

Consultation on proposals for the publication of statistics on further education and skills inspections and outcomes.

Response of the Association of School and College Leaders

A. Introduction

The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) represents nearly 21,000 education system leaders, heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business managers and other senior staff of state-funded and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL members are responsible for the education of more than four million young people in more than 90 per cent of the secondary and tertiary phases, and in an increasing proportion of the primary and further education and skills phases. This places the association in a strong position to comment on the issue of statistics in FE and skills from the viewpoint of the leaders of schools and colleges of all types.

ASCL welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this consultation. We understand that the survey is seeking views on Ofsted's statistical publications of FE and skills data which are published twice a year and about those which are published monthly, reporting on data sets in further education and skills inspections.

Our response to this consultation is based on the views of our members who have provided information for our call for evidence on this matter.

B. Key points

Proposal 1: Changing reporting of provider types

In terms of changing provider types when reporting and grouping smaller types of colleges together, **we neither agree nor disagree with this proposal**. We need more detail to be able to comment comprehensively on this proposal.

We are not against the proposal in principle but feel that any changes to groupings of providers may skew the final data for that group, as well as compromise any historical trends for those groupings.

For example, college inspection outcome trends have generally improved over the last few years. We cannot be absolutely clear but we believe that changing the groupings may negatively change the improvement trend for some of those groups. This, then, reflects on the reputation of all providers in those groups - both positively and negatively.

We would need to see the statistical trend based on actual data to be sure that this proposal did not have a negative impact on published data trends and therefore the reputation of colleges in general.

Proposal 2: Removing historic inspection judgements for providers that had a prolonged break in funding.

We do not agree with this proposal, which would lead to the cleansing of inspection histories.

The reason for our disagreement is that a history describes the journey of an institution and this should be public knowledge, irrespective of whether they have a break in funding or not.

Cleansing the historical data may reflect more positively on those institutions which have poorer quality histories but for institutions which have improved significantly over a period of time within a variety of inspection regimes, their developmental histories are part of their culture and heritage, which we believe should be preserved. We believe that all providers should be treated equally in this respect.

Proposal 3: Introduce more detailed reporting on the quality of provision

We agree with the principle of this proposal and with more detailed quality reporting.

We **do not** believe that it is feasible to make changes to quality reporting based on college inspection outcomes in either 2020 or 2021 due to the impact of Covid on both schools and colleges but we do agree that more detailed quality reporting should be introduced once the inspection regime has had time to return to a normal pattern or cycle.

There should be sufficient time for schools and colleges to re-establish themselves after the disruptions of Covid during most of 2020 and possibly a considerable time in 2021.

However, we **agree** and **would support the introduction of more detailed reporting on quality issues in colleges inspections from September 2022**, assuming a return to more normal inspection practices. This would give college leaders the time to work on quality issues caused by Covid disruptions and return to more normal reporting practices themselves.

C. Conclusion

Our response, as mentioned above, relies heavily on feedback from our members and others in the sector.

In summary:

- **we believe that in proposal 1**, there needs to be more information on the implications of reporting in smaller college groups for us to reasonably identify the impact of the proposal and we currently, **neither agree nor disagree** with the proposal.

- **we do not agree with proposal 2;**
- **we agree with proposal 3**, however, we ask for this to be introduced from a later date. We agree with the principle of this proposal but wish the proposal, if it goes ahead to be delayed to late in 2022;

We hope that this response is of value to your consultation. ASCL is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that it can.

Anne Murdoch,
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Association of School and College Leaders
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