

Sector Developments

Cuts to 16-18 Funding

Mainly as a result of demographic changes, the Department for Education (DfE) has been required by the Treasury to achieve around £450 million savings in respect of provision for young people aged 16-18. A spokesperson for the Education Funding Agency (EFA) said that 2013/14 allocations to providers will be unaffected by this. However, in cases where there have been significant under-spends (for example in 16-18 apprenticeships) there are fears that the Treasury may still set 2013/14 16-18 budgets at a lower level.

Colleges collectively fail to deliver contracted levels of provision

The SFA has published data that shows that in 2011/12, £2,965 million was allocated to providers, of which only £2,874 million was delivered. The shortfall in delivery has given rise to concerns that this may provide the Treasury with the justification for making further cuts in future FE budgets. FE colleges were responsible for around £78 million of the of the £91 million shortfall, with local authorities and private trainers accounting for the rest. Apparently, some colleges failed to use almost a quarter of their allocation. However, the largest single overpayment was made to Learndirect (now privately owned by Lloyds TSB), which received around £5.3 million over and above the level of provision it actually delivered. In the attempt to avoid a repeat of this shortfall in delivery in 2013/14, the SFA is reducing the funding allocations made to providers that underperformed in 2011/12 and is offering larger allocations to those that over performed.

'Claw back' rules relaxed

In the past, providers failing to meet their funding targets by more than 3% were required to pay back part of their funding allocation for which provision was not delivered. This is known as 'claw back'. However the SFA has now relaxed its rules on 'claw back', so that providers that have missed their targets by 10% or less will now be allowed to keep a greater proportion of the funding they were allocated in respect of provision they failed to deliver. A spokesperson for the Association of Colleges (AoC) said that the problems colleges had faced in meeting funding targets were partly caused by a reduction in the funding rates paid by the SFA in 2011/12 compared with rates in previous years, and added that the relaxation of the rules was needed to give colleges the time they needed to adjust to these new rates.

Unemployed learners leaving FE courses to take up jobs to be excluded from success rates

Previously, when FE students in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or Employment Support Allowance (ESA) left their course in order to take up a job, the provider's retention and achievement rates were both adversely affected and this impacted negatively on the provider's overall Qualification Success Rate (QSR). However, BIS has now announced that a provider's QSR will, in future, exclude those students that leave early to take up a job. In announcing the change, a spokesperson said that BIS 'did not want to penalise providers by counting as a fail those learners who withdrew from their courses because they got a job', but went on to warn that BIS 'will continue to treat as failures, all other instances of non-achievement'. But in responding to the change, a spokesperson for Ofsted cautioned that 'if a learner leaves a course without achieving a qualification, this information must continue to be carefully recorded' and added that 'inspectors would consider changes in circumstance, and the consequential impact on outcomes data, very carefully'.

SFA struggles to find fraudulent subcontractors to 'name and shame'

Last summer, the SFA promised to 'crack down on fraud and the misuse of public money', and that 'a list of banned subcontractors that the SFA would refuse permission for lead providers to use', would be published. However, it seems that the list has yet to appear. This reason given by the SFA for this is that 'we do not currently have any subcontractors that we have refused permission for lead providers to use.'

'Every little helps'

In 2012/13 the SFA allocated Tesco £3,851,914 from its adult skills budget and £461,819 from its 16-18 apprenticeship budget. Tesco's group profit in that year was £3.8 billion

Job losses and apprenticeship displacements likely as Pearson subsidiary closes

Pearson is closing its subsidiary 'Pearson in Practice' leaving around 550 of the firm's staff facing redundancy. This year the firm received around £65 million from the SFA, of which £50 million was in respect of provision for trainees aged 16-18. Pearson in Practice was formed as a result of Pearson's acquisition of two private training firms, Zenos and Melorio, in 2010 at a cost of around £100 million. The subsidiary provided apprenticeships and work based training programmes lasting between 3 and 12 months, largely for young people aged 16-24 and made a profit of around £95 million in its first year of operation. This was mainly as a result of the availability of significant government funding for schemes for increasing the employability of young people. However, more recently, funding allocations have been linked more closely to the success rates of trainees in obtaining employment on finishing their courses. This has apparently made it difficult for the firm to maintain its financial viability and decision to cease operating will apparently leave the firm with a balance sheet loss of around £120 million. A spokesperson for Pearson said that the firm 'will work closely with its partners in the further education sector and industry' and hopes that 'around 5000 learners will eventually be transferred to other providers'. Pearson will continue to provide training for young people and adults through another subsidiary, 'Pearson Work Based Learning' but will now do so indirectly, mainly through sub contracting arrangements with colleges and employers.

Information Authority (IA) plans to bring forward Individual Learner Record (ILR) deadlines

First, colleges were required to submit their ILR data by the last Monday in March in the following funding year. Even after this date a provider could revise any of their data that was subsequently found to be incomplete. Then, the deadline was brought forward to the third week of November, with no returns being accepted after that date. Now, the Information Authority (not to be confused with the Data Service) has proposed that the deadline for ILR returns should be brought forward to the third week of October, bringing it in line with the census returns deadline for schools. The proposals are a response to calls from BIS to receive more 'timely full-year data' from the sector in order to help BIS make its case to the Treasury for funding. The IA also argues that 'an earlier ILR return will allow the SFA to redistribute funds earlier in the academic year from under-performing providers to those providers demonstrating demand in line with published priorities'. The IA proposals have invoked a strong, and generally negative, response from the sector, with college representatives arguing that bringing the date forward 'clashes with the main college enrolment period' and that an earlier ILR return would be 'less rigorous' and would lead to 'less robust data'. As a result, the IA has agreed to consult further with the sector, with a final decision being expected to be made by the end January or early February.

The National Apprentice Service launches its 'Service Standard'

The NAS has launched a new code of conduct called the 'Service Standard' which sets out how NAS will deal with employers wanting to take on apprentices and, perhaps more significantly, how these employers will be put in contact with providers. The Service Standard seems to suggest that only the 'most appropriate college or training provider' would be put forward by the NAS for an employer's consideration, without defining what 'most appropriate' actually means. This has invoked concerns from across the sector including claims that the NAS 'may not always be fully aware of the extent of the strengths and weakness of different providers'. In response, a spokesperson for the NAS said that it would 'choose which providers to refer employers to, on the basis of employer needs, specialisation, success rates and track record' and going on to say that 'if more than one provider meets their criteria we (the NAS) will mention this'. However, the spokesperson warned that usually 'employers ask us for just one name' and added that 'Ofsted ratings are not the favoured criterion of SME's' looking for a provider'.

Government consults on the creation of new Traineeships

Matthew Hancock, the Minister for FE, Lifelong Learning and Skills, has launched a consultation on the creation of new Traineeships. In the third quarter of 2012 there were around 206,000 16-18 year olds and 821,000 19-24 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET). Evidence shows that young people who are classified as NEET 'are more likely to suffer long term unemployment, low pay, poor health and depression'. The new Traineeships are primarily intended to provide young people who are NEET with the extra help they need make the first steps towards getting back into learning or work. The Traineeships will last at least 6 months and the content of the programme is expected to include 'work-readiness training' such as CV writing and interview training, along with work experience and additional English and maths for those without good GCSE grades in those subjects. 'Intensive traineeships' are also being developed for those particularly challenged young people with no work experience and very few or no qualifications.

Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) staff face redundancy

Later this year the new FE Guild will assume the responsibilities of both LSIS and the Institute for Learning (IfL) in respect of setting professional standards and codes of behaviour for FE staff and for the professional development of those working in the FE sector. Government funding for the IfL has already ceased, but from April 2013 government funding for LSIS also will cease. As a result of this, the LSIS Board has announced it will begin 'a managed exit from its delivery of improvement services for the FE sector', leaving around 160 LSIS employees facing redundancy. The chief executive of LSIS, Rob Wye, has said that approaches will be made to the new Guild in respect of a possible transfer of LSIS staff to the new Guild. However it appears unlikely that Transfer of Undertakings and Protection of Employment (TUPE) regulations will be applicable in this particular instance.

But LSIS continues to develop new FE teacher training qualifications

Meanwhile, apparently undaunted by the prospect of its impending demise, LSIS is continuing to develop three new initial teacher training (ITT) qualifications. The new qualifications include a level 3 Certificate in Education and Training to replace the current Preparation to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PETLLS), a level 4 Certificate in Education and Training to replace the Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CETLLS), and a level 5 Diploma in Education and Training (along with a specialist diploma at level 5 for those teaching English, mathematics or supported learning) to replace the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS). On the basis of responses to an earlier consultation on the proposed changes, LSIS has doubled the length of the level 5 Diplomas to 120 credits, instead of the 60 credits initially proposed. This is intended to give the award parity with the school based Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE).

Approval of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP's) needed for the award of 'Charter status'

BIS is in the process of consulting with the sector on proposals for the award of 'Chartered status'. The new kite mark will be awarded to those colleges that meet the specified criteria and, of course, can actually be bothered to apply for it, particularly given the experiences of those colleges that went to the trouble of acquiring the Training Quality Standard (TQS). For those colleges that do apply and are awarded Chartered status, it will be granted for up to 5 years, after which time the college would need to reapply. The government argues that acquiring Chartered status will 'help institutions to build their reputation, gain recognition for what they had achieved within their communities, raise the status of FE, and help the UK Border Agency to recognise legitimate providers'. Presumably, a college that had merely, say, received a good Ofsted inspection otherwise might not be thought to be capable of delivering quality provision. To emphasise the importance of the new award, FE Minister Matthew Hancock, has decreed that even if the other criteria are met, the blessing of the LEP will be necessary before a college can be granted the award. In justification for this, Mr Hancock argues that LEP approval is necessary 'because LEP's are crucial to ensuring that the right skills are drawn down in an area' and that the college needs to demonstrate that it 'is working in a way which is consistent with the LEP's local skills strategy'.

Many of the colleges that acquired the last 'must have' kite mark, the TQS, were left bewildered by the speed with which it came and went. Similarly, those colleges awarded 'Beacon Status' must be left wondering what currency the award will have when LSIS ceases to exist, or exactly what value there was in having been recognised as Centre of Vocational Excellence. Hopefully Chartered status will last a bit longer

Lord Heseltine's 'No Stone Unturned' proposals to be piloted in Greater Birmingham

Lord Heseltine's proposals for greater devolution of funding and legal powers from central government to local public and private sector bodies based in the regions is to be piloted in the Greater Birmingham region (which takes in Solihull, Lichfield, Tamworth and Burton, but strangely none of the adjacent Black Country Boroughs). The pilot is expected to provide the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP with access to around £1 billion worth of funding, (including a proportion of the funding that is at present centrally controlled by the SFA and the EFA). Key stakeholders within the region, including local authorities and chambers of commerce, have been given 3 months to produce a robust business plan in order to secure the funding and the associated devolved powers. However, responsibility for the implementation of the plan, the exercise of devolved powers and the control of the expenditure will be co-ordinated and administered by the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP. If the pilot is successful, devolution of funds and associated decision making powers could be rolled out to other regions, meaning that colleges might soon be negotiating with their local LEP for their annual funding allocations, rather than with the SFA.

More academy schools engage in selective admissions practices.

Since the Coalition Government came to power in 2010, the number of academies has increased from 203 to 2,456. In response, the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and the Pearson Group have established an 'Academies Commission', and have appointed the former Ofsted Chief Inspector Christine Gilbert to lead it. The Commission recently carried out a review of academy schools and has produced a report that suggests that many academies are 'bending' government admission rules in order to select pupils from more privileged families'. The report also says that, because they have been given control over their own admissions policies, academies 'may entrench rather than mitigate social inequalities and lead to increased social segregation'. The report goes on to say that converting to academy status has not necessarily been a 'panacea for school improvement' and that evidence shows that 'many previously poorly performing schools in disadvantaged areas that stayed with their local authorities have done just as well as those which embarked on the academy route'. The report also claims that 'many academies are failing to honour the commitments they gave towards helping other schools to improve.

Performance related pay (PRP) to be introduced in schools in England and Wales

The Minister for Education, Michael Gove, has announced that performance related pay (PRP) for teachers in schools in England and Wales will be introduced this September and that head teachers are to be given more freedom in deciding the pay of their staff. The recommendation to introduce PRP in schools in England was made by the School Teachers' Review Board (STRB) chaired by Dame Patricia Hodgson (no relation to Roy). In accepting the STRB recommendations Mr Gove did however, admit that 'further work needs to be done' in deciding the best way to implement them. The new system will end teachers' automatic progression through national pay points according to length of service. Instead, progression will be linked to annual appraisals. The proposals have led to counter suggestions that perhaps MP's pay should be also linked to their performance based on appraisals conducted by their constituents.

Education Select Committee report on Careers Advice

A report released by the House of Commons Education Select Committee investigating the impact of the 2011 Education Act on young people's career advice says that, since responsibility for the service has transferred from local authorities to schools, 'the quantity and quality of careers advice has deteriorated'. Perhaps unsurprisingly, concerns were also expressed about the 'independence and impartiality of careers advice given by schools', with schools being accused of 'putting their own interests ahead of that of their

pupils', 'restricting access to other education providers' and 'making the filling of their own sixth form places, more of a priority than their statutory duty to provide independent and impartial advice and guidance for their pupils'. The Committee concluded that the situation is 'worsening' and that 'urgent intervention is required', possibly in the form of the extension of the role of the National Careers Service (NCS), and for Ofsted to carry out an inspection of careers guidance services.

The Empire strikes back

Next month (February) Sir Michael Wilshaw, the Ofsted Chief Inspector, will be presenting his Annual Report to members of the House of Commons Education Select Committee. He is expected to tell Committee members that, amongst other (largely negative) things, FE colleges:

- Are 'focusing on vocational courses of little real value' and need 're-orientating towards a moral determination to provide high-quality and relevant provision'.
- 'Have expanded their provision but have failed to give enough attention to the quality of teaching and learning', and that this expansion 'serves little purpose if the provision does not make a significant difference to the life chances of learners'.
- Have improved 'so-called success rates', but that these are 'an increasingly poor proxy for the attainment of skills that are valued by employers'.

However, the long awaited fight has now started with the publication by the AoC of a vigorous and robust response to Sir Michael's analysis of the sector, in which it is argued that:

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- Sir Michael's report 'includes some significant errors and there are important omissions which undermine the credibility of some of his conclusions'.
 - Sir Michael has 'failed to provide any evidence to support his allegation that the sector lacks the moral determination to provide high-quality and relevant provision'.
 - Sir Michael has 'failed to present any evidence to support his allegation that colleges have focused on expansion at the expense of quality'.
 - Sir Michael 'has 'failed to recognise that the sheer size and complexity of a large college makes it impossible to inspect in the same way as, say, a primary school is inspected.'
 - Sir Michael 'comes from a school background' and although 'he is making a tremendous effort to understand the college sector he finds it difficult to translate his approach to inspection to the FE sector'
 - Inspection judgements 'are inconsistent'

The AoC response goes on to say that:

- A high number of lead inspectors 'have very little experience of the FE sector'.
- A significant number of lead inspectors 'led on three or fewer inspections in 2011/12, with some only being the lead inspector for one inspection' and that it was 'quite hard to see how someone leading one inspection a year is in a good position to benchmark one college against another'.
- The Ofsted risk assessment process, in which the inspectorate analyse current attainment data to decide which institutions to inspect, is skewed in favour of schools.
- Inspection was 'a high-stakes game' and colleges deserve to be more fairly treated by Ofsted.
- 'Success rates in English colleges far outstrip those achieved by comparable providers in the US and Australia'.

'Bacc off' intensifies in race to launch the first Technical Baccalaureate

First, we had the International Baccalaureate (IB). Then, there was Michael Gove's proposal for an English Baccalaureate (EBacc). This was followed closely by his proposals for a Higher Baccalaureate (HBacc). Then, coming out of left field, Ed Miliband shifted the emphasis to vocational studies and proposed a Technical Baccalaureate (TechBacc). Almost immediately, Lord Adonis, New Labour's architect of the

academies programme, stole a march on Mr Miliband with proposals for his own TechBacc. And now, Lord Baker, the ex Conservative Education Minister, instigator of the national curriculum and joint architect of the University Technical College (UTC) programme, has trumped the whole lot of them by announcing his own plans for a TechBacc, complete with well developed arrangements for accreditation offered through City and Guilds (CGLI). The content of Lord Baker's TechBacc apparently reflects the curricula currently on offer at UTCs. At level 2 and level 3, TechBacc would include 'appropriate technical accreditation', an 'extended project', 'thinking and employability skills', along with English, maths and ICT. Alternatively, level 3 TechBacc technical accreditation would consist of a programme of study including least two GCE A levels 'in sciences or technical subjects'. Another alternative would include a combination of GCE A levels and 'appropriate technical accreditation'. Lord Baker also claims that his TechBacc would allow students aged 16 to combine a TechBacc with an EBacc, thereby giving some students the opportunity to achieve both.

The working group that developed the TechBacc proposals was chaired by Sir Michael Tomlinson, thereby providing him with an opportunity to resurrect at least some of his original plans for a new Diploma. Learning from past experiences, Sir Michael has swiftly rejected accusations that an option to combining academic and technical qualifications in one programme would dilute the A level 'gold standard', since this was basically the same criticism levelled at his own diploma proposals. For those of you with long enough memories, after painstaking research and considerable consultation with key stakeholders, Sir Michael's proposals for a new diploma were either watered down, or completely ignored, by successive governments. They did however, give birth to 'Specialised Diplomas' which, after not inconsiderable levels of funding and effort were expended on them, eventually proved to be unpopular with just about everybody.

As an interesting aside to all this, CGLI involvement in Lord Baker's TechBacc might just give a significant edge to these latest proposals. This is because CGLI established legal ownership of the names 'Technical Baccalaureate' and 'Technological Baccalaureate' some years back, when it was engaged in developing its own Technical Baccalaureate plans. These plans failed to come to fruition because the government policy of the day diverted its efforts away from developing a Technical Baccalaureate and into developing the now defunct General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ). No doubt colleges can hardly wait for yet another new diploma to be launched, particularly since trying to implement the last few was such fun.

Lord Baker calls for a 'Back to Basics' revamp of 14-18 education

Lord Baker has published a new book, entitled '14-18: A New Vision for Secondary Education', in which he argues that young people should be assessed at age 14 'to see where their interests lie' and that they should then be given a choice of attending one of 4 different types of college. These would be:

- Liberal Arts Colleges (similar to grammar schools) that would offer academic subjects.
- University Technical Colleges where students would take 'technical subjects' for 40% of the time and 'academic subjects' for the remaining 60%.
- Career Colleges that would offer skills and craft based subjects, 'such as plumbing or catering'.
- Specialist Colleges focusing on subjects such as Sports, Creative and Performing Arts, an example of which would be the 'Brit School' (British Recording Industry Trust) in Croydon.

This would 'create a coherent array of routes leading to university, apprenticeships and employment'. Lord Baker also argues that 'the national curriculum should stop at age 14', but that pupils 'should continue to study core subjects such as English and mathematics until they were 18'. With reference to FE colleges, Lord Baker said that the FE sector needed 'basic reform' and like Sir Andrew Foster before him, argues that colleges should 'specialise more' and stop trying to cater for 'such a huge range of activity'. He also warns that colleges should be wary of recruiting pupils at age 14, saying that 'there was a danger that every secondary head in the country will recommend their most difficult students to FE colleges'.

GCE A Level changes signal the end of Curriculum 2000 (CK2)

Michael Gove, the Minister for Education has written to Ofqual to say that, with effect from 2015:

- Two year GCE A Levels will be reintroduced, with examinations at the end of the two year course
- The 'Russell Group' of universities will advise Ofqual on the new A Level syllabus content
- January re-sit examinations will no longer be held
- AS Levels will become 'stand alone' examinations to be taken over one or two years.

School and college unions and a large number of professional bodies have criticised the planned changes. A spokesperson for the AoC said that in FE and sixth form colleges there was 'overwhelming support for the retention of an AS/A2 structure because of the role that AS levels have in bridging the gap from GCSEs and in informing university admissions officers and employers'. A spokesperson for the University and Colleges' Union (UCU) said that, 'in the absence of good alternative qualifications, young people will feel they have to continue with A levels and many will fail'.

Introduction of a new Minimum Standard for 16-18 providers

The FE sector has long argued for parity in the way in which the success rates of schools and colleges is measured. The government has now responded to this by developing a 'new minimum standard' that will be the absolute minimum level of performance required of 16-18 providers. All providers with students who are at the end of Key Stage 5 and who enter them for examinations at level 3 will be in scope. These will include all maintained school sixth forms, Academy school sixth forms, 16-19 Academies, University Technical College (UTC's), Studio Schools, Sixth Form Colleges, General FE (GFE) Colleges and 16-18 apprenticeship providers. The minimum standard will be calculated using the same data for all providers and will measure the achievement by students in their level 3 academic and/or vocational examinations.

All level 3 qualifications will be included in an approved list (although this is expected to contain only around 10% of the current 4000 or so approved qualifications). Each of these qualifications will be allocated a value measured in 'points'. The DfE will aggregate the achievements of students entered in examinations for these qualifications and then calculate the average points score achieved per examination entry for each 16-18 provider. The range of average point scores will be statistically 'normalised' to identify those 16-18 providers with performance below the minimum standard point score set, who will then be served with a notice to improve. Subsequent failure to improve within an agreed time frame will invoke a range of intervention strategies 'including withdrawal of funding or closure'. The DfE will use the validated awarding body data available in February each year to determine which providers have failed to meet the previous year's minimum standards. This will be done retrospectively for 2011/12. The point at which the minimum standard will be set will be reviewed annually. Details in respect of which level 3 qualifications are in scope, the number of points allocated to level 3 qualification successes, the points at which the minimum standard will be set and the methodology used to calculate average points scores, are given on the DfE website.

My thanks now go to Richard Durston, Group MIS Manager at Oxford and Cherwell Valley College (OCVC) and Karen Dyke, interim manager at OCVC for providing me with the information contained in the sections below. (But not the 'And finally..... Section - I wouldn't want them to be blamed for the rubbish joke!)

Raising the participation age (RPA)

From this summer all young people must remain in learning until the end of the academic year in which they reach age 17 and from the summer of 2015, they must remain in learning until they reach age 18. 'Remain in learning' means that they must be in:

- Full time education comprising of at least 540 guided learning hours (GLH) per year, or
- A full time job which includes at least 280 'off the job' GLH study per year, or
- An appropriate apprenticeship scheme

Introduction of new 'study programmes' for 16-18 year olds

In response to the recommendations contained in the Wolf Report, from this September all students will be expected to follow a cohesive 'study programme', rather than a 'bundle of individual qualifications'. This, in turn means that colleges and schools will need to fundamentally redesign many of their course programmes for 16-18 year olds. Study programmes must reflect the following requirements:

- They must include at least one qualification of 'substantial size' (i.e. of sufficient weight and relevance to provide a nationally or locally recognised route into a trade, profession or other form of employment, or access to a university or higher education course').
- They must be comprised of qualification and non-qualification activity, including as and where appropriate, tutorial provision and high quality work experience.
- Non-qualification activity should 'be based on a teacher's assessment of a student's needs and abilities and can include tutorials, coaching, mentoring or other taught courses'.
- Unless this is inappropriate, they should include work experience. Work experience should be 'purposeful' and be focused on a particular vocational area. It should contribute directly to a study programme' and consist of 'substantial, regular time in the workplace gaining vocational knowledge and /or employability skills' or alternatively, 'one or two short periods of work experience to test out vocational ideas connected to future study or employment options'.
- They must include the study of English and mathematics, with a view to working towards the achievement of GCSE A*-C for those students who do not already have them. English and mathematics can be below GCSE to allow students to progress, (e.g. Functional Skills) but in all cases should be at a level higher than that previously obtained by the student
- For students with profound and/or complex learning difficulties or disabilities, a study programme 'may contain no qualifications at all and be either focused on work experience or on non-qualification activity that will contribute to a young person's preparation for adult life. In such cases, the study programme must still include an English and mathematics component at a level appropriate to the student'.
- Study Programmes for part time students should adopt the same principles as for full time students, on an appropriate pro-rata basis.

In the case of GCE A level or substantial level 3 vocational programmes focused on progressing to higher education or employment, colleges are unlikely to need to significantly change their programmes. However the requirement for young people to work towards a grade C in English and mathematics, where this has not already been achieved, applies equally to those on academic and on vocational programmes.

Ofsted and the new study programmes

From 2013/14, the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) will be modified to take into account the new study programmes. Inspectors will be required 'to pay particular attention to the quality and coherence of study programmes to ensure they are appropriate in providing a route into further or higher education or into employment'. Existing 16-18 performance tables will be reformed to reflect the new minimum standards being introduced and will also include student progression and destination monitoring.

New study programmes and funding

From 2013/14 there will also be changes to the way in which 16-18 provision will be funded. This will be 'per learner' rather than 'per qualification' as at present. Aspects of the new funding arrangements include:

- The 6 week funding qualification period remains, which means that colleges still have an opportunity to move students onto the correct course in the first 6 weeks. However, taster courses of less than 2 weeks in duration will not be funded.
- Provider weightings (other than for London weightings) will be removed.
- The number of programme weightings will be reduced to 3, and most will be revised downwards.
- Funding will be based on 'banded guided learning hours'. There will be 5 GLH bands and study programmes will be funded depending on which bands the study programme falls into. A full time study programme must consist of at least 540 GLH per year. (This will be pro rata for part time students).

- Total GLH will *not* be solely based on class contact time and will include qualification related and non qualification related activity.
- Funding will largely be dependent on student retention. Students that are not retained will be generally funded at 50% of the base rate for that particular programme.

More details on study programme structures and funding arrangements can be found on the DfE website

And finally.....

A college was undergoing a 'short notice' Ofsted inspection and an inspector was undertaking a visit to a local hospital where some of the college's pre-nursing students were undertaking work experience. One of the students, accompanied by his supervisor, showed the inspector around the ward where he was working and introduced her to some of the patients. The inspector was keen to find out from the patients how the student was doing and so began to ask them questions. Instead of the responses she expected, one of the patients began reciting a monologue starting with, 'Och, wee cowerin' tim'rous beastie...' The next patient looked out of the window and began singing 'Oh my luve's like a red, red rose, that's newly sprung in June'..... The third patient glared at her and started to shout 'Fair fa' your honest sonsie face, great chieftain o' the puddin' race...' at which point the inspector decided that, on personal health and safety grounds, she should beat a hasty retreat for the door. Once safely outside, the inspector asked the student's supervisor, 'Was that the hospital psychiatric ward?' 'No,' the supervisor replied, 'that was the Burns unit.'

Alan Birks – January 2013

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