

Realising Self Regulation in the Further Education Sector Phase 2

A proposition for the further development of the self-regulatory system submitted by the Self Regulation Implementation Group to the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills

November 2007

FOREWORD BY SIR GEORGE SWEENEY

In your responses to our Phase 1 proposition in March and our proposals for practical implementation through Phase 2 in April this year, you emphasised some key points this proposition should address.

Particularly important was the development of ideas around the Single Voice for Self Regulation for Further Education (hereafter referred to as 'the Single Voice') which, through ownership and responsibility for its development, would be the cornerstone of sustainable self regulation over time. Following the then Secretary of State's challenge at the AoC conference in November 2006, the senior members of all of the representative bodies have shown their single commitment to the establishment of a Single Voice. This is evidenced in a joint agreement on the memorandum and articles for the incorporation of the Single Voice. It is this agreement and commitment to sustained single engagement that underpins the proposals we now put forward for your consideration. In addition, senior members of stakeholder constituencies have been engaged in a programme of work to support the development of this proposition.

The rationale for our proposals is that a strong further education sector is essential for the realisation of the government's ambitions for the nation. If we look at the strongest further education systems internationally – community colleges in America and Canada, technical and further education colleges in Australia, at technical institutes in France and Germany – we can see that they all have strong, autonomous, confident institutions at their heart. Such institutions do not require a centralised, planned and regulated system. They have taken responsibility for their own futures and in particular, are demonstrably responsive to the needs of learners, employers and communities, and are committed to continuous improvement.

These institutions and those associated with them are seen as leaders and role models. Acting collectively, they can ensure their knowledge and experience is applied to govern the sector and to develop it into the future. Further education in England has, over the last ten years changed out of all recognition. It has matured, improved success rates and responsiveness, demonstrated how it responds quickly to government priorities and is now ready to assume, progressively, important new responsibilities and forge a different relationship with government.

Central to our proposals is the establishment of an effective and efficient Single Voice which will:

- represent the single voice of the sector in strategic dialogue with government on regulatory matters
- represent and support providers in interpreting and responding to regulatory directives set by government and national agencies, while in doing so accepting and recognising the distinctive voices of representative bodies from different parts of the sector
- be responsible for developing, implementing and maintaining the framework for self regulation and developing a rolling programme of activity for this purpose.

In the first year of operation the framework will be developed around the following key objectives:

- enhancing the sector's capacity for self improvement
- responsiveness to the needs of learners and employers
- simplification of the regulatory landscape
- provider governance and codes of conduct under self regulation delivered through the representative bodies

The single voice will determine other aspects of the regulatory landscape that may be considered in further developing the framework for self regulation within the FE system. These may include

matters relating to funding, qualifications and quality assurance. The Single Voice will determine how these or other regulatory matters are addressed in future phases of developing a more self regulating sector.

In response to your request, we believe that our proposals are capable of practical implementation and are set in the context of the Machinery of Government changes.

I invite your consideration and agreement to the proposition which we trust will form part of the forthcoming consultation on the Machinery of Government changes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Sweeney', written in a cursive style.

Sir George Sweeney
On behalf of the Self Regulation Implementation Group

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1 OUR AMBITION

The proposition offers a vision of a Further Education sector comprising respected, autonomous, demand-led organisations acting both individually and collectively within a self-regulation system in delivering high quality, responsive provision for the benefit of learners, employers, communities and the nation and operating as a respected and trusted partner of government¹.

The vision will require a new set of accountability relationships between government, its regulatory agencies and providers, both individually and collectively. Central to this development will be the establishment of a Single Voice that will support and represent the system-wide needs of the FE sector on regulatory matters, including the development, implementation and maintenance of a system of self regulation that respects provider autonomy, is responsive to the needs of learners and employers, simplifies the regulatory landscape and is accountable to government for sector operations and performance.

The relationships between the Single Voice, providers, government and its regulatory agencies are set out in **Diagram 1**.

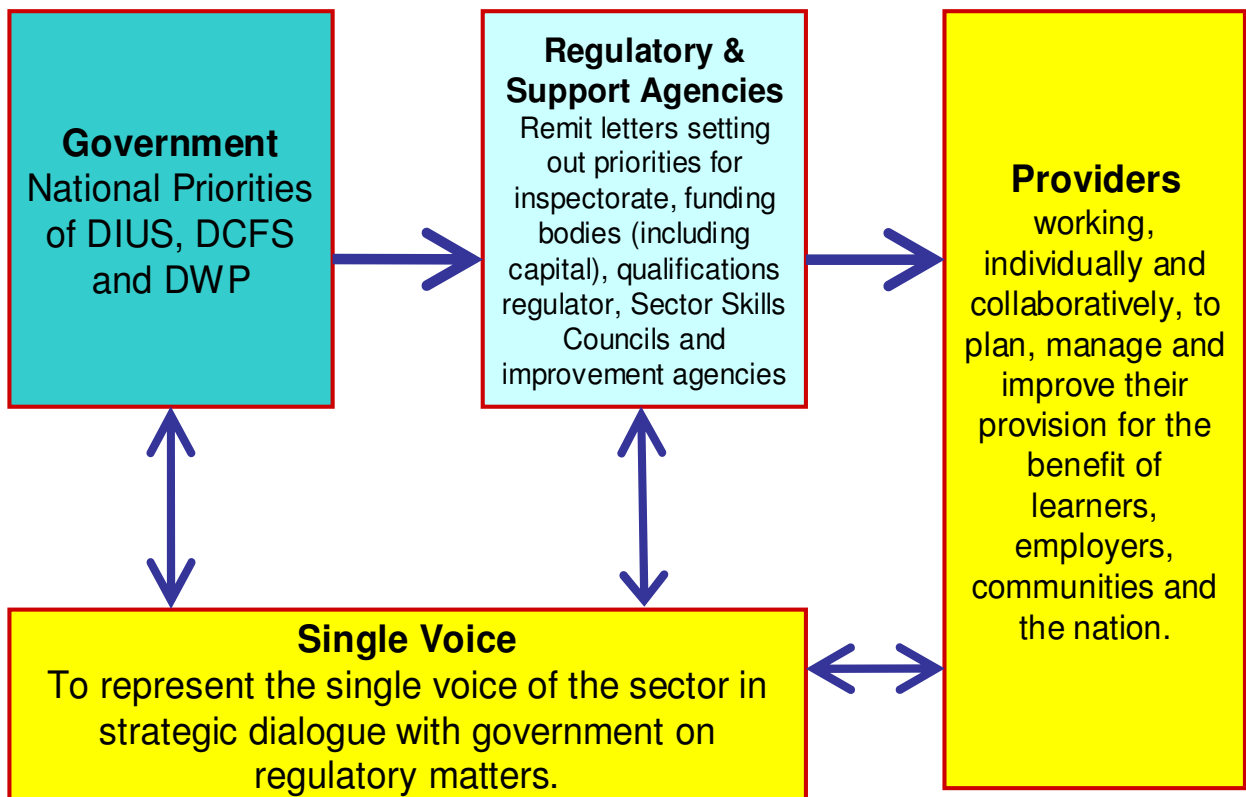


Diagram 1

¹ The proposals will embrace all those within the further education sector who are delivering or wish to deliver publicly funded provision. This will include but will not necessarily be limited to: academies, colleges of further education, consortia federations, local authorities, private companies, schools, sixth form colleges, trusts and voluntary organisations.

1.1 Respective Roles

The accountability relationships set out in diagram 1 require a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the respective parties. These are set out below.

Government sets policy and establishes the machinery of government necessary to deliver that policy efficiently and effectively. It identifies national priorities that are set out in remit letters to regulatory and support agencies, including those responsible for inspection, funding, qualifications, skills development and quality improvement. Self regulation is predicated on a progressive transfer of responsibilities from regulatory agencies to providers in the FE sector

The Single Voice represents the sector in strategic dialogue with government on regulatory matters. It represents and supports providers in interpreting and responding to regulatory directives set by government and national agencies, while in doing so accepting and recognising the distinctive voices of representative bodies from different parts of the sector. It will be responsible for developing, implementing and maintaining the framework for self regulation and developing a rolling programme of activity for this purpose.

Providers take greater responsibility individually and collaboratively for planning and improving their provision for the benefit of learners, employers, communities and the nation. They also work collectively through the Single Voice in identifying the system wide needs of the FE sector on regulatory matters.

2 SELF REGULATION AND THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

Since the start of the project, there has been a major realignment of government departments. This proposition should be viewed in this new context. Government have committed DIUS, DCSF and DWP to the pursuit of self regulation for the FE sector. Decisions regarding the Machinery of Government changes will be the subject of extensive consultation in the New Year, of which detailed proposals on self regulation will be a part. The changes appear to be entirely consistent with our ambitions.

3 AIMS OF SELF REGULATION WITHIN FURTHER EDUCATION

This proposition sets out five main aims for the development of self regulation within the FE system: provider autonomy and empowerment; a focus on the needs of learners, employers and communities; simplification of regulatory requirements; improved accountability to government and building on professional confidence and trust.

3.1 Provider autonomy

Self regulation is about increasing the autonomy of providers within the FE system. We envisage a self regulation system in which all providers are capable of self-regulating their own affairs, both individually and collectively, through processes of planning, review and development that are responsive to local needs and lead to self improvement.

3.2 Focus on learners, employers and communities

Self regulation is about improving responsiveness to the needs of learners, employers and the wider community. We envisage a self regulation system in which learners, employers and communities have increased involvement in the planning, review and development of FE provision at both the provider and system levels.

3.3 Simplification of regulatory requirements

Self regulation is about simplifying the regulatory and support frameworks within which providers are required to operate. We envisage a self regulation system characterised by a reduction in the regulatory demands placed on providers and single ownership of the regulatory framework facilitated by the Single Voice.

3.4 Accountability to government

Self regulation is about recognising the individual and single responsibilities that providers have in securing public funding within the FE system. We envisage a self regulation system in which providers become respected and trusted partners of Government by recognising their statutory responsibilities and their accountability for the effective delivery of national policy and the efficient use of public funds.

3.5 Professional confidence and trust

Self regulation reflects increased confidence and trust in the professional capabilities of those working in the FE sector to manage their own affairs, with reduced levels of external regulation. We envisage a self regulation system that further develops these capabilities, and exploits their full potential, through a sector focus on innovation, continuous professional development, peer-to-peer learning and the sharing of good practice across the FE sector. Demonstrating a strong commitment to continuous professional development will build even greater confidence and trust in the professional capabilities of those working in the sector and contribute to maintaining the reputation of the sector as a high quality deliverer of learning.

4 ESTABLISHMENT OF A SELF REGULATION SINGLE VOICE FOR FURTHER EDUCATION

The Single Voice represents the sector in strategic dialogue with government on regulatory matters. It represents and supports providers in interpreting and responding to regulatory directives set by government and national agencies, while in doing so accepting and recognising the distinctive voices of representative bodies from different parts of the sector. It will be responsible for developing, implementing and maintaining the framework for self regulation and developing a rolling programme of activity for this purpose.

The Single Voice will be set up as a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital, established according to the terms of a Memorandum of Association. It will establish an overarching code of conduct for providers, to which each provider will be required to adhere. The following representative bodies have nominated either their chair or chief executive to be a director of the company: the ALP, AoC, HOLEX, Landex, MEG, NATSPEC, NIACE, SFCF, 157 Group.

The Single Voice will be the vehicle for transforming further education into a more self-regulating sector. It will be characterised by delivery through the representative bodies. The Single Voice will not develop into a bureaucracy; rather it will provide opportunities for providers themselves to take ownership of the changes necessary to achieve the aims and objectives set out in this paper. We envisage that a small secretariat function will be necessary to support this work, together with full or part time secondments where this is necessary to provide required expertise.

In the first year of operation the framework for self regulation will be developed around the following key areas of work:

- enhancing the sector's capacity for self improvement
- responsiveness to the needs of learners and employers
- simplification of the regulatory landscape
- provider governance and codes of conduct under self regulation delivered through the representative bodies

As part of this work the Single Voice will assume operational responsibilities for:

- the Information Authority
- the Bureaucracy Reduction Group
- the Communications Practitioner Panel
- the FE Reputation Group
- National Learner Panel
- National Learner Survey

There are other aspects of the regulatory landscape that may be considered in further developing the framework for self regulation within the FE system. These may include matters relating to funding, qualifications and quality assurance. The Single Voice will determine how these or other regulatory matters are addressed in future phases of developing a more self regulating sector.

5 SCOPE OF THE PHASE 2 PROPOSITION

This proposition is focused on four aspects of work that will be developed as part of the first phase of moving towards self regulation. These are:

- enhancing the sector's capacity for self improvement
- responsiveness to the needs of learners and employers
- simplification of the regulatory landscape
- provider governance and codes of conduct under self regulation.

Proposals on these matters are set out as objectives in Section 6 of this document.

The Single Voice will establish working groups to advance proposals for each of these areas of development, based on proposals set out in this proposition.

6 OBJECTIVES OF THE PHASE 2 PROPOSITION

The proposition sets out four broad objectives for the initial development of a self regulation system to achieve the aims set out above.

These objectives have implications for how work is carried out at the level of the individual provider and at the FE system level. Realisation of these objectives will have benefits for providers and their staff, for learners, employers and communities, and for government. These are evidenced throughout this report and summarised in Section 7.

6.1 Enhancing the sector's capacity for self improvement

We are proposing a system of self regulation through which providers will demonstrate, individually and collaboratively their capacity for assuring minimum levels of performance and for continuously improving the quality and standards of provision for the benefit of learners, employers and local communities. We also envisage a situation where the Single Voice has a pivotal role in developing the capacity for self improvement within the FE system, through sector ownership of improvement guidance and support programmes and the national improvement strategy on which these programmes are based. This will ensure that the sector assumes direct accountability for its performance and reputation, a key objective of self regulation. The Single Voice would wish to enter into early discussions with government on how the sector could achieve ownership of the improvement strategy and the support programmes that arise from this.

Organisational review and development

All providers will need to demonstrate that they are capable, as autonomous organisations, of self-regulating their own affairs through effective arrangements for organisational review and development. These will include the capacities for identifying and responding to the needs of learners, employers and communities, setting appropriate performance standards, benchmarking performance, ensuring rigorous self-assessment, managing risk, acting on underperformance, identifying and spreading good practice and more generally for operating as effective learning organisations. Each provider will be expected to set out its own approach to carrying out these aspects of organisational review and development for scrutiny during inspection and other external review processes. The Single Voice will have the lead role in working with other agencies to develop guidance standards for organisational review and development, including self-assessment. A multi agency group has been established to achieve these aims and it has been proposed that this group be taken forward under sector ownership.

The Framework for Excellence will provide the key 'output' measures against which all providers will self-assess and review their performance. Providers will, however, be given greater flexibility in using self-assessment and peer review to support their own business development needs, a mission-driven approach to organisational review and development similar to that used in the American Middle States Commission on Higher Education (as cited in the Foster Report). Providers will be expected to develop their own key performance measures (linked to the Framework) for this purpose. Over time the Single Voice will develop and consult on a broader set of outcome measures to demonstrate the sector's contribution to wider government targets, including for communities.

The Single Voice will have a strategic role in the further development of the Framework for Excellence to support both organisational review and development, including self assessment. In particular it will work with other agencies to develop the Framework as a diagnostic tool that can be used by providers for improvement purposes. This work will involve identification of the organisational 'enablers' (input and process indicators) that support achievement of output measures set out within the Framework. The EFQM model will be examined as part of this exercise.

Collaborative approaches to improvement

Providers will increasingly work together in developing their capacities for self improvement, development centred on benchmarking performance, validating self-assessment judgements, spreading good practice and facilitating single action on underperformance. Such an approach recognises the single responsibilities that providers have for improving performance within the sector and in particular targeting underperformance.

Following on from the findings of the national peer referencing pilots, further extended trials are currently being undertaken through the QIA Support for Excellence programme to assess the effectiveness of whole organisational approaches to peer review and development aimed at helping providers to improve their self assessment processes, to build their capacity for improvement and to support their moves towards greater self regulation. The Framework for Excellence will be used as a reference standard within these trials. The Single Voice will work with QIA in producing good practice guidelines arising from this work. Development work will also be undertaken to identify the skills base necessary for effective practice in peer review and development and the national training standards that might be developed for this purpose.

Provider participation in peer review and development activity will be voluntary. The Single Voice will consider the outcomes of peer review trials which are now being undertaken for the first time across the whole of the FE sector, through the Support for Excellence programme. Once these are substantially tested, the Single Voice will consider the recommendations that are made on the appropriateness of a national peer review and development system. Such a system would allow the inspectorate to focus on the effectiveness of the self regulation at a system level, consistent with the role of an external regulator. In the immediate term it is anticipated that OfSTED will give increased recognition to the findings of peer review activity as part of its own evidence base for inspection.

Providers will be expected to develop a range of strategies for identifying and spreading good practice both internally and externally as part of their approach to organisational review and development. The Single Voice will wish to nurture, through the improvement strategy, providers and practitioners who are capable of developing and spreading innovative practice which can be scaled-up across the FE system.

Dealing with underperformance

Providers will be expected to develop systematic approaches for identifying and dealing with underperformance as part of their arrangements for review and development. Review activities, including self-assessment, should be undertaken 'proportionate to risk' and robust risk management systems developed for this purpose. The role of the Single Voice in managing underperformance will be considered in the light of legislation that will transfer and extend intervention powers currently held by the Secretary of State to the LSC. The Single Voice will work with the LSC to develop a licensing system that ensures all public-funded providers meet and maintain minimum standards of provision. Such a licensing arrangement is seen as a pre-requisite for establishing public confidence in a self regulating sector. The Single Voice will also work with other agencies in recommending support and intervention strategies for dealing with providers whose performance is just satisfactory or not improving.

The Single Voice will work with LSC to develop benchmarks that define minimum levels of provider performance for achieving and retaining licensed status. It will also issue guidance to providers on the need for more targeted approaches to underperformance as part of arrangements for organisational review and development. Peer review and development trials will be expected to focus on underperforming provision and action to address the causes of under-performance. The Single Voice will promote collaborative arrangements such as federations, collaborative partnerships and trusts in order fill gaps in provision and to address poor quality.

National improvement strategy

A national improvement strategy will be necessary to advance the aims of self regulation, including the capacities of providers, individually and collectively to improve their performance in a self regulating environment. The Single Voice will ensure that the new improvement strategy is

responsive to the needs and priorities of providers, learners and employers, as well as the government's own reform agenda.

The Single Voice will work with QIA and other agencies in reviewing the current national improvement strategy and how this might be further developed to support the aims of self regulation. It will consult with the sector to determine priorities for the new strategy and to ensure its alignment with the government's own reform agenda. Finally, the Single Voice will work with national agencies to develop programmes and services that can best support the strategy.

6.2 Responsiveness to the needs of learners, employers and communities

Responsiveness to the needs and views of learners, employers and communities will be central to the development of self regulation within the FE system.

All providers will be expected to develop strategies for actively engaging these key stakeholders in their planning, review and development processes. The stakeholders should expect opportunities for greater influence on the nature of provision and how it is delivered; more bespoke forms of delivery should result. They should also expect an enhanced voice in governance functions, through the greater flexibility that will be available to providers in determining the composition of their governing bodies. Providers will be expected to develop comprehensive procedures for facilitating and responding to 'customer' complaints.

At a system level, the Single Voice will be a key vehicle for identifying and representing the system wide views and needs of learners, employers and communities across the FE sector. It will do so directly through assuming operational responsibility for such functions as the National Learner Panel and National Learner Survey, and indirectly through close working relationships with other national bodies on ways of enhancing responsiveness. The Single Voice will also be fully responsive to the needs and views of learners, employers and communities in the development and implementation of a sector owned improvement strategy for further education.

The Learner Voice

The Single Voice will maintain its dialogue with the National Union of Students and NIACE about their work with the development of learner involvement strategies. The Single Voice will develop a Learner Involvement Strategy (LIS) as a component of its overall strategic planning process. The LIS will engage and incorporate existing forums and reference groups such as the National Learner Panel (NLP) alongside learner representative bodies, building on best practice examples from its members. Mirroring the institutional process, the Single Voice LIS will be developed in the spirit of engagement and partnership with all relevant learner groups and organisations with multiple access points and mechanisms for involvement.

The National Learner Panel (NLP) will operate from within the Single Voice to provide a reference group for consultation on policies, proposals and initiatives at the national level. The Single Voice will work with the National Learner Panel to determine how best to support its activities and future development. The Single Voice LIS will interface with the providers' own strategies to:

- encourage greater learner involvement at an institutional level through, for example, training, mentoring and coaching
- encourage greater dialogue and consultation with learner representative bodies; ensure learner involvement in learner survey design and analysis
- review the results of the National Learner Survey
- ensure that learner views are acted on
- initiate change in the system from a learner's perspective
- identify key priorities from the learner perspective and provide advice on policies, proposals and initiatives at the national level.

It is assumed that the existing budget for the NLP will be transferred to the Single Voice to enable it to provide a secretariat function for the NLP.

The Employer Voice

From April 2008, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills will be responsible for managing the Sector Skills Council network, including accreditation and will articulate the needs of employers. The Single Voice will seek to establish a strategic partnership with the Commission with a view to improving the FE sector's responsiveness to employer needs in England. Until April 2008 the Single Voice will maintain dialogue with the Sector Skills Development Agency. The Single Voice will be able to engage with the views of employers at a national level on skills needs through the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils (TASSC). Just as providers engage with employers at the local level, the strategic partnership with the Commission will seek to complement rather than duplicate or override local or regional employer engagement activities, including the local employer coalitions funded by Working Ventures UK.

The Community Voice

Communities will benefit from a greater focus on ways of assessing and demonstrating the value of further education to local communities. Current work on Public Value and the socioeconomic impact model will be built on by the Single Voice as part of its commitment to support the further development of the Framework for Excellence to ensure a broader set of outcome measures are developed that reflect the value of further education to local communities and the wider contribution of adult and community learning in meeting government targets.

Communities will benefit from the dialogue that the Single Voice will have with the LGA, HOLEX, LEAFA and NIACE to ensure that local community interests are reflected in the future work on self regulation, including ways of enhancing the community voice.

6.3 Simplification of the regulatory landscape

The Single Voice will ensure that the FE sector is not overburdened with unnecessary bureaucracy and information requirements from government and its agencies. It will also ensure that communications to the sector are fit for purpose. It will take responsibility for functions dealing with the monitoring and policing of government agencies. Its initial concern will be to bring within its remit the Information Authority, the Bureaucracy Reduction Group and the Communications Practitioner Panel.

The Single Voice will influence emerging thinking on rationalisation of data collection and its efficient use by working with the Information Authority and the Bureaucracy Reduction Group to establish what information is needed, when and to what standard; the underlying principle being the production of consistent information which is submitted once and used many times. The Single Voice will act as Secretariat for these groups which will enable streamlining to take place. It is assumed that existing budgets will transfer with each of these functional groups.

Future work will include consultation about where the Information Authority and wider 'data service' functions would best operate, either within the Single Voice or independently (like HESA – Higher Education Statistical Agency). The Single Voice will need to consider, in due course, how the Information Service and the Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP) initiatives regarding the development of the Unique Learner Number, Learner Registration Service and the UK Register of Learning Providers can eventually enable data sharing (from the single source) across partners (including the LSC and Ofsted).

To ensure that the sector is regarded as a trusted partner of government delivering high quality provision and meeting the needs of learners, employers and communities, it will, through the Single Voice, take responsibility for improving and maintaining the reputation of the further education sector. The Single Voice will take responsibility for the FE Reputation Group and steer its programme of work. It will assume the secretariat functions and associated budget.

6.4 Provider governance and codes of conduct under self regulation delivered through the representative bodies

The Single Voice, on behalf of the sector, needs to ensure that the statutory framework relating to the composition and structure of governance is compatible with self regulation. The Instrument and Articles of Government will continue to form the basis of the legal entity of colleges. Current governance arrangements for other providers, including private and voluntary sector agencies and those within the public sector (where additional regulatory frameworks simultaneously apply), will continue to apply. The Single Voice will provide advice to the Secretary of State on the Instrument and Articles of Government as they relate to the missions and strategic objectives of incorporated institutions. It will keep under review, the operation of the Instrument and Articles and from time to time, make recommendations after consultation with governing bodies to government for their development and modification. Each governing body will have the flexibility to determine its own composition in line with the needs of the locality within the terms of the Instrument and Articles and will be expected to ensure that full consideration is given to the learner voice. We envisage that governing bodies and boards will be more empowered as autonomous organisations to self-regulate their own affairs within a clearer accountability framework.

The responsibilities of provider governing bodies and boards include ensuring that the interests of learners, employers and the wider community are served. They will need to be aware of the impact of their decisions not only on their own institution but the wider standing and reputation of the sector. This responsibility will extend to the relationship that governing bodies and boards have with key stakeholders, including local authorities, employers and stakeholder groups within the community.

The Single Voice will facilitate through the representative bodies, local and regional networks of governors in order to exchange views and experiences and promote peer review to support provider governance development. The Single Voice will take responsibility for good governance guidance and promote governance improvement networks at regional and national level as appropriate.

The self regulation system will depend on an overarching code of conduct for providers, to which each provider will be required to adhere as a registered member. Governing bodies and boards will be responsible for ensuring that the provider does not fall below the standards set out in the code of conduct, determining their own code of conduct in line with the principles of self regulation. The overarching code of conduct will enable the Single Voice to act collectively to remedy situations where governing bodies and boards do not effectively discharge their duties. Future work will include the development of and consultation on the overarching code of conduct. This will be taken forward by one of a number of working groups set up to advance the proposals set out in this proposition (see section 8 below).

7 SUMMARY OF BENEFITS OF SELF REGULATION

Realisation of the objectives set out in the previous section will have benefits for learners and employers, for providers and their staff, and for government. These are summarised below.

7.1 Benefits for learners and employers and communities

Self regulation places the needs of learners, employers and communities at the heart of the FE system.

- Learners, employers and communities will have more influence on the nature of educational and training provision and how it is delivered. A more individualised / bespoke approach to the delivery of education, training and qualifications will result.
- Learners, employers and communities will be more actively engaged in the planning, review and development processes of providers, including self assessment. The needs of learners, employers and communities will be more effectively represented at the system level through representative 'consumer' voice groups.
- Learners, employers and communities will feel confident that they can raise issues of concern and that these will be addressed professionally through comprehensive complaints procedures at both the provider and system levels.
- Learners, employers and communities will benefit from more systematic approaches to tackling under-performance within the sector. No part of the FE sector will be able to operate below minimum performance standards. Learners, employers and communities will benefit from single measures to raise the reputation and performance of the FE sector.
- Learners, employers and communities will benefit from measures aimed at reducing bureaucracy within further education and releasing teaching, training and other practitioners to focus on front-line duties. A reduction in bureaucracy should also ensure that more funding is directed to front-line services.
- Learners, employers and communities will benefit through governing bodies having more flexibility in determining their own composition within the terms of the Instrument and Articles of Government.

7.2 Benefits for providers (governors, principals and directors)

- Providers should expect greater autonomy in the running of their businesses, including greater flexibility and control in planning their own provision to meet local needs. Resulting from this, there will be more opportunity to develop innovative solutions to the sector's skills requirements and greater flexibility/control in how these are met.
- Providers will be given more discretion in developing their own approaches to organisational review and development, including self assessment, in ways which are responsive to their own business development needs; a mission-driven approach to quality improvement.
- Providers should benefit from the drive to promote collaborative working that underpins the proposed model of self regulation. They will be able to benchmark performance, share practice and seek collaborative support for improvement through systems of peer review and

development. They will be encouraged to collaborate through federations, partnerships and trusts to deliver education and training to address gaps or shortcomings in local provision.

- Providers should expect a more direct influence over the strategies and programmes for supporting improvement in the sector. Improvement support will be more focussed and responsive to organisational needs. Support for innovation will also be encouraged.
- Providers should experience over time a simplification of the regulatory landscape, a streamlining of the information demands made by government and external agencies and as a result, more resources going to the frontline services. They should also benefit from more light touch, proportionate systems of external inspection, targeted at eliminating underperformance.
- Providers will benefit from the establishment of the Single Voice to support and represent the system-wide needs of the FE sector on regulatory matters, including self regulation.

7.3 Benefits for FE Workforce (managers and practitioners)

- The FE Workforce will benefit from the increased public confidence and trust that self regulation places on the professional capabilities of those working in the FE sector.
- The FE Workforce will benefit from less bureaucracy and more time to focus on teaching, training and other front-line services.
- The FE Workforce will benefit from the opportunity to challenge, learn and gain support from other peers through more collaborative models of review and development.
- The FE Workforce will benefit from a sector-owned national improvement strategy with a strong emphasis on continuous professional development of staff.
- The FE Workforce will benefit from more flexible opportunities to develop innovative solutions to local skills requirements and how these are met.
- The FE Workforce will benefit from single measures to improve the reputation of the FE sector.

7.4 Benefits for Government

Self regulation will enable a new set of accountability relationships with providers that will benefit government in the following ways:

- The Single Voice will offer an effective opportunity for strategic dialogue between the sector and government on regulatory matters.
- The Single Voice will help providers to interpret and respond to national priorities and shape the national support programmes that will be used to enhance the capacity for self regulation and self improvement within the sector.
- Providers will take full responsibility, individually and collectively for improving performance within the sector, including targeted measures for improving underperformance. The sector's capacity for self improvement will be enhanced.

- Self regulation will ensure that the needs of learners, employers and communities are placed at the heart of the FE system. It will support the personalisation of learning, progress towards the Leitch ambitions and Government ambitions for community and social cohesion.
- Through the registration of their representative bodies with the Single Voice, providers will be committed to the aims and objectives of self regulation and demonstrate this through adherence to agreed codes of conduct and performance standards. Self regulation will prioritise the elimination of underperformance.
- Self regulation will streamline regulatory processes and reduce the level of regulation undertaken by external agencies. This should ensure the more efficient and effective use of public funds.
- Government should expect a radical but manageable approach to the development of self regulation within the FE system. The phased approach offered in this proposition should be capable of meeting these expectations.

8 THE WAY FORWARD

The Machinery of Government changes and the impact of changes to the pre- and post-19 landscape present an opportunity to radically transform the way the current FE system operates. Self regulation will now sit within this overall architecture. The main channel for future communications on the proposed changes to the regulation of the FE system will be the consultation on the Machinery of Government changes due to begin in January 2008 and run until March 2008.

8.1 Timetable of work

November 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of detailed proposals to DIUS for submission to Ministers (16 Nov) • Panel debate at AoC annual conference (20 Nov) • Continued working with DIUS officials on proposals to include in Machinery of Government consultation document (21 Nov)
December 2007 <i>(Pre-MOG consultation)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inauguration of the Single Voice • Discussion on process, whereby sector ownership of improvement strategy and function may be achieved • Formation of working groups to establish sector ownership of development proposals set out in proposition • Inputs to specific sector conferences and workshops
January – March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOG consultation document launched • Participation in regional MOG conferences and related communications activity
April 2008 onwards <i>(Post-MOG consultation)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developments in self regulation reviewed in the light of MOG consultation outcomes and sector informed of any changes • If agreed, Single Voice to assume responsibility for Bureaucracy Reduction Group, Information Authority, Communications Practitioner Panel, the FE Reputation Group, National Learner Panel and National Learner Survey