
Background and Introduction

1 The first year of the Framework for Excellence (FfE) implementation was largely successful. We are aware however, that there is further work to do in order to improve both the operation and the usefulness of the FfE in the future. This work includes:

- Having greater involvement of the sector in the further development of the FfE through the inclusion of sector representatives on governance and technical groups.
- Further refinement of some performance indicators (PIs) in collaboration with the sector.
- Further development of the FfE surveys to enable a streamlined approach and alignment with other surveys.
- Improvement of data supplied to the FfE for calculation of scores and grades, along with improved quality assurance of the data used within the FfE.
- Provision of benchmarking capabilities.
- More effective communications to ensure providers and other users know what to expect (‘no surprises’) and to enable people to understand more fully how scores and grades are calculated.

2 The changes we are implementing in response to our experience of the FfE in 2008/09, and to feedback received from the sector, are set out in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Improvements

Framework for Excellence Governance

3 Provider representative organisations are now included in the FfE governance and decision-making groups (Sponsoring Board and Policy Committee) and, consequently, will help to refine the FfE and take part in decision making. These organisations represent schools, colleges, private training providers and local authorities and provide the sector perspective to the development of FfE

Framework for Excellence Structure

4 Following the move to a flatter structure of performance indicators within the FfE, we are currently reviewing the relationship between the Employer Views PI and the Training Quality Standard. Working closely with employer and provider
representative organisations, we will also take a fresh look at the data we have around the amount of training (Employer Responsive) undertaken by each provider and how this might be included in the new FfE structure.

5 We want the FfE to operate with certainty and stability and, to this end, we have set assessment criteria which:

- Reflect the progress the sector has made.
- Set the standards that we expect to maintain for three further years.

In order to maintain these standards we will need to keep the assessment criteria, under review. This ensures that the criteria remain valid as the FfE is extended to include new types of provider, and enables us to monitor and respond to the impact of the present economic situation, if necessary.

**Performance Indicators**

**General**

6 We know we need to refine some of the existing PIs further. We will work collaboratively with the sector and continue to ask providers, their representative organisations and other stakeholder for their views on this. This is being addressed through the inclusion of sector representation on all of the FfE governance groups (as mentioned above) and also on the FfE Technical Assurance Group.

7 A study following the first pilot results showed that the FfE takes sufficient account of contextual factors. Several performance indicators incorporate elements of contextualisation. Qualification success rates, for example, take account of the very different success rates in short courses, Apprenticeships, A-levels, and other long courses. Learner Views take into account the level of qualification.

8 We also commissioned a follow-up study to analyse 2009 Framework outputs, the findings of which can be found on the FfE website (http://ffe.lsc.gov.uk). The outputs of this study support our commitment to ensuring that the FfE does not disadvantage any provider type. Should any particular issues to be identified, they will be incorporated in the PI development work referred to above.

**Surveys**

9 Our aim is to keep the FfE as simple as possible, and we know that providers want a streamlined approach to surveys. Providers have told us that they want to be able to:

- Incorporate the FfE surveys into their existing surveys.
- Use the data from the learner and employer views surveys to support quality improvement at subject sector and course level.
- Find out what learners and employers really thought of their experience.

10 Providers also told us they would like to have a longer timeframe in which to participate in the learner and employer surveys. We have taken account of this in the FfE 2009/10 in the following ways:

- The Learner Views survey in 2008/09 was undertaken between 2 January and 27 February 2008. In 2009/10, the survey is being conducted between 1 October 2009 and 12 February 2010. This extended period will allow learners
on roll-on-roll-off programmes, or short programmes that are due to finish before Christmas 2009, to have an opportunity to complete the survey.

- The Employer Views survey was undertaken over a six-week period in 2008/09, this was extended to a 13-week period in 2009/10.

11 The FIE learner views survey provides overall learner views on the key aspects of their learning within each college or provider in a way that is comparable with the outcomes from other colleges and providers. Most colleges and providers still wish to carry out their own learner surveys in addition to the FIE survey in order to gather additional information about their learners’ experiences and identify areas of strength and weakness. In order to enable the smooth operation of the two types of survey, it will be made possible for colleges and providers to loose-link their own surveys to the FIE Learner Views survey. This will allow learners to complete the FIE’s and their own college or provider’s survey seamlessly.

12 We will continue to work with providers and other key stakeholders over the next 18 months to investigate how we can further integrate the FIE surveys with colleges’ and providers’ own processes.

13 In addition, working with DCSF we have created a single survey for piloting by schools with sixth-forms in 2009/10. This includes health and wellbeing questions relevant to Every Child Matters outcomes.

**Qualification Success Rates**

14 In the FIE for 2008/09, qualification success rates (QSR) for FE short courses (5 - 24 weeks duration) and FE very short courses (less than 5 weeks duration) were combined within the success rate performance indicator. Also in the FIE measure, qualification success rates for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships were also taken as a single QSR. For the FIE in 2009/10, these four categories of provision will be separated. This is in response to the widening gaps between FE short and FE very short QSRs and between the QSRs for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships.

15 The process for calculating QSR scores in the FIE in 2008/09 included a ‘rounding’ step which, in a few cases, resulted in a different score than would have been calculated had the rounding not occurred. In a very few cases this impacted upon the final grade for QSR. This process has now been revised and the 2009/10 calculation process no longer has rounding applied prior to calculation of the final score.

**Use of Resources**

16 Following feedback from providers and stakeholders and an internal review, we have removed two of the Use of Resources measures; Delivery against funding allocation (formerly UoR2) contract and Provider-level Unit Cost (formerly UoR4). Whilst it is accepted that these measures, where calculable, could provide additional information for use in commissioning discussions, it was agreed that they are not appropriate in their current format as PIs.

**Ofsted Grade**

17 Originally, the Ofsted Overall Effectiveness grade was to be included in the FIE as a proxy indicator of the Quality of Provision. When the requirement for an Overall Performance Rating was removed in January 2008, there was no longer a need to include the Overall Effectiveness grade in the FIE. This means that the outcomes from the FIE and from inspections have been decoupled, which aligns with the views
Data

18 It is essential to have complete, accurate and timely data from providers in order to ensure that the analysis of the FfE is robust and accurate. We rely on providers to ensure that data are complete and submitted to deadline.

19 Our intention is to work with the sector on how to improve data returns from providers. As data collection methodologies develop, we will be able to provide more detailed information, for example at course and programme level.

20 Implementation of the FfE has highlighted some underlying data issues which impact on the accuracy of Framework scores and grades. (BIS and DCSF will jointly commission the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the Further Education Data Service to work to resolve these issues over the next six months. We are also working with the LGA towards alignment of data collection and processes.

Benchmarking

21 When we share the FfE 2009/10 results with providers in spring 2010, we will also share high level benchmarking and trend information. We will develop the benchmarking capabilities further to provide enhanced benchmarking facilities by spring 2011.

Communications

22 We will improve the timeliness of our communications to ensure that:

- Providers have all the information they need to participate actively in the FfE and to maximise data returns, including the responses to the surveys.
- Providers and other users know what to expect to minimise the possibility of ‘surprises’ when results are shared. This includes notification of changes to scoring grids and assessment criteria as soon as is possible.

23 We will also further develop our supporting materials in order to enable people to understand fully how scores and grades are calculated and how the FfE data can be used to best effect for making choices and for supporting quality improvement. This will also include clear explanations for how some FfE results might be different from other sources of information.

24 The FfE website now provides a subscription service through which subscribers can request automatic notification of updates to the website, including the publication of key documents.