

Personalising Further Education: Developing a Vision

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 12 February 2007

Your comments must reach us by that date.

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THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online or offline response facility available on the Department for Education and Skills e-consultation website (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations>).

The information you provide in your response will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations, which allow public access to information held by the Department. This does not necessarily mean that your response can be made available to the public as there are exemptions relating to information provided in confidence and information to which the Data Protection Act 1998 applies. You may request confidentiality by ticking the box provided, but you should note that neither this, nor an automatically-generated e-mail confidentiality statement, will necessarily exclude the public right of access.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

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If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact Luke Owen on:

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e-mail: luke.owen@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the Consultation Unit on:

Telephone: 01928 794888

Fax: 01928 794 311

e-mail: consultation.unit@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Which of the following would you classify yourself as:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trainer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Principal
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chief Executive	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learner	<input type="checkbox"/>	Employer
X	Other				

Please Specify: Trade union

Which of the following best describes your organisation or institution:

<input type="checkbox"/>	college	<input type="checkbox"/>	work based learning provider	<input type="checkbox"/>	adult and community learning provider
<input type="checkbox"/>	employer	x	sector stakeholder		

Please Specify:

The principal trade union for academic staff in FE colleges, offender education and personal and community development services

1 Do you agree with the description of personalisation?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	X	Mostly	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
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Comments: UCU agrees with the concept of “personalisation”: that is working with the learner to ensure that they are actively engaged with the whole of the learning process as it affects them. We also support the points made on page 8 of the consultation document: that the learning experience should: respond to the needs of the whole person, seek and respond to the views of the learner, respond to the needs of the local community and employers, raise the ambitions of all learners, support all learners to become expert, encourage individuals to take responsibility and foster openness and trust.

We welcome moves to establish the voice of the learner in decision making in providers. However UCU strongly believes that the issue of personalisation is far more complex than the consultation paper suggests. Whilst not denying there will be benefits to the further education system that will flow from the personalisation agenda, UCU believes that the benefits claimed in the paper are wildly overstated. In addition UCU would argue that certain aspects of current government policy will actually restrict learner choice and the degree to which there can be personalisation. Indeed the direction of travel of much government policy in the FE system may well impact adversely on any attempts at personalisation.

2 Are there other key areas our discussions should cover?

X	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
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Comments: The aspects that is most lacking from the consultation paper are:

- Any analysis of the areas where choice could be made real and meaningful for learners
- An analysis that approaches personalisation as a series of discussions between the provider of the learning programmes, the practitioners that deliver the programmes, other key stakeholders such as the qualifications and assessment regulator and the examination and awarding bodies who largely set the curriculum content.

3 Would a system that delivered on this aspiration begin to eliminate the disparities in success rates discussed earlier in this consultation? We are particularly interested in your views in relation to the most disadvantaged learners.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mostly	X	No
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Comments: The reasons for disparities in success rates are various and often deep seated and cultural. Many of them have their roots in the class nature of the UK education system and cannot be tackled successfully just by actions from within the FE system. Alongside these reasons, the historic and relative under funding of the FE system does not assist in eradicating the disparities in success rates, especially for those with the greatest disadvantage, because there are not the resources to be able to offer the support that these learners require. These are endemic weaknesses that will not be resolved by the kind of superficial personalisation without resources that consultation paper offers.

4 Are all the elements of a successful personalisation strategy captured at annex A?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mostly	x	No
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Comments: UCU does not disagree with the elements but we do not consider there are sufficient resources in the sector to be able successful deliver all the elements without harming actual teaching and learning. As we have stated above we also consider that large parts of current and future government policies and actions in the sector will not allow for real freedom of choice for learners but only freedom of choice within the very narrow parameters as set by these policies.

5 To what extent do you agree that the successful application of the approaches outlined in annex A lead to better results and increased progression for learners?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	x	Partially agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree
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Comments: The successful application of these approaches is dependent on there being additional resources to make them effective.

6 Have we effectively captured the benefits of personalisation?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mostly	X	No
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Comments: The claims for the benefits of personalisation made in the paper are greatly exaggerated. There would seem to be almost as many claims for the benefits of personalisation as the medieval church made for holy relics, with about as much chance of seeing them realised. There are and will be benefits from a realistic personalisation agenda but to make such exaggerated claims will undermine the good that can be done and discredit the whole process

7 How can providers ensure their personalisation strategies deliver these benefits, particularly for the most disadvantaged?

The personalisation strategies of providers will not deliver the benefits as described in the consultation paper

Comments:

8 Have we captured the correct measures of success for personalisation?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mostly	X	No
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Comments: as we have stated, UCU does not agree that the benefits claimed for personalisation will flow from the strategies around the concept. The proposed measures therefore will not measure the success or failure of such strategies but entirely different aspects of the FE system. We do consider that learner satisfaction surveys and similar devices do give interesting and valuable information on what learners think about their learning experiences but they have to be used with care and sensitivity to all the particular circumstances surrounding that learning. UCU is also concerned that lighter touch inspection with far greater reliance on "desk" information and far less actual visits and observation by inspection will mean that some understanding and appreciation of actual conditions of and for teaching and learning will be lost from judgements made on providers.

9 Do you agree that measuring the effectiveness of personalisation should be embedded within existing and proposed quality tools?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	X	Mostly	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
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Comments: any embedding must be in line with attempts to reduce bureaucracy within the sector/

10 What are the implications of a more personalised approach in tutorial and pastoral support?

Comments: Given the diversity of student body, and especially the large numbers of part time learners, the implications for a more personalised approach to tutorial and pastoral work would be that this will not be possible unless there are considerably more resources made available for these purposes. One of the implications will be on existing workloads of those staff undertaking this tutorial and pastoral work. If this is to be more "personalised" it will need to be undertaken within existing workloads not in addition to these. Such work will need to be considered as "class contact" time and given the same importance and recognition as actual teaching.

There are also implications for tutorial and pastoral work with adult students in the direction of policy both from the government, and now reiterated by the recently published Leitch Report, that the bulk of adult learning will take place in the workplace through Train to Gain programmes. We wonder how exactly how the personalisation processes such as increased choice and more tutorial and pastoral work will take place in these situations. Will learners have the same choice as their employers? Will the pastoral work envisaged take place in work time?

11 Are there models of excellent practice you would share?

Comments:

12 Do you have any further comments you would like to make?

Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply x

Here at the Department for Education and Skills we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

X Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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All UK national public consultations are required to conform to the following standards:

1. Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy.
2. Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.
3. Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.

4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.
5. Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator.
6. Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.

Further information on the Code of Practice can be accessed through the Cabinet Office Website: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/consultation-guidance/content/introduction/index.asp>

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 12 February 2007

Send by post to: W3D, Teaching, Learning and Personalisation Unit, Improvement Group, DfES, Moorfoot, Sheffield, S1 4PQ

Send by e-mail to: personalising.fe@dfes.gsi.gov.uk