

## UCU guidance on 'mocksteds'

### Inspection and improvement

- 1 Ofsted currently inspects further education and skills institutions against a document known as the Common Inspection Framework. Via inspection and evidence gathering, Ofsted makes effectiveness judgements on: the quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management.
- 2 UCU members are concerned about the nature and rigour of assessment of the post-16 education and training sector, and also the related/associated activities that take place in an attempt to game, strategise and pre-empt Ofsted inspection.
- 3 Members report that Ofsted inspections can create a culture of fear and stress among staff, leading to a focus on superficial compliance rather than meaningful improvement. Additionally, mock inspections can distract from the institution's primary goal of providing high-quality education to students. These can combine to be a waste of resources that could be better spent on other initiatives that support learning and development. We argue that it would be more beneficial for institutions to focus on self-evaluation and continuous improvement, rather than the efforts that go into the inspection process.

### 'Mocksteds'

- 4 UCU has raised concerns with Ofsted about the use of mock-Ofsted inspections, commonly termed 'mocksteds'. Our concerns are that 'mocksteds' are not a good use of the already limited funding for the sector; that these place undue stress and workload implications on FE staff; and they are lacking in reliability and validity.
- 5 We are pleased to have received the following feedback from Ofsted when we raised our concerns with them:

*"Ofsted discourages the use of 'mocksteds' or simulated inspections. The inspection handbook says that providers should not devote time to preparing for inspections or drafting documents solely for inspection. Ofsted provides sessions to new and other providers to ensure they know what to expect from inspection and regularly updates providers about changes to inspection. This together with the published inspection handbook give providers the information they need to know. Ofsted makes it clear in the dissemination of the EIF that colleges and providers should not use valuable resource on consultants to specifically help them with inspection."<sup>1</sup>*

- 6 We encourage branches to use this quote when engaging with local management and report to us where either there is a refusal to follow the Ofsted line or where positive outcomes have resulted.

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of 29 November 2022 Standing Group of Teaching Associations (SGTA) meeting