

# A Guide to the FE Sector

August 2021



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# Introduction

The Further Education (FE) sector is a wide-ranging and diverse education system.

It is made up of many different types of provider and it offers a huge range of exciting opportunities.

The FE sector is vast; there are literally thousands of opportunities available including apprenticeships and vocational qualifications.

If you're a bit bewildered by it all, you are not alone!

It can be difficult to understand how things fit together.

This guide comes is your starting point.

Things change very quickly in this industry, one year can be a long time and what may have been relevant today might then not be the case anymore.



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The sector encompasses several bodies who represent certain segments for example the AoC who predominantly represents the colleges, and AELP who often speak for the Independent Training Providers.

The FE sector itself is primarily funded by the Department for Education, using different guises and funding streams.

In addition to the Skills Sector (FE Sector), we have Welfare to Work initiatives, which are funded by the Department for Work and Pensions This covers all Job Centre Plus activity and presently Restart Scheme.

# How big is the FE Sector

- **3,977 Registered Training Organisations, according to ROTO**
  - Decommissioned 31st July 2021.
- Organisations previously had to apply to ROTO, which is the ESFA's market entry pre-qualification process, this enables them to tender for access to government funded opportunities.



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- **2,121 Registered Apprenticeship Training Organisations according to ROATP**
  - Application windows are open throughout the year.
- Organisations that wish to become eligible to receive government funding to train apprentices, must apply to ROATP.

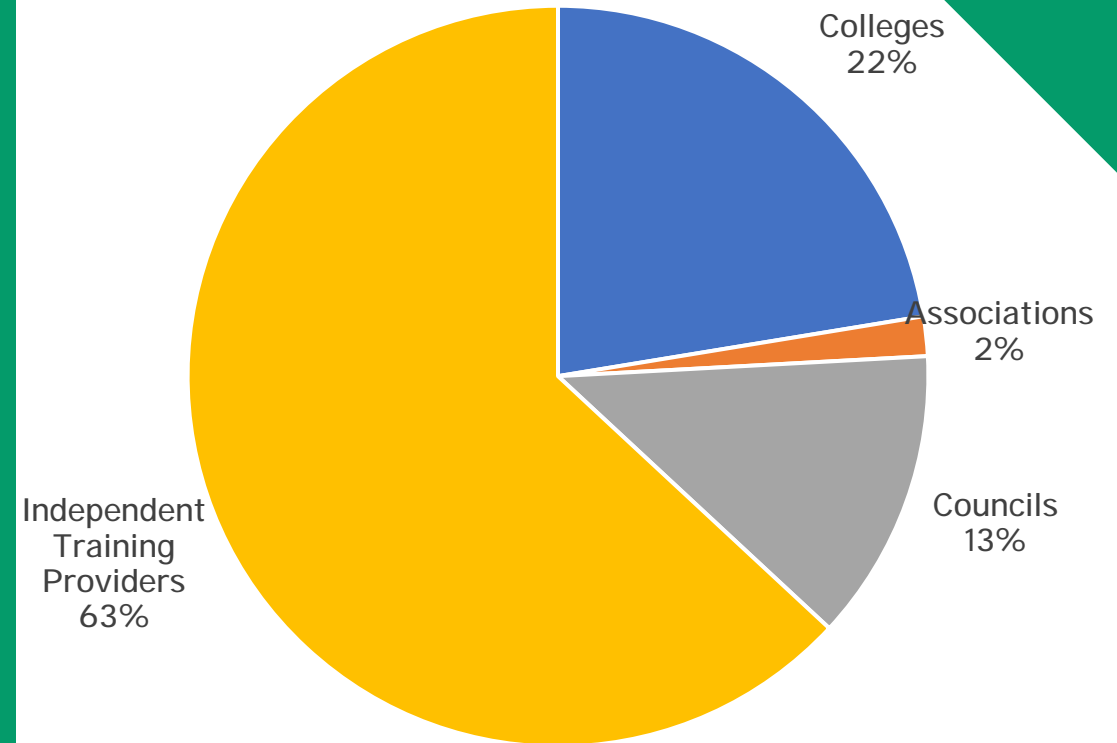
# How big is the FE Sector

- 986 ESFA funded training organisations
  - 221 Colleges
  - 17 Associations
  - 126 Councils
  - 622 Independent Training Providers (ITP's)



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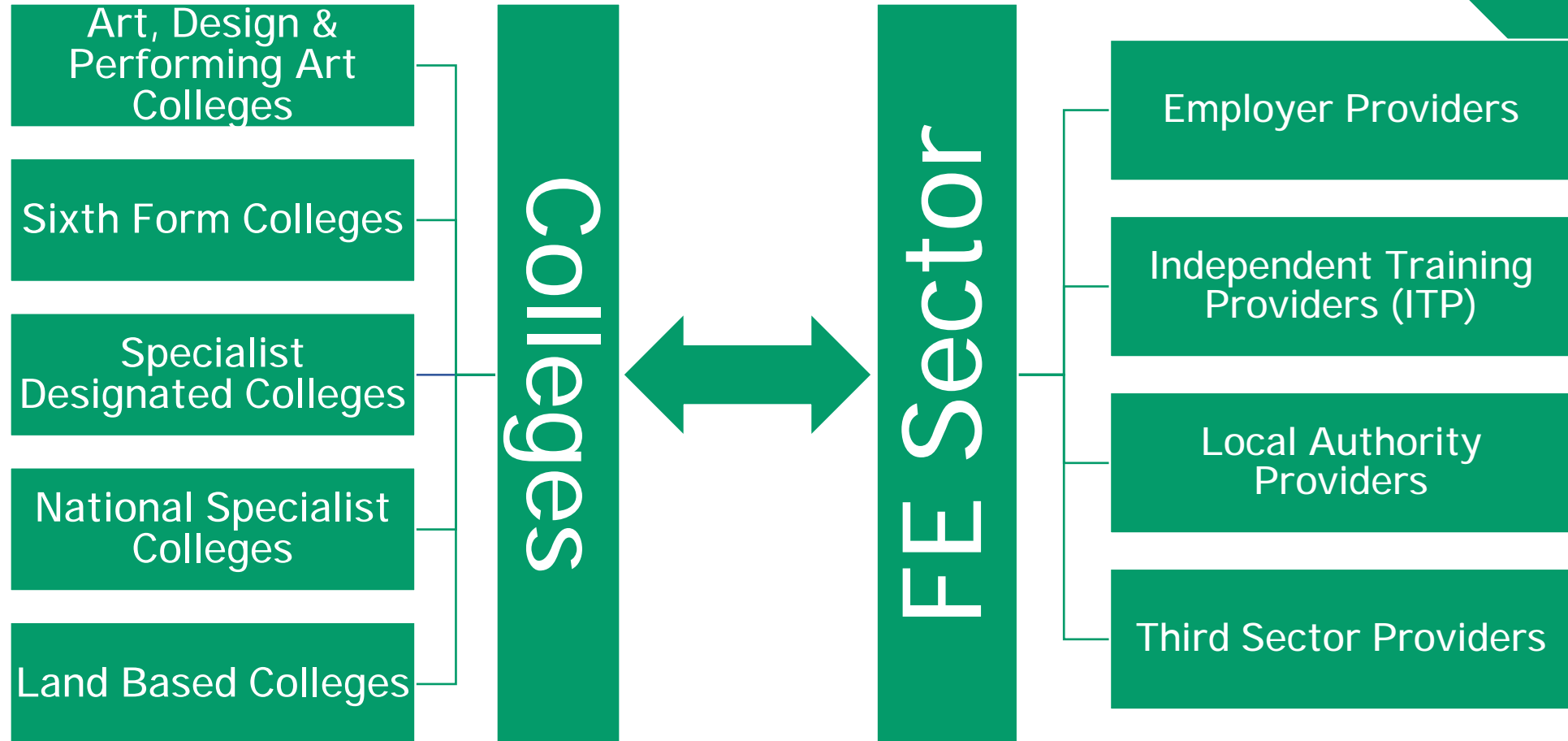
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# Providers involved in delivering FE



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# FE Providers



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**FE providers include any institutions or organisations (other than schools or universities) that receive government funding to provide education and training to people over the age of 16.**

- **Schools and universities are not part of the FE sector.**

**There are five different types of FE provider:**

- **Colleges**
- **Independent Training Providers (ITPs)**
- **Local Authority (LA) providers**
- **Employer providers**
- **Third sector providers**

# Colleges



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## General Further Education (GFE) Colleges

- GFE colleges are one of the main providers of further education in England. GFE colleges offer a wide range of programmes. They have a strong focus on supporting you to develop valuable workplace skills through providing technical and professional education and training. Almost all offer apprenticeships and have close partnerships with employers.



## Sixth Form Colleges

- Sixth form colleges are the second most common type of FE college in England. They cater primarily for the 16-19 age group. Unlike school sixth forms they are not attached to a secondary school. Sixth form colleges offer a diverse range of courses. The majority of learners at a sixth form college are studying full-time academic courses. However, many now offer vocational courses too. Around two-thirds of sixth form college learners progress to higher education.



## Specialist Colleges

- Art, Design & Performing Art Colleges
- Specialist Designated Colleges
- National Specialist Colleges (NSC)
- Land Based Colleges

# Independent Training Providers (ITP)

ITPs are one of the main providers of Work-based Learning (WBL).

Working closely with employers, they receive government funding to provide 'off-the-job' training; this may include teaching theory, providing learning support, or delivering practical training.

ITPs are often used to deliver training to apprentices on behalf of colleges and employers.

There are a large number of different ITPs in England, varying greatly in size.



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**Some are small and focus on a single area of vocational training such as hairdressing or construction.**

**Others will provide training opportunities across the country in a range of vocational training.**

**ITPs can be in the private or third sector.**

**Independent Training Providers are sometimes referred to as Private Training Providers (PTPs) or Independent Learning Providers (ILPs).**



# Local Authority Providers (LA)

Local government is responsible for a range of vital services for people and businesses in defined areas. Among them are well known functions such as social care, schools, housing and planning and waste collection, other licensing, business support, registrar services and pest control.

Many Local Authorities such as boroughs and local councils provide Adult and Community Learning (ACL) opportunities.

They can also be providers of Work Based Learning (WBL).



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**Depending on where you live, local government consists of at least one or two tiers of authorities. Two tiers, with responsibilities of local services divided between them:**

**24 county councils**

**181 district, borough or city councils**

**One (unitary) tier providing all services:**

**59 unitary councils**

**33 London boroughs**

**36 metropolitan boroughs**

# Employer Providers

Not all employers use an external organisation to provide training to apprentices: some deliver their own 'in-house' training.

An Employer-Provider is where the employer of the learner/apprentices is the main provider of on-programme learning and development.

Employer-Providers withdraw directly from their Apprenticeship Levy to fund the apprenticeship delivery and assessment.



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**Employer Providers are responsible for supporting staff through their qualifications and, as with other types of FE provider, have to comply with standards set by Ofsted.**

**An employer provider has the benefit of doing things their own way, giving increased opportunities and control. However, there are a number of costs associated, processes and quality levels that must be adhered to.**

# FE education and training can take place in a range of settings.

This section outlines approaches to learning that are prominent in the FE sector: Work-based Learning, Adult and Community Learning, and online and blended learning.

# Education and Skills Funding Agency

The ESFA brings together the former responsibilities of the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and Skills Funding Agency (SFA) to create a single agency accountable for funding education and skills for children, young people and adults.

ESFA is an executive agency, sponsored by the Department for Education.



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## **The ESFA:**

- **is accountable for £58 billion of funding for the education and training sector, providing assurance that public funds are properly spent, achieves value for money for the tax payer and delivers the policies and priorities set by the Secretary of State**
- **regulates academies, further education and sixth-form colleges, and training providers, intervening where there is risk of failure or where there is evidence of mismanagement of public funds**
- **delivers major projects and operates key services in the education and skills sector, such as the National Careers Service, the National Apprenticeship Service and the Learning Records Service**

# Ofsted

Ofsted inspect education services, providing skills for learners of all ages. They inspect and regulate services that care for children and young people. Ofsted priorities, include:

- all work is evidence-led
- evaluation tools and frameworks are valid and reliable
- frameworks are fair
- aim to reduce inspection burdens and make expectations and findings clear
- target time and resources where they can lead directly to improvement



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**Ofsted's role is to make sure that organisations provide education, training and care services in England to a high standard for children and students.**

**Every week, Ofsted carry out hundreds of inspections and regulatory visits throughout England and publish the results online.**

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework>
- <https://www.slideshare.net/Ofstednews>

# Traineeships

A traineeship is an education and training programme designed to help young people (aged 16 to 24) to move on to an apprenticeship or job.

It consists of three main parts: a work placement, work preparation training and English and Maths (if you have yet to achieve GCSEs at grade C or 4, or equivalent).



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**A traineeship is for young people who are:**

- **eligible to work in England**
- **have little or no work experience but are motivated to work**
- **aged 16 to 24 - or 25 with an EHC plan - and qualified up to level 3**

# Traineeships

The core content of a traineeship should consist of three elements:

- Work preparation training
- Work placement
- English and maths
- Trainees will complete an unpaid work placement for a minimum of 70 hours.
- For more information, see:  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/traineeship-information-for-training-providers>



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**Trainees will get:**

- help with getting work, such as writing a CV and finding a job
- a work placement of 70 hours or more
- help with the skills needed for an apprenticeship or job in the area they want to work in
- a job interview or feedback from an employer
- help with English, maths and basic digital skills (if needed)
- won't be paid, but may be given expenses for things like travel and meals

# Largest Traineeship Contracts

- PREVISTA LTD
- PEOPLEPLUS GROUP LIMITED
- CORNDEL LIMITED
- STRODE COLLEGE
- SKILLS TRAINING UK LIMITED
- FAREHAM COLLEGE
- BACK 2 WORK COMPLETE TRAINING LIMITED
- BRIGHTER BEGINNINGS DAY NURSERY LIMITED
- PROFESSIONAL TRAINING SOLUTIONS LIMITED
- PATHWAY FIRST LIMITED

- SKILLCERT LIMITED
- VOCATIONAL SKILLS SOLUTIONS LIMITED
- LET ME PLAY LIMITED
- BARNSELY COLLEGE
- REMIT GROUP LIMITED
- ASPIRATION TRAINING LIMITED
- THELIGHTBULB LTD
- JGA LIMITED
- ACACIA TRAINING LIMITED
- B-SKILL LIMITED



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# Adult Education Budget (AEB)

The Adult Education Budget (AEB) can help kick-start careers.

It's a government-funded programme that can be accessed by employers and individuals to fund a huge range of training.

It's a great resource for employers to upskill their workforce and support staff with their career progression.

The problem is, not many people know about it.



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The AEB funds the delivery of education and training for learners aged 19+. The funding can be accessed through local training providers or colleges.

The AEB aims to engage adults and provide the skills and learning needed to progress in work or equip them for an apprenticeship.

Employers can access AEB to improve or refresh the skills of their current workforce, and learners can utilise the AEB to gain new skills to prepare them for the workplace, improve progression opportunities or support a career change.

# AEB Devolution

As part of the devolution deals, certain adult education functions, in the Apprenticeships Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 which are funded by the AEB, were transferred from the Secretary of State for Education to the devolved MCAs in relation to their respective areas by Legislative Orders.

On 1 August 2019, the adult education budget (AEB) was apportioned between the ESFA and initially 6 mayoral combined authorities (MCA's) and the Greater London Authority (GLA).



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# Apprenticeships

**An apprenticeship is a form of work-based Learning.**

**As an apprentice, they'll get:**

- **Time for training or study as part of the apprenticeship**
- **Holiday pay and other employee rights**
- **Apprentices are entitled to the apprentice rate if they're either:**
  - **aged under 19**
  - **aged 19 or over and in the first year of their apprenticeship**



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**The training provider will work closely with the employer to create a detailed training plan.**

**Apprentices can expect regular progress reviews as well as ongoing mentoring and support.**

**There are more than 100 apprenticeship types available spanning Levels 2-7.**

**Entry requirements vary.**

**Young people aged 16-24 who lack the necessary skills and experience for an apprenticeship can study a six-month 'traineeship' in preparation.**

# Apprenticeships



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For more information, see:

- [apprenticeships.gov.uk/](https://apprenticeships.gov.uk/)
- [instituteforapprenticeships.org/](https://instituteforapprenticeships.org/)
- [gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship](https://gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship)
- [accounts.manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk/service/index](https://accounts.manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk/service/index)
- [gov.uk/recruit-apprentice](https://gov.uk/recruit-apprentice)

# Largest Apprenticeship Contracts

- KAPLAN FINANCIAL LIMITED
- JTL
- GP STRATEGIES TRAINING LIMITED
- PREVISTA LTD
- HIT TRAINING LTD
- BCTG LIMITED
- MARR CORPORATION LIMITED
- QA LIMITED
- BPP PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION LIMITED
- M I T SKILLS LIMITED



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- ASPIRATION TRAINING LIMITED
- BABINGTON BUSINESS COLLEGE LIMITED
- EAST SUSSEX COLLEGE GROUP
- PARAGON EDUCATION & SKILLS LIMITED
- DUDLEY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
- LEEDS COLLEGE OF BUILDING
- LIFETIME TRAINING GROUP LIMITED
- REALISE LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT LIMITED
- CARE FIRST TRAINING LIMITED
- BABCOCK TRAINING LIMITED

# Advanced Learner Loans

Advanced learner loans are available for individuals aged 19 or above to undertake approved qualifications at levels 3 to level 6, at an approved provider in England.

Advanced learner loans give individuals access to financial support for tuition costs similar to that available in higher education and are administered by Student Finance England.

Loan eligibility does not depend on income and there are no credit checks.



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**The availability of loans at level 3 for 19 to 23 year olds do not replace an individual's legal entitlement for full funding for a first full level 3 qualification.**

**Advanced learner loans are paid directly to the college or training organisation on behalf of an individual.**

**They are not means tested or subject to credit checks and any individual who meets the criteria will be able to apply for a loan regardless of their current employment status.**

# Advanced Learner Loans

Loan repayments commence only when a learners income is over a certain amount (the 'threshold' amount).

Individuals maybe eligible for support via the Bursary Fund, the money can help pay for things like:

- Accommodation and travel
- Course materials and equipment
- Childcare
- Classroom assistance for a disability or learning difficulty - once you're assessed by the college or training provider



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**Interest will start to be applied to the loan as soon as payments to the college or training organisation begin. The rate of interest will be 3% +RPI until the April after they leave the course.**

**This interest applies to the loan, not the monthly repayments. They are fixed at 9% of earnings above the threshold amount.**

**After the course is finished, the interest will depend on income. The interest on the loan will change - The rate of repayment stays the same.**

# Largest Advanced Learner Loan Contracts

- LIFETIME TRAINING GROUP LIMITED
- LTE GROUP
- MARR CORPORATION LIMITED
- NCG
- THE WKCIC GROUP
- THE CITY OF LIVERPOOL COLLEGE
- NOTTINGHAM COLLEGE
- BIRMINGHAM METROPOLITAN COLLEGE
- LUMINATE EDUCATION GROUP
- IXION HOLDINGS (CONTRACTS) LIMITED

- BCTG LIMITED
- EAST SUSSEX COLLEGE GROUP
- ACTIVATE LEARNING
- LIONHEART IN THE COMMUNITY LIMITED
- SOUTH & CITY COLLEGE BIRMINGHAM
- CORNWALL COLLEGE
- PATHWAY FIRST LIMITED
- BLACKPOOL AND THE FYLDE COLLEGE
- WALTHAM FOREST COLLEGE
- ACACIA TRAINING LIMITED



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# National Skills Fund

## Free level 3 qualifications for adults

Any adult aged 19 and over, who does not already have a level 3 qualification (equivalent to an advanced technical certificate or diploma, or A levels) or higher, can access hundreds of fully funded level 3 courses.

This offer is part of the government's Plan for Jobs. It represents a long-term commitment to remove the age constraints and financial barriers for adults looking for their first level 3 qualification so that they can access training to enable them to progress.



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**Courses are available in a variety of lengths, to support adults to get the skills they need to boost their careers. Learners may be able to get help to pay for childcare, travel and other costs.**

- **19 to 23 year olds can also access additional courses for free through their legal entitlement to a first full level 3 qualification.**

**The qualifications have been identified to help adults improve their job prospects. They have good wage outcomes and can address skills needs in the economy, delivering a wide range of skills in many jobs and sectors**

# Work-based Learning (WBL)

WBL is an approach to learning that entails working whilst gaining a qualification in a given area. WBL provides genuine work experience, applying academic and practical skills and developing skills for employment.

WBL can be delivered by any of the five types of provider outlined above (colleges, ITPs, LA providers, employer providers or third sector providers). ITPs are the most common type of provider.



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- **Work-based Learning covers a range of different programmes including apprenticeships, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and other professional vocational qualifications.**

# Adult and Community Learning (ACL)

Adult and Community Learning (ACL) provides accessible learning opportunities for people from all backgrounds and of all abilities. Sometimes referred to as 'community learning', ACL is delivered by LAs, third sector providers and colleges.

Adults may choose to learn with ACL for a range of different reasons such as learning new skills or preparing for higher level study. They may be returning to education after a break, changing career, or simply wanting to learn alongside others in the community.



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**Most ACL learners study on a part-time basis, taking short courses that last for a set period of weeks. Classes can take place at a range of locations in the community, either during the day or in the evening. They can also take place online.**

**ACL offers a range of learning opportunities, many of which are suitable for beginners. ACL can include vocational, academic, recreational and life skills courses. Some programmes may be unaccredited, meaning that learners are not working towards a formal qualification. Some providers offer courses specifically for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).**

# Kickstart Scheme

The Kickstart Scheme provides funding to create new jobs for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long term unemployment. Employers of all sizes can apply for funding which covers:

- 100% of the National Minimum Wage (or the National Living Wage depending on the age of the participant) for 25 hours per week for a total of 6 months
- associated employer National Insurance contributions
- minimum automatic enrolment pension contributions



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Employers can spread job start dates up until 31 December 2021. You'll get funding until 30 June 2022 if a young person starts their job on 31 December 2021

As a Kickstart gateway , we can support an employer to get a Kickstart Scheme grant, in addition to offering employability support to the young person on the scheme, we also provide:

- Information from the employer about the jobs
- Submit this information to DWP by contacting local or national Kickstart Scheme contact
- Pay employers the Kickstart Scheme funding

# Restart Scheme

The government's Plan for Jobs is helping millions of people across the country who have been directly impacted by coronavirus (COVID-19).

Restart Scheme referrals will be made over a 3-year period, benefiting more than 1 million Universal Credit claimants who are expected to look for and be available for work but have no sustained earnings. The scheme:

- Identifies and encourages work goals and help to transfer existing skills into future roles
- Develops a plan to help find new employment, and provide local work experience placements and skills training
- Details how benefit calculations will look once they are in work and as they earn more
- Supports health, disability and wellbeing
- Advises on how to manage money, child/caring responsibilities, housing and/or travel costs whilst on the scheme
- Supports them to retain for jobs and progress in the new role



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**The scheme will provide up to 12 months of tailored support for each participant.**

- **Participants will receive:**
- **regular contact with all participants using a variety of methods and channels**
- **a personalised offer for all participants, tailored to individual and local need**

- **For more information:**

**[gov.uk/government/publications/restart-scheme](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/restart-scheme)**

# Restart Scheme Providers & Contract Areas



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## Serco Limited

West Central - Shropshire,  
Herefordshire, Worcestershire,  
West Midlands

## Jobs 22 Limited

•Staffordshire, Warwickshire,  
Leicestershire, Lincolnshire  
(except North and North East),  
Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire,  
North Buckinghamshire  
(Aylesbury Vale)

## Reed in Partnership Limited

Northumberland, Tyne and Wear,  
County Durham, Teesside, North  
Yorkshire, East Yorkshire, North  
and North East Lincolnshire

## Maximus UK Services Limited

West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire,  
Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire

## G4S Facilities Management (UK) Limited

Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside,  
Cheshire

## Ingeus UK Limited

Greater Manchester

## Seetec Pluss Limited

Gloucestershire, Bristol, Wiltshire,  
Somerset, Dorset, Devon,  
Cornwall

## Fedcap Employment Limited

Oxfordshire, South  
Buckinghamshire (Wycombe,  
Chiltern, South Bucks and Slough),  
Berkshire, Surrey, Hampshire, Isle  
of Wight, West Sussex, Brighton  
and Hove

## Ingeus UK Limited

Central and West London

## Maximus UK Services Limited

South and East London

## Reed in Partnership Limited

Rutland, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk,  
Suffolk, Hertfordshire, Essex,  
Kent, East Sussex

# Skills Support for the Workforce

**Skills Support for the Workforce (SSW) helps support small & medium-sized businesses to upskill their employees with training courses & qualifications to grow their business and boost the local economy.**

- **Advice and guidance**
- **Personal development planning**
- **Skills development**
- **Accredited qualifications such as awards, certificates and diplomas**
- **Bespoke training programmes tailored to meet business needs**
- **Learning and mentoring**
- **Training will reflect the needs of a business and can be delivered on site or at other appropriate venues**

# Skills Support for the Workforce

- Training is tailored to the specific needs of the business
- Training can be more cost-effective than hiring skilled employees
- Increases employee confidence, motivation and productivity
- Improves employee loyalty and retention by making them feel valued
- Fully-flexible training; pick full qualifications or mix and match individual units to suit the business
- On-the-job vocational training to meet individual needs; including tutor-led learning, workplace assessment, distance learning and online learning.
- Fully funded training - no cost to the business or employees
- Employees will benefit from a wide variety of training courses like leadership and management, technical skills training and higher level skills relevant to the business.
- Completing the training can help employees progress onto higher level qualifications, take on more responsibility, and progress in their careers.



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# Adult Skills for Work

These are funded and part-funded training programmes to upskill employees within small and medium-sized businesses.

Adult Skills for Work (ASW) provides part-funded training for employed individuals in a wide range of subjects which can be tailored to both their own needs as well of those of the business.

- For Individuals – who want to increase skills to obtain a better job? Thinking about a career change? Want to earn more?
- Adult Skills for Work provides funded and part-funded training for individuals in employment who are seeking to improve their skills in order to progress in their education, job role or career and take the first step towards a better career.
- For Employers – Provide their workforce have basic skills training needs which may be stopping them from progressing in their work?
- Adult Skills for Work provides and part-funded training for employed individuals in a wide range of subjects which can be tailored to both their own needs as well of those of the business. ASW can provide solutions that enable and develop their workforce so that adults can progress in the business and in their career.



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- Recognised accredited qualifications and training courses to enhance employees' skills.
- Training to improve the skills of the workforce to meet future challenges or skills shortages.
- Support for the staff to gain new skills, improve their current level of knowledge in an occupation, or get them ready for an apprenticeship.
- Training for individual learners to gain new skills to support their career development or a career change, or to improve progression opportunities in their current job role.
- Training can cover a wide range of subjects and will be tailored to the specific needs of the business.
- Training is delivered flexibly so that individuals currently in work can access training outside of their working hours.
- ASW offers re-training opportunities to develop new skills and improve earning potential
- Functional skills – English, maths and Essential Digital Skills

# [gov.uk/further-education-courses](https://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses)



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Further education (FE) includes any study after secondary education that's not part of higher education (that is, not taken as part of an undergraduate or graduate degree).

Courses range from basic English and Maths to Higher National Diplomas (HNDs).

**FE also includes 3 types of technical and applied qualifications for 16 to 19-year-olds:**

- **level 3 tech levels to specialise in a specific technical job**
- **level 2 technical certificates help get employment or progress to another tech level**
- **applied general qualifications to continue general education at advanced level through applied learning**

# Online & Blended Learning

Online learning refers to the process of learning using the internet. It may involve online interaction with tutors and other learners via online lectures, 'webinars' or chat forums. Many providers now offer online courses as an alternative to traditional face-to-face teaching.

Blended learning is an approach to education that combines face-to-face learning with computer technology. For example, learners may be required to complete an online activity prior to a class or training session.



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**Both online learning and blended learning involve a greater degree of flexibility than traditional learning approaches, enabling people to learn a time and place that suits them.**

# Remote Education

Learning that happens outside of the classroom, without a teacher present. This includes both digital and non-digital remote solutions.

**Digital remote education:** remote learning delivered through digital technologies, often known as online learning.

**Blended learning:** a mix of face-to-face and remote methods. An example would be the 'flipped classroom', where main input happens remotely (for example through video), while practice and tutoring happens in class.

**Synchronous education:** this is live, typically a live lesson but also reflects other live practices such as chat groups, tutorials and one-to-one discussions that also happen in a live online setting.

**Asynchronous education** is when the teacher prepares the material and the pupil accesses it at a later date.

Asynchronous can involve both digital (pre-recorded videos) and non-digital (textbooks) materials.



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# Qualifications

There are a large number of qualifications on offer in the FE sector and the choice can seem quite overwhelming! This section provides an outline of the different types of accredited courses on offer, to help learners get to grips with the options available.

# Qualification Levels



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**Most qualifications have a difficulty level ranging from Entry level up to Level 8.**

**The higher the number, the higher the qualification is.**

'Entry level' is divided into three sub-levels (entry level 1, 2, and 3).

• This level of study offers a basic introduction to a subject area and may be the best option for those with no formal qualifications.

Level 1 qualifications are more advanced than entry level and are equivalent to GCSE grades D-G or 3-1.

Level 2 qualifications provide an in-depth understanding of a subject and are equivalent to GCSE grades A\*-C or 9-4.

Level 3 qualifications offer more specialised, advanced learning and are equivalent to A Levels.

This level is usually required for entry to university or certain job roles.

Level 4 and above is referred to as 'higher education' (HE). Many FE providers now offer HE courses.

# Qualification Levels



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## Entry Level

Each Entry Level Qualification Is Available At Three Sub-levels - 1, 2 And 3. Entry Level 3 Is The Most Difficult.

- Entry Level Award
- Entry Level Certificate (ELC)
- Entry Level Diploma
- Entry Level English For Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Entry Level Essential Skills
- Entry Level Functional Skills
- Skills For Life

## Level 1

- First Certificate
- GCSE - Grades 3, 2, 1 Or Grades D, E, F, G
- Level 1 Award
- Level 1 Certificate
- Level 1 Diploma
- Level 1 ESOL
- Level 1 Essential Skills
- Level 1 Functional Skills
- Level 1 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)

## Level 2

- CSE - Grade 1
- GCSE - Grades 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4 Or Grades A\*, A, B, C
- Intermediate Apprenticeship
- Level 2 Award
- Level 2 Certificate
- Level 2 Diploma
- Level 2 ESOL
- Level 2 Essential Skills
- Level 2 Functional Skills
- Level 2 National Certificate
- Level 2 National Diploma
- Level 2 NVQ
- O Level - Grade A, B Or C

## Level 3

- A Level
- Access To Higher Education Diploma
- Advanced Apprenticeship
- Applied General
- AS Level
- Level 3 Award
- Level 3 Certificate
- Level 3 Diploma
- Level 3 ESOL
- Level 3 National Certificate
- Level 3 National Diploma
- Level 3 NVQ
- Tech Level

## Level 4

- Certificate Of Higher Education (CERTHE)
- Higher Apprenticeship
- Higher National Certificate (HNC)
- Level 4 Award
- Level 4 Certificate
- Level 4 Diploma
- Level 4 NVQ

# Qualification Levels



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## Level 5

Diploma Of Higher Education (DIPHE)  
Foundation Degree  
Higher National Diploma (HND)  
Level 5 Award  
Level 5 Certificate  
Level 5 Diploma  
Level 5 NVQ

## Level 6

Degree Apprenticeship  
Degree With Honours - For Example Bachelor Of The Arts (BA)  
Hons, Bachelor Of Science (BSC) Hons  
Graduate Certificate  
Graduate Diploma  
Level 6 Award  
Level 6 Certificate  
Level 6 Diploma  
Level 6 NVQ  
Ordinary Degree Without Honours

## Level 7

Integrated Master's Degree, For Example Master Of Engineering (MEng)  
Level 7 Award  
Level 7 Certificate  
Level 7 Diploma  
Level 7 NVQ  
Master's Degree, For Example Master Of Arts (MA), Master Of Science (MSc)  
Postgraduate Certificate  
Postgraduate Certificate In Education (PGCE)  
Postgraduate Diploma

## Level 8

Doctorate, For Example Doctor Of Philosophy (PhD Or DPhil)  
Level 8 Award  
Level 8 Certificate  
Level 8 Diploma



# Vocational Qualification

## NVQ, QCR

Sometimes referred to as 'professional' or 'technical' qualifications, vocational qualifications are designed to recognise a learner's skills, knowledge and understanding in a particular industry or area of employment.

Generally speaking, learning is more practical and job-focused than with academic qualifications.



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**All of the qualifications mentioned in this section are available to young people over the age of 16 as well as adult learners.**

**Entry requirements vary greatly depending on the level of study, provider, and the particular course. Will need learners to check the course details on the provider's website to find out.**

# Vocational Qualification NVQ, QCR

NVQs are practical, work-based qualifications ranging from Level 1 to Level 7. In order to enrol on an NVQ learners must be employed in their field of study - they might be a full-time employee or a learner with a work placement or a part-time job.

They will be assessed in relation to their ability to meet certain work-related tasks called 'competencies'.

Assessment takes place via observation; an assessor will watch and assess whether a learner can do the task in question.

Learners will also be required to produce a portfolio of work.

NVQs are flexible. There is no time limit to complete an NVQ but it usually takes around a year to complete an NVQ at Levels 1 and 2. Level 3 and above may take longer.



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NVQs can be based in a college, school, or workplace. Training can also take place via online or blended learning.

NVQs cover a wide range of subjects. There are no age limits and no special entry requirements. Learners can start at a level that suits them.

An NVQ can be a great way to prove professional skills to employers. On completion of an NVQ, learners may choose to progress to the next level of study. Completing an NVQ Level 3 opens up the possibility of studying an higher education course such as an HNC or HND.

# Awards, Certificates and Diplomas

Awards, certificates and diplomas tend to be job-related (there are some exceptions to this) and are designed to develop knowledge, understanding and practical skills for employment.

Teaching is mainly classroom-based, although many courses include a work placement. Studying towards one of these qualifications can help to enhance career prospects.

On completion, many people move straight into work or choose to study at a higher level at college or university.

All three may be taken as stand-alone courses, alongside other (academic or vocational) qualifications, or as part of a wider programme such as an apprenticeship.

There is a vast range of different awards, certificates and diplomas covering many different subjects and vocational areas. Courses usually take one or two years to complete, or longer if studying part-time.



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Awards can be studied at any level. They are more concise than certificates and diplomas of the same level. On completion of an award you may have the option to continue studying towards a certificate or a diploma, or to study at a higher level.

Certificates involve more in-depth study of a topic than awards of the same level. They provide a broad base of knowledge and skills. They can also be studied at any level. On their completion of a certificate, they may have the option to continue studying towards a diploma, or to study at a higher level.

Diplomas are the most comprehensive of the three. They offer an extensive programme of learning, allowing them to learn more about a subject than awards and certificates of the same level. They can also be studied at any level.

# T Levels

A T Level or 'Tech Level' is a Level 3 programme.

T Levels are taken over two years and are available to both young people over the age of 16 and adults.

T Levels are intended as a technical alternative to A Levels. They are college-based but involve a work placement.



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**They will become increasingly available in a range of industries such as accounting, agriculture, construction, engineering or IT.**

**T Levels have a strong emphasis on supporting learners to develop the technical knowledge and practical skills needed for their chosen occupation.**

# Functional Skills

Functional Skills are qualifications in English, maths and ICT. There are five levels (from entry level 1 through to Level 2).

Sometimes they form part of a study programme for those needing to develop Maths and English skills.



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	Entry level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Maths	✓	✓	✓	
English	✓	✓	✓	
IT	✓	✓	✓	
Job seeking skills	✓	✓		
Life skills	✓			
Business and job specific skills		✓	✓	✓

Entry level qualification	Level 1 qualification	Level 2 qualification	Level 3 qualification
<p>An entry level qualification might be right for you if you've been away from learning for a long time and need help to build your skills.</p> <p>This is similar to having:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 GCSE below grade G or 1</li> <li>Functional Skills –entry level</li> <li>Foundation learning – entry level</li> </ul>	<p>This is similar to having a GCSE at grades D–G or 1–3</p> <p>And also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NVQ level 1</li> <li>GNVQ Foundation</li> <li>Key skills level 1</li> <li>Functional Skills level 1</li> <li>QCF level 1</li> <li>RQF level 1</li> </ul>	<p>This is similar to having a GCSE at grades A*–C or 4–9</p> <p>And also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NVQ level 2</li> <li>GNVQ Intermediate</li> <li>Key skills level 2</li> <li>Functional Skills level 2</li> <li>QCF level 2</li> <li>RQF level 2</li> </ul>	<p>This is similar to an A level.</p> <p>And also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NVQ level 3</li> <li>GNVQ Advanced</li> <li>Key skills level 3</li> <li>QCF level 3</li> <li>RQF level 3</li> </ul>

# GCSE's

GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education.

These are subject-based qualifications taken by most people in England at the end of year 11 as well as by many adult learners.

GCSEs are Level 1-2 qualifications (depending on what grade is achieved).

They are assessed by exams, coursework, or a combination of both.

With a large number of subjects available, GCSEs provide a solid foundation for further academic and vocational study and for employment.

A grade C / 4 in English and maths is a prerequisite for many jobs and courses.



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New grading structure	Current grading structure
9	A*
8	
7	
6	A
5	
4	
3	B
2	
1	
U	C
	D
	E
	F
	G
	U

# A Levels and AS Levels

A Levels and AS Levels are Level 3 academic qualifications available to adult learners as well as school-leavers.

A Level stands for 'Advanced Level'.

They entail more in-depth study than GCSEs.

You usually study three subjects or more at the same time over a two-year period (full-time).

AS Levels are the same difficulty as A Levels but are more concise. They only take one year of full-time study to complete.



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**A and AS Levels are qualifications requiring rigorous academic study. Assessment is usually by examination at the end of the course.**

**There is a wide range of subjects available.**

**Some people choose to take A Levels alongside other qualifications.**

**Successful completion of AS and A Levels opens up the possibility of higher education study at college, university or online.**

**AS and A Levels are recognised by many employers.**

# Common abbreviations in the FE sector

- ACL - Adult and Community Learning
- ASL - Additional Support for Learning
- AEB - Adult Education Budget
- AO - Awarding Organisation
- ASW - Adult Skills for Work
- BAME - Black, Asian and minority ethnic
- CEIAG - Careers Experience Information Advice and Guidance
- CPD - Continuous Professional Development
- DfE - Department for Education
- EIF - Education Inspection Framework
- EPA - End Point Assessment
- EPO - End Point Assessment Organisation
- EQA - External Quality Assurance
- ESFA - The Education and Skills Funding Agency
- ESF - European Social Fund
- ESOL - English for Speakers of Other Languages

- FE - Further Education
- GCSE - General Certificate of Secondary Education
- FS - Functional Skills
- HE - Higher Education
- HNC - Higher National Certificate
- HND - Higher National Diploma
- ICT - Information and Communication Technology
- ILP - Individual Learning Plan
- ILR - Individual Learner Record
- IQA - Internal Quality Assurance
- ITP - Independent Training Provider



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# Common abbreviations in the FE sector

- LA - Local Authority
- LEP - Lead Enterprise Partnerships
- LRS - Learner Record Service
- LARS - Learning Aim Record Service
- NVQ - National Vocational Qualification
- OFSTED - Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
- ONA - Organisation Needs Analysis
- PGCE - Postgraduate Certificate in Education
- PGDip - Postgraduate Diploma
- QCF - Qualifications and Credit Framework
- PLR - Personal Learning Record
- PTP - Private Training Provider

- ROTO - Register of Training Organisations
- ROTAP - Register of Apprenticeship Training Organisations
- RQF - Regulated Qualifications Framework
- SEND - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- SSW - Skills Support for the Workforce
- SSU - Skills Support for the Unemployed
- SSR - Skills Support for Redundancy
- TNA - Training Needs Analysis
- WBL - Work-based Learning
- WPL - Workplace Learning



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# Combined Authority

## Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA)

- [cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk](https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
- @CambsPboroCA

## Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)

- [greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk](https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)
- @Greatermcr

## Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA)

- [liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk](https://liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk)
- @LpoolCityRegion

## North of Tyne Combined Authority (NoTCA)

- [northoftyne-ca.gov.uk](https://northoftyne-ca.gov.uk)
- (@NorthTyneCA)

## South Yorkshire City Region Combined Authority

- [sheffieldcityregion.org.uk](https://sheffieldcityregion.org.uk)
- @SheffCityRegion)



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## Tees Valley Combined Authority

- [teesvalley-ca.gov.uk](https://teesvalley-ca.gov.uk)
- @TeesValleyCA)

## West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)

- [wmca.org.uk](https://wmca.org.uk)
- @WestMids\_CA

## West of England Combined Authority

- [westofengland-ca.gov.uk/](https://westofengland-ca.gov.uk/)
- @WestofEnglandCA)

## West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WTCA)

- [westyorks-ca.gov.uk/](https://westyorks-ca.gov.uk/)
- @WestYorkshireCA

# Glossary of Key Terms

## Cognitive

The mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses

## Legal Entitlement

The entitlements allow learners aged:

- 19 to 23 to be fully-funded if they study for a first qualification at level 2 and/or level 3
- 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade C/grade 4 or higher, to be fully-funded if they study for a qualification in English or maths, up to and including level 2



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# Glossary of Key Terms

## End Point Assessments

- **End-point assessment (EPA)** is an assessment of the knowledge, skills and behaviours that the apprentice has learned throughout an apprenticeship, which confirms that they are occupationally competent.
- **Assessments** have been designed by employers in the sector and are conducted by independent bodies known as end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs).

## End Point Assessment Organisations (EPAO)

- **An independent organisation must be involved in the EPA of each apprentice so that all apprentices following the same standard are assessed consistently.**
- **Only organisations on the register of end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs) are eligible to conduct the independent EPA of apprentices.**

# Glossary of key terms

## Apprenticeship

Apprenticeships combine practical training in a job with study.

As an apprentice they will:

- be an employee earning a wage and getting holiday pay
- work alongside experienced staff
- gain job-specific skills
- get time for training and study related to the role (at least 20% of their normal working hours)

Apprenticeships take 1 to 5 years to complete depending on their level.



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## Traineeship

A traineeship is a course with work experience that gets young people ready for work or an apprenticeship. It can last from 6 weeks up to 1 year, though most traineeships last for less than 6 months.

Young people can apply if there:

- eligible to work in England
- unemployed and have little or no work experience
- aged 16 to 24 and qualified up to and including Level 3 (equivalent to A Level)

# Glossary of key terms

## Kickstart Scheme

The Kickstart Scheme provides funding to create new jobs for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long term unemployment. Employers of all sizes can apply for funding which covers:

- 100% of the National Minimum Wage (or the National Living Wage depending on the age of the participant) for 25 hours per week for a total of 6 months
- associated employer National Insurance contributions
- minimum automatic enrolment pension contributions

## Restart Scheme

The Restart scheme provides Universal Credit claimants who have been out of work for at least 12 months enhanced support to find jobs in their local area.

# Glossary of key terms

## Advanced Learner Loan

People can apply for an Advanced Learner Loan to help with the costs of a course at a college or training provider in England.

Loan eligibility does not depend on income and there are no credit checks.

## National Skills Fund

- Starting this year, the government is investing £2.5 billion in the National Skills Fund as part of our Plan for Jobs.
- Any adult aged 19 and over, who does not already have a level 3 qualification (equivalent to an advanced technical certificate or diploma, or A levels) or higher, can access hundreds of fully funded level 3 courses.



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# Glossary of key terms

## Third Sector

The third sector refers to non-profit-making organisations such as charities, foundations and community groups.

Third sector organisations include:

- Charities
- Voluntary and community organisations
- Social enterprises and cooperatives
- Think tanks and private research institutes (this does not include universities and colleges)
- Some organisations, such as housing associations have been spun off from government and are considered quasi-third sector groups, even though they deliver public services.

## Private sector

- Private sector organisations are owned by individuals and shareholders.
- These businesses are driven by profit.
- The profit from private sector organisations benefits the owners, shareholders and investors.
- They are financed by private money from shareholders and banks.



# Staying up to date

As mentioned previously, the Skills Sector (FE Sector) is changing and it's important to connect to the latest news and updates for this ever changing and diverse industry.

We believe its key and to enhance knowledge, develop insights and understand the view points, people can do this by following the right people, and being aware of the news of representation bodies and influences within in the industry.

We've taken the time to highlight a few organisations and bodies over the next few pages.



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**If you are involved in the delivery of FE training, the best places to obtain information, updates and be aware of CPD requirements, not only from your quality team, but also your awarding organisations.**

**It's important connect and follow them on social media, such as Twitter, LinkedIn etc**

- **This will help you keep in tune with the industry.**

# TES Further Education



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- [tes.com/news/hub/fe](https://tes.com/news/hub/fe)
- [linkedin.com/company/tes-fe-news/](https://linkedin.com/company/tes-fe-news/)
- [Podcast Series](#)
- [twitter.com/tesfenews](https://twitter.com/tesfenews)

# Association of Employment and Learning Providers

AELP is a national membership organisation that represents the interests of an extensive number of organisations that deliver apprenticeships, employability support and vocational learning.

The main purpose is to lobby for government funded skills and employment programmes that increase workforce productivity and improve social mobility.



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- [aelp.org.uk](https://aelp.org.uk)
- [linkedin.com/company/aelp](https://linkedin.com/company/aelp)
- [twitter.com/aelpuk](https://twitter.com/aelpuk)

# Everything FE

Thought Leadership in Further Education is brought to you by our team of experts, designed to help you grow your FE knowledge, expertise and network.



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- [everythingfe.co.uk](https://everythingfe.co.uk)
- [everythingfe.co.uk/influencers](https://everythingfe.co.uk/influencers)
- [everythingfe.co.uk/articles](https://everythingfe.co.uk/articles)

# Further Education Community

This group has been created to network all professionals from the sector. By doing this we can get the sector communicating ideas, jobs, advice & guidance to help progress in to a brighter future for Further Education.



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- [linkedin.com/groups/8127832/](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8127832/)

# Association of Colleges AOC

Association of Colleges is the national voice for further education, sixth form, tertiary and specialist colleges in England. They are a not-for-profit membership organisation established in 1996 by colleges, for colleges. Members make up almost 95% of the sector - transforming 2.2 million lives each year.

Acting as the collective voice, AoC represent and promote the interests of colleges, and provides our members with high-quality professional support services, including training, events and recruitment.



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- [aoc.co.uk](https://aoc.co.uk)
- [twitter.com/AoC\\_info](https://twitter.com/AoC_info)
- [linkedin.com/company/association-of-colleges/](https://linkedin.com/company/association-of-colleges/)

# BAME Apprentice Network

For Apprentices by Apprentices, the BAME Apprentice Network is a Community of Black, Asian, Minority, Ethnic (BAME) Apprentices which aims to change the landscape of apprenticeships, empowering apprentices to develop personally and professionally, as well as championing change within the sector.



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- [bameapprenticenetwork.com/](https://bameapprenticenetwork.com/)
- [youtube.com/channel/UCDg07jntiAacNIZ15L2sFSQ](https://youtube.com/channel/UCDg07jntiAacNIZ15L2sFSQ)
- [twitter.com/bameappnetwork](https://twitter.com/bameappnetwork)
- [eventbrite.co.uk/o/bame-apprentice-network-29672812829](https://eventbrite.co.uk/o/bame-apprentice-network-29672812829)
- [linkedin.com/company/bameappnetwork/](https://linkedin.com/company/bameappnetwork/)

# Learning & Work Institute

Learning & Work Institute is an independent policy, research and development organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. We research what works, influences policies, develop new ways of thinking, and help implement new approaches.



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- [learningandwork.org.uk/](https://learningandwork.org.uk/)
- [twitter.com/LearnWorkUK](https://twitter.com/LearnWorkUK)
- [facebook.com/festivaloflearning/](https://facebook.com/festivaloflearning/)
- [linkedin.com/company/learning-and-work-institute/](https://linkedin.com/company/learning-and-work-institute/)



# FE News

Providing trustworthy and positive Further Education news and views since 2003, they are a digital news channel with a mixture of written word articles, podcasts and videos. Their specialisation is to provide a mixture of the latest education news, their stance is always positive, sector building whilst sharing different perspectives and views from thought leaders, to provide a think tank of new ideas and solutions to bring the education sector together and come up with new innovative solutions and ideas.



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- [fenews.co.uk/](https://fenews.co.uk/)
- [linkedin.com/company/fe-news-uk/](https://linkedin.com/company/fe-news-uk/)
- [twitter.com/FENews](https://twitter.com/FENews)

# FE Week

FE Week is the premier news service for the further education and skills sector in England.

Since its founding in September 2011, FE Week has firmly cemented itself as the go-to news source for further education and skills. They have a proud reputation for breaking news, investigations and expert analysis, which is second to none in the sector.

FE Week is published weekly during term time, and is written for middle and senior management working in colleges and private training providers, and those interested in this sector, including government, policy shapers and other service providers.



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- [feweek.co.uk/](http://feweek.co.uk/)
- [twitter.com/](https://twitter.com/FEWeek)
- [facebook.com/FEWeek/](https://facebook.com/FEWeek/)
- [linkedin.com/company/fe-week](https://linkedin.com/company/fe-week)

# Other useful websites



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Education and Training  
Foundation  
[et-foundation.co.uk](http://et-foundation.co.uk)

Learning Aim Record Service  
(LARS)  
[gov.uk/guidance/learning-  
aim-reference-service-lars](http://gov.uk/guidance/learning-aim-reference-service-lars)

National Careers Service  
[nationalcareers.service.gov.u  
k](http://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk)

Ofqual Register  
[register.ofqual.gov.uk](http://register.ofqual.gov.uk)

FE Advice  
[feadvice.org.uk](http://feadvice.org.uk)

GMLPN  
[gmlpn.co.uk](http://gmlpn.co.uk)

# Thank you...

We hope you have found this guide useful, this was created as we felt that there was need for an updated Guide for the FE sector

We understand it's not the answer to everything, but we want to help others. If you want to grow in this sector, you must ask questions and learn from your own mistakes, and the mistakes of others.



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**It's important to talk to your colleagues, and peers, share experiences, you cannot know everything.**

**This is working document, if you have any suggestions or improvements, please contact us. In the meantime, please contact with us...**

- [facebook.com/pathwaygroup/](https://facebook.com/pathwaygroup/)
- [instagram.com/pathwaygroup/](https://instagram.com/pathwaygroup/)
- [linkedin.com/company/1933582](https://linkedin.com/company/1933582)
- [twitter.com/pathwaygroup](https://twitter.com/pathwaygroup)