Annex D: Form for Responding to this Consultation Document

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Leading learning and skills

(Reference: Consultation on the development of the Framework for Excellence – a comprehensive performance assessment framework for the further education system)

Please complete and post this form to the above address (or fax to 024 7682 3334) by no later than **20 October 2006**. A copy of your response will also be forwarded to your local LSC for information. A Microsoft Word version of this response form is available on the LSC website (www.lsc.gov.uk) and can be completed and emailed back to: framework-for-excellence-consult06@lsc.gov.uk if preferred.

Early responses would be greatly appreciated.

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Please respond below by ticking the appropriate box or deleting as appropriate and entering your comments in the space provided.

Do you wish your response to remain confidential?	Yes ☐ No ☒

Which of the following organisations do you work in and/or represent?

Employer	☐
Further education college (including representative bodies)	☐
Higher education institution with further education provision	☐
Local authority	☐
Other public sector institution (including representative bodies)	☐
Private training institution	☐
School	☐
Sixth-form college	☐
Specialist college (for example, agriculture or art and design)	☐
Specialist college for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	☐
Specialist designated institution	☐
Ufi/**learndirect**	☐
Voluntary sector institution (including representative body)	☐
Other (please specify)	☒

trade union

Comments are invited on the following questions:

Question 1: Do you think that a comprehensive performance assessment should incorporate the   Yes ☒   No ☐
Common Inspection Framework?

Comment: UCU is unclear what is meant by this question. In as much as a comprehensive performance assessment is a both a picture and a judgement of a college or provider, it would need to take account of inspection grades and reports and therefore it should incorporate the Common Inspection Framework (CiF). Indeed paragraph 20 of the consultation document it states that "the CIF forms the core of the Framework extends its scope". UCU considers that the CIF which has itself been the subject of considerable consultation, does provide a useful and comprehensive set of questions to ask of an institution in respect of its full range of policies and activities.Throughout the consultation document there are references to the CIF. We are unsure through which mechanisms the CIF going to be aligned to and incorporated into the Framework. We look forward to seeing this set out in future consultations and outcomes of discussions on the Framework. One of the areas of greatest unease and one that is addressed in the consultation is the use of different systems of grading in the CIF and parts of the proposed Framework. We are still unconvinced that the problems around this have been resolved.

Question 2: Do you agree that the three dimensions of responsiveness, effectiveness and finance   Yes ☐   No ☒
based on the seven key performance indicators (KPIs) are sufficient for comprehensive performance
assessment or are there other aspects that need to be included? *(please specify)*

Comment: UCU does not agree that 3 dimensions based on the 7 key performance indicators (KPIs) are sufficient for comprehensive performance assessment. This is based on our view that we are unsure whether the 7 KPIs are going to encompass certain aspects of colleges' and providers' activities that we consider to be of crucial importance. We also consider that there is a dimension and a set of KPIs that seems to be largely if not entirely absent. It may be argued that the issues we raise are inherent and implicitly and sometimes explicitly embedded in both the CIF and the 7 KPIs. We are not convinced this is so and certainly we consider that these issues need greater profile in a system of comprehensive performance assessment. These issues are:

•   equal opportunities: this should be at the heart of everything that the learning sector does. It could be argued that it is encompassed within the responsivess dimension and the KPI of the quality of provision. We would argue strongly that these do not have a high enough profile, and need a far higher profile and specific KPIs to measure progress in this area.

•   widening participation: clearly this is a particular aspect of equal opportunities. Despite what seems to be a change of direction in government policy around widening participation, we believe that this is still is a crucial issue for the learning and skills sector especially given the UK's still relatively poor participation rates for young people and adults.

•   employment engagement: we again repeat our contention that it is not enough to just meet employer needs, but those of employees also must be taken into consideration as well. We would argue that the KPIs could be redrawn to allow for this.

•   the staffing dimension: UCU sees this as a much more serious omission. Quality and excellence ultimately depend on the staff who actually deliver the learning programmes. It can be argued that be issues around staff will be encompassed within the effectiveness dimension. We believe that this approach will be inadequate. It is vital that there is staff ownership of all the processes that both underpin and make up the implementation of quality assurance and improvement. It is essential that part of performance

assessment is the human resource management within a college or provider. This should be a separate dimension its own set of key performance indicators. Later in this response we will outline what such KPIs could be.

Question 3: Do you agree that the proposed Framework of KPIs is applicable to all the types of colleges and providers that make up the further education system? Yes ☒ No ☐

Comment: Broadly we agree that the proposed Framework should be applicable not only to all types of colleges and providers making up the further education system, but also school 6th forms. If performance is to be comprehensively assessed and decisions made on the basis of the judgement, then it is vital that institutions and services are judged by the same standards for comparable work. We do have some concerns in one area however. This is around the provision of adult and community learning/personal and community development learning(ACL/PCDL). Our concerns are around how the KPIs for financial health and control could be applied to some local authority ACL/PCDL services who may not have or be in control of the financial information and control that may be needed for these KPIs. We understand that the Framework will be implemented a year later for ACL/PCDL. We assume that this can be detail will be fully addressed before implementation.

Question 4: Do you agree that the information needed for the proposed Framework should be assembled, as far as possible, from the information that any well-managed college or provider would collect and analyse? Yes ☒ No ☐

Comment: UCU agrees that the information needed for the Framework should be assembled as far as possible from information already collected and analysed. We hope that this keeps bureaucracy to a minimum because we are concerned that a model which has 3 dimensions and 21KPIs could become over bureaucratic. However we would also wish to add that there may be components of performance that are so important to a well balanced assessment and where information is not currently collected and analysed, that we would not wish for this formulation to become an iron rule. We would also like to be part of any discussions as to what actually a well-managed college or provider means in practice.

Question 5: Do you agree that the principles proposed in Section 4 provide a suitable basis for the development of the KPIs? Yes ☐ No ☒

Comment: UCU has a fundamental difficulty with the underlying concepts behind the Framework. Whilst not disagreeing about the important of quality, quality performance and the need to maintain and improve quality. We do not agree with the way that this is being developed and for some of the purposes for which it will be used. We do not think that in organisations as complex and diverse as colleges, and in a sector as complex as the learning and skills sector, performance can be encompassed by 3 dimensions and 21 KPIs, and then finally reduced to a single score or rating. The approach is so crude as to actually give little genuine information for anyone, individual or employer to base decisions on. We have very grave concerns that the proposals especially those of having a single score or rating feed into the whole climate of targets and league tables which we consider to have extremely damaging effects on education.

Question 6: Do you think that the proposed factors contributing to the KPIs described in paragraphs 31 to 37 are a suitable basis for initial development and trials? Yes ☐ No ☒

Comment: UCU does not consider the proposed factor contributing the KPIs as a suitable basis for development and trials. The reasons for this have been given above. In short we consider that the KPI are not broad enough to capture the whole performance of a college or provider. In particular we think that equal opportunities and widening participation have not been given enough prominence. We also consider that there is whole dimension and consequent KPI absent which is around staffing/human resource management.

Question 7: Do you think that there are any additional or alternative objective, quantifiable indicators that should be used to define the KPIs, particularly where they draw on existing data sources? *(please specify)* Yes ☒ No ☐

Comment: UCU would suggest the following measures and information could be used in relation to the dimensions and KPIs that we consider to be absent or undeveloped in the proposals. These are presented as examples not as an exhaustive list:

Equal opportunities and widening participation

- Existence of equal opportunities polices and evidence of their implementation
- Evidence of compliance with equality legislation
- Breakdown of students in terms of ethnic origin, gender, age and disability
- Identification of gaps between the different community representation in the college/provider and numbers in the locality
- Breakdown of staff in terms of ethnic origin, gender, age and disability

Staffing and HRM

- Numbers of professionally qualified staff
- Presence of union learning representatives and learning agreements
- Industrial relations record including number of days lost to industrial action
- Staff turnover
- Staff sickness
- Evidence of staff satisfaction surveys
- Existence of a full range of agreed HRM/employee relations policies and evidence of their implementation

Question 8: Do you agree that the approach to determine the KPIs, as proposed in Section 5, should include an element of qualitative assessment as well as quantitative measures? Yes ☒ No ☐

If not, how do you think the KPIs should be determined? *(please specify)*

Comment: It is essential that the KPIs include elements of a qualitative assessment as well as quantitative measures if all the dimensions of college/provider performance are to be assessed. It will be impossible to gain a full picture if only quantitative measures are used. We realise the process of making a qualitative assessment may be difficult especially outside the inspection process and UCU would welcome being part of discussions as to how such measures could be assembled.

Question 9: Do you think that all the KPIs and dimensions should carry the same weight or significance Yes ☒ No ☐
when contributing to the overall performance rating? If not, what should be the weighting or significance placed on the KPIs and/or the dimensions and why? *(please specify)*

Comment: We agree that all the KPIs and dimensions should carry the same weight or significance.

Question 10: Do you think that the requirement to assess the dimensions against the five-point   Yes ☒ No ☐
scale place a significant additional burden on colleges and providers? If so, please explain why.

Comment: UCU does believe the requirement to assess the dimensions against the 5 point scale places a significant additional burden on colleges and providers largely because we do not understand how this 5 point scale will be aligned to the 4 point scale of the CIF and proposed to use for grading KPIs. We believe that in trying to align the 2 scales colleges and providers, the Framework will have to collect more and more extensive information

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Question 11: Do you agree with the interim arrangements for grading scales proposed in   Yes ☐ No ☐
paragraph 49?

Comment: No because we cannot understand how the two scales will be aligned

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Question 12: Do you think that the overall performance rating should be a Star rating, a one-word descriptor, a statement or a combination of these?

Star rating	Yes ☐	No ☒
One-word descriptor	Yes ☐	No ☒
Statement	Yes ☐	No ☒
Combination of the above *(please specify)*	Yes ☐	No ☒

Comment: UCU does not think there should be an overall performance rating

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Question 13: Do you think that your organisation or those you represent will have difficulty in   Yes ☒ No ☐
implementing the Framework and, if so, why? *(please specify)*

Comment: Because it is so complex and because the threat of contestability sours the whole enterprise

Question 14: Do you agree with the proposed schedule for the operational introduction of the Framework for Excellence set out in Section 7?   Yes ☐   No ☒

Comment: We consider it to be too short in relation to complexity of the task and the importance that will be given the end results of overall performance assessment

Question 15: Is there anything else that you would like to add? *(please specify any other considerations, comments or issues you may have)*

Comment: UCU is concerned about the emergence of these new categories of "underperforming" and "coasting" , " barely satisfactory" and , "satisfactory but not improving". UCU would wish to play an active role in the discussions around defining these terms.