

Glossary of Further Education (FE) Terms

This glossary explains terms and acronyms commonly used in Further Education (FE). It is intended as a general guide and does not cover all technical or internal terminology used within the sector.

A

Accounting Officer

The senior postholder (usually the Principal or Chief Executive) who is personally responsible to DfE and parliament for assuring regularity, propriety and value for money in the management of public funds.

Adult and Community Learning (ACL)

Learning opportunities for adults, often part-time, focusing on skills, employability, wellbeing and community engagement.

Advanced Learner Loan (ALL)

A government-backed loan to help adults aged 19+ pay course fees for eligible qualifications.

Apprenticeship

Paid employment combined with structured training, leading to a nationally recognised standard or qualification.

Association of Colleges (AoC)

The national membership organisation representing further education colleges in England.

C

Clerk / Governance Professional

The independent adviser to the governing body, responsible for governance compliance, advice and effective board operation.

College Financial Handbook

Statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education setting out financial management and accountability requirements for colleges.

Code of Good Governance

A sector-agreed code setting out principles of effective governance in further education colleges.

D

Department for Education (DfE)

The UK government department responsible for education, children's services, further and higher education, apprenticeships and skills.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Provides background checks to help employers make safer recruitment decisions and protect children and vulnerable adults.

E

Education Inspection Framework (EIF)

The framework used by Ofsted to inspect and assess the quality of education and training providers.

External Review of Governance

An independent review of governance effectiveness, normally undertaken every three years.

F

Further Education (FE)

Education for people aged 16 and over not part of school education or higher education, including vocational, technical and academic provision.

Functional Skills

Qualifications in English, Maths and digital skills that support progression to employment or further study.

G

Governing Body / FE Corporation

The statutory body responsible for the strategic direction, oversight and accountability of an FE college.

H

Higher Education (HE)

Education at undergraduate or postgraduate level, typically delivered by universities or colleges with higher education provision.

I

Instruments and Articles of Government

The college's constitutional documents setting out its governance arrangements and legal framework.

L

Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE)

A forthcoming loan entitlement enabling adults to fund modular learning and retraining across their working lives.

Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

LSIPs unite employers, Strategic Authorities, higher education, further education and Independent Training Providers and wider stakeholders in solving skills challenges together.

O

Ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, responsible for inspecting services providing education and skills for learners of all ages.

Q

Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

A plan setting out actions a college will take to improve the quality of education and learner outcomes.

Quality Assurance

Processes used to ensure education and training meet required standards and continuously improve.

S

Safeguarding

The duty to protect children and vulnerable adults from harm and promote their welfare.

Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

The college's annual evaluation of its performance, strengths and areas for improvement.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

Support arrangements for learners who have additional learning needs due to disability or learning difficulty.

Study Programme

A tailored programme for 16–19 learners combining qualifications, English and Maths (where required), work experience and personal development.

T

T Levels

Two-year technical qualifications equivalent to three A Levels, developed with employers and including a substantial industry placement.

V

Value for Money (VfM)

The effective, efficient and economical use of public funds.

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