Use by LSIS

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service will use the Framework data to inform the development and targeting of its programmes and services. Where the Framework identifies colleges or providers that require additional support to improve their performance, LSIS will provide that support.

Looking Forward: The Governor’s Role

College corporations are encouraged to use the Framework in setting and monitoring their own strategic goals and targets. There will also be an increased emphasis on validating self-assessment judgements, both internally and externally, using evidence such as Framework results, and through processes such as peer review. For example, the college’s self-assessment report should make reference to the Framework’s scores for 2007/08, which will have been shared with the institution in May 2009. Boards should also consider the Framework’s scores and grades for 2008/09 and make reference to them in the self-assessment report, as data becomes available.

The Framework will provide a “balanced scorecard” of performance ratings which will enable governors and boards to identify progress made by their own colleges and comparative evidence. It will provide a range of evidence for self-assessment and support improvement activity, including pre- and post-inspection actions. The Framework will also provide evidence to inform, and where appropriate, support, proposals by colleges (and other providers) for commissioned business. It will provide a platform of comparative evidence for stakeholders and commissioning bodies once the 2010 Machinery of Government reforms are in place. By their engagement in the process of considering and acting upon Framework evidence now, governors will help ensure their colleges are ready for the challenges ahead.

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The Framework for Excellence

An Introductory Guide for College Governors

Background

The Framework for Excellence is at the heart of the ambition to create a world-class further education system, with a focus on skills, employability and social mobility. The prime purpose of the Framework is to provide information for learners and its partners on how money for Further Education is being spent on the FE System.

The operation of the learning and skills system is itself being reformed from March 2010 as the Young People’s Learning Agency, Skills Funding Agency and Local Authority arrangements replace the role of the Learning and Skills Council. These changes are described in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill, which is currently in Parliament and expected to become law by 2009. The Framework is being reviewed in this developing policy context to ensure that it is fit for purpose and flexible for use across the further education sector.

As the Framework has been developed to assess performance and help drive quality improvements, it will be integral to providers’ own self-assessment and self-improvement processes. It will also support the development of self-regulation. It is expected that colleges, providers and their representative bodies, including The Single Voice, will want to use Framework evidence to identify and take action in order to improve performance across the sector.

Taken together, the Framework, the LSC’s Intervention Policy, the National Improvement Strategy, inspection and the current developments in self-regulation will help colleges and providers to focus on their success and identify areas for improvement.

Structure of the Framework

The Framework was developed to assess three dimensions that are widely recognised as critical elements of the performance and to provide a transparent mechanism to enable colleges and providers to make informed choices as users of the FE system.

Use by Learners

The LSC wishes the Framework to provide information for learners and their guardians, such as parents and carers, to enable them to make informed choices as users of the FE system. Learners have said that they are most interested in knowing about:

- the views of other learners;
- the quality of provision, including facilities and resources and whether their learners need are being met;
- learners’ success rates, which are particularly significant when there is a choice of providers offering similar courses;
- destination information, which will enable them to evaluate the worth of a course in terms of investment in time, effort and money.

Use by Employers

The Framework will provide a consistent, employer-generated rating of LSC-funded provision that will enable them to factor into their decision-making process when selecting training providers. The rating will be based on employers’ views of the publicly-funded training they have received.

Use by Colleges and Providers

The Framework should be used by colleges and other providers to assess and improve performance, and incorporate the findings of self-assessment into reports for governing bodies and local education agencies. The LSC expects all providers in scope to participate in the Framework for all but the second phase of pilot activity, the Framework will be piloted in 2008/09 by adult and community providers and other providers not included for implementation until 2010/11. The LSC will also pilot assessment reports with providers that select two second phase pilots.

To achieve these aims, the Framework will:

- set out the areas and levels of performance to be achieved by each college and provider to particular the highest level of provision to be achieved by each college and provider;
- provide information to learners and employers to help them make decisions;
- provide a management tool for providers to help them identify quality issues;
- help Ofsted determine the timing and intensity of inspection, and inform inspection judgements;
- provide a transparent mechanism to enable Ofsted, the LSC and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) to support and to challenge colleges and providers, in line with their respective remits.

The additional performance indicator of success at full level 3 is under consideration for 2009/10.

Scope

In 2008/09, the Framework applies to FE, tertiary, sixth-form, agricultural and horticultural, art and design colleges, and to private training providers that deliver Apprenticeships, Train to Gain and other LSC employer responsiveness-funded provision. The Provider Guide 2008/09 sets out in full the areas and levels of performance indicators for each college and provider. It is available from the LSC website and is also published by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and the Department for Children, Schools and Families in March 2008.

As well as demonstrating the quality of provision, the Framework will provide evidence for central government and its partners on how money for Further Education is being spent on the FE System.

Use by the LSC

The Framework will be incorporated within LSC business processes for commissioning, intervention and challenging performance. From spring 2009, a consideration of Framework ratings and indicators will become part of the strategic commissioning dialogue with providers, and will inform the process of negotiated commissioning.

From spring 2009, the LSC’s financial and wider intervention policy will have regard to the publicly available elements of the Framework. From spring 2010, interventions such as Notices to Improve, and other actions such as contract withdrawal and renewal of funding, will be triggered by Framework for Excellence scores of inadequacy. The LSC will incorporate the Framework, as a minimum quality threshold, into the tendered commissioning process for provision to be delivered in 2010/11.