

2014/30

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Pocket Watch – Intervening in FE

Introduction

One year on from the introduction of the new intervention process for FE, the BIS Dept has launched an **update** on how the system is working. Apart from confirming formal publication of reports from the FE Commissioner team who go into Colleges when alarm bells are sounded about performance or financial health issues, the Paper adds little new. However it comes as a number of other performance measures are being developed leaving the sector under greater scrutiny than ever before. So how's the sector performing and what are these other measures?

How's the sector doing at the moment?

So far the Commissioner and his team have investigated ten Colleges suggesting some serious concerns yet the overall picture as reflected in the Annual Ofsted Report published last December is more positive: *"the FE sector has raised its game, 71% of all providers were judged good or outstanding, an increase of 7% on last year."* Clearly the current financial climate is making life difficult for some providers and as the Ofsted Report indicated, some long-standing concerns notably around the teaching of English and maths, apprenticeship provision and that old kernel: responding to employers remain but as the Chief Inspector concluded, *'there are more grounds for optimism than previously.'* Continuing work by the ETF and Commission on Vocational Teaching/Learning should strengthen those grounds.

What are the latest performance measures?

Proposals for 16-19 accountability have already been announced and Ofsted is continuing to review its longer-term inspection procedures but other developments worth noting include:

- The intervention process. This process was introduced last year and ensures that where problems for an FE provider are identified, the FE Commissioner and his team can go in and over a couple of weeks, assess the situation and devise a rescue plan. At its most dire this can involve provider closure but more typically involves a recovery strategy and perhaps a change of leadership and governance. The grounds for going in are broadly based on seven triggers covering serious quality and/or financial concerns and the aim is for signs of recovery within a year, or where funding issues are involved, a bit longer
- Post-19 performance measures. Earlier this year the Dept announced that it was developing a new set of outcome focused measures which it would publish in experimental form this July. In all there will be three measures: progress within learning; destinations; and earnings with the aim being to align these 19+ measures with those at 16-19
- Overall Accountability Framework. The Government remains keen to see College Corporations take a much stronger role when it comes to holding College leadership teams to account. It's therefore following up last year's AoC report on governance by developing a handbook on accountability aimed at governors which it intends to publish also in July
- Employer View. This was launched by Ofsted a few weeks ago and a bit like the Learner View introduced a couple of years ago, allows 'customers,' in this case employers, to register their views on the service they've received by answering any of five questions covering for example the support received and how up to date the training was
- The FE and Skills Data Dashboard. Also just launched by Ofsted, this online tool enables users to log on and check out how providers are performing over a three year period in a range of areas against national averages

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