tested positive for Covid-19. Seeing a case so early in the term was a real wake-up call as to the reality of the virus. As ever with these things, the call came on a Sunday. This meant our senior leadership team dropping afternoon plans and jumping on a Zoom call (with one of us dialling in from a kayaking trip, complete with life jacket!).

It was vital to ascertain not only what the situation with the affected staff member was, but the impact it would have on the wider college. Getting hold of Public Health England and the DfE proved tricky (on a Sunday afternoon) and it took some time for us to establish exactly what action we needed to take.

“It’s been a stark reminder that Covid-19 is with us”

After some initial confusion as to who would need to self-isolate, we were advised through the NHS Test and Trace system that up to 15 staff members would need to stay at home for 14 days. Fortunately, due to the Covid-safe measures we had taken at college (social distancing, compulsory masks in all communal areas etc) no student was affected on that front.

But with a number of tutors now unable to come into college, we had no choice but to contact around 100 students and move them to our online learning platform temporarily. This is not ideal so early in the academic year, when students and tutors have not yet formed relationships with one another. But in this case, it was sadly unavoidable to reduce

any risk of Covid-19 transmission.

Having gone through this experience, we now better understand the crucial processes that must be in place, particularly in relation to test and trace; ensuring we know exactly which students and tutors have been where and when they have been there. Policies have been updated and clear procedures shared among all staff, so that everyone understands what is required.

We are focusing on ensuring everyone on site continues to familiarise themselves with the guidance and follow it. The “hands, face, space” message has to be crystal clear as this is the only way we can protect ourselves and our community.

In hindsight, it’s also clear we were lucky in terms of the number of staff who came into what is deemed “close contact” with the individual who tested positive. It could easily have been

more, which would have had a severe impact on the college. Managing bubbles and contact between staff and students is extremely challenging. For example, a student or staff member may be in a particular ‘curriculum bubble’ but then go into the library or the common room and end up being part of another bubble, which makes contacting and tracing more difficult. It’s also tricky trying to balance staff cover.

In total, as a result of one staff member testing positive, around 100 students and 15 staff were directly affected – having to either go home or change their timetable.

It has been a stark reminder that Covid-19 is with us. Having thought we’d prepared for every eventuality, we’ve had a reality gap as well as a reality check – which thankfully we’ve now closed.



STUART RIMMER

CEO, East Coast College



Without a clear government plan for virus control, colleges have been left to guess

A lack of a blueprint for keeping colleges safe partly explains why one college even considered 'alternate weeks', writes Stuart Rimmer

My great friend Craig, who features in many of my stories, is a builder. I was chatting to him about restarting college life and how government kept issuing guidance after guidance through the summer. He asked, "Don't you just get given a plan?"

I was stunned into silence. He went on to tell me that he never starts any (re)build without a clear and agreed plan. A blueprint of what it needs to look like – so everyone is happy, costs are controlled or fairly allocated and quality delivered.

Embarrassed, I fudged an answer that consisted of attempting to explain the freedoms of incorporation, representative bodies, nuances of governance and local context, of some colleges having more money than others (so could do more than others), the complexity of staff and union consultation, and so on. But in the end he was simply correct.

For every college there appears to be a different way of approaching re-opening in the context of Covid. We've all taken DFE "guidance" and attempted to apply it with sense and integrity. But without a clear and unchanging set of rules the problem is that some of us will

undoubtedly get it wrong. What is considered "reasonable" by one college would be considered against the rules in another.

Some colleges set out their positions early in the summer to help with staff planning. Others waited. Should we use temperature testing? Who knows? Should we wipe down after each class? To mask or not to mask? How big can a bubble be? What proportion of provision should be online? Does anybody know?



College leaders can't agree. Some are at 20 per cent online, some even chancing their arms at 50 per cent flip week timetables – as we saw with a college last week.

The college announced plans to alternate students between on-site provision and working from home each week, and then U-turned after an outcry from parents.

The ESFA has also started phoning around checking onsite attendance – prompting the

question, does it have a view of what is right or wrong? We were told to use our judgement, and so we used our (totally unqualified epidemiological) judgement as best we could.

Other colleges have taken a pragmatic or generous view of "social distance where possible". In my own college, we are trying to deliver a full onsite timetable to provide some normality and opportunities for learners (before Boris Johnson almost inevitably

important is that they are all valid views, but it makes effective delivery almost impossible.

"We are experts on pedagogy, not virus control"

We all carry personal bias into this scenario. Leaders try to navigate this logistical nightmare by implementing best-fit plans. This is far from a criticism of colleagues, in whom I have witnessed a stoicism and can-do attitude of which we should be fiercely proud.

But we are fighting the Covid battle from a position of inherent weakness. We are experts on pedagogy, not virus control.

We are likely to experience local lockdowns over the coming weeks and months, which will disrupt and damage learning, but if the government had provided a clear, unambiguous and mandated blueprint then at least we would have begun the term with some consistency.

Without a plan, have we built the start of the academic year on shaky foundations and will the walls come tumbling down?

It remains to be seen, but I can tell you now that Craig wouldn't have started this without his signed-off blueprint. Should we?

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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READER'S REPLY

Law to be changed to help those made redundant finish their apprenticeship

How would this work with apprenticeships that have occupational competency whereby an employer has to sign to say they are also competent? How would this work for apprenticeships such as plumbing and heating (now a level 3 four-year standard) and electrical installation? It cannot be a one-size-fits-all scenario.

Anonymous, website

Minister says the quality of an FE course should be judged by job outcomes

Achievements rather than job outcomes are a better measure of the results of education in FE. One of the unfortunate factors of measuring success of the sector is that it is often many years later that the benefit is achieved. My own children achieved level 3 at college and both went on to achieve degrees and are now director-level in global IT organisations. However, non-job-related level 2 qualifications that are generic and a cash cow for the provider should be measured on progression and not achievement. A one-size-fits-all is not the answer and will once again penalise the excellent opportunity that FE gives to the late achievers.

Derek Tilley, website

And when? End of the programme can be an entry level job that progresses with work experience to a higher-skilled job. Without the course, the high-skilled job may not have been possible. Therefore, how do you judge and when? Better than qualification achievement rates though.

Nikki Davis, Twitter

Apprenticeship providers call on government to find three months of 'catch-up' cash

I know of many providers who have managed to keep their apprentices on track despite Covid. I worry that a blanket

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Law to be changed to help those made redundant finish their apprenticeship



Allowing the Education and Skills Funding Agency to continue to fund apprentices to complete their training if they are at least 75 per cent of their way through their programme at the point of redundancy will only be beneficial if the minimum six months is maintained for apprenticeships of under two years, and if the definition of redundancy is extended to include "laid off", "let go" or otherwise lost their job through no fault of their own (for example their employer has gone out of business).

Jill Whittaker, website

extra three months could be a reward for those providers who have not done all they could, and as unpopular as that statement might be, there are a number of those.

Tony Allen, Twitter

Lockdown learning actually suits some students better



Absolutely we saw great progression in some of our learners that might otherwise struggle but then there is also a flipside, I think it proves that you can't have a one-size-fits-all view of education and we should adapt teaching and final assessment to suit the needs of the learner better.

Steve Sleahcim, Facebook



Some struggled, some excelled. It proves even more how funding streams need to think about the learners as individuals not tick this box if you don't then no not allowed.

Rachel Newman, Facebook

Movers & Shakers

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



Joel Charles

Director of policy, communications and public affairs, Seetec

Start date August 2020

Previous job

Director of government relations and impact, Future Care Capital

Interesting fact

He is a trustee of a foundation that supports underprivileged children to pursue their educational ambitions



Laura Leong

High-performance skills coach, WorldSkills UK Centre of Excellence

Start Date August 2020

Concurrent job

WorldSkills UK training manager in floristry

Interesting Fact

She has won RHS Chelsea Florist of the Year twice



Frazer Minskup

High-performance skills coach, WorldSkills UK Centre of Excellence

Start Date August 2020

Concurrent job

WorldSkills UK training manager in autobody repair

Interesting Fact

Despite working with Bentley Motors for five years as its global trainer, he never got to drive a Bentley on the road

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

FEWEEK

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