

Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills

For use from September 2012

The *Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills* was devised by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, in line with the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It summarises the judgements inspectors will make during inspection.

Age group: 16+ (14–16 provision in colleges)

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Introduction

The *Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills* was devised by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in line with the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It sets out the principles that apply to further education and skills inspections under part 8 of the Act, the structure of the inspection, and the key aspects we make judgements against.

This document is a summary of the key features of the full Common Inspection Framework. The framework is published in full as part of the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills*.¹

The handbook has two parts. Part 1 is guidance for inspectors and providers on the preparation for, and conduct of, inspections. Part 2 is the full framework and evaluation schedule, and guidance on how inspectors will use the Common Inspection Framework to make judgements and award the main and contributory grades.

Principles of inspection and regulation

The principles of inspection and regulation reflect Ofsted's values and ensure that we carry out our statutory duties efficiently and effectively. The principles focus on the interests of service users – children, young people, parents and carers, adult learners and employers. They promote improvement in the services we inspect or regulate, and value for money. They also take full account of our policies on equality and diversity.

All inspections carried out by us or on our behalf must:

- support and promote improvement
- be proportionate
- focus on the needs of users
- focus on the needs of providers
- be transparent and consistent
- be accountable
- demonstrate value for money.

¹ *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills* (120061), Ofsted, 2012; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120061.

Provision inspected under the Common Inspection Framework

The Common Inspection Framework applies to the inspection of provision either wholly or partly funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) or Education Funding Agency (EFA)² in:

- further education colleges, sixth form colleges and independent specialist colleges
- independent learning providers: companies
- community learning and skills providers: local authorities, specialist designated institutions and not-for-profit organisations
- employers
- higher education institutions providing further education
- providers of learning in the judicial services.

The different types of provision inspected under the Common Inspection Framework for learners aged 16–18 and 19+, and learners aged 14–16 in colleges only, are:

- apprenticeships, access to apprenticeships and National Vocational Qualifications offered in the workplace
- community learning
- National Careers Service – careers advice and guidance
- learning programmes leading to a qualification
- learning provision in the judicial services
- employability programmes
- Foundation Learning.

The grading scale for inspection judgements

This four-point grading scale will be used in all inspections to make principal judgements:

- grade 1: outstanding
- grade 2: good
- grade 3: requires improvement
- grade 4: inadequate.

² Ofsted does not inspect provision wholly funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

The Common Inspection Framework 2012

The Common Inspection Framework comprises the principal criteria that inspectors must consider when inspecting every education and training provider. The inspectors make a judgement on adequacy from the two categories: adequate and inadequate. A provider will be deemed to be inadequate if it is graded inadequate for overall effectiveness. For all other grades, the provider is deemed adequate.

Overall effectiveness

The judgement on overall effectiveness is based on how effective and efficient the provider is in meeting the needs of learners and other users, and why. Inspectors will use all the available evidence and take into account judgements on:

- outcomes for learners
- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- the effectiveness of leadership and management.

Outcomes for learners

Inspectors will make a judgement on outcomes for learners by evaluating the extent to which:

- all learners achieve and make progress relative to their starting points and learning goals
- achievement gaps are narrowing between different groups of learners
- learners develop personal, social and employability skills
- learners progress to courses leading to higher-level qualifications and into jobs that meet local and national needs.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inspectors will make a judgement on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by evaluating the extent to which:

- 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.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inspectors will make a judgement on the effectiveness of leadership and management by evaluating the extent to which leaders, managers and, where applicable, governors:

- demonstrate an ambitious vision, have high expectations for what all learners can achieve, and attain high standards of quality and performance
- improve teaching and learning through rigorous performance management and appropriate professional development
- evaluate the quality of the provision through robust self-assessment, taking account of users' views, and use the findings to promote and develop capacity for sustainable improvement
- successfully plan, establish and manage the curriculum and learning programmes to meet the needs and interests of learners, employers and the local and national community
- actively promote equality and diversity, tackle bullying and discrimination, and narrow the achievement gap
- safeguard all learners.

Working together

Code of conduct for inspectors

Inspectors must uphold the highest professional standards in their work and treat everyone they encounter during inspections fairly and with respect. Inspectors must:

- evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour
- evaluate provision in line with frameworks, national standards or requirements
- base all evaluations on clear and robust evidence
- have no connection with the provider that could undermine their objectivity
- report honestly and clearly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
- carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy, respect and sensitivity
- try to minimise the stress on those involved in the inspection
- act in the best interests and well-being of service users

- maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with those being inspected, and communicate judgements clearly and frankly
- respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work
- respond appropriately to reasonable requests
- take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues.

Expectations of providers

So that inspection and regulation are productive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and providers establish and maintain a working environment based on courtesy and professional behaviour. Inspectors will uphold the code of conduct and Ofsted expects providers to:

- be courteous and professional
- apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors
- enable inspectors to conduct their visit in an open and honest way
- enable inspectors to evaluate the provision objectively against the standards/framework
- provide evidence that will enable the inspector to report honestly, fairly and reliably about their provision
- work with inspectors to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy
- ensure the health and safety of inspectors while on their premises
- maintain a purposeful dialogue with the inspector or the inspection team
- draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors promptly and in a suitable manner
- respect that inspectors will need to observe practice and talk to staff and users without the presence of a manager or registered person.

Complaints about inspections and regulation visits

If providers or interested parties are dissatisfied with some aspect of their inspection, Ofsted's complaints procedure sets out how they can complain, and what will happen with their complaint.³

³ *Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted* (070080), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/070080.

Terms used in the framework

Activity	One of the range of activities that a learner may take part in, including taught sessions, training, assessments, reviews of progress, coaching and job search, both on and off the provider's premises.
Aspect	Term used to describe one of the main areas of the Common Inspection Framework. These are: Outcomes for learners; Quality of teaching, learning and assessment; and Effectiveness of leadership and management.
Employability programmes	Short learning programmes aiming to get unemployed learners into work. Terms used for the unemployed on benefits include: work-related activity group (WRAG), jobseekers allowance (JSA) and employment support allowance (ESA).
Employer-based provision	Employer-based provision includes apprenticeships, and NVQs delivered wholly or partially in the workplace.
Foundation learning	Programmes that support achievement and progression through entry level and level 1 towards level 2 or, as appropriate, towards other destinations such as open, supported or voluntary employment, further education or training and increased levels of independence.
Inspection services provider	Inspection services providers are external organisations contracted by Ofsted to provide Additional Inspectors, administrative support on inspection, the collation of pre-inspection information for inspectors via a portal, quality assurance and production of reports, and post-inspection evaluation by providers.
Learner	A person seeking information or advice on learning opportunities or employment, and taking part in education, training and development programmes or activities, including student, apprentice, participant, client and customer.
Learning programmes	Learning programmes cover further education programmes in school sixth forms, colleges and other providers for learners above the compulsory school-leaving age, who have not yet reached 19 years of age at the start of an academic year where the main aim is a vocational or academic qualification.
Learning	Gaining of knowledge and understanding, and development of skills and attributes that lead to the attainment of learning goals, including qualifications.
Nominee	The nominee is a senior member of staff from the provider who is the key link between the provider and the inspection team.
Provider	Any organisation, including consortium or partnership, involved in providing information and advice services, education, training or development programmes or activities, including colleges, independent training providers, local authorities, voluntary organisations and employers.
Provision	The range and type of learning programmes available.
RARPA	A process for recognising and recording progress and achievement for non-accredited learning.
Record of main findings	A template for recording grades awarded for the aspects of the Common Inspection Framework, the provision as a whole and for the different types of provision. The record of main findings is published as part of the inspection

	report.
Safeguarding	In the context of inspection inspectors will check the arrangements a provider has made to meet safeguarding statutory requirements; safeguarding arrangements are required by law to minimise any risk of, and protect young people from, harm and abuse while they are following learning programmes or courses at a learning provider.
Tariff for inspection	The tariff for inspection refers to the number of inspector days allocated to that inspection. It consists of preparation days for HMIs, on-site days for HMIs and Additional Inspectors, and post-inspection days for report writing.
User	Young people, adult learners and employers, parents and carers.

Annex A. Structure of grades

