

In this issue:

Ofsted: Tell them what you think!

Ofsted: Tell them what you think!

Ofsted: Consultation open till 5 December

Ofsted are currently conducting a consultation on their proposal that a revised common inspection framework for all providers operate from September 2015. This framework would apply to all sectors from early years through schools and academies to further education, adult and community education and skills providers. The consultation on this proposal provides an opportunity to make submissions to Ofsted on their existing inspection regime and its effects on FE and Adult and Community Education staff and also to express a view on what should replace it.

Whilst we quite naturally share an ambition for excellence, there is wide scale dissatisfaction with a target-driven snapshot approach to inspection which has fuelled calls for the abolition of Ofsted (FE Sector Conference May 2014) to end an inspection regime that is driving all sectors of education through a 'toxic target-driven culture'.

There has been some movement. In schools Ofsted has abandoned the grading of individual lessons. In FE, although there is currently an un-graded observations pilot being conducted by Ofsted, there continue to be calls from colleges to retain grades for each lesson observed. It has also been suggested that lecturers in FE prefer to be given a grade when they are observed. It is understandable that many staff in FE are suspicious and weary of change.

In the ground-breaking, UCU commissioned, research by Dr Matt O'Leary, the myths surrounding the validity and value of grading lesson observations are exposed. The effects of judging and grading the quality of all a lecturers practice on the basis of an isolated, episodic and subjective observation of a tiny fraction of their total teaching time are shown to be negative and counterproductive to the stated aim of improving quality.

Now is the time to speak out about Ofsted's inspection regime

UCU will be making a submission, however it is vital that Ofsted receive submissions to their consultation from as many individual lecturers and UCU branches as possible to ensure the voice of those who are actually observed and inspected is accurately heard. UCU has produced some guidance to assist members in answering Ofsted's consultation questionnaire. The consultation closes on 5 December.

The consultation document and questionnaire can be found here:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/better-inspection-for-all-consultation-proposals-for-new-framework-for-inspection-of-schools-further>

UCU guidance on the consultation can be found here:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=6768&mediaid=6922>