



Module 8

Curriculum

For suggestions on how to get the most out of these self-study materials, see the booklet on 'Using the materials'.

Preface to Governance Training Materials

At the time of writing the Governance Training Modules, the **Education Act 2011** had been implemented. It abolished the Young People's Learning Agency, with funding for colleges now being administered by either the Education Funding Agency and / or the Skills Funding Agency. It significantly reduced the complexity of colleges' Instrument and Articles of Government, giving them greater flexibility to run their own affairs. The details are included in Schedule 12 of the Act which makes a number of amendments to prior legislation. Section 29b of Schedule 12 states that "the governing body of the institution may modify or replace its instrument of government and articles of government". These must however comply with certain requirements set out in Part 2 of Schedule 4, thereby retaining some of the key responsibilities previously enshrined in legislation. In some cases, the statutory provision for sixth form colleges differs from that of general further education (GFE) colleges with the **Department for Education (DfE)** overseeing the former and the **Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)** the latter; however all colleges will now be actively considering the changes that affect them and all governors will need to be aware of the implications for their own organisation. At the same time as the Education Act 2011 was passed into law, the Association of Colleges published **The English Colleges' Foundation Code of Governance**.

This voluntary code of practice was developed by the sector following extensive consultation and all GFE colleges have been encouraged formally to adopt it. It has the full support of the government and is seen as "an important milestone in making colleges more locally accountable and in freeing them to respond more effectively to local learners, employers and community partners".

The government's reform plan for the further education and skills system was set out in **New Challenges, New Chances** published on 1 December 2011 and further refined in **Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills** published in April 2013. A **summary of NCNC** is available from LSIS. In November 2011 the final report of the Independent Commission on Colleges in their Communities, **A Dynamic Nucleus**, was published. Alongside New Challenges, New Chances, these two documents establish the foundation for the future development of the further education and skills sector.

The 2013 version of the Governance Training materials incorporate these significant changes to the operation of further education but all governors are recommended to familiarise themselves with and take account of the key documents referred to in this preface. The materials enshrine the six principles set out in the Good Governance Standard for Public Services by the Independent Commission on **Good Governance in Public Services** (2005), to which all governing bodies are referred.

The **Association of Colleges** has also compiled a **Governance Resource Library** which provides a wide range of online resources for governors and which will usefully complement these materials.

The **Learning and Skills Improvement Service** which has produced these updated and much valued governance training modules will cease to exist after August 2013. It is hoped the essential updating of these resources will be regularly carried out by other existing organisations or newly-emerging ones.

Acknowledgements

The first edition of these training materials was published by the Further Education Funding Council in 2000 and further updated and amended in 2002 following the establishment of the Learning and Skills Council in 2002. They were commissioned by LSC in 2002 under the Standards Fund and produced by a partnership of national organisations involved in further education.

This third edition of the training materials has been published by **The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS)**, as part of the **Leadership Skills for Governance** programme, and incorporates the changes brought about by the Education Act 2011 and government policy initiatives as at January 2013.

Authors

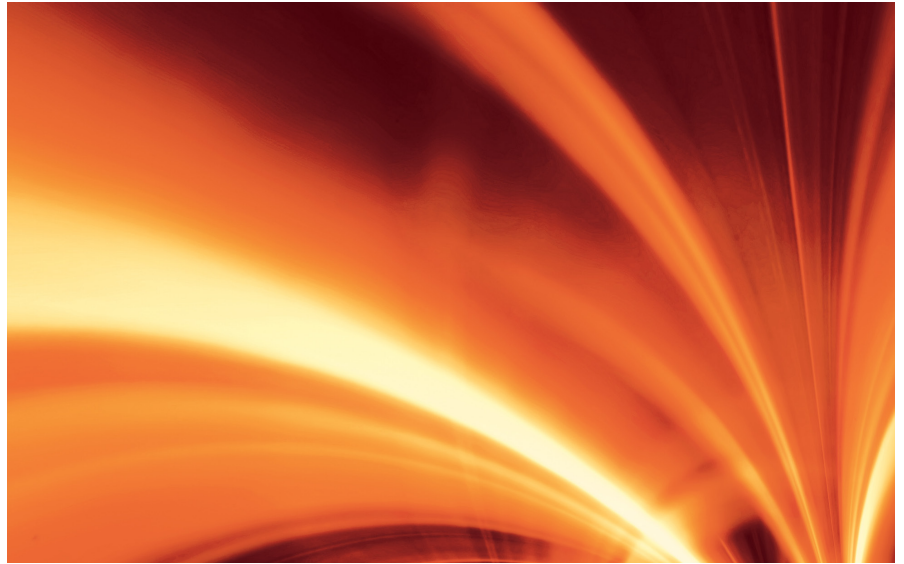
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We would like to thank the advisory group for their input into developing the modules; and the critical readers for their helpful comments on the draft materials.

Feedback on the modules should be sent to fegovernance@lsis.org.uk

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Introduction

This module looks at your responsibilities as a governor in terms of the core activity of the institution: the curriculum. We also look briefly at ways in which you as a governor can try to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in your college, although quality issues as a whole are addressed in Module 9: Quality and standards.

This module is intended for all new governors. It will also be of benefit to those who have been governors for some time but who wish to check, extend and update their knowledge about this topic.

The term ‘curriculum’ is often used to refer to the portfolio of course programmes and qualifications offered by a provider. In practice, the concept can be broadened to encompass the students’ complete learning experience including other activities that enhance learning, cultural and sporting opportunities, as well as facilities such as libraries and learning centres.

Under the Articles of Government, the governing body is responsible for determining the educational character and mission of the college, for raising standards and for overseeing its activities. As a result, governors are expected to take a strategic overview of their organisation’s curriculum offer and make sure that it is in keeping with the mission and strategic plan. Where the curriculum changes, for example in response to government initiatives or changing local employment needs, governors should ensure that the mission, strategic plan and curriculum continue to relate to each other. Look back at Module 6: Strategy and educational character if you need to revisit this aspect of governors’ responsibilities. Issues of curriculum quality are covered in Module 9: Quality and standards.

Aims

By the end of this module you should be able to:

- explain what is meant by ‘curriculum’ and the meaning of terms used to describe categories and levels of qualifications;
- describe the variety of learning opportunities at your college both for 14–19 year olds and adult learners;
- show how this provision relates to the needs of students and employers’ skill requirements in your local community and to national strategy;
- demonstrate how your college’s curriculum offer forms a coherent part of provision within your local area and show how some specialist niche provision contributes towards the ‘bank’ of national skills;
- understand the funding available for learners;
- outline the current range of government policies;
- explain how your college’s provision, on its own and in collaboration with other providers, contributes towards social inclusion and equality of opportunity; and
- participate actively in discussions and in decision-making – at both governing body and committee level – about curriculum issues in your college, in accordance with your responsibilities as a governor.

Contents

Mark the sections you want to study and tick them off as you complete them.

To do	Done	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Section 1 National and local influences on the curriculum
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Section 2 The students and their courses
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Section 3 The curriculum offer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Section 4 Assessing the effectiveness of teaching and learning

Working on the self-study activities

These materials have been designed for flexible use. You can work through them with other governors in training and development sessions. You can also work through sections and activities in your own time and at your own pace if you find it difficult to attend organised training sessions. Governors who have used these materials point out how valuable it is to work on at least some of the suggested activities together with another governor or group of governors, possibly from across a partnership, as there is such potential to learn from each other's experience. For suggestions on how to organise this kind of support for yourself, see the booklet on 'Using the materials'.

What you will need

To complete activities in this module you will need to obtain the following documents from the clerk:

- your college's vision and mission statement, a copy of the strategic plan, the college prospectus and, if available, the annual report;
- principal's reports relevant to governors;
- standards and performance reports relevant to governors;
- the most recent **Ofsted** report; and
- data on the student cohort from the current academic year and from the previous two years.

Where you need to make notes in response to activity questions, we suggest you do this in a notebook or on separate sheets of loose-leaf paper, and store the information you compile along with the module, for future reference.

Section 1

National and local influences on the curriculum

No two providers are identical in their curriculum offer. Each provider's curriculum is influenced by both national and local factors. In this section you will be looking at some of the key influences, including the national drivers, and the needs of your local economy and community.

Government departments that influence education policy

Currently there are two ministerial departments that influence education and training: the **Department for Education** and the **Department for Business, Innovation and Skills**.

The current policy drivers for funding education and training focus on employability, apprenticeships, world class skills, and reviewing of vocational qualifications.

Department for Education (DfE)

This department is responsible for education and children's services. It oversees the 14-19 element of further education. The Education Funding Agency provides grants to providers for 16-19 education. The Government is committed to increasing the number of places in education and training for 16-18 year olds in preparation for raising the age of participation in full-time education or training to 18 by 2015'. Local authorities have a duty to ensure that sufficient, suitable places are available to meet the reasonable needs of all young people, and to encourage them to participate. Local authorities must also track young people's progress as they move between different education and training opportunities.

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)

This department is responsible for the economy: skills, higher education, innovation, business and trade. The Skills Funding Agency provides the funding for adult learner-responsive provision (provision led by the learners' choice and demand) and employer responsive-provision (led by employer choice).

In the department's **Plan for Growth** strategy of March 2011, Ambition 4 is "to create a more educated workforce that is the most flexible in Europe". This has a significant focus on employer responsive work, particularly apprenticeships including higher level apprenticeships.

Colleges at the heart of their community

"Colleges change lives; they feed skills into the economy and support employers to develop their workforce to underpin a competitive economy. They also cement the fabric of the community, bringing the unemployed back into the workforce, tackling issues of equality and diversity and working with health, social services and the voluntary sector to create access and opportunity to ensure inclusion."

Quote from a report by the 157 group

Currently, the government agenda is for increased localism and providing tailored public services for the needs of the local community.

“High skills have always been an enabler of social mobility. Even more importantly we know that gaining and using skills gives individuals and their families a stronger sense of purpose and pride in their own achievements. It is also clear that learning, including perhaps in its more informal settings, strengthens communities by helping bring people together and encouraging active citizenship... But the skills revolution we seek and the benefits we look to it to bring cannot be led from above. It needs the active involvement of you [as college leaders] and your learners as well.”

John Hayes, Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, speech on 15 June, 2011

Many colleges are already an integral part of the economic and social development of the community in which they operate. Current government agendas aim to strengthen this and to make colleges more accountable to their local communities. Colleges undertake a dialogue with the funding agencies to determine what provision best meets local needs. The following was submitted by Ofsted as evidence to the Independent Commission on Colleges in their Communities (July 2011):

“Key strengths included extensive partnerships with local businesses, the local authority, schools and charities which create real projects that have high impact on both learners and the immediate community. These colleges are key players in the development of an effective community ethos. They develop strategies to engage hard-to-reach groups, and support them back into learning. Links with employers help them to become more competitive, enable them to secure their future workforce, and provide opportunities to local people. Students value work placements highly and have a very good choice of experiences through extensive links with employers, schools, nurseries, community organisations and universities.”

Evidence to the Commission from Ofsted – college inspection reports

Offender learning

Offenders, in prisons and supervised in the community, according to need, should have access to learning and skills, which enables them to gain the skills and qualifications they need to hold down a job and have a positive role in society.

Activity

Find out more about national and local influences on your college's curriculum. Work through the questions below to find out more about the national and local influences on your college's curriculum. Make a note of your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Look through some principal's reports relevant to governors. What curriculum matters are raised in the principal's reports? Make a note of them. Do they illustrate any of the national or local influences listed above?
2. Look at your college's vision, mission statement and strategic objectives. How do these relate to the current government policy drivers?
3. Look through your college prospectus. How does the curriculum offer support the economic needs of your community.

Viewpoint

We hope this activity has given you an insight into how curriculum issues are considered by your college. You should have managed to identify some curriculum areas that seem to reflect national and local influences. You may feel that one or two aspects need to be considered more carefully. When you can, check your thoughts out with the clerk or perhaps with the relevant senior post-holder with responsibility for curriculum and standards. If you have any questions or action points that you want to follow up, make a note of them in the 'Action planner' in 'Using the materials'.

In the next section we shall be looking in more detail at how the curriculum relates to student age, different types of courses, levels and qualifications.

Section 2

The students and their courses

As a governor, you need to know what kind of students your organisation has, how they are funded, the levels and types of courses they follow, and what the links are between the courses on offer, the progression opportunities and links with employment. There may also be international students who will have specific needs. You will then focus specifically on the range of students and courses at your own college.

Colleges and courses

Every provider is unique in its offer, depending on its mission and specialisms. However, it is possible to group providers according to the age range of their students and the range of courses they offer, as shown in [Figure 1](#).

College type	Students and courses
Sixth-form colleges	Students aged 16–19; some colleges also have adult students; mainly full-time courses.
General further education and tertiary colleges; community providers	Students aged 14+; they attend on a full- or part-time basis; wide range of vocational, academic and professional courses offered; some colleges have links to students aged under 16
Land-based colleges Art, design and performing arts colleges	Students aged 14+; courses reflect the specialist vocational requirements implicit in the college's name; students may be full- or part-time.
Specialist designated colleges	Students are mostly adults; these colleges may be highly specialised in the courses they offer or they may offer a wide range of courses to adults; attendance is full- or part-time; it may be on a residential basis.

Figure 1: Categories of colleges – students and course

Categories and levels of qualifications

The Office of Qualification and Examination Regulation (Ofqual) regulates at all levels, from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) of the national curriculum up to higher level vocational qualifications equivalent to a PhD. These assessments and qualifications are collected into separate systems (or frameworks). Find out more about the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) on the [Ofqual site](#).

Figure 2 shows the national framework of qualifications for post-16 education and training, with qualifications offered at eight different levels and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) has been designed by the higher education sector, and describes all the main higher education qualifications. It applies to degrees, diplomas, certificates and other academic awards granted by a university or higher education college (apart from honorary degrees and higher doctorates). The FHEQ broadly corresponds with levels 4 to 8 of the National Qualifications Framework, in terms of the demands the qualifications place on learners. Find out more about the [NQF](#) on the directgov site.

Level	Examples of NQF qualifications	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (HHEQ)
Entry	Entry level certificates English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) Adult literacy and numeracy, and ESOL Functional skills at entry level (English, maths and ICT)	
1	GCSEs grades D-G BTEC Foundation diplomas OCR Nationals NVQs Functional skills at Level 1 Adult literacy and numeracy, and ESOL	
2	GCSEs grades A*-C Functional skills at Level 2 Apprenticeships NVQs Adult literacy and numeracy, and ESOL	
3	A / AS levels International baccalaureate NVQs Advanced apprenticeships	
4	Certificates of higher education Higher level apprenticeships NVQs	Certificates of higher education Higher national certificates

Level	Examples of NQF qualifications	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (HHEQ)
5	HNCs and HNDs Other higher diplomas NVQs	Diplomas of higher education Foundation degrees Higher national diplomas
6	BTEC advanced professional diplomas, certificates and awards	Bachelor's degrees Bachelor's degrees with honours Graduate certificates and diplomas Post-graduate certificate in education (PGCE)
7	BTEC advanced professional diplomas, certificates and awards	Master's degrees Integrated master's degrees Post-graduate certificates Post-graduate diplomas
8	Specialist awards	Doctoral degrees

Figure 2: Qualifications by level across the National Qualifications Framework

Equality and diversity

The Equality Act 2010

This Act came into force on 1 October 2010 to bring the UK in line with other European countries. It applies to any business with employees and those providing goods and services to the public and brings together previous equality legislation. It distils nine Acts into one, harmonises definitions and exceptions and places a new Equality Duty on public bodies.

It is important that all public bodies, including FE and skills' providers, recognise the protected characteristics under the Act: race, religion or belief, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity.

The Act requires the college to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups; and
- foster good relations between people from different groups (i.e. persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it).

It is the responsibility of the governing body to monitor the Equality Act and how it is implemented within the college.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding in the FE and skills sector places the learners at the centre of learning decisions, and builds around the need to be safe and to succeed. Personal safety is a fundamental precondition for effective and successful learning, and can only be experienced in a safe learning environment that promotes wellbeing and security for all learners, of all ages, especially those who are vulnerable. **[Find out more about the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act of 2006.](#)**

A number of legal and policy drivers now reinforce the educational argument for safer learning, which in turn is reflected in legal duties which themselves place a focus back on the needs of the learner.

Further education colleges and providers of adult, community and work-based learning in England are required to secure the safety of the children, young people and vulnerable adults who are their learners.

Every Child Matters, 2003, is an initiative which focuses on five outcomes, for all those working with children and young people up to the age of 18. Many providers have extended this to all learners including adults.

Providers must strive to help them achieve:

- being healthy
- staying safe
- enjoying and achieving
- making a positive contribution
- achieving economic wellbeing.

The 'staying safe' outcome principally concerns the capacity of learning providers to ensure that children and young people stay safe from harm. Safety is arguably a precondition for the achievement of each of the other four outcomes. Evidence for their success includes compliance with relevant legislation, undertaking appropriate checks, combating bullying, harassment and discrimination, and ensuring all staff are appropriately trained. Learning is expected to support children and young people and keep them safe from accidental injury, bullying, harassment, discrimination, crime, antisocial behaviour, neglect, sexual exploitation, exposure to violence and other dangers.

Activity

Get to know who your students are and what courses they study.

In this activity you will be finding out more about the students at your college and the levels and types of courses that they follow. You may already have some of this information from working through the activities in Module 1: Introduction and Module 6: Strategy and educational character. If not, or if there are gaps in your information, you should look at your principal's report to governors and / or your college's annual report.

1. Look at the trends over the last couple of years in terms of student numbers, balance of full- and part-time, and the levels and types of courses on offer by comparing the most recent data with that for the previous two years. What patterns, if any, emerge?
2. Now consider the curriculum plan. How does it reflect those trends? Are there omissions? Are you happy that the curriculum strategy currently being adopted is congruent with the patterns that emerge from these trends? Are there any implications for the strategic plan here?
3. What opportunities are there for students to progress in the college? Are all students able to move flexibly across all the curriculum areas offered by the college? Are there patterns of unequal take-up across the National Qualifications Framework according to gender, age, ethnicity, disability, etc.?
4. Get copies of your college's policies in relation to equality and diversity. If you identified any patterns of unequal take-up in relation to the previous question, does the organisation address these?

Viewpoint

This activity should help bring to life the profile of your college and its students. You should have built up a picture of your institution in terms of two important characteristics: the student body and the range and type of courses. This picture should be consistent with the institution's vision, mission, strategic objectives and the needs of the community it serves. It should provide comprehensive progression routes across subject areas for all students. If you are in doubt about the overall picture or have questions about the fit between this picture and the mission, strategic objectives and community needs, make a note of your questions in the 'Action planner' in 'Using the materials' and raise it in the forum and context you consider most appropriate – your clerk will be able to help with this. The issue of financial support for students is considered in more detail below.

Support for students

Financial support for learners

Financial support for students is a complex and ever-changing area, but it is important for you to have a basic understanding of the system of funding and how it is implemented by your own college. You will look at this in more detail in Module 10: Finance and resources. Funding priorities are set annually and shift in order to meet national skills' needs. In addition colleges are allocated discretionary funds to support students from low income families and disadvantaged backgrounds into employment.

Activity

How does your college's approach to student financial support ensure equality of opportunity? Ask the clerk or your college's financial director for the strategies relating to student finance and funding streams and the college's strategy for bursaries for 16 -18 year old students. This should include learning support funds, financial support, bursaries, fee levels, grants, local transport initiatives, and full cost work (where the student pays for the full cost of the programme of learning).

Guidance and support

Guidance and support to students is an important part of the total curriculum offer and must be available to all students irrespective of age. Institutions should provide pre-enrolment advice, ensure that induction programmes are part of the course package, and offer support throughout a course. For example, support could involve learning support, financial support or support for welfare concerns. In addition institutions should offer guidance for progression and employment. Where students have additional learning needs the college should have a clear approach to defining those needs, together with the resources to support them.

Activity

Review the guidance and support your college offers.

Viewpoint

The management of the student support provision is of critical importance in ensuring that the college is able to retain students. You should ensure that the college has in place a swift and effective support service that addresses student problems quickly and sensitively whilst keeping teaching staff informed and involved.

Section 3

The curriculum offer

In this section you will look at the curriculum offered by your college. As described in Section 1, each provider is unique, however they organise their curriculum based on the National Qualifications Framework (see [figure 2](#)) which is based on national policies aimed at:

- raising the levels of skill in the workforce;
- ensuring that young people's learning enables them to develop the functional skills and broad range of capabilities needed for future employment;
- inclusion in education and training and addressing equal opportunities' issues so that no group is excluded from the full range of benefits that come from work and from playing a full part in society;
- developing a lifelong learning culture enabling people to continue to learn throughout their lives for a variety of purposes; and
- encouraging people of all ages to take part in learning and so enjoy the benefits of qualifications and improved knowledge and skills.

Every provider has to offer a breadth of curriculum that enables individual learning / training plans to be agreed with each learner according to their needs. Levels of learning are defined by the Office of Qualifications and Examination Regulation ([Ofqual](#)).

Entry and Level 1

Most general FE colleges offer entry and foundation level learning programmes. The courses offered at these levels include functional skills in English and mathematics for adults, provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities and programmes aimed at enabling young people who have not yet achieved Level 2 to progress onto the next levels of learning or employment. There are some specialist colleges that solely offer programmes for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, often with residential facilities.

Foundation learning generally supports low-attaining learners to help raise their participation, attainment and progression. Often programmes and projects aimed at reengaging young people into education and training will be part of a college's foundation learning provision. Young people work on a personalised programme that leads to a mix of small, flexible qualifications, as a basis for progression to further learning or employment. Foundation learning can be delivered in schools and colleges, or by private or voluntary sector training providers.

Examples

- Literacy and numeracy skills' development embedded in vocational and other programmes.
- Work preparation and transition to work programmes for learners with learning difficulties.
- Life skills and independent living skills programmes for learners with learning difficulties.
- A range of motivational progression focused awards and certificates to enable young people to progress to the next level of learning or employment including learning based on vocational subject, functional skills and personal and social development qualifications.

Level 1 and 2

Most general FE colleges offer vocational qualifications at Levels 1 and 2. They also offer GCSE opportunities to learners who wish to improve their qualifications, in order to progress to further opportunities.

Examples

- BTEC Introductory Awards, Certificates and Diplomas (Level 1)
- BTEC First Awards, Certificates, Extended Certificates and Diplomas (Level 2)
- OCR Nationals (Levels 1 and 2)
- VRQs (Vocationally Related Qualifications)
- NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications)
- GCSEs (level 2)
- Functional Skills in English, Mathematics and Information Communication Technology (Levels 1 and 2)

Level 3

Learners will either undertake an A-level programme or a vocational programme depending on their learning goals. Some providers offer the opportunity for A-level students to undertake a vocational award as part of their programme and also the opportunity for vocational students to undertake A-levels.

Examples

- BTEC Extended Diploma (e.g. in sport and exercise)
- A-Level (e.g. in English)
- NVQ Level 3 (e.g. in motor vehicle engineering)
- International Baccalaureate.

Functional skills

On most programmes, learners will undertake functional skills. Functional skills are a key element to the curriculum and qualifications reforms in England. They are the practical skills that allow people to use English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) in real-life contexts. In developing functional skills, people can adapt and apply the knowledge to suit different situations they may face at home, at work, in education, and in the community.

English for speakers of other language (ESOL)

ESOL courses aim to improve speaking, reading and writing of English for learners whose first language is not English. ESOL courses are currently available from Entry level through to Level 2. The Skills Funding Agency has stated that ESOL courses leading to approved qualifications will continue to be funded, however it is worth looking out for further guidance from the government as funding rules may be amended from time to time.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are seen as an important contribution to economic growth. There are three levels of apprenticeship available:

Apprenticeships

- Apprentices work towards work-based learning qualifications such as an NVQ Level 2, functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT, and, in some cases, a relevant knowledge-based qualification such as a BTEC.
- These provide the skills students/learners need for their chosen career and allow entry to an advanced level apprenticeship.

Advanced level apprenticeships

- Advanced level apprentices work towards work-based learning qualifications such as NVQ Level 3, functional skills and, in most cases, a relevant knowledge-based certificate such as a BTEC.
- To start this programme, learners should ideally have five GCSEs (grade C or above) or have completed a Level 2 apprenticeship.

Higher apprenticeships

- Higher apprenticeships work towards work-based learning qualifications such as NVQ Level 4 and, in some cases, a knowledge-based qualification such as a foundation degree.

Apprentices have an employer and are paid a wage. A training agreement sets out what is expected of the college, the employer and the apprentice.

Colleges are increasingly using a variety of delivery approaches for apprenticeships in order to best meet the needs of the employer and the apprentice. Delivery is normally on a regular day release basis where apprentices attend the college for one day every week. Increasingly however other delivery approaches are used such as block release where apprentices attend the college daily for an extended period of time or delivery in the workplace. Often combinations of these delivery approaches are used.

Colleges provide assessors who visit the apprentices in the workplace to observe, record and validate assessment evidence. Colleges also provide training coordinators who provide pastoral support and have overall responsibility for monitoring and supporting an apprentice's progress. Some colleges combine these two roles.

14-16 year olds enrolled in colleges

Further education (FE) colleges will be able to enrol 14-16-year-olds who wish to study high-quality vocational qualifications from September 2013. FE colleges will be able to "set up their own '14-16 centres'. The new centres will offer a combination of high quality vocational and academic subjects and aim to attract students of all abilities who want early access to practical and technical education.

Only FE colleges which meet certain criteria will be able to enrol and receive government funding for 14-16-year-olds from the academic year 2014-2015. Criteria include the following:

- College must have been rated good or above at their last Ofsted inspection. If a college was rated as satisfactory, and their last inspection was a number of years ago, they will have to show evidence of improved performance over the past four years.
- They must conduct an assessment of their capability and readiness using the 'readiness to open checklist' published by the government.
- Their finances must be in good order.

Foundation degree courses and other higher education programmes

Foundation degree courses are designed to develop higher Level skills at levels 4 and 5 which will equip students with the combination of technical skills, academic knowledge and transferable skills that employers need. All students enrolled on foundation degree courses must demonstrate their skills in the workplace, and work experience is essential for students who are not in employment. They will also have the opportunity to progress to a degree course at honours level. Some colleges also run degree courses and Master's programmes, depending on their specialism and resources.

The Government HE White Paper, **Students at the heart of the system** (2011) and the subsequent fee reforms have created an HE system where the costs of teaching are met through student loans, repayable on an income basis. In the first year of this reform, colleges were able to bid for direct Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) numbers from a defined allocation of places (20,000) for 2012/13. HEFCE is awaiting further guidance from the Government on future funding arrangements. It is likely that unrestricted recruitment of learners with high-grade A-Level results (AAB or higher) will continue. The role for further education colleges is central to the Governments plans for delivering higher education. Central to this is the role further education colleges can play in creating diversity in the sector, providing choice for learners, particularly reaching out to non-traditional HE learners and delivering locally-relevant, vocational HE and lifelong learning. In addition a revised quality improvement and assurance system for HE in FE will be introduced from 2013/2014.

Activity

1. How does your organisation's curriculum plan support students/learners?
2. Consider some representative students from the student profile at your college. How does the curriculum offer meet the needs of students and the local economy? What challenges are posed for these students, and for staff and managers?

Viewpoint

Although the various curriculum initiatives offer very flexible choices in principle, they pose challenging problems for managers in terms of group sizes, timetabling and tracking, forecasting income, and other factors. For teaching staff, there are additional responsibilities. For students, greater flexibility and different assessment approaches can be confusing.

The learning needs of adults

There are different funding streams and government priorities for adult learning. Look at the [NIACE](#) site for background.

The learning needs of adults are different from those of most students in the 16–19 age group. They may want to acquire functional skills missed in their earlier years, to refresh and upgrade their skills as returners to work, or to re-train for different employment opportunities after periods of unemployment. Some adults will be learning solely out of personal interest, as a leisure activity. For them, the social aspects of studying might be as important as the knowledge or skill gained. Their study skills and confidence as learners may need to be enhanced.

Adult literacy and numeracy learning

There are national standards set by the Office of Qualifications and Examination Regulation (Ofqual) that define levels of learning for literacy and numeracy for adults. Detail of this can be seen in the [adult core curriculum site](#).

Professional development and higher level skills for adults in the workplaces

Most colleges, through partnerships with employers provide higher-level qualifications for employees, to increase their knowledge and skills and provide them with professional qualifications such as accountancy, business improvement techniques, IT skills, CORGI gas registration, First Aid, Safe handling, Security.

Adult and community learning (ACL)

Traditionally adult and community learning was delivered via funding from the local authority in each area, sometimes delivered through provision managed by the authority, or delivered through partners such as colleges and training providers or voluntary organisations. Adult and community learning is now directly funded via the Skills Funding Agency, and is outside the local authority budget, however your college may deliver adult and community learning on behalf of the local authority. This could include family learning classes, health awareness, and English for speakers of other languages.

Access to HE

These courses are designed for people who would like to study at university but who left school without the usual qualifications, such as A-levels.

Activity

1. How well does your college cater for the needs of adult students?
2. Identify some key ways in which your institution is catering for the needs of adult students – for example, where are courses sited, what additional support or services are offered? If you are not sure, look at your institution's vision, mission statement, strategic objectives, the college prospectus, principal's report relevant to governors, or curriculum reports to governors or the academic board.

Viewpoint

We hope you were able to identify some key ways in which your college is providing adults with learning opportunities. You may have noticed some different approaches to learning from those you've noted for 16–19 year olds: learning taken to other locations such as community centres, employers' premises, libraries and primary schools; dedicated adult areas in the college such as adult common rooms; provision of crèche or nursery places. Perhaps special projects have been developed offering a range of beneficiary allowances and support.

Section 4

Assessing the effectiveness of teaching and learning

As a governor, you will want to be confident that the college is delivering high quality teaching and learning and is continuously monitoring and working to improve practice. Module 9: Quality and standards takes a more detailed look at quality where you will learn about quality assurance, course review, self-assessment and development and improvement planning frameworks that seek to maintain and improve college performance. You will also learn about the ways in which your college performance is monitored and reviewed both during the year and annually. **The Ofsted common inspection framework (CIF)** asks providers the following question: how effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?

The CIF sets out the following range of statements which inspectors use to explore the effectiveness and quality of teaching and learning:

- Learners benefit from high expectations, engagement, care, support and motivation from staff
- Staff use their skills and expertise to plan and deliver teaching, learning and support to meet each learner's needs
- Staff initially assess learners' starting points and monitor their progress, set challenging tasks, and build on and extend learning for all learners
- Learners understand how to improve as a result of frequent, detailed and accurate feedback from staff following assessment of their learning
- Teaching and learning develop English, mathematics and functional skills, and support the achievement of learning goals and career aims
- Appropriate and timely information, advice and guidance support learning effectively
- Equality and diversity are promoted through teaching and learning.

Teaching and learning observations

All providers have teaching and learning observation schemes where teachers, and sometimes also assessors and tutors, are observed and have their performance and the quality of learning graded by an observer. The grading scale normally follows the Ofsted scale of: Grade 1 outstanding; Grade 2 good; Grade 3 requires improvement; Grade 4 inadequate. Schemes and observation policies vary; with some providers observations are unannounced, without notice given to the observed teacher, whereas with others notice is provided and teachers are able to prepare for the observation. In schemes where notice is given, an observation window of time may be provided so that a teachers knows that he or she will be observed at some point, for example, during a particular week.

There are also differences in how observation grades link to teachers' appraisal, pay, competency or capability, and training and development. There is no single model for the observation and monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders, managers and governors must be aware of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment occurring in the college, what is being done to improve or maintain standards and what is being done to develop and share practice.

Self-assessment and quality improvement

In Module 9: Quality and standards, self-assessment and quality improvement planning are looked at in detail. Colleges should produce an annual self-assessment report and a quality improvement plan. Self-assessment is primarily about improving college performance and should therefore be driven by the goals of the college and the needs of its learners and stakeholders. Lesson observation

profiles and a review of teaching and learning must feature prominently in self-assessment and improvement planning.

There is no prescribed framework for self-assessment but it is highly advisable that the Ofsted common inspection framework is used as the template as it provides both structure and focus. Self-assessment should be viewed as an integral part of organisational planning and not as an add-on extra. Module 9: Quality and standards looks at the importance of integrating self-assessment into business planning; colleges should seek to establish a culture of continuous improvement in which self-assessment is embedded in business processes and is not a one-off event. Governors should also approve the college self-assessment report and evaluate the effectiveness and accuracy of the self-assessment process.

It is also important that governors are assured that key stakeholders are involved in the self-assessment process. For example, learners, employers and partner schools should be surveyed to ascertain their level of satisfaction with the services provided to them.

Governors normally undertake a self-assessment of their own effectiveness in various aspects of governance including the impact on quality and standards. Typically this is conducted through the use of an annual questionnaire or through a 'health check' approach. The outcomes and actions arising from this can be incorporated into the self-assessment and quality improvement plan under the leadership and management heading.

Activity

Reviewing the effectiveness of teaching and learning in your college.

- 1. Ask the senior manager responsible for quality to provide you with the following information:**
 - the teaching and learning observation grade profile for the college;
 - the college's policy and procedure for observing teachers (useful for finding out whether or not teachers are given notice of an observation or whether observations occur without prior notice as these are factors which can affect the grade profile); and
 - some completed sample lesson observation forms.
- 2. Ask how the profile of lesson observation grades compares to that of other colleges and how it correlates with the college's success rates. For example, if the college's success rates require improvement yet the lesson observation profile shows that the majority of teaching and learning is good or outstanding there may be an issue about the reliability and accuracy of the observation scheme. It is likely in this scenario that observers may in this instance be grading too generously.**
- 3. It might also be useful to know as a governor what percentage of the teaching team is newly-qualified and what support is in place for these teachers.**
- 4. Further questions to ask might be:**
 - How are teachers who are graded as inadequate or as requiring improvement supported to improve?
 - How are teachers new to the college inducted?
 - How are observers selected and trained?

- Does the college's personnel or human resources department provide governors with information on teaching staff turnover, equality and diversity data relating to teachers, newly-qualified teachers and/or teachers new to the college?
- What percentage of the college's professional development budget is dedicated to teaching and learning and what are the priorities for the year?

Use this information to make your own judgement on the effectiveness of the teaching and learning at your college. There should also be a significant focus on teaching and learning in your college's self-assessment report and quality improvement plan, as well as previous inspection or monitoring visit reports.

Viewpoint

Doing this kind of research will give you confidence in the quality of teaching and learning in your college. If it has raised any doubts in your mind or questions that you want to ask, note them in the 'Action planner' in 'Using the materials' and come back to them after you have worked through Module 9: Quality and standards.

Module review

This module has looked at your responsibilities as a governor in terms of the core activity of the college: the curriculum provided for the students. It also briefly looked at ways in which you can assess the quality of teaching and learning at your college. If you have worked through the whole module you should be confident that you can:

- explain what is meant by ‘curriculum’ and the meaning of terms used to describe categories and levels of qualifications;
- describe the variety of learning opportunities at your college both for 14–19 year olds and adult learners;
- show how this provision relates to the needs of students and employers’ skill requirements in your local community and to national strategy;
- demonstrate how your college’s curriculum offer forms a coherent part of provision within your local area and show how some specialist niche provision contributes towards the bank of national skills;
- outline the range of government curriculum initiatives;
- explain how your college’s provision, on its own and in collaboration with other colleges, contributes towards widening participation and equality of opportunity; and
- participate actively in discussions and in decision-making – at both governing body and committee level – about curriculum issues in your college, in accordance with your responsibilities as a governor.

If you are not sure that you have achieved a particular goal, look back at the contents list in the introduction to the module. You may find it useful to reread the relevant section.

Summary of key learning points

In this module you have looked at the range and depth of curriculum offered by your college and your own responsibility as a governor for ensuring the quality of that curriculum and monitoring the college’s response to national curriculum initiatives.

The curriculum is the core activity of the college and therefore a major responsibility for governors. One important aspect of this is to match the curriculum with the needs of the community the college serves.

There are a number of national and local influences on the curriculum offer of a college – some of them government-led and others specific to the community served by the college. Your college’s curriculum offer must fit into the national framework of qualifications for post-16 education. It is important to understand the student profile at your college so that the curriculum offer meets their needs. Special consideration must be given to widening participation and providing equality of opportunity, including opportunities for students with disabilities and learning difficulties and students whose first language is not English.

There are a number of curriculum initiatives for 16–19 year olds. These are designed to contribute to the overall government policy of providing flexibility for learners, raising the levels of skill and employability in the population, and developing a lifelong learning culture.

Where your college’s curriculum offer seeks to attract adult learners, it must take into account a number of factors specific to this group, for example, prior experiences of education and training, confidence levels, family commitments and responsibilities and what the progression options might be. Increasingly funding is driving what colleges offer to adults and the focus is increasingly around functional skills and helping adults to gain qualifications up to and including Level 2. The challenge

for colleges is to attract and retain adult learners who can be nervous about returning to education and often have outside commitments and responsibilities that work against their ability and desire to stay in learning. It can also be a challenge for colleges to be able to afford to deliver discrete classes to adults; if this is unaffordable adults may therefore have to infill into classes for 16-18 year olds.

Where next?

You have now completed work on Module 8: Curriculum. If there are areas in which you need more guidance or information, they may be covered in other modules. Turn to 'Check your current knowledge and skills' in 'Using the materials'. This self-assessment questionnaire will help you to decide which modules or sections of modules may help to fill these gaps. Tick the useful sections for further study.

If you cannot find the information you need within these materials, turn to the 'Action planner' in 'Using the Materials'. Note down what further information, support or guidance you would like. The 'Action planner' gives advice on who may be able to help, and how.

Putting it into action

We hope that working through this module has raised useful questions, increased your awareness of issues and given you ideas for practical action that you would like to follow up. The 'Action planner' in 'Using the Materials' contains a section where you can note down any questions or action points that you want to follow up within your own college.

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