

**SKILLS BILL  
COULD LEAD TO  
OFQUAL DEMISE**

Page 30



**CALL FOR LEVY  
FLEXIBILITIES  
REJECTED**

Page 18



**HONOURS FOR  
FE LEADERS  
REVEALED**

Page 15



# FE WEEK

**In-depth, investigative journalism, determined to get past the bluster & explain the facts for the FE & skills sector**

FEWEEK.CO.UK | @FEWEEK

FRIDAY, JUNE 11, 2021 | EDITION 356



**BOARD MEMBER QUILTS IN  
PROTEST OVER SINK OR SWIM  
TECH VENTURE AT CAPITAL  
CITY COLLEGE GROUP**

EXCLUSIVE

Page 7

## UPROAR AS DFE RESEARCHERS TO BAN JOBLESS APPLICANTS...AT RANDOM

- Skills Bootcamps include a 'Randomised Control Trial' branded as 'ludicrous'
- DfE will randomly reject and ban for a year half of all successful applicants
- Providers refuse to sign contracts as clock ticks on £18m flagship programme

EXCLUSIVE

Page 4

ncfe.

### Let's get digital.

Essential Digital Skills qualifications now live for registrations!

Visit [ncfe.org.uk/eds](https://ncfe.org.uk/eds) Email [eds@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:eds@ncfe.org.uk)

Skills  
Forward

# FEWEEK

## MEET THE TEAM



**Nick Linford**  
**EDITOR**

@NICKLINFORD  
NICK@LSECT.COM



**Shane Mann**  
**MANAGING DIRECTOR**

@SHANERMANN  
SHANE@LSECT.COM



**Billy Camden**  
**DEPUTY EDITOR**

@BILLYCAMDEN  
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK



**JL Dutaut**  
**COMMISSIONING EDITOR**

@DUTAUT  
JL.DUTAUT@FEWEEK.CO.UK



**Jess Staufenberg**  
**COMMISSIONING EDITOR**

@STAUFENBERGJ  
JESS.STAUFBENBERG@FEWEEK.CO.UK



**Fraser Whieldon**  
**REPORTER**

@FRASERWHIELDON  
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK



**Simon Kay**  
**DESIGNER**

SIMON@FEWEEK.CO.UK

### THE TEAM

- HEAD DESIGNER: Nicky Phillips
- SALES MANAGER: Bridget Stockdale
- EVENT MANAGER: Frances Ogefere Dell
- EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT AND FINANCE OFFICER: Victoria Boyle
- OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR: Evie Hayes
- OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR - APPRENTICE: Zoe Tuffin



**FEWEEK**

Got a story ?

Get in touch.

Contact [news@feweek.co.uk](mailto:news@feweek.co.uk) or call 020 81234 778

## EDU WEEK JOBS

### FEATURED JOBS

THIS WEEK'S TOP AVAILABLE JOBS IN THE FE SECTOR. TO FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION PLEASE TURN TO THE CENTRE OF FE WEEK OR VISIT THE WEB ADDRESS LISTED

TO ADVERTISE YOUR VACANCY WITH EDUCATION WEEK JOBS AND FE WEEK PLEASE CALL 020 81234 778 OR EMAIL [ADVERTISING@FEWEEK.CO.UK](mailto:ADVERTISING@FEWEEK.CO.UK)



**DERWENTSIDE COLLEGE**  
**MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES**  
**SALARY DEPENDENT ON ROLE**

<https://httpslink.com/fzti>



**SIXTH FORM COLLEGES ASSOCIATION**  
**DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES**  
**FROM £55,000 PER ANNUM**

<https://httpslink.com/2at9>



A merger between Uxbridge College and Harrow College

**HCUC**  
**SECTION MANAGER**  
**ESOL: ADULT & COMMERCIAL**  
**£40,588 - £44,165 PER ANNUM**  
**INCLUDING LONDON WEIGHTING**

<https://httpslink.com/ilnc>



**SPARSHOLT COLLEGE**  
**VICE PRINCIPAL - CURRICULUM**  
**£67,964 - £70,004 PER ANNUM**

<https://httpslink.com/zs6m>



Raising Standards. Protecting Homeowners

**NHBC**  
**SENIOR TRAINER/ASSESSOR AND NVQ ASSESSORS**  
**SALARY DEPENDENT ON ROLE**

<https://httpslink.com/6pzo>

### ESFA announces 'gobsmacking' change to this year's qualification achievement rates



Page 5



### UCAS glitch: 'the icing on a very difficult 18 months'

Page 10



### A big lesson from the pandemic is the role local government plays

Page 28



### Young people aren't digital natives in the way employers need

Page 29

#### SUBSCRIBE

Stay in the know with an FE Week subscription, from as little as £1 per week. FE Week is the essential read for the FE & skills sector.

Visit [feweek.co.uk/subscribe](https://feweek.co.uk/subscribe) or email [subscriptions@feweek.co.uk](mailto:subscriptions@feweek.co.uk)

#### ADVERTISE WITH US

If you are interested in placing a product or job advert in a future edition please click on the 'advertise' link at the top of the page on [feweek.co.uk](https://feweek.co.uk) or contact:

E: [advertising@feweek.co.uk](mailto:advertising@feweek.co.uk)  
T: 020 81234 778

#### DISCLAIMER

FE Week is owned and published by Lsect Ltd. The views expressed within the publication are those of the authors named, and are not necessarily those of FE Week, Lsect Ltd or any of its employees. While we try to ensure that the information we provide is correct, mistakes do occur and we cannot guarantee the accuracy of our material. The design of the digital newspaper and of the website is copyright of Lsect Ltd and material from the publication should not be reproduced without prior permission. If you wish to reproduce an article from either the digital paper or the website, both the article's author and FE Week must be referenced (to not do so would be an infringement on copyright).

Lsect Ltd is not responsible for the content of any external internet sites linked to.

Please address any complaints to the editor.

Learning & Skills Events, Consultancy and Training Ltd  
c/o Mindspace,  
9 Appold Street,  
London EC2A 2AP  
T: 020 8123 4778  
E: [news@feweek.co.uk](mailto:news@feweek.co.uk)

FE WEEK IS PROUD TO BE A MEMBER OF



# Fury as bootcamp providers will see half of applicants rejected for research purposes

NICK LINFORD  
NICK@FEWEEK.CO.UK

From front

Exclusive

Training providers have been left livid and refusing to sign contracts after the Department for Education revealed their researchers would randomly reject half of all eligible bootcamp applicants.

"Ludicrous" is how one described the delivery requirement, first revealed in a DfE presentation (see image) to the successful bidders to the £18 million digital, technical and construction skills bootcamp tender.

Announced by the prime minister Boris Johnson in September 2020, skills bootcamps are typically three-month courses at level 3 and above and form part of a number of new flagship adult education policies.

During the presentation, the DfE explained the planned randomised control trial (RCT) meant they would need to recruit twice as many candidates and then submit all their details to the DfE.

A research contractor to the DfE, the Institute for Employment Studies, would then take at least four weeks to "randomly select candidates for you from your qualifying candidates list and inform you of who is receiving training and who is in the control group".

Several providers voiced similar ethical concerns about the DfE researchers spending weeks to randomly separate the unemployed applicants into this "treatment group" and a "control group".

The lucky "treatment group" would benefit from the training, whilst the "control group" would be refused access for at least a year so that they could be monitored and compared.

One training provider described it as being "like half the patients given a trial drug and rest given a placebo".

The DfE presentation spelt out that they must "not offer bootcamp training to any candidates in the control group for at least a year after they have been assigned to the

## Randomised Control Trial



- As part of conditions for delivering training you are participating in a Randomised Controlled Trial. This a very rigorous form of evaluation which involves randomly selecting viable candidates into a treatment group who receive the training and a control group who will be signposted to information on other provision. This evidence will help determine if further bootcamps will be funded.
- The RCT element of the evaluation will start for bootcamps beginning around the end of August/beginning of September.
- There will be mandatory training for all providers and sub-contractors to explain what is required to support the delivery of the training. This will confirm what we need you to do (we have also provided a brief in advance).
- To give you some advance warning of some of the requirements we must place on you to deliver this evaluation you can expect to;
  - Provide us with requested detail on implementation to allow us to plan for randomising candidates.
  - Provide all candidates with the information we provide to ensure they understand how their information will be used.
  - Provide two qualifying candidates for each place of training on offer with full baseline data. For example, if you were delivering 30 places on a bootcamp you would need 60 qualifying candidates
  - Wait to receive your candidate list from the researcher team/DfE. We will randomly select candidates for you from your qualifying candidates list and inform you of who is receiving training and who is in the control group.
  - Do not offer bootcamp training to any candidates in the control group for at least a year after they have been assigned to the control group, even if they ask/get referred again.
  - Flag any issues with these mandatory requirements to us by the end of June

control group, even if they ask/get referred again".

The DfE also told providers not to speak to the media and that the research findings would be shared with the Treasury to "help determine if further bootcamps will be funded".

FE Week has spoken to many of the successful providers that were present during the DfE briefing, all of whom have refused to sign the contract after the "goalposts had been moved".

"It would be a challenge in the time available to hit our contact target, let alone double it," said one.

Another objected to the "bureaucracy" of having to wait to be told who they can enrol, "by which time, they may no longer be interested".

And they all expressed concern about the unfunded costs of recruiting twice as many applicants, only for the DfE to then reject half that would become "guinea pigs" for research purposes.

With the flagship programme in jeopardy before launching and the results of a second £18 million bootcamp tender facing ongoing delays, the DfE has now been forced to revisit the RCT requirements.

The DfE told FE Week that conversations were ongoing with the 18 bootcamp providers and a meeting had been arranged for next Tuesday to try to break the deadlock.

A spokesperson said: "We are continuing

to engage with suppliers on the proposed evaluation approaches. Due to ongoing contract discussions, this is commercially sensitive, so it would be inappropriate to comment further at this time."

Winning bidders also voiced ethical concerns where there were no alternative courses available for the rejected applicants, to which the DfE said they would be "signposted to information on other provision".

On seeing the RCT plan, Fiona Aldridge, director for policy and research at the Learning and Work Institute, told FE Week this research technique in post-16 education was "extremely rare".

"It's important that we have a strong evidence base for future investment decisions in education. I welcome the use of RCTs in assessing the effectiveness of bootcamps.

"There is, however, a set of ethical issues that need to be thought through. In particular, decisions about who gets to take part should be communicated in a timely way that doesn't discourage potential learners from engaging in wider opportunities."

The DfE refused to comment on, or defend, the ethics of the research approach.

Government guidance on randomised controlled trials, published by Public Health England, states that if there is an "existing intervention that works, it would be unethical not to give it to participants".

# ESFA announces 'gobsmacking' change to this year's qualification achievement rates

**BILLY CAMDEN**  
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

## Exclusive

Provider-level qualification achievement rates (QARs) will include only some courses in 2020/21 – a decision that has left one college principal “gobsmacked”.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency announced on Wednesday that only those that are subject to “normal assessment” will be included, but qualifications that receive teacher-assessed grades will be left out.

The QARs will then be shared with individual providers as well as Ofsted for inspection purposes and for decisions on which colleges and training providers to visit.

Lindsey Johnson, principal of Craven College in North Yorkshire, tweeted her dismay following this week’s announcement.

**“Using any kind of data to make a decision as to inspect or not is absurd to say the least!”**

“Am I the only one who is gobsmacked by this? ‘Normal assessment’? It’s far from normal! Teachers are exhausted from trying to cram teaching into a truncated academic year... ESFA, you are really out of touch!,” she said.

Paul Eeles, chief executive of the Skills and Education Group, added: “What is more gobsmacking than teacher assessed grades being excluded is they are planning to have QARs at all! Using any kind of data to make a decision as to inspect or not is absurd to say the least! Nothing about the last two years is



normal.”

QAR data, which is used to measure providers’ performance and hold them to account, was not produced for the 2019/20 academic year following the Covid-19 outbreak. Providers were not sent the data, nor was it shared with the inspectorate.

The ESFA had said earlier this academic year that the data would again not be published in 2020/21, but that it would be shared with providers and Ofsted.

Announcing the update this week, the agency said: “Recognising the ongoing impact of the pandemic and published guidance on the awarding of qualifications for summer 2021, those qualifications confirmed as subject to normal assessment (category A) will be included in institution level QARs and shared with Ofsted and providers.

“Those qualifications confirmed as teacher-assessed (category B1) and those which may be subject to a teacher-assessed grade if they cannot safely access an assessment (category B2 and Access to HE courses regulated by QAA) will not be

included in institution level QARs or shared with Ofsted or providers for 2020 to 2021.”

Ofqual has split the awarding of vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) for this year into three broad groups.

Those that are most like GCSEs and A-levels, such as most BTECs, will receive teacher-assessed grades. VTQs that are used for direct entry into employment and demonstrate occupational or professional competence will see their assessments go ahead as planned.

And assessments for VTQs that are unlike GCSEs and A-levels but are still used for progression, such as functional skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), should still go ahead. But if this is not possible, they can receive teacher-assessed grades.

The QARs are the percentage of enrolments that are successfully completed and passed in each academic year by providers.

They are produced for apprenticeships, adult education and 16 to 18 programmes.

**ncfe.**

 **Skills  
Forward**

# Let's get digital.

**Qualifications live  
for registrations!**

Essential Digital Skills initial assessment and diagnostics, resources and qualifications to address the digital skills needed in today's world.

**Visit** [ncfe.org.uk/eds](https://ncfe.org.uk/eds)

**Email** [eds@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:eds@ncfe.org.uk)

# Unconventional tech venture sparks board resignations at London college group

FRASER WHIELDON  
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

From front

Exclusive

Two governors have resigned and union tension has flared at one of England's largest college groups after it announced plans to invest in an unconventional tech venture.

Capital City College Group (CCCG) is spending half a million pounds kitting out its currently empty Regent's Park campus for a course run with a new firm called 01 Founders, which involves a "sink or swim" admissions model and no teachers.

FE Week understands the true cost runs into the millions when accounting for the exclusive use of the campus in central London, which at one stage was being considered for sale.

The college revealed that a split within the board led to two resignations, one of which was the Association of Colleges' area director for the Midlands Shane Chowen.

After being approached by FE Week, Chowen said he "didn't feel this was the right thing for the group. It does not look to me like it will have an impact on the communities I believe the college should be focusing on."

Fellow governor Sarah Ebanja has decided not to seek another term on CCCG's board over the decision on the course, FE Week understands.

The news comes as the college plans to make lecturers redundant in other parts of its group.

The coding course is free for learners to take and offers participants a guaranteed job after they graduate. Learners can be of any age, have no academic qualifications and will be taught through software from coding platform 01 Edu.

To get a return on investment, FE Week understands 01 Founders will take a cut from the programme's graduates' salaries, or a stake in any companies they set up – as it has done with a similar project called '42' in France and America.

A controversial aspect of the intensive two-year programme is that it starts with a one-month

selection process, based on a "swimming pool" model where applicants "sink or swim".

Where this has been used for similar programmes overseas, 1,000 applicants have been slashed down to a cohort of 250. Hopefuls have to work every day, including at weekends, to complete, file and evaluate tasks.

CCCG's chief executive Roy O'Shaughnessy told FE Week he "really didn't like" the model, and the approach for CCCG's programme has been described as "a swimming pool with armbands".

Applicants will be able to access pastoral services and if they do not make it, candidates will be signposted to similar courses.

CCCG's project will also involve around 1,000 applicants, who will be whittled down to 250. The successful learners will then work independently or in groups to complete 50 projects over two years, while studying multiple programming languages.

A target has been set of making half of course participants women, 30 per cent ethnic minorities, and half from underrepresented backgrounds in tech, such as the long-term unemployed.

O'Shaughnessy hopes it will attract a "whole group of individuals who wouldn't necessarily look at an FE college specific before this". He also hopes they will "get an 'in' to every major employer in London that will be participating in this going forward".

But union officials have been enraged to learn the course does not use teachers, as CCCG is looking to make 30 staff members redundant. The job cuts will be made on courses where "fewer students are enrolling, and class sizes have become untenable", according to a college spokesperson.

University and College Union general secretary Jo Grady branded it "frankly

disgusting CCCG wants to throw staff on the scrap heap whilst wasting the equivalent of millions of pounds on a project that advertises itself as offering 'teacherless' training".

Staff, she added, are voting on taking industrial action.

The college's spokesperson said they had been "open" with the UCU about proposals to reduce full-time equivalent staff and will look to make voluntary rather than compulsory redundancies.

Asked what its return from the tech venture would be, CCCG said it will see returns on an equity stake in 01 Founders, a company that was incorporated in January.

The CCCG spokesperson refused to disclose how much the stake was worth.

Although it is kitting out and lending its whole building to the programme, the group intends to eventually start charging rent on the premises.

The 42 project started in 2013 in France before expanding to America, and was founded by computer engineer Nicolas Sadirac. 01 Founders was co-founded by Sadirac and entrepreneur Brent Hoberman. Former culture minister Ed Vaizey and former schools minister Jim Knight are listed as advisers to 01 Founders.

While applicants are guaranteed a job at the end of the course, the syllabus reveals this could be with the 01 Founders Talent Agency, where the company may profit from hiring out graduates to outside companies.

CCCG has only recently exited early intervention with the Education and Skills Funding Agency. That came after a surprise £10 million deficit in 2018/19, following unplanned, multi-million-pound losses in previous years. Another £10 million deficit was recorded in 2019/20.

Chair Alastair Da Costa said the greatest risk from the coding school was not financial, but reputational: "In terms of how the public will perceive it, how the swimming-pool model would be perceived, that it's too different for FE, and that we're entering into a relationship with two international organisations."

01 Founders did not respond to requests for comment at the time of going to press.



Regents park campus

# FAB warns of 'conflict of interest' arising from Skills Bill legislation

**BILLY CAMDEN**  
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Exclusive

Plans to hand the government's apprenticeships quango new powers over technical qualifications are a "retrograde step" and introduce a conflict of interest, awarding bodies have warned.

The Federation of Awarding Bodies has sought legal advice over the Skills Bill ahead of its second reading in the House of Lords next week.

A key proposal in the Bill is to give the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education the ultimate sign-off power for the approval and regulation of technical qualifications in future.

In a position statement, seen by FE Week, the FAB says that while this may look like an "obvious extension" of remit, it "actually sets the scene for a muddled and cumbersome two-tier system of qualifications regulation emerging".

The federation is concerned the move would reverse the "gains" of independent regulation that parliament intended in 2009 when it set up Ofqual.

Unlike Ofqual, the institute is a non-departmental public body directly accountable to ministers, not parliament.

FAB explains that Ofqual was created following a period of "significant scandals and instability" in the regulation of qualifications which resulted in the then Qualifications and Curriculum Authority being abolished.

It warns that the government is in danger of repeating the "mistakes of history by handing back day-to-day political control of technical qualification regulation directly to ministers via the institute".



"We believe this to be a retrograde step as it will not secure strong public confidence in these important qualifications in future," the statement says.

It goes on to claim that this part of the Skills Bill, in its current form, fails to meet "five Cs": competence, coherence, competition, complexity and cost.

One of the biggest concerns for FAB is that the legislation would introduce a "material conflict of interest", since the institute will be both a state awarding/accreditation body for technical qualifications (e.g. T Levels) as well as a regulator deciding which technical qualifications can be granted regulatory approval for public funding purposes.

"In an unprecedented move, this turns the institute into both a market participant in qualifications (by developing, accrediting and certificating its own technical qualifications) and a market regulator of technical qualifications, deciding which qualifications that they do not own can operate in the marketplace in future," the briefing note said.

"We don't have a problem with the institute being either a market participant or a market regulator, but we do not believe it is in the national interest to allow it to operate with both these functions in hand."

Writing for FE Week, FAB chief executive Tom Berwick said the new power proposed for the institute "is the biggest flaw in the proposed legislation".

"Without offering any real evidence of how outcomes will be better, a Conservative government has set upon a course to nationalise technical education."

In response to the concerns, a DfE spokesperson said: "Now more than ever, the role of employers in the skills system is critical to our economic recovery and growth.

"The Bill will give the institute responsibility for ensuring that employers' views are at the heart of the system, whilst Ofqual will continue to regulate and maintain education standards. We believe that both organisations (working together with awarding organisations) have a vital role to play to ensure the quality of technical qualifications."

The Skills Bill does admit that by extending the institute's approval powers, the "risks of duplication and inconsistency" in the qualifications market "are increased".

To combat this, the institute will be required to cooperate with Ofqual to create a "single approval gateway" for technical qualifications.





16 - 30 JUNE 2021 | ONLINE



FREE REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

HEADLINE PARTNER



The annual

# FESTIVAL OF EDUCATION

ONLINE | 16-30 June 2021



## INSPIRING KEYNOTES

Hear from leading educationalists and thought leaders during our daily broadcasts.



## CPD DAYS

Our Friday Fest days will feature invaluable CPD opportunities for all education professionals, with other 50 sessions.

# JOIN US AT THE PREMIER EDUCATION EVENT OF THE YEAR!



The 2021 Festival of Education will take place online across two inspiring weeks and will be free for educators across the globe.



# #EDUCATIONFEST

[educationfest.co.uk](http://educationfest.co.uk)

FESTIVAL PARTNERS

LITERARY FESTIVAL PARTNER



BLOOMSBURY EDUCATION

# UCAS glitch: 'the icing on a very difficult 18 months'

**BILLY CAMDEN**  
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Exclusive

Tens of thousands of students faced more stress this week as a glitch in UCAS's system automatically rejected their university offers.

Around 100,000 learners had until midnight on Thursday (June 10) to make their decisions through the admissions service's portal.

But as many as one in five received emails from UCAS in the early hours of this morning telling them that their offers were lost.

UCAS tweeted at 8.36am on Thursday to assure students the issue was an "error" and that their IT team was working "urgently" to fix the issue.

But it was met by a barrage of complaints from anxious learners and parents. A-level grades are being awarded through teacher-assessed grades this year, rather than normal exams, owing to multiple lockdowns caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Richard Hiding tweeted: "One very stressed daughter, email received at 1am telling her that all her offers were lost. The icing on a very difficult 18 months."

Another user called Laila said: "This has caused so much stress. It is very unprofessional to post on Twitter without sending an email at least. What if other undergraduate/postgraduate students do not have a Twitter account? My daughter has been unbelievably stressed and is not doing OK since the morning!!!"

## "A small percentage of those due to make their decisions today were automatically declined earlier this morning"

While another, Atif, added: "This gave us a near heart attack this morning as we were shocked at seeing all our offers getting auto-declined whereas the deadline is midnight of 10 June."

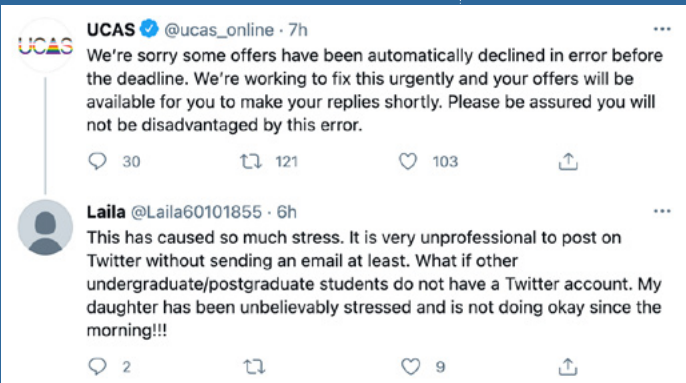
Chief operations officer for UCAS,

Sander Kristel, initially told FE Week that only a "small percentage" of the 100,000 university-hopefuls had been affected, before clarifying this amounted to around 20,000.

He said the issue was fixed by 9.30am and apologised to those affected, insisting that no student will be disadvantaged by the error.

"Unfortunately, a small percentage of those due to make their decisions today were automatically declined earlier this morning due to a systems error," he said.

"We have apologised to all affected students and reiterated that our teams are available on the telephone lines and social media to provide support and advice as students make their decisions today."



UCAS's tweet about the glitch

**APPRENTICESHIPS**  
by **Active IQ**

PARTNERING WITH YOU FOR YOUR  
*End-point Assessment needs*

- HIGH-QUALITY RESOURCES
- 17 END-POINT ASSESSMENT STANDARDS
- OVER 15 YEARS' EXPERIENCE AS A RECOGNISED AO\*
- 48 HOURS TO BE APPROVED
- OVER 90 APPRENTICESHIP PROVIDERS
- COMPLIMENTARY RECOGNISED QUALIFICATIONS
- GUARANTEE OF EXPERT ASSESSORS

\*Awarding organisation

To find out more, visit our website [www.activeiq.co.uk](http://www.activeiq.co.uk) or email [apprenticeships@activeiq.co.uk](mailto:apprenticeships@activeiq.co.uk) and quote 'EPAJUN2021'

T 01480 467 950, option 7  
#beginwithbetter

activeiq.co.uk

# Colleges must share sexual abuse records for future Ofsted inspections

**BILLY CAMDEN**

**BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK**

Colleges will have to share their records and analysis of sexual abuse when Ofsted comes knocking in the future.

Inspectors will also speak to students about such issues after the watchdog admitted its inspections do not yet “sufficiently assess” the extent of sexual harassment in schools and colleges.

The new rules follow a rapid review ordered by the Department for Education in response to allegations of abuse shared on the Everyone’s Invited website.

Ofsted’s inspectors visited 30 schools and two colleges and spoke to over 900 young people in April and May about the prevalence of sexual harassment, finding that “many” teachers and leaders “consistently underestimate the scale of these problems”.

They “either didn’t identify sexual harassment and sexualised language as significant problems, they didn’t treat them seriously, or they were unaware they were happening”, according to the report.

The watchdog also reviewed the evidence bases for 93 inspections and found their own inspectors are failing to identify or follow up on the issues.

It notes how schools have a requirement for leaders to provide records and analysis of sexual violence and sexual harassment, including online, but this is not currently in the FE and skills inspection handbook.

Ofsted has promised to amend this. “In future, on notification of college inspections, leaders will be asked to supply this information to inspectors. Inspectors will also be mandated to follow this up with college leaders,” today’s report said.

They also found that talking to single-sex groups of learners was an “effective way to gather evidence about sexual harassment and violence”.

As a result, Ofsted will “make it explicit” to inspectors they should do this during future inspections wherever possible.



“This will help inspectors to understand how a school’s or college’s approach to tackling sexual harassment and sexual violence, including online, is working”, the review added.

In addition, from September onwards, the inspectorate will “produce and jointly deliver further training on inspecting safeguarding in education settings, including looking at issues of peer-on-peer sexual abuse”.

Association of Colleges chief executive David Hughes responded positively to the new rules, insisting that colleges “want to do their bit to stamp out sexual abuse in our society”.

“Colleges work hard to create a safe environment for students to thrive in and will do whatever it takes to help eliminate sexual abuse and harassment. If that includes sharing data with Ofsted inspectors, then that is what they’ll do,” he said.

“We will support Ofsted to get the detail right on this – what is asked, how it’s used and how context is taken into account.”

Ofsted’s report warns that sexual harassment, including online sexual abuse, has become “normalised”.

Around nine in ten of the girls to whom inspectors spoke said sexist name-calling and being sent unwanted explicit pictures or videos happened ‘a lot’ or ‘sometimes’. Inspectors were also told that boys talk about whose ‘nudes’ they have and share them among themselves like a ‘collection game’, typically on platforms such as WhatsApp or Snapchat.

Ofsted’s report does admit that the findings

are “not fully representative” of schools or colleges across England, but says the issues are “so widespread that they need addressing for all children and young people”.

Chief inspector Amanda Spielman said the review “shocked” her. “It’s alarming that many children and young people, particularly girls, feel they have to accept sexual harassment as part of growing up.

“This is a cultural issue; it’s about attitudes and behaviours becoming normalised, and schools and colleges can’t solve that by themselves. The government needs to look at online bullying and abuse, and the ease with which children can access pornography.”

In response, the Department for Education said that its upcoming Online Safety Bill will enshrine in law a “ground-breaking” new system of accountability and oversight of tech companies, where firms will need to “prevent children from accessing inappropriate content, such as pornography, and online bullying”.

The government also said it will encourage school and college leaders to dedicate inset day time to help train staff on how to deal with sexual abuse and harassment, and promised to introduce “strengthened safeguarding guidance to boost teacher confidence in identifying and responding to these issues”.

Ofsted recommends that school and college leaders should “develop a culture where all kinds of sexual harassment are recognised and addressed, including with sanctions when appropriate”.

# Applications open for new £18m higher technical qualifications expansion fund

**BILLY CAMDEN**

**BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK**

Colleges and universities are being invited to bid for a slice of a new £18 million fund to expand their higher technical qualifications (HTQs) offering.

The Growth Fund has been set up to help providers invest in equipment and develop the business links they need to offer training at levels 4 and 5 in sectors with growing employer demand, such as digital, construction, health and science.

Applications can be made from today and will need to be submitted within four weeks, by July 9.

It is being funded from the National Skills Fund, of which £50 million was earmarked for "capital investment to drive up higher technical provision" in the November spending review.

## "Free to access and will support people to rapidly reskill or upskill to meet local economic needs"

The Growth Fund follows a review of higher technical education concluded by the government in July 2020.

Ministers have since pledged to introduce newly approved HTQs from September 2022, supported by a government-backed brand and quality mark.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education will shortly announce the first successful digital HTQs. Awarding



bodies will be invited to submit HTQs for approval against employer-led occupational standards in construction, and health and science on July 5.

This will be followed in 2022 by business and administration; education and childcare; engineering and manufacturing; and legal, finance and accounting. The year after will involve agriculture, environmental and animal care; catering and hospitality; creative and design; and hair and beauty.

As well as the Growth Fund, the DfE has today announced £10 million for Institutes of Technology to develop and deliver higher technical short and modular courses in STEM disciplines like engineering, manufacturing, construction and digital.

Aimed at working adults, these courses, which will be available from autumn 2021, will be "free to access and will support people to rapidly reskill or upskill to meet local economic needs".

Another £2 million has been set aside for a project led by The High Value

Manufacturing Catapult, an organisation that "supports businesses to harness innovation".

Working with IoTs, the company will "support the development and delivery of modular training focused on upskilling employees to help address future skills gaps in high-value manufacturing".

The new suite of HTQs is planned to be a natural progression route for young people taking new T Levels or A-levels.

Education secretary Gavin Williamson said: "Investment in higher technical skills will support more people to secure exciting and rewarding careers, fill skills gaps in our economy and help us build back better from the pandemic.

"We also want to counter the myth that a degree is the only way to a good job. This funding will help open up more high-quality training alternatives for people, empowering them to get the skills they need to build the life they want, wherever they live."

# Two more struggling UTCs join multi-academy trusts

FRASER WHIELDON  
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Exclusive

Another two university technical colleges are being absorbed into multi-academy trusts and expanding their age ranges after facing possible financial ruin amid recruitment struggles.

A financial notice to improve issued last month to Health Futures UTC instructed it to join a "strong" MAT by September after the government became concerned about its "weak financial position and management".

Meanwhile, Greater Peterborough UTC (GPUTC) announced this week it will join Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust in June and will extend its starting age to 11 from September.

Health Futures, which opened in 2015, has remained tight-lipped about which MAT it will join, but West Midlands-based Shireland Collegiate Multi Academy Trust confirmed it had held "exploratory talks" with the West Bromwich-based UTC without having discussed anything formally.

Another candidate is the trust run by its lead partner, the University of Wolverhampton. The university declined to comment on which MAT the UTC will join.

Both UTCs have faced problems recruiting enough students to meet capacity, with the latest government statistics showing Health Futures has 160 students against a capacity of 600, while GPUTC has 224 against 500.

The 2020 accounts for Health Futures UTC warns "low student numbers" are its principal risk, after the college, which specialises in healthcare and science for 14- to 19-year-



Health Futures UTC

olds, ended the financial year with a loss of £593,555.

The Ofsted grade three college also owed the Education and Skills Funding Agency £458,845 and its accounts say it is depending on the agency not asking for that cash back if it is to have enough money to meet its liabilities over the next year.

It is also receiving "additional financial support" from the agency.

Were the government to demand its money back and discontinue that support, this would cast "significant doubt" on the college's ability to continue as a going concern, the accounts say.

Board member Michelle Shaw, director of education for the university, said Health Futures joining a MAT will "help ensure its ongoing viability".

She said the college had complied with all the demands of the notice to improve, which included submitting certain financial information, boosting the number of board members and asking the ESFA for permission to make certain transactions.

The additional support had been provided, she explained, "to ensure that operating costs can be met during this time of low student numbers. The student number situation will be remedied once the UTC has joined the new MAT."

GPUTC's financial statements for 2019/20 reveal that, in addition to having generated a "significant" deficit, the ESFA was also clawing back £234,730 after the college did not recruit enough students for the 2019/20 academic year.

They add that the trustees consider that the

UTC will "not have sufficient resources to continue for the foreseeable future".

Principal David Bisley said the UTC had "doubled the number of students on the roll over the past three years.

"With the support of Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust, our superb offer to students and the strong school community we have developed, we are confident we will reach our target of being fully subscribed by the 2022/23 academic year."

FE Week reported in March 2020 the grade three college, which opened in 2016, had dropped its age range from 14-19 to 13, as part of a growing trend in UTCs admitting broader age ranges to improve their enrolment.

Simon Connell, chief executive of the UTC licensing body the Baker-Dearing Trust, previously told this newspaper changing entry age could be a "pragmatic solution" for colleges with low rolls which need to up their capacity "significantly".

Joining an MAT has also become a common option for struggling UTCs in recent years. It is a move favoured by ministers and, despite initially resisting it, the Baker Dearing Trust began to encourage the process in 2019 to enable the colleges to survive.

When Health Futures' and GPUTC's moves go ahead, 28 of the 48 currently open UTCs (58 per cent) will be run by MATs.

Schools system minister Baroness Berridge told the Commons education select committee in April the government hoped to have a "strong sustainable group of UTCs" by the autumn, and to have "worked through any of the issues that are remaining".



David Bisley, GPUTC Principal; Missy Welch (Yr 12 student); Martin Campbell, Executive Principal CMAT; Faizaan Chaudhry (Yr 13 student)

News

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
CONTACT US NEWS@FEWEEK.CO.UK

# ITPs will be included in catch-up plans, DfE confirms

FRASER WHIELDON  
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Independent training providers can rest assured they will be eligible for the government's latest catch-up funding, it has been confirmed.

The Department for Education last week announced £1.4 billion for extra tuition, teacher training and additional years in education to help students whose learning has suffered due to Covid-19.

This included £222 million to expand the 16-to-19 Tuition Fund, which will deliver extra tuition for students, specifically focusing on English and maths as well as vocational courses.

Additionally, providers will also be funded to offer students in year 13 the option to repeat the year "if they have been particularly badly affected by the pandemic".

When the support measures were announced last week, there was initially concern as to whether independent providers would be in-scope to benefit alongside schools and colleges.

The press release sent out by the DfE said the funding would only apply to "schools, colleges and early-years providers in England".

FE Week has now had it confirmed by the DfE that independent training providers will also be eligible.

Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive Jane Hickie said her organisation was "very pleased" with the clarification.

The AELP had recommended to the education recovery commissioner Sir Kevan Collins that "no young person should be excluded from any form of government catch-up support based on where they chose to access their educational entitlement," she said.

Over 100 independent providers have direct

16-to-19 contracts and were already utilising the £96 million the government committed to the 16-to-19 Tuition Fund last July.

Allowing them to access this second tranche, Hickie said, "will enable continuity and support young people who most need it".

The extra tuition can be delivered one-to-one or in small groups for disadvantaged students on 16-to-19 study programmes if their learning has been disrupted because of coronavirus.

Providers in the first wave of the 16-to-19 Tuition Fund spent their allocations on hiring extra tutoring and pastoral staff, as well as mental health support for students.

While ITPs have welcomed the funding, the Covid catch-up announcement caused Sir Kevan Collins to resign. He told prime minister Boris Johnson in his resignation letter the amount of money "falls far short of what is needed".

Collins was reported to have called for spending of around £15 billion.

## INVEST IN THE FUTURE

Digital IT apprenticeships are the rewarding way to build a talented, progressive digital team. BCS is the end-point assessment organisation and trusted industry body partner already chosen to assess over **20,000** apprenticeships across software, infrastructure, network engineering, cyber, data and business analysis, digital marketing and IT sales. We'll also support apprentices on their continuing professional journey with BCS membership and RITTech registration.

### BUILDING BUSINESS FUTURE



Sponsoring Digital Apprenticeship provider of the year



DIGITAL IT APPRENTICESHIPS

Find out more at [bcs.org/digital-it-apprenticeships](https://bcs.org/digital-it-apprenticeships)

# Queen's Birthday Honours 2021: Who received what in FE?

**FRASER WHIELDON**  
**FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK**

The next FE commissioner and the author of the landmark post-18 education review are among those receiving gongs in this year's Queen's birthday honours list.

Included in the awards for almost 20 people from the FE and skills sector is a knighthood for Philip Augar and a CBE for Chichester College Group principal Shelagh Legrave.

Augar, a former banker, was appointed in 2018 to lead the 'Review of Post-18 Education and Funding' which reported in 2019 and has since had many of its recommendations taken forward such as a lifelong loan entitlement and handing Ofsted the power to inspect all apprenticeships.

Augar, the list explains, is being recognised for services to higher and further education policy and he said he had been "privileged to chair an outstanding panel" with support from "dedicated" officials.

"This honour reflects their efforts and I hope that the report we produced will remain of value to everyone involved in the sector."

There is also a damehood for the scourge of the Department for Education, Commons Public Accounts Committee chair Meg Hillier.

Hillier called it a "huge honour," but: "Holding the government to account is a joint endeavour and I can't do my job without the support of the committee."

Chichester College Group principal Shelagh Legrave, who is due to become the new FE Commissioner in October, has been made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE).

The Ofsted grade one college leader called it an "unexpected honour" and felt especially privileged after already being made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 2015.

"I absolutely love my job and to be recognised for doing something I love is extraordinary.

"I can't quite put into words how it feels. I am simply thrilled."

Also being made CBEs are outgoing Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education chair Antony Jenkins and London South East Colleges leader Sam Parrett

Parrett.



Parrett, who has led the group since it was created in 2016 after running Bromley College since 2010, said she was "overwhelmed" to be recognised, and it had come as a "complete surprise" for which she was "incredibly grateful".

The gong "reflects the huge amount of work and dedication many people have put in over the past few years," she said, after having received an OBE in 2017.

Jenkins, a former Barclays group chief executive who is leaving the role next month after starting out as IfATE's shadow chair in 2016 before it officially launched the following year, said he is "delighted and humbled by this recognition," and was "proud of the work we have done together".

South and City College Birmingham principal Mike Hopkins, East Coast College principal Stuart Rimmer, and Workpays chief executive Helen Richardson have been made Members of the

Order of the British Empire (MBE).

Rimmer, who became the college's first principal in 2017 after a merger between Great Yarmouth College, Lowestoft College and Lowestoft Sixth Form, called it a "great honour," but said: "Leading a college is a privilege and very much a team effort.

"I am fortunate to work with some amazing staff who positively impact our students every day."

"Humbled and honoured," was how Hopkins described his reaction, "as I have never sought any such personal recognition, I have simply done the best I can throughout my career".

He was born and educated in the city, and took over what was then South Birmingham College in 2007, before it consumed City College and Bournville College.

He credited the MBE to his staff, but he said his college, the largest in its region, had "still a lot to do, especially with the aftermath of the pandemic".

Richardson was honoured for services to young people, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, after her provider delivered laptops and WiFi access for its learners, while also hand delivering work to their homes.

"I was really surprised to receive the honour and clearly very excited," she said.

"The whole team has worked even harder than usual to continue to deliver to young people during Covid."

## 2021 Queen's birthday honours list – FE and skills recipients

Name	Role	Honour
Philip Augar	Lately Chair, Post-18 Education and Funding Review	Knighthood
Margaret Olivia Hillier MP	Chair, Commons Public Accounts Committee	Dame
Kate Margaret Josephs	Former Director, Funding Directorate, ESFA	CB
Antony Peter Jenkins	Chair, Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education	CBE
Shelagh Jane Legrave OBE	Chief executive, Chichester College Group	CBE
Dr Helen Samantha Parrett	Chief executive and executive principal, London South East Education Group	CBE
Claudia Lindsay Harris	Lately Chief Executive Officer, The Careers and Enterprise Company	OBE
Gurveer Dhani	Senior Private Secretary to the Secretary Of State For Education	MBE
Catherine Dutton	Chair, Kendal College	MBE
Martyn Featherstone	Lecturer, The Northern School of Art	MBE
Michael John Hopkins	Principal, South and City College	MBE
William Christopher Radcliffe Husband	Vocational Qualifications Officer, Devon Army Cadet Force	MBE
Gareth Mansel Jenkins	Executive chairperson, FSG Tool and Die Holdings Ltd	MBE
Shivarubeni Mahathevan	Curriculum Manager and Tutor, Redbridge Institute of Adult Education	MBE
Helen Kathryn Richardson	Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Workpays Ltd	MBE
Stuart Rimmer	Principal, East Coast College	MBE
Brenda McCutcheon	Sewing Teacher, Newcastle Adult Education	BEM



**AELP'S FLAGSHIP NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR MEMBERS AND THE BROADER SKILLS SECTOR!**

**Didn't catch the conference?**

All session recordings and slides will be available from Monday 14th June!

**THANK YOU!**  
**TO OUR SPONSORS AND EXHIBITORS**

Registration Sponsor



Premium exhibitor and workshop sponsor



Media Partner



Exhibitors



Workshop Sponsor



The AELP National Conference 2021, held online between Monday 7th and Thursday 10th June, hosted a mix of high level, informative keynote plenaries followed by expert roundtables and over 30 workshops, across the four action packed days! Watch out for coverage of the main hot topics in Countdown and FE Week where we'll be highlighting the key messages and helping members to translate policy into practice.

We would like to thank our Headline Sponsors, Learning Curve Group and NOCN, for their support. Thanks also to all key note and roundtable speakers, workshop facilitators, and our premium and exhibition sponsors who all contributed to making the event a great success.

[aelpnationalconference.org.uk](http://aelpnationalconference.org.uk)



KEYNOTES



ROUNDTABLES



WORKSHOPS





## AELP NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

## DfE promises Baker Clause consultation

**FRASER WHIELDON**  
**FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK**

The government has promised to run a consultation on the Baker Clause, as concerns about non-compliance with the legal requirement mount.

A Department for Education spokesperson has told FE Week it plans to launch the exercise in the summer to gather feedback on proposals to strengthen the legislation.

Yet the penalties that schools could face might not go as far as some would like, after Ofsted's head of FE insisted that non-compliance should not be a "determining factor" of inspection grades, as some have called for.

The clause was authored by former education secretary Lord Kenneth Baker and made into law in 2018. It mandates schools and colleges to allow other training providers access to their learners to inform them of technical qualifications or apprenticeships.

A DfE spokesperson told FE Week this week more details on the consultation "will be released in due course," calling it "vital that young people are informed about the wide range of options for them to reach their future careers goals".

Non-compliance with the clause has become a widespread problem in the education sector, with research by UCAS revealing last month that one-third of students are not told about apprenticeships.

Data from the Careers and Enterprise Company from November showed just 47 per cent of the more than 2,000 schools in the quango's careers

hubs fully met a target for a "meaningful encounter with providers of the full range of learning opportunities" for students. For those schools not in the hub network, 13 per cent met the target.

Speaking at the Association of Employment and Learning Providers this week, the careers quango's chief executive Oli de Botton admitted it was "true historically that there hasn't been enough access for independent training providers or enough information about apprenticeships and technical routes for young people".

The DfE's Skills for Jobs white paper, published in January, set out a plan to amplify enforcement of the clause.

This included a new minimum requirement about who is given access to which pupils and when, "tougher" formal action against schools that do not comply, and making government-funded careers support for schools conditional on compliance.

The government has also pledged to lower the minimum age schools must provide independent careers guidance to students, from age 12 to 11.

In addition to updated guidance on expectations, the white paper also revealed Ofsted will conduct a thematic review of careers guidance in schools.

Up until now, the government and its agencies have made minimal attempts to enforce the clause, despite it being a legal requirement. Sector leaders have labelled it as the "clause law without teeth".

To date, non-compliant schools have only received letters telling them to comply.

In May 2020, Ofsted judged a secondary school to be 'inadequate' partly because it was "not currently meeting its statutory responsibility to ensure that providers of technical qualifications and apprenticeships visit the school to inform pupils about these options". FE Week understood this was the first case of a school being pulled up by the inspectorate for failing the Baker Clause.

Yet, speaking at the AELP conference, Ofsted's deputy director for FE and skills Paul Joyce threw cold water on the watchdog capping grades based on compliance with the clause. "Limiting grades is not always the best way to go, and

careers advice and guidance, although really, really important in my view, should not be the sole determining factor of what grade the school actually gets.

"It's much, much better for us to report what we actually see and to call out practice where schools are not complying with the Baker Clause."

de Botton did tell conference delegates the CEC had heard from the schools and colleges that "they are providing more and more access to ITPs, more and more compliance with the Baker Clause".



Kenneth Baker

## AELP NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

# Keegan stands firm on keeping levy funding for apprenticeships

BILLY CAMDEN

BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The skills minister has restated her stance that apprenticeship levy funding should only be used for apprenticeships, insisting it has proven to be the best way to build a “solid” skills pipeline.

Gillian Keegan’s comments, made on the second day of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers national conference, deals a blow to the hopes of organisations like the Confederation of British Industry to fund a wider array of training with the levy.

The minister said her stance on the levy was born out of the “madness” of organisations recruiting people and building “skills pipelines” from other countries, instead of using home-grown talent.

**“We have largely relied on either those skills or bringing in global talent to fulfil many of our skills gaps”**

“When I look at what the apprenticeship levy has actually done,” she told delegates, “it has forced a shift in how employers work with the Department for Education and training providers to build the skills pipeline”.

She said the sector and government had “lost focus” on that, compared to 20 or 30 years ago, due to “lots of global movements, lots of talents available from other countries”.

Recalling her time as a governor of an NHS trust, Keegan said managers had found the supply of nurses from Portugal and Spain had been depleted, so they were building a pipeline



Gillian Keegan

for skilled people from the Philippines.

This was “madness,” the minister said, and reflected how: “We have largely relied on either those skills or bringing in global talent to fulfil many of our skills gaps, and this is simply not going to work.”

But with the coronavirus pandemic and global talent shortages that approach “isn’t going to work, so we have to build really solid skills pipelines in this country, and we owe that actually also to the people of this country to do that”.

The levy gives employers two years to put a programme in place or work with their supply chain or local community to transfer funding, she explained.

Chancellor of the exchequer Rishi Sunak announced at his spending review in November that employers will be able to transfer levy funds in “bulk” to small-to-medium enterprises.

The government is also offering incentive payments of £3,000 for employers to take on apprentices, until this September.

The reforms brought about by the levy had,

Keegan argued, led to a situation where now “we have 7,500 starts on nursing apprenticeships at all kinds of different levels. That change came about because the levy was there – it kind of annoyed everybody into action in a way.”

While the minister wants to “work with the industry to overcome any barriers,” she believes: “We’ve got to be forced to be strategic sometimes, and I think if I’m honest, that’s how I feel about the apprenticeship levy.”

The CBI had, as recently as last October, told the government to end the “failed experiment” of the apprenticeship levy.

Following multiple calls for reforms and relaxations of the levy, the confederation’s Learning for Life: funding a world-class adult education system report said the levy should be turned into a “flexible skills and training levy”, which can be used for short modular courses, pre-apprenticeship programmes, product training, professional courses and soft skills training.

## AELP NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

# Halfon: Government should fund apprentice wages for SMEs

BILLY CAMDEN

BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The government should pay apprentice wages and fund their full cost of training “for at least a year” if they work for a small or medium-sized employer (SME), an influential MP has said.

Robert Halfon, chair of the education select committee and a former skills minister, believes the chancellor’s extra investment for apprentice incentives and Kickstart programmes should not have “been given so much to the bigger companies”.

Speaking at this week’s Association of Employment and Learning Providers conference, Halfon said it would have been better targeted at smaller firms and went as far as to call for their apprentices’ wages to be funded.

It echoes a policy proposed by Labour, which wants unspent apprenticeship levy funding to subsidise apprentice wages.

Halfon said: “The number of apprenticeship starts has fallen steadily among all age groups since 2015/16, from 509,000 to 323,000 in 2019/20. That’s an overall decline of 37 per cent. This fall was particularly acute for the most disadvantaged young people aged under 25, who fell by 52 per cent.

“So, to support SMEs, we should fund 100 per cent of training costs and salary, at least for the first year of an apprenticeship.”

He added that government should “try and ensure” that every person is given an “apprenticeship guarantee” and “strategically weigh the levy in favour of young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to address the rising unemployment figures in this age group”.

Under chancellor Rishi Sunak’s plan for jobs, the government has offered apprentice incentive



Robert Halfon

payments to all employers since August. The cash bonuses for starting new apprentices currently amount to £3,000 for any age at any employer.

Sunak is also investing £2 billion in Kickstart – a wage-subsidy scheme that allows people aged 16 to 24 who are claiming Universal Credit to take newly created six-month work placements with employers, who will also have their overheads covered.

Kickstart grants for employers can total £6,500.

Expanding on his call for apprentice wage subsidy for SMEs in a Q&A after his speech, Halfon said: “The money that government has given towards apprenticeships and Kickstart is going to every company whether they’re big or small.

“And I think, they perhaps should not have given so much to the bigger companies and given that money to smaller companies.

You’ll be able to give those companies more money than the existing schemes, and I think that would have been a bigger incentive for those smaller companies to employ young people and employ apprentices.

“I talked about an apprenticeship guarantee and I think if you gave

that incentive to small businesses to do this I think it would make a huge difference. Huge difference. And I suspect that it would be very successful, and they would be able to employ a lot more apprentices than they otherwise might do.”

But the idea of wage subsidy was not met with enthusiasm by the Education and Skills Funding Agency’s director of apprenticeships Peter Mucklow, who also spoke at the conference.

He said: “One of the most important things we can do for SMEs is to give them assurance around the availability of funding. That’s what we sought to do very much for this year, enabling SMEs to reserve funding for up to ten new starts. And it’s also about confidence for the long term.

“I think we have to differentiate between necessary actions that we’re taking for the transitional system, where employers are incentivised to employ apprentices by the benefits they get, rather than necessarily by attracting wage subsidies.

“The levy itself has been designed to very specifically support apprenticeships and to support the education and training costs in apprenticeships rather than the wage cost.”



Peter Mucklow

AELP NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Careers and Enterprise Company launches support for private providers

FRASER WHIELDON  
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The government’s careers quango has unveiled plans for a host of new support measures for independent training providers delivering careers guidance.

The Careers and Enterprise Company, working with the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, has published a guide to young peoples’ career and training options and later this month WILL start hosting webinars on the subject.

Speaking at the AELP national conference this week, the organisation’s chief executive Oli de Botton said the resources “can help those working on careers in ITPs to help young people find their next step after their apprenticeship or traineeship or whatever”.

The guide, titled What’s Next? A Technical Education Pathways Resource, is available as a PDF from AELP’s and Ufi VocTech Trust’s

SectorShare website.

It provides information on such courses as traineeships and apprenticeships, on the English and maths condition of funding rule, and on financial support for learners, including those with special education needs and disabilities.

The webinar series is set to start on June 28 and the first broadcast will cover the resource and hear from a CEC career leader who is based at an independent training provider. The career leaders are staff members trained to evaluate and improve their provider’s careers programme.

Future webinars will look at helping schools understand how to work with students on pathways with ITPs.

CEC launched in 2014 but has predominantly focused its efforts on schools and colleges.

Nicola Hall, the CEC’s director of education, said the CEC “has always known how important ITPs are. But we want to keep doing more, both to help teachers understand as much as possible about training provider options, as well as to support providers to deliver good careers education to the

young people they support.

“That’s why we’re working closely with the AELP and have created a training provider focus group, to tailor this work and draw on their expertise.

“We will continue to support parity of esteem between the different pathways a young person can take, and this piece of work to support schools, colleges and training providers to achieve this builds on the work we are already doing.”

AELP chief executive Jane Hickie said the organisations behind this “really useful” initiative “have worked hard to make the new resource available as soon as possible after the publication of the FE white paper”, earlier this year.

“It will be really useful to have the resource at one’s fingertips when so many young people are worried about their future as we come out of the pandemic.”

More details on the support being put together by the CEC for ITPs will be revealed once funding from the government has been agreed.

# Easy, efficient enrolment.

With our brand-new platform, **Enrol**, the entire enrolment process is quick, easy and remote.

Spend less money on travel, less time on admin and keep up to date with all your applicants.

Find out more at [www.onefile.co.uk/enrol](http://www.onefile.co.uk/enrol)



0161 638 3876  
hello@onefile.co.uk

Proud sponsors of



# Universal credit rules hold people back from training, warns AoC

**BILLY CAMDEN**

**BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK**

Universal Credit rules are excluding people from training and must be scrapped if the government is serious about its levelling-up agenda, according to a new report.

The Association of Colleges this week accused policymakers of creating an "education vs work" divide.

In a report titled *Let Them Learn: further education colleges' support for the unemployed* the membership body warned that those receiving universal credit have obligations to prioritise job searches and take available jobs if able to do so.

This means that they "may be employed in the short term, but are prevented from developing skills that would allow them to get into better-quality, more stable, better paid employment over the longer term".

In addition, the length of time that people can continue receiving Universal Credit (UC) while undertaking work-focused study has been capped at eight weeks. The government announced recently that it would pilot an extension of this to 12 weeks for full-time study, or up to 16 weeks on a skills bootcamp in England.

AoC chief executive David Hughes said the rules mean that those most likely to benefit would have to give up financial support to train and learn, and with no access to other maintenance support would likely have to forgo any chances of reskilling in order to live, eat and pay bills.

Government statistics show there were 2.6 million seeking either Universal Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance in April 2021, compared to 1.4 million in March 2020, before the first Covid-19 lockdown.

The AoC's report said government is rightly talking about the importance of training and retraining to support people and employers following the pandemic, with investment in traineeships, apprenticeships and Kickstart.

But there "seems to be a mismatch between the levelling-up agenda and the employment



and jobs strategy".

The report called for reform to universal credit rules and for every unemployed person to receive financial support for a course at college "when they need it, to get into good local jobs, no matter their starting point and with no impact on their benefits".

Also on the list of recommendations was an extension to the new level 3 adult offer under the lifetime skills guarantee, so that it is open to everyone, not just those without any existing level 3 qualifications.

In addition, the AoC wants partnerships with JobCentre Plus to be embedded in new local skills improvement plans mooted in the FE white paper and Skills Bill, which gets its second reading in the House of Lords next week.

Hughes said: "We need a coherent system that spans education and welfare and works for those at risk of long-term unemployment. If we don't, we risk leaving people behind in efforts to boost sought-after skills for employers and help combat the impact of the pandemic on jobs and the economy."

Senior researcher and policy analyst at Resolution Foundation, Kathleen Henehan added: "A clear and joined-up national

strategy is needed, with serious consideration given to removing unhelpful barriers that prevent people from accessing opportunities to learn and train."

A government spokesperson said: "Universal Credit is designed to help people into work, and every claimant receives tailored support from their work coach, including help to build new skills, with recent changes made to enable claimants to take part in full-time training for longer."

"In addition, our multi-billion-pound Plan for Jobs is helping people train and find new opportunities as we push to build back better."

The government added that UC is not designed for those in full-time education, but there are some exceptions, including those caring for a child and being in receipt of a disability-related benefit.

UC claimants can also have a "permitted period where a claimant may be allowed to restrict their job search to their previous or qualified job goal, if their work coach deems that there is a reasonable prospect of them securing employment in this field".



# JOB VACANCIES

Derwentside College is one of the top performing Colleges in the Country for its student achievement and satisfaction. With a turnover of £10million, employing 140 staff and running 200+ courses, we are leading the way in delivering a diverse range of services to learners and employers, not only locally but also nationally.

**As a result of our continued outstanding success, the College is now seeking to appoint a number of talented individuals with extensive experience to join our team.**

**Current opportunities:**

- Training Consultant in Health & Social Care (3 posts delivering in the North East and 1 National - location flexible)
- Training Consultant in Professional Business Services (North East Based)
- Training Consultant in Hospitality & Catering (North East Based)
- Lecturer in Health & Social Care (North East Based)
- Business Development Consultant (North East Based)
- Recruitment and Engagement Officer (North East Based)



The College is positively committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children, young people and vulnerable adults who attend its education and training provision. All staff are expected to share this commitment. The successful candidates will be required to obtain a satisfactory DBS Enhanced Disclosure.

As an equal opportunities employer, the College welcomes applicants from all sections of the community.

**Further information on each of the above posts, along with details on how to apply can be found on our website [www.derwentside.ac.uk/job-vacancies](http://www.derwentside.ac.uk/job-vacancies)**  
 Derwentside College, Front Street, Consett, County Durham, DH8 5EE



A merger between Uxbridge College and Harrow College

## Section Manager - ESOL: Adult & Commercial

Hayes Campus

Salary in the range of £40,588 - £44,165 per annum including London Weighting

The School of English Language Teaching Foundation Studies (ELTFS) provides full and part time general courses for adults and young learners.

As one of two Section Managers you would primarily be responsible for the School's adult ESOL, Functional Maths, Job Centre Plus and other commercial courses as well as managing a team of lecturers and teaching on a range of programmes.

Applicants must have a relevant degree/professional

qualification, an English Language Teaching qualification and an advanced level teaching qualification recognised by the FE sector. Experience in delivering ESOL courses, good leadership skills and experience of supervising a team in Further Education or a similar setting are essential.

For a full job description and to apply, please visit: **Jobs & Careers at Harrow College and Uxbridge College**

Closing date: **27th June 2021**



## Director of Programmes

Salary: from £55,000 – subject to skills and experience

**A very exciting opportunity to work in the education sector and make a real difference.**

SFCA is the membership organisation for England's sixth form colleges. It supports, champions and strengthens the work of its 116 member institutions through a suite of events, CPD and services.

SFCA seeks to appoint a Director of Programmes, who will play a key role in initiating, developing and delivering a suite of membership activities associated with curriculum, leadership, governance and quality.

Recent experience of a management or leadership role in a 16-19 environment would be an advantage.

Please apply by letter, setting out your experiences and why you think you are suited to this post, as well as a CV, giving two referees. One referee should be your current or most recent employer.

Applications by email to: [info@sixthformcolleges.org.uk](mailto:info@sixthformcolleges.org.uk)



**VICE PRINCIPAL - CURRICULUM**  
**£67,964 - £70,004 per annum.**  
**Relocation support**

As a member of the Strategic Leadership Team, reporting directly to the Principal & Chief Executive, the Vice Principal (Sparsholt campus) will work with senior staff to lead and manage the College to achieve outstanding student success, and will be responsible, in liaison with the Principal, for the formulation and implementation of College Policy in respect of the overall management of the College.

The post holder will be responsible for the direction and management of a large curriculum portfolio on the Sparsholt campus (which will include commercial activities), contributing actively to the design, development and implementation of the College's strategic plan and objectives. The post holder will possess outstanding leadership and management skills and have an in-depth understanding of the post 16 Education offer. In addition, the post-holder will be required to join the designated safeguarding team.

The role will involve working with Governors, Senior Post Holders, the Strategic Leadership Team, College Managers and staff, Government bodies and other external partners and networks.

You will be joining a College which is proud of its reputation for excellence in a number of fields, rated 'Good' by Ofsted and 'Good' for financial health by the ESFA, and which is ambitious for our students' futures.

The position offers a very significant opportunity to join a dynamic leadership team and to develop your senior career pathway within the FE College sector in a high quality and supportive environment.

Relocation support / on-site accommodation available. Further details set out in further information document.

Benefits include: Teachers' Pension Scheme, free car-parking, occupational sick pay, ability to access a range of CPD events and activities.

**Closing date: Noon on 15 June 2021**

**Interview Date: 23 June 2021**

**Application packs are available from:**

**01962 797309**

**<https://www.sparsholt.ac.uk/college/jobs/>**

**[HR@sparsholt.ac.uk](mailto:HR@sparsholt.ac.uk)**

*We are committed to equal opportunities for all, irrespective of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, marital status, religion or sexuality. The college is registered with the Disclosure and Barring Service and the successful applicant will be required to apply for an enhanced disclosure*



Raising Standards. Protecting Homeowners

NHBC has a number of fantastic opportunities for Senior Trainer / Assessors in our Apprenticeship and Industry training teams.

These excellent opportunities are to join our growing Training business who heavily support NHBC's ongoing commitment to providing high quality insights and training to the home building

sector. You will deliver relevant, impactful and engaging training to Site Management, trades (most notably Bricklaying) and supporting teams such as customer service, sales and design.

If you are interested in helping make a real difference to the quality of new homes built in the UK then we may have a role for you.



**To review our current vacancies and apply please click here**

**MOVING FORWARDS WITH THE NEW**  
**EDU WEEK JOBS**

**[educationweekjobs.co.uk](http://educationweekjobs.co.uk)**



**Recruitment and Job Searching made even easier**

In association with  
**SCHOOLS WEEK**  
**FE WEEK**



## Focus: Post-16 mathematics



The Maths Centre for Excellence at City College Plymouth

## Can the Centres for Excellence master the GCSE resit problem?

**JESS STAUFENBERG**  
@STAUFENBERGJ

The Centres for Excellence in Maths are headed into their fourth year. With just two years of funding left, FE Week looks at how it all adds up

"I've been in the sector 20 years, and this is the first big initiative on maths I've seen with FE in the title," says Zia Rahman, head of maths at Newham College in London. His colleague, Liz Hopker, nods. "Prior to this project, there hadn't really been that much about maths in FE – mastery had been mainly about schools."

The initiative they're talking about, the Centres for Excellence in Maths (CFEM), was launched by the Department for Education in 2018. Schools already had 'maths hubs', maths mastery was a big topic, and there were even paid trips to Shanghai. But specific initiatives for post-16 maths seemed to have been forgotten.

It was not for a lack of trying over the preceding two decades. Various attempts had been made to shift stubbornly low pass rates in maths GCSE, improve adult numeracy and create more vocationally focused qualifications, explains Andrew Davies. He's vice chair of the National Association for Numeracy and Mathematics in Colleges, which he says was set up precisely because there was so little cross-sector collaboration on maths in FE.

"There's been an awful lot of efforts on maths that have been very well meaning," he begins. "The chief flagship policy in recent years has been the centres, which has given the opportunity to share good practice."

Prior to that, there was the 1999 Moser report, which sounded the alarm on the state of numeracy among adults. Then there was the 2004 Inquiry into Post-14 Mathematics Education, which warned of huge teacher shortages and issues with the curriculum and CPD. It prompted a well-regarded resource

package by the University of Nottingham called Standards Unit – but then again all went quiet.

Then came the "gamechanger" recommendation in the Wolf review in 2011, says Davies. The report warned that less than half of students aged 18 held both maths and English GCSE passes. Worse, only four per cent were achieving them during the 16-18 phase. By 2014, it was a condition of college funding for students without a grade 4 to enrol in maths and English.

But the problems rolled on. Both the Sainsbury review of technical education in 2016 and the Industrial Strategy in 2017 warned of the need to improve maths study. A review of post-16 maths by professor Sir Adrian Smith said the country must "recognise more explicitly...the fundamental importance of further education".

Various initiatives followed, including Maths

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



## Focus: Post-16 mathematics

CONTINUED

for Life, which espouses “dialogic teaching” (encouraging students to discuss). At the same time a level 3 “core maths” qualification arrived in 2014, GCSE maths was reformed in 2015, and functional skills maths was also reformed in 2019.

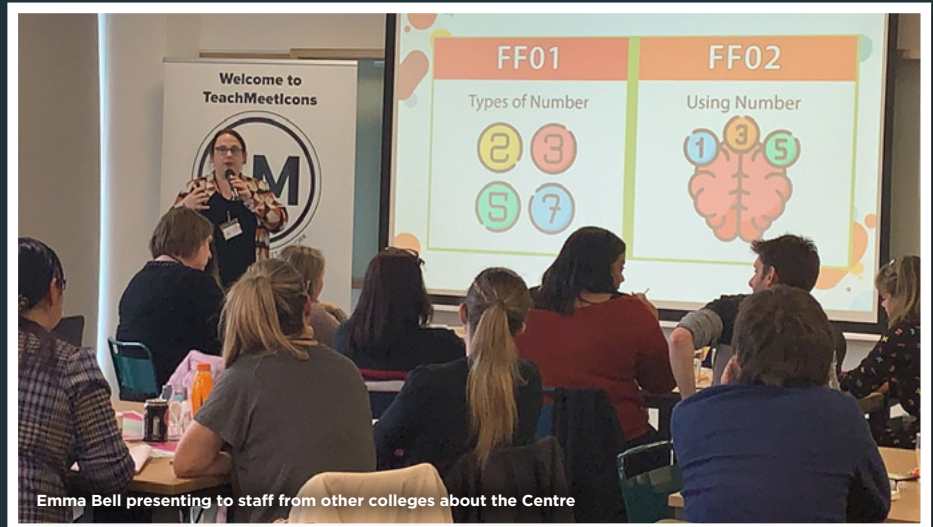
### “Instead of teaching all the GCSE again, we went back to the basics”

Despite all these efforts, data shows less than a quarter of students who arrive without a GCSE grade 4 in maths aged 16 will have achieved this two years later.

So three years ago the government announced £40 million to be shared between 21 colleges, which would act as Centres for Excellence in Maths, working with up to ten partner colleges. The Education and Training Foundation and

#### The 21 'Centres for Excellence in maths'

Stamford College
Leicester College
Cambridge Regional College
Harlow College
Leyton Sixth Form College
Newham College of Further Education
Christ the King Sixth Form College
Gateshead College
Lakes College West Cumbria
Tameside College
Nelson and Colne College
Fareham College
East Kent College
Greater Brighton Metropolitan College
Weston College of Further and Higher Education
City College Plymouth
Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group
Warwickshire College Group
Leeds City College
Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education
Wilberforce College



Emma Bell presenting to staff from other colleges about the Centre

the University of Nottingham got a slice of the funding to support the project.

It wasn't entirely without controversy – as FE Week pointed out at the time, six of the 21 centres actually had below average GCSE resit pass rates. FE Week analysis can also reveal the latest Ofsted reports for seven centres actually highlight concerns around maths attainment. Meanwhile, the colleges with the very best GCSE maths pass rates, such as Dudley College, had not become centres at all.

Perhaps this explains why the CfEM focus is on research. While the equivalent Centres for Excellence in SEND (also overseen by the ETF) disseminate their proven good practice, the maths centres were handed a fact-finding mission. This is two-fold: first, ‘action research projects’ led by staff, and second, national trials on mastery led by Nottingham University. Findings from the latter have been stalled by Covid, and will now come out at the project's finish in 2023.

“It evolved into being research focused,” explains Steve Pardoe, head of the CfEMs at the ETF. “These are centres for excellence, not of excellence. No one would claim to have all the answers. The action research, for instance, has been hugely popular.”

The colleges agree. Running their own research has allowed staff to address one of the first problems facing the sector, explains Hopker – the lack of academic evidence in an FE setting. “We did literature reviews, which did show there was very little on maths in FE,” she says. “Just since doing the action research, there's now already so much more available.”

The centres pitch the projects to the ETF who help refine research questions and methods. Colleges must investigate four areas: motivation and engagement of learners, use of mastery, use of data and technology, and use of contextualisation (in which maths is placed in an applied context). In 2018/19, up to £170,000 was available per centre, and this year, it was up to £210,000.

At Fareham College in Hampshire, staff decided to research motivation by training learning support assistants to become one-to-one maths coaches, providing an extra hour of learning a week. “We did a lot of work around growth mindsets,” says Rosie Sharp, centre lead. “It's about recognising that the students have already done the GCSE once and failed, so more of the same isn't going to work.”

A major issue facing the centre project is that hard attainment data over the past two years has been impossible to get, owing to cancelled exams.

So Sharp's team surveyed the students using questionnaires. Before coaching, 32 per cent reported feeling positive about maths; afterwards, 65 per cent did, she says. Meanwhile attendance at maths lessons has gone from 76 per cent to 82 per cent. The centre has now trained 11 coaches across its six ‘partner’ colleges.

Motivation and ‘contextualisation’ was the focus at City College Plymouth. The college decided to interpret the idea of a “centre” literally, using funding to create a more

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

# Feature

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
CONTACT US NEWS@FEWEEK.CO.UK

## Focus: Post-16 mathematics

CONTINUED

inspiring physical space kitted out with re-purposed tablets, says Nadia McCusker, centre lead. Meanwhile other lessons were held in unusual locations, including orienteering sessions in woodland, or using ratios to mix dyes in hair and beauty workshops. "By taking them out of the traditional environment, we were able to engage them with maths more than usual."

GCSE resit passes rose 20 percentage points in the latest November exam series, to 58 per cent, she adds.

Some of these changes have been inspired by "maths mastery", which is explained in an FE-specific handbook compiled by the ETF and Pearson. Geoffrey Wake, professor at the University of Nottingham, and director of the centre trials, explains. "Slow down, first of all. It's about working out where the student's understanding is, and building it

up, block by block, from there. It's giving students the time to think through the concepts. Not rushing through the curriculum."

This is key for FE maths teachers, who can feel they must squeeze a two-year GCSE course into about 30 weeks, he says. "We're saying, do the fundamentals."

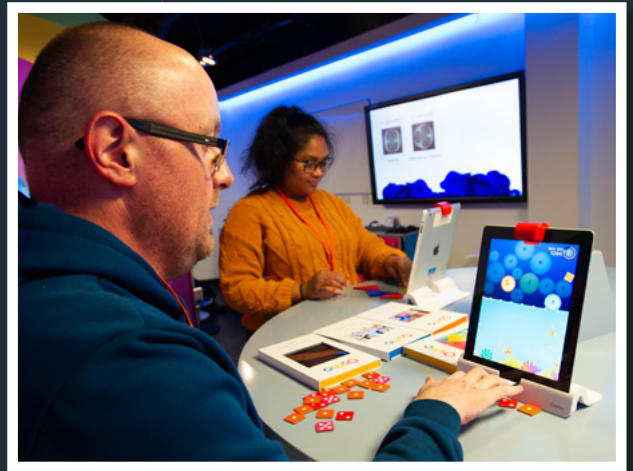
Debra Jory, maths manager at City College Plymouth, says the centre team changed its maths scheme of work to reflect this.

"Instead of teaching all the GCSE again, we went back to the basics. That's also been motivational for students."

At Leicester College, 'network' meetings between centres and their partner colleges have allowed such approaches to spread, says Michelle Bilby, centre lead. Students now use HegartyMaths, an online resource, to learn the basics themselves. This has also allowed the college to halve class sizes, which has improved learning in more complex topics, she adds.

Meanwhile at Leeds City College, the college used centre funding to buy £1,000 annual licences for maths software for its college partners after trialling the software itself. It focuses, mastery-style, on teaching maths in "personalised building blocks", says Jonny Diamond, head of English and maths.

Another approach to maths mastery "with an FE lens", spearheaded by Emma Bell, centre lead at the Grimsby Institute, has even been



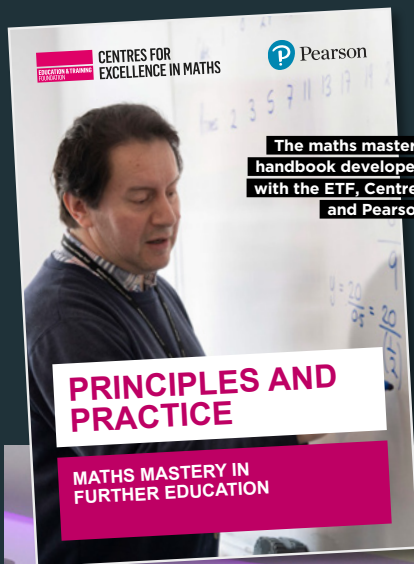
shortlisted for a national award.

But with full attainment data lacking, for now the biggest claim to success is probably the CPD opportunities. "Anything that can allow teachers to collaborate and improve in this area is very welcome," says Julia Smith, a spokesperson for the Mathematical Association. "It can be a very tricky arena to work in. This has raised the profile of post-16 mathematics." Diamond puts it more succinctly. "When maths teachers from Leeds are emailing maths teachers from Shipley, that's great. They're happier when they work."

But big issues remain, which the centres – currently working across 172 colleges – do not directly address. Teacher shortages is one, but several staff warn that the numeracy crisis among adult learners is being overlooked. Others say that similar Centres for Excellence are badly needed in English and digital skills.

However, the most unanimous call from staff and experts is for a closer look at the GCSE itself, and whether it is the right qualification for FE. The government has remained quiet, but Alison Wolf, author of the 2011 review, has stated she doesn't think it should be "compulsory" to do GCSE English and maths. She is looking at alternative curriculums for 16-19 learners, she says.

The CFEMs are a start, building up a much-needed catalogue of ideas. Professor Wake reflects: "It's a project, funded for five years. But we know that embedding what we've learned into the fabric of FE can be really difficult. So, what's the legacy?"



Headline Sponsor



Tuesday, 2 November 2021 | The Midland, Manchester

“The AELP Autumn Conference 2021 will be a fantastic opportunity to assess the skills landscape as we emerge from the pandemic. City & Guilds are proud to be the Headline Sponsor for this event for the next three years. In our on-going role as Patron of AELP we also look forward to being involved in conversations across the sector to examine the opportunities for skills as a major pillar and driving force for our economic recovery”

**David Phillips, Managing Director | City and Guilds / ILM**

# RICHARD LEESE

Chair, City Regions Board, Local Government Association



## A big lesson from the pandemic is the role local government plays

**Councils have had to respond to the collapse of some of their region's biggest employers, writes Richard Leese**

As the vaccine is rolled out and the economy opens up, local government is turning its attention to planning and supporting recovery.

With the powers to work in partnership with national government and others, councils can help well-intended but often disconnected national schemes keep people in work and businesses recruiting.

This is why, working with the Learning and Work Institute and grant management services company Rocket Science, we have produced a dedicated Local Skills and Employment Recovery Hub.

It includes a number of resources to help councils understand and develop their thinking around employment and skills programmes as we emerge from the pandemic.

The hub also pulls together best practice as well as helpful jobs and skills recovery guides for those, including colleges, looking to tackle skills and employment issues in their local communities.

Although each council approached their response in different ways, some common themes emerged about their experiences and situations. One common thread was local leadership and partnership.

Whether they were focused on

shifting their service to online, working directly with businesses to mitigate impact, or developing a coherent council-wide response, there have been some big shifts in their employment and skills offer.

For example in Devon, the county council had to respond rapidly to the collapse of one of the region's biggest employers, Flybe. They set up a redundancy support team, aimed at being the "joining glue" for local support.

This included linking recently redundant workers to training support, through both the adult education budget and a £750,000 fund to provide training focused on transition-to-growth sectors.

In other examples, Halton Borough Council in the north-west of England, and the London Borough of Hounslow found a significant increase in vacancies in the healthcare sector. They have formed strong partnerships to help move people from other forms of local employment, notably in

manufacturing and at Heathrow Airport, into temporary work in these sectors.

Meanwhile in Shropshire, the council faced issues common to many rural authorities, where sectors have been impacted by the effects of Brexit on the agricultural sector. By working with local employers, they have encouraged more businesses to relocate to the area as they move out of bigger cities.

### "A key first step is to map existing support"

This close working with local businesses on the ground is mirrored in many councils, including in Essex, where the council supported local businesses to adapt as they reopened again after periods of lockdown.

A key first step is to map existing support. The complexity of employment and skills policy means there will often be disjoints or areas where better join-up would deliver better results.

Given all delivery is ultimately local, this can only be done locally, and here councils play a key role.

There will always be issues where the evidence on what works is more limited, or where there are gaps in support. So, another step is identifying these gaps in evidence and support, and thinking about how best to fill them.

Perhaps the biggest message from these case studies is the role local government can play in making sure local growth, development and regeneration delivers good job and skills opportunities.

Of course, this is more important than ever as we seek to recover from the pandemic. With the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, there could be an increase in the number of people in our communities facing unemployment or seeking to retrain.

Those predominantly affected will be between 16 and 25 years old, as well as older people who have fared less well when trying to re-enter the labour market after previous recessions.

Councils are uniquely placed in their communities to convene with local and national partners, including colleges, to address these challenges.



BEV  
JONES

Joint chief executive, Career Colleges Trust



## Young people aren't digital natives in the way employers need

**Students need digital skills for employment that are very different to those they use every day on their devices, writes Bev Jones**

Generation Z is regarded as digitally enabled. They are the generation that has grown up with technology being an inherent part of their lives – in the way they communicate, socialise and access entertainment.

So why then are so many employers struggling to find young people who are equipped with adequate levels of digital literacy?

Through our partnership work with employers, we know that young people leaving school and college are not the digital natives we assume them to be. Yes, they have their phone attached to them all day, and many are gaming experts – but this is quite different from having the digital skills needed for employment.

These “skills” encompass a wide range of competencies, many of which are assumed to be innate. But they are not.

For example, communicating online is more complex than young people may think. Using the right tone and language is a skill that may not come naturally and has to be adapted to specific situations.

Sending formal emails is a key business skill, which students need to be taught as it is such a different form of communication when compared to everyday interactions with friends.

And the same is true when it comes to taking part in business video conferences – these are

dramatically different from FaceTime calls with peers. Colleges must start with these basics, as they are crucial building blocks to sound digital capability.

### “Business conference calls are dramatically different to FaceTime”

Beyond the skillset for communicating efficiently online, we also need to ensure young people can keep themselves, their data and other people's data safe. Cybersecurity is a huge industry, catalysed by the growth in online activity. Young people moving into employment must understand the importance of cyber safety, including their own wellbeing when operating in a digital world.

Technology is playing a huge part in recruitment and career development, which students also need to understand and use to

their advantage. Yet they can only do this with the right training and support ahead of their journey into employment.

Being able to use a variety of software, apps, video-conferencing technologies, and having the confidence to undergo interview and assessment centres online, are all real-life, essential skills that must be acquired. They are for the benefit of both the employer and the young person.

FE colleges must play a leading role in ensuring young people have these skills, across the many vocational subjects they offer.

An example of this within the construction industry can be seen at City of Glasgow College.

Construction is changing rapidly, with digital technology moving to the forefront as modern methods of construction replace more traditional ones.

Digital design is now a requirement of government construction procurement processes. Yet this is not sufficiently reflected in current education policy, where there is a real disconnect between the skills young

people need for work and the skills actually being taught.

So building and civil engineering company Sir Robert McAlpine took its own action, working with us to establish a Career College at the City of Glasgow College.

As part of this initiative, an employer skills board has been launched, with representatives from major construction employers such as Balfour Beatty, Morrison Construction and Cidon.

Board members have discussed and agreed the skills, knowledge and behaviours that employers need their young recruits to be equipped with upon leaving college. The City of Glasgow College is now using this insight to re-design study programmes and develop digital skills CPD programmes for staff.

The CPD aspect is crucial. Many FE tutors are sector-specialists but are not always given the time or opportunity to keep up to date with fast-moving industry developments. Now they are being supported to understand how technology is impacting the construction sector.

As a result, tutors can demonstrate to students the real-life connection between digital skills and employment, contextualising the lessons being taught.

The Skills for Jobs white paper sets out the need for employers and educators to work more closely and the huge role that digital technology will play. We must not assume students are digital natives but roll up our sleeves and upskill them now.



## TOM BEWICK

Chief executive,  
Federation of  
Awarding Bodies



## The Skills Bill could set the scene for Ofqual to be abolished

**The government is effectively nationalising technical education through the Institute for Apprenticeships, writes Tom Bewick**

Leviathan was a mythical sea monster in the Book of Job. In the modern context, it refers to an enormous superstructure that sucks the life out of innovation, investment and entrepreneurial endeavour.

Monopolies – like those in the state or private sectors – are examples of how good intentions easily end up short-changing the public. Just think of the ongoing battle over the railways.

Enter, then, the post-16 Skills Bill. Don't get me wrong: there's a lot to welcome in the draft legislation. The individual lifelong learning entitlement is genuinely a step forward in eventually cementing a statutory right to adult education and retraining.

From a social policy point of view, it's up there with the 1946 NHS Act, which established the idea of universal healthcare free at the point of need.

Notwithstanding the complex funding and qualifications rules governing the lifetime skills guarantee, it doesn't take a genius to see how this concept can be built on in future.

But one major difference is that this is no longer the 1940s. People are sceptical of paternalistic institutions that are bossy and want to tell them what to do.

In many ways, that is the biggest

flaw in the proposed legislation. Without offering any real evidence of how outcomes will be better, a Conservative government has set upon a course to nationalise technical education.

The 18th-century philosopher Edmund Burke made the point that societies were best served by an approach to human affairs that “puts its trust in experience and in the gradual improvement of tried and tested arrangements”. Where, in this bill, is the trust in FE?

The draft legislation does not attempt to build on tried and tested qualifications.

Instead, it assumes the right of the secretary of state to effectively nationalise the technical education system via the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

The current regulator, Ofqual, has been sidelined in the process. One long-term reading of the legislation is that it sets the scene for Ofqual to be eventually abolished. After all, some might argue, what is the point of a

statutory regulator if it has oversight over a diminishing part of the qualifications landscape?

As we've already seen with the development of T Levels, the government has assumed intellectual ownership and control of these qualifications. The legislation gives the Institute the right to run a state monopoly in qualifications, alongside its accreditation role of other quals that it doesn't own.

**“The Institute will have the power to prevent the development of new qualifications”**

Awarding organisations work under licence (commercial contracts) to deliver the content and curriculum expertise. This Bill paves the way for the Institute

to extend this operating model to other forms of technical qualifications in future.

When combined with the rationalisation agenda of the below level 3 vocational qualifications review, it is apparent for all to see just how significant a re-making of the VTQ landscape this could turn out to be.

The Institute will have the power to put in place moratoriums to prevent the development of new qualifications, as well as the power to lift them.

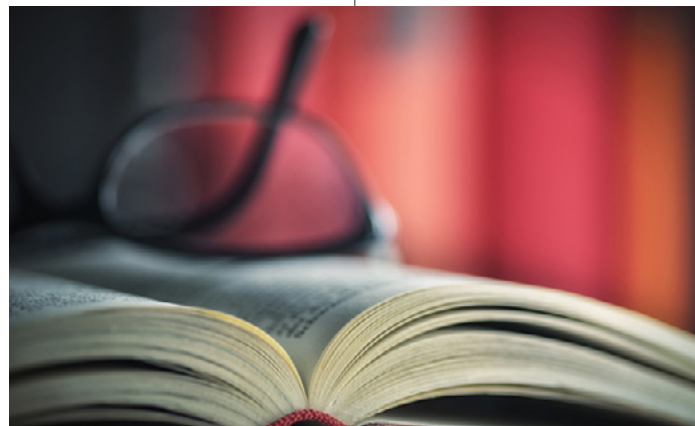
It will also be able to designate technical courses that are not necessarily qualifications regulated by Ofqual or developed by awarding organisations.

In practice, this could mean a local college or FE provider could apply to the Institute to have its courses accredited, therefore bypassing the need to use qualifications offered by regulated awarding bodies.

The other significant powers the Institute will be assuming is the ability to charge fees for regulation. There will need to be safeguards built in during the passage of the Bill. We've already seen how EQA charges have added an “invoice chasing” culture to the apprenticeship programme.

With post-pandemic public expenditure under severe pressure, the Bill could be used as a funding ratchet, enabling the DfE to push even more of the costs of regulation onto the FE sector.

That's why accepting Leviathan is never a good idea.



DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
CONTACT US NEWS@FEWEEK.CO.UK



# READER'S REPLY

## Spielman bags two more years as Ofsted chief inspector

The best news coming from this is that the sector hopefully won't have to face another change in inspection framework for a good while yet, particularly when it is always largely predicated on the concerns Ofsted has about the pre-16 compulsory schools' curriculum.

Richard Moore, website

This is a good outcome. Whilst I still don't feel FE is enough of a priority when research is done or decisions made, she is a balanced leader seeking to do the right thing.

Louise Doyle, Twitter

## Revealed: top 10 highest paid college leaders in 2019/20

It reminds me of Fawlty Towers: "Don't mention the pension arrangements"!! It's best not to highlight that most principals will leave with £1m+ pension, accumulated mostly from taxpayers' contributions! Oh and for good measure, so will most of their senior management colleagues working with them!

Justsaying, website

Is there a problem with them amassing a significant pension? It's a big job with a lot of responsibility. I would also add that many principals, bar the few extremes, are paid at a level that looks very proportionate.

Bob Smith, website

## Government must act now to make colleges financially sustainable

This is probably one of the most disappointing articles I have read on FE Week. Quote: While the introduction of the Further Education Commissioner has been a positive development, there remains confusion over who is responsible for

## REPLY OF THE WEEK

### Spielman bags two more years as Ofsted chief inspector

I remember when MPs were first against her being appointed. HMCI has without doubt moved the organisation forward, but we still have much to do to prove a) value for money b) independence c) an alternative to grading and d) a more diverse leadership team. Maybe AS can make this her last hurrah in 2023...

@TeacherToolkit, website

intervening and in what circumstances.

For real?

Has anyone actually done an analysis of Atkins' interventions against student success rates, and financial cash out from the DfE? Why don't you do that, FE Week? In addition, the "shoot first" (literally, in some cases) approach, criticised by the report from Mary Ney also has gone unnoticed. Financial performance has gotten worse under the Atkins/DfE regime. Learning Skills Council anyone?

Appreciate that this is political speak, however, stating the obvious, anyone can do. Colleges are underfunded, have been for years, but if you speak out, there will be retribution. The future is hard for colleges, but what's new?

David Priestley, website

## Land-based colleges lose millions in commercial income

Brilliant article, Jess – at a time when these roles and diversity in these careers have never been more needed. The work Plumpton College doing at One Garden Brighton is brilliant. We need DEFRA and the National Lottery Heritage Fund to make even more investments.

Anita Kerwin-Nye, Twitter

# Movers & Shakers

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



**Sue Kamal**

People director,  
Realise Learning and  
Employment Ltd

**Start date** May 2021

**Previous job**

Global head of organisation development,  
Reuters

**Interesting fact**

At weekends, she can often be found at the Pool Cafe in the Peak District village of Hathersage, where she helps her husband in the family-run cafe next to the open-air pool.



**Pete Joddrell**

Deputy principal,  
Eastleigh College

**Start date** May 2021

**Previous job**

Assistant principal, New College Swindon

**Interesting fact**

He has run the London Marathon five times, including the record-breaking race in 2020 when over 43,000 runners took part in a virtual event, receiving a Guinness World Record.



**Chris Russell**

National director,  
Education, Ofsted

**Start date** September 2021

**Previous job**

South-east director, Ofsted

**Interesting fact**

He plays the piano, and early in his career, he spent two years teaching in Zimbabwe as a VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas).

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](mailto:news@feweek.co.uk)

FEWEEK

Got a story?

Get in touch.

Contact: [news@feweek.co.uk](mailto:news@feweek.co.uk)  
or call 020 81234 778