Information for Candidates
For
Head of Learner Skills Service

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Contents

The Skills Funding Agency ........................................................................................................... 3
The Role ....................................................................................................................................... 4
  Job Description ....................................................................................................................... 4
  Person Specification .................................................................................................................. 5
  Competencies ........................................................................................................................... 6
Terms & Conditions of Employment .......................................................................................... 8
How to Apply ............................................................................................................................. 9
  The Process ............................................................................................................................. 9
Special Requirements .............................................................................................................. 10
Equality & Diversity Monitoring ............................................................................................. 10
Further information ................................................................................................................. 10
The Skills Funding Agency

In March 2008, the Government announced radical changes to the way learning and skills acquisition for young people and adults was to be funded in the future. The White Paper 'Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver', set out proposals for transforming the post-16 education and skills system, by creating a new Skills Funding Agency – a funding body for post-19 learning and skills – with strengthened support and advice services, and by widening the responsibilities of local authorities to include funding for 16 to 19 year olds, supported by a new Young People’s Learning Agency.

Since then, the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) has been working with the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Department for Work and Pensions, colleges and providers to develop the new system which constitutes a radical transformation of how participation and attainment will be enhanced to match the country’s needs.

Legislation has been introduced which will see the abolition of the Learning and Skills Council from 2010 and the creation of the Skills Funding Agency and the Young People’s Learning Agency.

The creation of the Skills Funding Agency is designed to ensure individuals and employers can access learning and skills through three key gateways:

- the National Skills Service (Train To Gain);
- the National Apprenticeship Service; and
- the Adult Advancement and Careers Service.

The Skills Funding Agency will be responsible for ensuring that strategic skills needs of the country are appropriately addressed at national and regional level. It will provide advice directly to Ministers on how strategic skills needs, identified by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, can be met and resourced. It will spearhead multi-agency action in support of employers, identifying gaps and mismatches in the supply of skills to meet new employer demands, especially to help grow the jobs of the future.

The Skills Funding Agency will fund colleges and learning providers and will develop new and innovative ways of ensuring the funding processes are demand led. It will also promote and support the Further Education sector, ensuring it has the capacity in terms of buildings and infrastructure to provide not only adult education and skills but also over 600,000 places annually to support 16-19 participation.

The Skills Funding Agency will be the sponsor of the Further Education sector and will work with the Young People’s Learning Agency to ensure that the Young People’s Learning Agency’s policy is coherent with the post-19 strategy policy and that the impact on colleges of any policy change is fully understood and accounted for. The Skills Funding Agency will be responsible for the performance of the Further Education sector and will instigate action when needed on behalf of the Young People’s Learning Agency. In doing so the Skills Funding Agency will ensure that the process is light in touch for those doing well, but will be quick to act for those performing below the minimum level of performance.

The Skills Funding Agency will provide a range of specialist services for clients and customers with specific needs such as learners with learning difficulties, those in custody and those on benefits who need to be supported back into work through training. It will work with the Department for Work and Pensions and the Ministry of Justice on design and implementation.

The Skills Funding Agency will also develop and deliver a range of shared management and IT-enabled services that will transform services to business and individuals across the Further Education sector and more widely. These services include: the collection, management and appropriate exchange of Further Education data; a funding and settlement system; system wide enablers such as the Learner Registration Service, which allocates
unique learner numbers critical to the delivery of 14-19 diplomas, the Qualifications and Credit Framework and Skills Accounts; and an Information Platform which will provide on-line access to a wide range of information about the labour market, learning opportunities and colleges and providers.

The Role

The radical changes outlined above represent a fundamental transformation of the nation’s long-term education, learning and skills provision providing education and skills opportunities for over three million learners and trainees, working closely with a wide range of partners and stakeholders including across government.

This pivotal role calls for an innovative individual with a strong knowledge of learning and skills to transform services to deliver high-quality, cost-effective learning products and solutions at all levels of adult education.

This is a new post and will initially be a transition role within the Learning & Skills Council and will transfer to the Skills Funding Agency from April 2010.

Job Description

This is a senior role reporting directly to the Chief Executive of the Skills Funding Agency, offering the successful candidate an unrivalled opportunity to be part of the senior team in developing a ground-breaking new agency with substantial funding to secure the knowledge and skills the nation needs to meet global economic challenges.

The Head of Learner Skills Services is to lead on the provision of a skills service for learners that takes account of the work of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills and through customer insight and feedback ensures that services and offerings for Learners are coherent, desirable and tailored to meet their needs.

The Head of Learner Skills Services will develop and lead on all activities to do with the learner, including the Adult Advancement and Careers Service.

The Head of Learner Skills Services principle accountabilities will include:-

- The effective strategic performance of coherent and easily accessible Learner Skills Services, designed to drive the take-up of learning and training opportunities by individual learners.
- Advising Ministers and Chief Executive on all Learner Skills Service related matters.
- Providing visible, effective and inspirational strategic leadership to the staff of Learner Responsive Services and the Adult Advancement and Careers Service.
- Acting as the Learners’ Champion within the Skills Funding Agency and at Board level; ensuring the voice of the learner is heard and that learners and their representative groups can influence the shape of learning e.g. working with the national learner panel, the National Union of Students, NIACE etc.
- Acting as the public face of the Skills Funding Agency on all learner related matters and ensuring the Skills Funding Agency’s reputation is a credible, high profile strategic partner that understands the skills needs of learners and delivers the Government’s skills agenda with a range of key external stakeholders and partners, including the Home Office, DWP and Jobcentre Plus.
- Building a positive public profile and reputation for the delivery of high quality learner responsive services and products that both accurately predict learner behaviour and needs and provide learners with high quality, cost effective learning products and
solutions that are designed to address learner needs, deliver public entitlements and are aligned where appropriate to employer requirements and the employment market.

- Working with the Employer Skills Director, to develop a customer insight function that applies best practice customer insight tools and techniques to build an understanding of customer preferences, attitudes, behaviour and experiences. This will draw insight from a range of sources including a detailed understanding of existing management information, business-generated data and available social, marketing and external stakeholder research. Working with UKCES to ensure there is new research or analysis available to fill information and knowledge gaps.

- Ensuring a high quality learner experience where learners are able to feedback promptly on that experience, and this is fed into product and service development and any issues and complaints are addressed effectively at all levels across the service.

- Taking account of DIUS policy and priorities, provide vision and leadership within the Skill Funding Agency for ensuring that learning provision is responsive and high quality, influencing the work of the College and Learning Provider directorate.

- Working with the Employer Service Director, ensure Regional Directors align their work on strategic skills to ensure needs of all types of adult learners and apprentices are met: including those who have special needs, are unemployed or are being made redundant; offenders etc.

- Responsibility for the development of AACS and skills accounts, the linkage to provider accreditation and the virtual real time shared information platform; ensuring QCF and the unit based system to support choice and flexibility.

- As a member of the Skills Funding Agency’s executive board promote the values of the Skills Funding Agency; acting corporately in support of the objectives and priorities of the Skills Funding Agency.

- Lead the realisation of the Skills Funding Agency’s goals with regard to equality & diversity and health & safety, including demonstrating and championing respect of others, prioritising race equality and welfare objectives, implementing and reviewing action plans and reporting on progress.

Person Specification

This is a demanding role and the successful candidate will be able to demonstrate, in their written application and at interview, the knowledge, skills and experience set out below, as well as the required competencies.

Knowledge, Skills & Experience

- Degree or equivalent qualification
- Experience of developing and delivering national strategies and policies and of addressing learning and skill needs of learners
- Recent experience of influencing and implementing new initiatives in response to Government strategy and priorities
- Recent experience of working with National Agencies, DIUS/DCSF and Government department in the development and implementation of strategies, policies and initiatives
- Proven track record of leading and affecting educational change
- Management of large budgets (multi-million)
- Proven strategic planning experience leading to the achievement of organisational objectives
- Proven experience of successfully leading organisational and cultural change
• Strong negotiating and influencing skills
• Experience of public speaking and chairing formal meetings dealing with sensitive and contentious issues
• Strong communication skills including leading conferences and presenting complex messages through all media.
• Proven excellent leadership skills and evidence of successfully leading, motivating and developing people and organisations
• Strong relationship building skills particularly at a senior level
• High level of personal energy
• Political awareness and sensitivity
• Commitment to the principles of equality and diversity

Competencies

Leading & developing teams
• Communicates a vision that generates excitement, pace and urgency, enthusiasm and commitment to the organisation
• Monitors overall performance against business strategy
• Models the Skills Funding Agency values and expects the team to do so too
• Creates an environment that values development and skill acquisition
• Promotes a risk taking culture where individuals feel free to speak out, to experiment and try out new ideas
• Regularly reviews and audits the skill base and creates development strategies which address long term goals

Conceptual thinking
• Takes a strategic perspective and considers the Skills Funding Agency as a whole when decision making
• Thinks ‘outside the box’ and applies new ways of looking at a situation or problem
• Creates new models, concepts or frameworks to help self and others understand the issues and spot linkages between seemingly unrelated situations
• Consistently focuses on the few most critical issues in the most complex settings

Understanding the environment
• Interprets subtle trends in the environment and how this will impact future needs and demands
• Anticipates or predicts changes in the broader political environment and plans strategies which take these into account
• Applies detailed understanding of the different needs, climates
• Challenges each stakeholder to identify most appropriate way forward for each
• Understands the importance of political influence in getting things done
Building relationships
• Consults and involves others in the decision making process to build trust and commitment over the longer term
• Creates a climate which respects and actively supports the strategic aims of partner organisations
• Acts in the long term interests of the partner/provider/stakeholder when these are aligned with the Skills Funding Agency’s goals
• Champions the role of the partnership network
• Understands and shows concern for the impact of the Skills Funding Agency’s goals on partnership network
• Creates opportunities for collaboration across the provider/partner network

Change leadership
• Takes risks in challenging the status quo
• Aligns business to deliver the Skills Funding Agency’s future goals
• Publicly challenges others –including providers - to align their work and their organisation to support long term goals
• Addresses areas of inconsistency in structure, processes and work practices which are contrary to the Skills Funding Agency’s stated objectives
• Questions long term plans – own and others to ensure they deliver transformational change
• Acts as ambassador for the Skills Funding Agency ensuring the values and vision are communicated with enthusiasm and commitment

Achieving excellence
• Commits significant resources and/or time to improve performance or reach a challenging goal
• Strives to deliver ‘firsts’ in the Skills Funding Agency’s major priority area
• Takes calculated risks to raise performance or deliver business targets
• Encourages others to make calculated risks
• Makes decisions, sets priorities or chooses goals on the basis of calculated inputs and outputs, cost benefit analysis and return on investment
• Creates standards of excellence for others to work towards
• Identifies major opportunities for efficiencies and savings and works to have these adopted

Decisiveness
• Takes tough decisions when addressing performance and is prepared to stand by them
• Deals confidently and assertively with very senior influential individuals and organisations in the external environment
• Maintains objectivity and a sense of perspective in periods of extreme stress/pressure
• Represents the best interests of the Skills Funding Agency in the external environment
• Holds others to account –makes sure they deliver on their promises

Please note your application will be short listed against the key skills/competencies required for the job. The competencies which are highlighted in bold above will be used for short listing and must be evidenced in your CV application along with core skills and relevant career history.
Terms & Conditions of Employment

Role title & Seniority

Head of Learner Skills Services (LSC) transferring to National Director of Learner Skills Services for the Skills Funding Agency in April 2010.

Remuneration & Reward

£102,714 - £114,127 per annum

The LSC also currently operates a flexible benefits package and bonus scheme both of which are non-contractual.

Contract

This is a permanent LSC contract which will transfer to the Skills Funding Agency in April 2010.

Pension

The LSC offers a choice of two pension schemes giving you flexibility to choose the pension that suits you best. The 'nuvos' pension scheme is an occupational defined benefit pension scheme, whilst the 'partnership' pension account is a stakeholder pension with a choice of providers.

Location

The LSC’s National Office is based in Coventry and this will transfer to the Skills Funding Agency’s National Office in April 2010. There are currently 42 offices throughout the UK and upon transfer to the SFA this will reduce to 20 locations including London. The role will require substantial national travel.

Annual Leave

25 days holiday plus 8 days of statutory holiday. Entitlement increases to a maximum of 33 days after 5 years service.

Appointment

This offer is subject to satisfactory references and medical clearance along with copies of relevant qualifications and proof of your eligibility to work in the UK. The successful candidate will need to complete the relevant security checks to comply with Cabinet Office protocols.

Probationary Period (external candidates only)

Your employment will be subject to a three month probationary period.

Confidentiality

The successful candidate will be expected to abide by the LSC’s confidentiality and data protection policies.
How to Apply

Applications should be made via the LSC’s on-line system which is accessible via our website www.lsc.gov.uk/vacancies.

The closing date for applications is midnight on Monday 8th June 2009.

All our current vacancies can be viewed on the LSC iRecruitment pages along with help and guidance on how to apply.

Before making an application for a vacancy you will be required to register an account on iRecruitment. Once you have registered an account you will be able to log in to your own account which will allow you to search, apply and upload your CV.

The registration process will take approximately 10 minutes. Please note you will be required to submit your CV during the registration process so have your CV relevant to the role ready to upload. The file name of your CV must be appropriately labelled to indicate which vacancy it relates to e.g. Head of Learner Skills ref: IRC3974.

Important please note

- You will be required to complete the application process in one sitting. Once you have initiated the application process there is no facility to save your application for completion at a later date. It is therefore vital you have prepared your CV prior to commencing the application process.
- If you submit an application and then withdraw it, further applications cannot be resubmitted against the vacancy and you will need to call our helpline number on 024 76 825800 or 024 76825830.
- You are advised to regularly log onto to your iRecruitment account in order to check the progress of your application. However, we will also reply to every application received via the email address used in your application.

You will be required to submit a CV which is tailored to promote suitability for the position reflecting the skills and competencies required as specified within the role description. It is essential that you evidence on your CV how you have demonstrated each of the required competencies, highlighted in bold on the role description, as these will be used as part of the short-listing process. The full list of competencies for each role can be found on the role profile however the competencies in bold are the only ones you need to address on your CV for the purposes of the application process.

The Process

All applications will be reviewed in line with the required skills/competencies (as per above guidance) following the closing date of Monday 8th June 2009.

All applications will be responded to by 19th June 2009 and short listed candidates will be notified of the date of the panel interview.

Short listed candidates will be required to attend a competency based panel interview and to make a presentation. Candidates may also be asked to participate in a psychometric assessment and/or other exercise. Details of the selection process will be included in the invite to interview letter.
**Special Requirements**
We are committed to ensuring that all our job applicants are treated fairly and with respect, irrespective of their actual or assumed background including gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic origin), religion/belief or disability.

Should you feel you require adjustments to be made to the recruitment process due to a disability then please contact our helpline on 024 76 825800 or 024 76 825830 or email us at careers@lsc.gov.uk.

**Equality & Diversity Monitoring**
All applications are judged solely on suitability for the role based on the skills, experience and competencies you demonstrate during the application process. To ensure that the LSC are meeting our commitment to equality as part of the registration process candidates are asked to complete the ‘Equal Employment Opportunity’ section. The information disclosed will form no part of your application and will not be given to anyone involved in the short-listing process.

**Further information**
If you would like further information regarding the role please contact:-

Susan Pember,
Director, Skills Funding Agency Set Up, LSC & Head of Profession Sponsorship, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

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