



A Strategic Guide for the delivery of GCSE English and Maths to the 16-19 cohort

Authors:

Brian Creese, Jenny Litster and David Mallows, UCL Institute of Education.

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Introduction

This Strategic Guide will help Further Education Providers to implement a strategic approach to delivering GCSE English and maths.

- Chapter 1 outlines and discusses the key issues to be addressed.
- Chapter 2 outlines key areas for less experienced providers to consider.

In producing this guide, IOE worked closely with five Further Education (FE) Colleges, each of which also contributed a case study on an element of their approach to GCSE English and Maths delivery. Extracts from the case studies have been used throughout the Strategic Guide to illustrate its main messages.

In the guide these colleges are referred to using the acronyms below:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| • Accrington and Rossendale College | AccRoss |
| • Barking and Dagenham College | BDC |
| • East Berkshire College | EBC |
| • Selby College | SC |
| • South Leicester College | SLC |

The full case studies and the organisational Health Check which accompanies this Strategic Guide are available at:

Health Check Tool

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2020>

Case Studies

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2021>

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1. A Strategic Approach to the delivery of GCSE English and Maths

In this guide, delivery of GCSE English and Maths is described under four headings:

- A) Governance and leadership.
- B) Curriculum management and course delivery.
- C) Staffing and CPD.
- D) The Learner Experience.

This section of the guide looks at each of the four areas in detail to support providers in completing the Health Check Tool that accompanies this guide and developing an appropriate strategic plan.

A. Governance and leadership

This section looks at ways in which providers can develop an effective Whole Organisational Approach to the delivery of GCSE English and Maths. This includes the necessity for senior leadership to take responsibility for English and maths including governor level involvement in order to lead organisational change.

A1. Leadership on English and maths

Delivering GCSE English and Maths on such an increased scale¹, and to learners who are not necessarily enthusiastic, presents a serious challenge to providers. In order to meet this challenge, organisations could adopt a Whole Organisation Approach (WOA) with progress achieved by all working together on a shared programme. The leadership for this programme is best coming from the most senior levels and every department and every individual should understand that research indicates that successful outcomes are best achieved where the English and maths strategy is visibly led and inspired from the leadership of an organisation.

One of the most important strategic decisions for providers to make is **who “owns” English and maths** within the organisation. Traditionally, English and maths results have been solely the responsibility of the English and/or maths departments. In all our case study sites, ownership of English and maths achievements, and indeed attendance, is now shared with vocational and other departments. Furthermore, a member of Senior Leadership Team (SLT), and in most cases a governor, is responsible for those achievements, and in some cases attendance at English and maths sessions. The understanding that English and maths achievements impact on every aspect of the organisation is an important driver for change.

¹ See Appendix 1, section 4: challenges.

English and mathematics...our approach is to ensure it is everyone's responsibility... Marion Plant OBE, Principal (SLC).

While it may be that the English and maths curriculum heads drive much of the approach, it is important that the whole organisation recognises that governors and senior leaders are united in being determined to implement those policies. Given that other areas, vocational departments in particular, may have to make sacrifices to accommodate the increased demands of the English and maths department(s), there is a crucial need for buy-in from all departments. This is the **essential first step** for every organisation.

In September 2013, the College Senior Leadership Team, in recognition of the increased significance of English and Maths, both in terms of funding and of the need to build these skills in learners, through the discrete provision via GCSE and Functional Skills, and by embedding these subjects into vocational teaching, introduced the idea of a English and Maths Committee. In February 2014, following a college restructure the previous autumn, the English and Maths Steering Group was formed. (AccRoss)

A2. Developing a strategic plan

Senior leaders are advised to develop a cross-organisation, comprehensive and strategic plan to address the challenges of delivering the new English and Maths GCSE requirements². Each strategic plan will be different and reflect the needs of the organisation that develops it, but providers may find it helpful to work within the framework provided by the Health Check Tool.

Structured discussion of these areas will facilitate the development of the strategic plan. Thought will need to be given to awareness-raising measures to achieve the buy in of staff and learners; organisational issues regarding central leadership of English and maths provision; communication and cooperation with vocational staff; and measures to deal with staff capacity.

Governors should be included in the development of the English and maths strategy, either through having a governor lead for English and maths or by having governor involvement in a senior leadership English and maths subcommittee.

The Education and Training Foundation, working with FE Sussex and Abingdon and Witney College, has developed training resources geared towards giving governors a greater understanding of the issues involved in the English and maths delivery for providers. Resources supporting a self-evaluation process can be found at: <http://gcseleadership.com/resources-and-links/fe-sussex/> and an online toolkit at: <http://gcseleadership.com/resources-and-links/abingdon-and-witney-college/>

² For full details of the new requirement see Appendix 1: Policy Overview.

To facilitate implementation of the agreed strategic plan Accrington and Rossendale College created a SLT-led Steering Group to facilitate the necessary changes. This group included the college Principal and governors and the heads of all departments.

The Steering Group's original purpose was to "have strategic oversight of the planning, delivery and performance of English and maths across the college". Within this remit it would:

- *Ensure that students aged 16-19 are able to access high quality programmes which support the development of their skills in English and maths and the achievement of appropriate qualifications.*
- *Oversee other provision in English and maths, including specialist teaching qualifications and programmes for adult learners.*
- *Take cognisance of developments in English and maths qualifications and Awarding Body options.*
- *Monitor performance and direct improvement strategies.*
- *Ensure that funding, reporting, audit and quality assurance requirements are met.*
- *Review staffing models and other resources to ensure they are fit for purpose.*
- *Report to the SLT and Board of Governors as appropriate.*

All the other approaches discussed in this Strategic Guide flow from the decisions reached in drawing up the strategy document. This should be the central document for all aspects of the organisation of delivery of English and maths within the organisation.

B. Curriculum management and course delivery

B1. Curriculum management

B.1.1 Reviewing current English and maths provision

The strategic approach should put in place the cross-organisation support for the English and maths department to deliver GCSEs successfully. Many of the organisations we have worked with on this project are seeing huge increases in their GCSE cohorts³. Careful planning and preparation is necessary to ensure the department is able to meet the demand. As a first step, the curriculum manager needs to carry out an in-depth review of the organisation's English and maths provision to ensure it is in a position to deliver effectively to the increased numbers of GCSE candidates. This review

³ For example, Selby College's English and mathematics enrolments over the past five years have increased by almost 300%.

should include looking at staff numbers and qualifications, teaching and learning resources, timetabling, class composition and the availability of e-learning materials. An ongoing task is reviewing which Awarding Organisation is used, re-evaluating the support given to learners and how that may be provided, use of tiered examinations and so on.

At South Leicester College such a review was undertaken and it concluded:

schemes of work curricular themes, tracking documents, learner profiles. Once any theme or area for concern was identified, staff development or 1-2-1 training was arranged. (SLC)

B1.2 Choice of Awarding Body

It has been explicit government policy for some years that provision of examinations through awarding bodies should be an active market. This means that not all examinations are the same and it is vital that organisations gain an in-depth understanding of the different approaches to GCSE English and maths that the different awarding bodies take. These differences are more marked for the English examinations than maths, with different awarding bodies having different approaches to the literature component in particular. Currently organisations decide if they are entering GCSE candidates for English, English Language or English Literature and whether to enter candidates for the upper or foundation tier.

East Berkshire College switched to iGCSE English in 2013-14 both because of the continuing logistical demand of doing the controlled assessment, but also because of the choices available for language study.

The course is anthology based and is assessed through two exam papers; paper 1 is worth 70% of the final mark and paper 2 is worth 20% of the final mark. A further 10% is based on three speaking and listening assessments. Learners liked the fact that they were not studying 'Of Mice and Men' and liked the fact that it was a different course to what they had previously studied at school. This definitely aided motivation and engagement within classes. Learners also liked that it was anthology based and covered extracts from nineteen different texts. This meant that if they did not engage with a text one week they were motivated by the idea of a different text the following week.

Many of these choices will disappear with the start of revised GCSEs. However, there remain striking differences between the English language syllabi. For instance, looking at the Reading options in Paper 1, extracts may be:

- One extract from C20th or C21st literature text
- One extract from C20 literary prose text

- Two authentic non-fiction texts, one C19th, one C20 or C21st
- One extract from C19 fictional text.

Marks for this section vary from 20% to 25% of the total award.

East Berkshire College made a decision to stop entering learners on the maths foundation tier:

The primary reason for this was to improve value added for learners and enable learners to achieve their full potential through stretch and challenge. In maths learners are taught to identify different types of questions within the Higher Tier paper so that they can navigate through building on their individual strengths and knowledge of different topics.

Selecting the right awarding body will be particularly difficult in the first years after the revised GCSEs come into play, but it remains vital that providers maximise the opportunities for their learners by choosing the Awarding Body which has the examination best suited to their learners.

B1.3. Exam preparation

Staff who have been used to delivering Functional Skills, with their flexible assessments, may find the transition to a once-a-year formal examination as daunting as their learners do. Given the short time available for study, it is important to have in place a coherent programme for exam preparation. This might involve having an English and maths drop-in centre, putting on extra tuition over the Easter break, additional tutoring, exam practice or provision of e-learning practice material on the organisation's VLE.

Permission from English and maths Director was requested about extending the GCSE delivery from 32 weeks to 34 weeks in order to deliver extra GCSE classes over the Easter holidays and May half-term. GCSE staff also requested to work during these holiday times to facilitate the workshops. Learners' parents also written to by the PAL advising that their son/daughter attend these necessary extra sessions. (SLC)

At AccRoss the Student Support services were fully committed to the English and maths team, both in helping staff maintain attendance at classes, but also ensuring a full turn out of learners for the exams. Learners are invited to pre-exam breakfast or lunch, which the staff feel helps to calm them down and ensures they have eaten, but they can also monitor non-attendance allowing support staff to drive out and find those who may otherwise have been late or missed the exam altogether. (AccRoss)

B1.4 Data monitoring

While secondary schools have increasingly put their faith in the use of extensive and complex data monitoring approaches, many colleges and training providers are relatively new to this approach. Data monitoring comprises two aspects:

- Explicit recording of formative assessment to track progress. Many organisations are now maintaining tracking sheets across all learners, and all curriculum aspects.
- Enrolments and evidence of the funding conditions being met. Where colleges do not have the entitlement right, funding can be clawed back.

There are significant gains to be made by FE providers that take data monitoring for English and maths learners seriously. However, teachers in post-16 education may require more support to connect the benefits of good data monitoring systems, for example, to allow for the early identification of issues, and rates of progress or results.

For the Steering Group to direct strategy and tactical decisions, quality data sources are necessary to provide a starting point on where to direct efforts and secondly to measure progress. It goes without say that using robust data sources is necessary in successfully driving the English and maths strategy. (AccRoss)

Constantly updating performance data can be helpful in providing early evidence of individuals who may be falling away from their expected progress and therefore allows for early intervention and support. It can also be a positive factor in providing positive feedback to learners, in turn may enhancing their performance and motivation. Most importantly, data monitoring allows for targeted support, giving the maximum number of learners the opportunity to progress to their GCSE achievements.

B1.5. Liaison with employers

It may be the case that the strategic approach to delivering English and maths will require learners to spend more time studying English and/or maths than was previously the case (on Functional Skills courses, for example), and that time on the vocational offer is therefore reduced. However, although it might be seen as taking time away from the vocational programme, good joint planning between the English/maths teachers and vocational teachers will maximise the vocational content across all learning programmes. It is important that employers and those involved in work placements understand both the impact of these delivery changes and the reasons behind them.

At Accrington and Rossendale College it was decided that English and maths targets should be included in work experience planning, the actual placement and in learner reflections following placement.

The Steering Group tasked the Deputy Head of Faculty for English and Maths to work with the Head of Personal Development to provide guidance and pro forma so planning, execution and reviewing of work placement activity could include SMART targets incorporating English and maths skills and experiences. The guidance required learners to consider targets for English and maths whilst on placement and to list and describe the opportunities to use English and maths skills that naturally occurred during the placement⁴. The intended result of this initiative was that learners would be more aware of English and maths as key employability skills and to be explicit about this in their reviews of their work experience. (AccRoss)

B2. Course delivery

B2.1. Departmental organisation

In all the organisations we worked with English and maths were located in a joint department and, in most cases, centred in a single location. This is easier to achieve in a small organisation, but it was frequently reported that integrating the English and maths departments was a positive action that helped provide centralised leadership.

Accrington and Rossendale College have recently made the change to integrating English and maths with the vocational areas:

At the start of 2014-15 academic year, English and Maths sat separately from study programmes; the subjects were separately timetabled, planned for and coded through the college curriculum planning process, creating dislocation between English and maths and other components of the study programme. To rectify this and ensure the vocational teams owned English and maths performance more completely, the strategic decision was taken to “code switch”, that is, to recode English and Maths so they were placed integrally alongside the other component parts of the study programme (main qualification, tutorial, work experience). This decision was part of the College drive to increase accountability across vocational teams for all elements of a learner’s programme of study. (AccRoss)

South Leicester College created the role of Programme Area Leader (PAL) in 2011. The rationale for creating the role was recognition of the important function of curriculum managers in effecting change at an operational and strategic level.

The English and maths PAL has two specific areas of responsibility:

⁴ For further details see pp. 58-63.

- *Operational management of the curriculum, teaching, curriculum planning, budgets and working collaboratively on planning at a strategic level; and,*
- *Direct line management of staff, recruitment and development and quality improvement.*

East Berkshire College also amalgamated English and maths in 2011, creating The Learning and Development Academy, a central department in English, mathematics, Tutorials and Additional Learning Support.

In subsequent years the college has adapted its delivery model for English and maths with staff moving away from a central staff room location to being placed within curriculum areas and teaching English and maths to specific curriculum learners. The current model is one with a central English and maths department, housed in one main staffroom, which is responsible for central delivery of GCSE and Functional Skills. There is a central grid position where all subject areas are required to timetable around agreed slots.

Exactly what your course delivery looks like and who delivers it will depend on other sections outlined above. It may be that vocational staff are taking the lead with lower level Functional Skills or that these qualifications are delivered with team teaching between vocational and specialist teachers. Teachers may just deliver GCSE or cover the whole range of qualifications and there may be differing amounts of embedding and contextualisation.

B2.2. Timetabling

Timetabling – Having a central grid system for English and maths classes coupled with a clear timetabling strategy that all vocational staff timetable around English and maths first is crucial. (EBC)

As evidenced in all the Case Studies included in this Strategic Guide, timetabling was an important element in establishing the Whole Organisation Approach. While each of the organisations we worked with had a different mechanism, in each case **English and maths were timetabled first**, with vocational and other subjects fitted around the English and maths core. Most often each vocational area was given an option as to which English and maths slot they wanted their learners to occupy. This may not be an easy reform to establish, but only by having control of the timetable can an organisation ensure that English and maths is the core offer.

Our experiences had shown that getting buy-in from subject areas on the shape of the cross college timetables was imperative. In February at the annual College Management Team development day Subject Area Managers were given the chance to discuss and agree on

different timetable models. In 2015 we will be on our third model in three years as we refine it further. (SC)

The most usual time allotted is one 3 hour session for maths and another 3 hour session for English, though some providers prefer two sessions of 90 minutes for each subject. Most teachers prefer the shorter sessions, but timetabling four sessions is logistically more difficult and there is some anecdotal evidence that it is harder to maintain attendance with four English and maths times compared with two.

In one of the Case Studies, English and maths have been given extra time beyond this core timetabling, with more sessions delivered in the Easter holiday and half term before the exams.

Following results in both GCSE and Functional Skills in 2013-14 it has become evident to the Faculty management team that the 2015-16 academic year would require an increased number of hours for Functional Skills and GCSE to improve results and to place these skills firmly at the heart of the study programme.

As a result of expressing this request to the Steering Group, GCSE hours have increased from 90 to 144. Whilst there has been concern amongst staff over “English and maths are taking hours away from the ‘real’ curriculum”, the rationale and need has been understood by the vast majority of areas. Coupling this with a centralising of Foundation programmes within the same faculty will allow learners to be better grounded in English and maths, providing opportunities of improved success rates at GCSE and allow both subject fundamentals and innovations to have equal billing within Functional Skills. (AccRoss)

B2.3. Effective teaching approaches

Many learners in this group will have had a negative school experience, will be very low in self-confidence and self-belief; they may well have been told on many occasions that they are not good at English or maths and believe this to be the case. Different approaches can show learners they know more than they think, and by nurturing learners’ self-belief motivation can improve and failures become successes.

All the teachers spoken to in the course of researching this guide have emphasised that learners in post-16 education have to feel that teaching and learning is different from being at school. In general “more of the same” is unlikely to produce different results.

Having attended a KS4 meeting with local feeder schools it was apparent to the staff attending that much of the classroom practice being discussed could be best described as “coaching”, “coaxing” and “practice paper completion” as opposed to teaching and learning. This

approach was seen by staff as very demotivating and helped explain why learners enrolling at college were struggling with the fundamentals of English and maths. The message from Steering Group was unequivocal – we were to focus on quality teaching and learning enabling learners to grasp fundamentals of these subjects and therefore improving their grasp of the subjects and providing better grounding in the subjects, rather than merely chasing a positive outcome through more superficial methods. (AccRoss)

Teaching approaches have to be more creative and imaginative and allow the learners more control and input; there may be room for greater online delivery or assessment, more discussion and debate. Learners should have more say in what and how they are taught. Approaches which identify the weaknesses in the cohort and, in maths particularly, concentrate on uncovering misconceptions, have been shown to be more effective for this cohort⁵. Such approaches will let learners feel they are not at school and that English and maths can be more interesting and fulfilling than they have so far experienced.

East Berkshire College expect their English and maths teachers to use a variety of resources and approaches:

Within lessons staff use a mixture of learning activities from flash cards, tarsia puzzles⁶, use of My Maths⁷ and Khan Academy⁸ as well as the use of interactive learning technologies. Learners are also encouraged to do an hour of maths homework a week using online learning resources. Activities for English have been quite collaborative to facilitate learner exploration of a text through group discussions where learners are developing knowledge and understanding from each other. Padlet⁹ was used to facilitate the feedback of group discussion and encouraged more participation in this part of the lesson.

English and maths teachers have also developed a culture of open communication with learners through reflective bubbles at the end of lessons and communication via email and Moodle outside of the classroom. This has allowed learners to ask questions to facilitate independent study but has also enabled staff to keep learners attending if there is a problem. (EBC)

To maximise effectiveness there should be an agreed policy on how staff mark, assess and feed back to learners on their work. We recommend this policy is for the whole college and not just English and maths.

⁵ See Swan, M. Improving learning in mathematics: challenges and strategies (2005)

⁶ <http://www.ideaseducation.co.uk/resources/Tarsia-guide.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.mymaths.co.uk>

⁸ <https://www.khanacademy.org>

⁹ <https://padlet.com>

C. Staffing and CPD

C1. Capacity and staffing model

All the organisations we worked with have looked to increase capacity, to meet increased demand, from within. This may be through doing a skills audit of the organisation's staff, finding out about teachers' personal skills, qualifications and confidence in English and maths, through talking to all current staff and identifying those with the potential (and willingness) to teach at a higher level than they are currently doing, or talking to staff about increasing their hours and commitment to teaching. **Carefully targeted and effective CPD is a vital factor in upskilling staff.**

Some organisations recruit teachers with great success. There may be a number of reasons for this – perhaps because they offer A-levels as well as GCSE and Functional Skills, or because of an existing high reputation or for geographical reasons. In general, however, recruiting high quality teachers of English and maths is difficult as there is a great deal of competition for such people, not just from the schools sector but from other industries. If this is your best route it may be worth considering one of the bursary schemes to employ a teacher through the maths graduate recruitment scheme¹⁰.

Inevitably, many organisations will be reliant on agency staff to ensure they have sufficient capacity to meet the increased number of GCSE candidates. While many agency staff are excellent, providers do report on a high variability of quality. If an organisation is using agency staff we recommend that they do as much as possible to integrate them into their organisation and make it clear the values and approaches which are part of the strategic approach. Agency staff should be made welcome and feel they are a part of the whole team, be included in training and professional development and share in the successes of the department.

Two new GCSE English teachers with energy and enthusiasm for the subject appointed. Both achieved grade one in their college formal observation and achieved excellent results. An experienced maths teacher appointed capable of teaching up to Level 5, who shared their experience with the rest of the GCSE Maths team in staff development sessions.

Three Functional Skills teachers with the potential to teach GCSE were timetabled to team teach across the academic year. This ensured that they learned how to deliver GCSEs and also provided extra support for the learners. (SLC)

The English and maths coordinator needs to devise a staffing model that delivers appropriate teaching to all learners while encouraging staff to add to

¹⁰ <http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/support-teacher-recruitment/bursaries-golden-hello-scheme/>

their skills and ability to meet new challenges. For instance, as at Selby College, it may be that all English and maths teachers teach all cohorts, from Functional Skills to A level.

In most cases, coordination with the vocational departments is a vital aspect of the Whole Organisation Approach, and this may be done in a wide variety of ways: individual English and maths teachers may be appointed to liaise with a vocational area, vocational teachers may work within the English and maths team to advise on ways of embedding and contextualising material. However, the aim is to co-ordinate English and maths teaching and vocational teaching more closely so that the English and maths content and teaching approaches are more “in synch” with the vocational work taking place within the study programme.

Accrington and Rossendale College have introduced “Link English and mathematics” tutors who liaise with particular teams and faculties to facilitate better communication. They work with the work experience co-ordinator and vocational tutors to ensure English and maths targets are set prior to work placement and reviewed on completion of placement.

As English and maths become an accepted part of study programmes, with greater ownership of learner attendance and greater interest in learner success at exams, it is expected that the flow of communication between English and maths tutors and the curriculum teams will need to be more regular and effective. Steps have been taken in terms of day-to-day communication and assigning English and maths “link” tutors to curriculum teams but further solidification of this is likely to feature on future agendas. (AccRoss)

At South Leicester College, this approach has led to shared presentation of training:

All integrated English and maths training for vocational staff had at least one GCSE English and one GCSE Maths teacher supporting the main deliverer. The GCSE teachers looked at the vocational tutors’ schemes of work to identify naturally occurring English and maths and helped them to be able to integrate these occurrences into their lessons. (SLC)

More use of embedding through vocational staff or team teaching may be useful ways of ensuring all learners receive appropriate levels of teaching. It may be necessary to have a team of GCSE-only teachers, though they would need to be integrated with the rest of the department and not become a separate entity.

East Berkshire College decided to embed speaking and listening into all Level 1 programmes:

As all curriculum areas use professional discussions and presentations as a way of assessing the subject knowledge of learners, developing

these underpinning skills would enable an effective link between GCSE and Functional Skills and vocational areas and also enable learners to be more productive and effective in these assessments. The project manager and vocational tutors worked together to discuss schemes of work and identify areas and topics where speaking and listening skills could be developed within the main curriculum area. Vocational teachers were paired with English teachers for their groups so they could work together to develop activities that would reinforce and underpin speaking and listening skills that would enable learners to communicate more effectively. (EBC)

C2. Continuing professional development

We would recommend that organisations undertake a comprehensive skills audit of their English and maths staff to establish both the level of their current qualifications and their potential to teach at higher levels. Any systematic review of current teaching capacity is likely to indicate significant training and professional development needs, and we recommend drawing up a plan for all staff training needs, including agency staff. These may well be both in terms of personal skills and teaching skills. A Functional Skills teacher moving up to GCSE may need to take a further English or maths qualification to improve their personal skill as well as receiving CPD on pedagogical approaches more suitable to GCSE teaching. An excellent self-evaluation tool for teachers is available on the NCETM website

<https://www.ncetm.org.uk/self-evaluation/summary/101/121?all#topOfNextSteps>. National courses, such as the English and Maths Enhancement Programmes, recently run through the ETF have been very important here, and, at the time of writing this guide, further programmes of CPD were being planned through the English and Maths Pipeline programmes (<http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/support-practitioners/mathematics-teaching-workshops> and <http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/support-practitioners/english-enhancement-programme>). Training may also be available from organisations such as NCETM, regional CETTs or can be used internally or jointly with neighbouring colleges or other providers. Highly experienced and competent GCSE teachers may find it difficult to adapt to the needs of the new cohort of learners which will have substantial differences to traditional GCSE cohorts. These teachers may need to work with Functional Skills or vocational teachers to understand how to motivate and communicate effectively with learners who are reluctant to study English and maths. Just as teachers who have traditionally worked with students studying for lower level qualifications can be developed to become excellent teachers of higher-level qualifications with appropriate support, the same is true of more academically inclined teachers.

Action research

A culture of collaborative working across and within teaching teams is essential to success in delivering GCSE English and Maths to this cohort.

Barking and Dagenham College have placed action research at the centre of the development of their practice, with support from the LSIS and now ETF practitioner research programme.

At Barking and Dagenham College we have sought to find answers to these challenges ourselves, on the front line, through the undertaking of practitioner-led action research. Whilst not providing us with answers to every challenge we face, action research has allowed us to make critical, objective and informed judgements on planned interventions and strategies that have consistently honed and improved our delivery of GCSE English and Maths over the last four years.

Practitioner involvement in action research can play an important role in a programme of continuing professional development.

... allowing all teachers to access and be part of the latest education research, informing their pedagogy, and subject specialism allows them to keep up to date with the most recent developments in their fields, ensuring that all students are well-prepared for a variety of life pathways. (BDC)

Barking and Dagenham College has seen great benefit from its involvement in and championing of practitioner research

Giving staff the opportunity to take part in research has led to dramatic changes in the teaching and learning of maths and English at Barking and Dagenham College. For instance, listening to how students want to learn has led to embracing the use of cloud technology so learners can improve their skills on the move in ways that suit them. They can write assignments on the bus home, get immediate feedback and use web-based activities independently. Through a series of action research projects, staff have taken time out to reflect on how they teach and how it really meets the needs of their learners. I am in no doubt this will lead to better engagement, improved retention and higher achievement in these subjects."

Sue Southwood, Programme Manager at the ETF and Barking and Dagenham College Governor in English and Maths

Selby College identified English and maths learning champions who liaise with departments and deliver CPD on embedding English and maths and they have made this a compulsory feature of training days so that every department has had English and maths sessions.

Accrington and Rossendale College have provided mostly externally led CPD for specialists, including the ETF Maths enhancement courses, qualification and awarding body updates. For vocational staff, over the last couple of years they have run upskilling in Functional skills, problem solving with maths CPD, prepared an aide memoir full of English and maths tips for planning and delivery of sessions and the assessing of learner work. In addition the English team have run a CPD session about verbal language and its potential effect on learner written work and success called “Baps and Teacakes”.

Performance of staff in English and maths is specifically commented on at Accrington and Rossendale College as part of Lesson Observations, and the quality of English and maths comment, correction and marking of learner work, is assessed through a quality audit.

East Berkshire College have taken a college-wide approach to professional development initiatives.

In 2010 the college introduced the concept of “Stand Out Teaching and Learning” embracing all the qualities and concepts needed for outstanding practice. Stand Out champions were introduced to share practice and develop staff through training and development. The idea was to create a consistent and standardised approach to teaching and learning. In 2012 the college introduced the DNA Model of Stand Out Teaching and Learning. This model was designed by expert teachers and managers and contains tried and tested teaching methods that work. The DNA Model of Standout Teaching and Learning brings greater transparency to what constitutes good to outstanding Teaching and Learning as well as the best strategies to use and support staff to refine their practice. (EBC)

D. The Learner Experience

D1. Information, advice & guidance (IAG)

It is important that every learner understands the necessity of continuing to study English and maths if they have not previously gained a grade C. This information needs to be clearly signposted in all IAG materials and talked about at any open evenings or recruitment events.

At South Leicester College English and maths staff were required to attend Parents’ evening:

English and mathematics teachers were asked to meet with parents and carers to discuss their child’s progress during Parents’ Evening. All teachers were required to attend. The English and maths manager manned a stand next to the signing in desk. (SLC)



South Leicester College also have an 'I Love English and Maths' campaign which ensures all their publicity includes mention of English and maths on every page.

The Whole Organisation Approach requires that English and maths is the central element of any study programme so all staff need to be clear with learners and parents that English and maths will be a central focus of their post-school study.

D2. Induction and enrolment

As noted above, the amount of time available for studying English and maths is tight and colleges which are able to get off to a rapid start feel they gain benefits. Selby College decided to radically change their induction and enrolment process to ensure that learners started their English and maths classes as soon as possible.

We realised that this stage was hugely important as we were going to identify English and maths needs from the outset and allocate to groups as the students enrolled. In preparing for enrolment the following were important:

- *Getting groups set up in our MIS in advance.*
- *Working closely with MIS, Student Services, Curriculum Managers and Guidance and Support Tutors so that all were clear about the process.*
- *Ensuring that students took initial assessments prior to enrolment to provide evidence of level where required. This happened either in the summer term when they visited college or at the start of the enrolment process on the day.*
- *Setting up recording systems. English and maths staff recorded allocations during the process and MIS input the subject and group information when the student enrolled. This allowed a checking up process to happen afterwards*
- *Information was secured from schools about which boards and specifications were followed at GCSE English. This allowed English staff to identify performance in specific modules which was vital in entering for November resits*
- *Stressing to external applicants to bring results with them to enrolment and ensuring we had the results of internal progressers.*

By conducting Initial Assessments at this stage, learners can be allocated appropriate English and maths classes, and timetabled before they arrive for full-time study. Having learners arrive on their first day knowing which English and/or maths class they are in and when and where sessions are to be held

maximises the time available to teachers. This, particularly when allied to a strong policy on attendance, minimises the opportunity for learners to slip through the system, and English and maths tuition can and does start from Day 1.**D3 Building self-confidence and motivation**

Colleges often see learners arriving from school with very low self-confidence and a conviction that they are “no good at” English and maths. If they are convinced they are set to fail, then their motivation is likely to be very low and they may also become disruptive. Encouraging greater self-confidence, showing learners there are areas in which they can succeed at is key to breaking this very negative cycle. This ties in with the teaching and learning approaches, since if lessons are structured differently with great emphasis on discussion and debate, or on AV resources, learners may respond differently.

Learners attending English and maths classes often lack motivation and self-belief. In the majority of cases, this is because they have previously failed at one or both of these subjects and, afraid of continuing the cycle of failure, they do not want to attend classes and retake exams. Learners can bring their previous negative learning experiences or negative perceptions of their own ability with them, and these act as barriers to learning. These barriers need to be acknowledged by all in order for learners to overcome them. Inspiring teaching that challenges learners to question ideas and reflect on their own ability ultimately motivates, and enables them to discard many of the limiting ideas or barriers to learning that they have. (EBC)

D3.1. Learner support

Many learners in this cohort will require continued support if they are to gain a GCSE in the limited time available. This extra support may be targeted at individuals and identified through teacher observation or, increasingly, through analysis of data. Several of the providers we worked with have set up permanent English and maths hubs, offering support to all learners at any time. There are areas where any learner can come for help, support or advice on any English and maths topic, and are staffed throughout the working day. These hubs were seen as providing an important area for effective support to the entire cohort and increasing the visible impact of English and maths around the colleges.

Accrington and Rossendale College English and maths team use the Pastoral team to chase non-attendance, feedback on absence reasons and to support the examination process in terms of reminding learners of exams dates and time, setting up pre-exam breakfast and calm spaces and chasing late attendance.

D3.2 Learner feedback

We have stressed in parts of this guide that in post-16 education learners respond better if they feel they have an element of choice and control. In schools, education is often seen as something “done to them” whereas in the FE sector it is more of a choice. Although the central thrust of this guide is a top-down Whole Organisation Approach, there must be room for incorporating feedback from learners. Mechanisms should be built in to invite learners to comment on and contribute to the organisation’s English and maths approaches. This is particularly important for organisations new to delivering GCSEs or where the college approach has changed to meet the challenges of the current policy.

Learners’ ideas to improve English and maths incorporated where possible into the quality improvement plan. For example, moving from three hour GCSE classes to two 1.5 hour classes on separate days. Learners also recognised the importance of English and maths and its role in improving their employment prospects. (SLC)

2. Delivering GCSEs from scratch: the essential guide

Many providers in the sector already have some experience of delivering GCSEs: FE Colleges and larger ACL providers have all been delivering GCSEs to some cohorts for many years. Consequently, the challenges these providers face are those of scale and of how to succeed with a changing cohort.

Smaller organisations, however, and particularly private training providers, are in a different position.

If you are an organisation which predominantly delivers apprenticeships or other work-based learning qualifications it is likely that you will have staff and administrators who are confident about delivering Functional Skills but may have little or no experience of GCSEs. This short document outlines some of the issues you need to think about. Many of these refer to other parts of this Strategic Guide but some processes will only be relevant to those starting from scratch.

2.1 Making the decision

Making the decision to start delivering GCSEs is an important one and needs to be thought about from commercial, logistical and educational angles. Even if you work in a sector which is demanding GCSE English and Maths for entry to work, there are a range of models you need to consider, including:

- **Outsourcing** – getting your learners to go to a different provider for the GCSE element of their training
- **Partnership arrangements** – perhaps delivering one GCSE subject while a partner organisation delivers the other
- **In-house delivery** – taking full responsibility for delivery of both English and Maths GCSEs.

In choosing an appropriate delivery model, you may need to consider how willing employers will be to release learners for GCSE provision, the geographical spread of your learners, what might be the best way of teaching GCSE, and whether you wish to become a registered exam centre.

Perhaps the most important thing is to realise that if you make the decision to deliver GCSEs in-house, the **whole organisation must be committed** to the success of the policy.

2.2 Writing an Action Plan

Having made the decision on how to deliver GCSE English and Maths, it is worth spending time creating a fully itemised **Action Plan**, detailing what needs to happen and to what timescale. The Action Plan will become the

guiding document and blueprint for setting up your organisation to deliver GCSEs. An Action Plan template is included at the end of this chapter.

2.3 Choosing an Awarding Body

Deciding on an Awarding Body is one of the first decisions you will need to take. The GCSE examinations offered by awarding bodies are quite different to each other, and you need to understand which Awarding Body offers the best ones for your learners. There is no reason why the Awarding Body you chose for English should be the same as the one chosen for maths and these may be different to the one you use already for Functional Skills. However you may also think there is an advantage in using the same body for all qualifications. If you have a fairly local catchment area for learners it may be worth talking to local schools about which awarding bodies they use, so the learners will be 'revising' a syllabus they are familiar with – or you may prefer to choose something different so as to avoid the boredom of repetition.

Under the revised GCSE courses (2015) there is no longer an option to take English (as opposed to English Language or English Literature) and for Maths (only) you may choose to put learners in for the foundation or higher tier examination.

2.4 Registering as a GCSE exam centre

All the training providers we have spoken to in the course of developing this Guide have found the process of registering with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) as a registered examinations centre to be demanding and frustrating. The view from the sector is that the JCQ is not geared up to work with small providers and has little understanding of the problems for private training providers. Nonetheless, several providers we have spoken to have succeeded in the task.

Providers do not apply directly to the JCQ to obtain registered centre status. In the first instance the prospective centre is required to complete an application form downloadable from the website of the individual Awarding Body whose qualifications they wish to offer. This is then sent to the relevant Awarding Body for processing.

Some providers have described this process as confusing and difficult to interpret, and that the advice was unclear. The provider needs to decide where exams will be held and, most crucially, where the exam papers will be stored. JCQ take the security of storage of exam papers very seriously, and will want to see very thorough arrangements. In the case of Chiltern Training they decided to use the attic space of their building for this purpose. They used a contractor they knew who was very helpful in interpreting the specification. They installed two sets of reinforced doors each with two locks, put bars on the roof windows and installed a reinforced steel safe bolted to the floor.

You will need to calculate how many learners can sit the examinations in the spaces allocated and to be clear about invigilation processes. The place of the examination does not have to be the same as the secure storage area, though it cannot be too far away. It may be an option to hire a hall nearby for the examination if you do not have sufficient space within your own premises. Other considerations include whether to buy the tables and chairs necessary for the examination or hire them for the exam period.

Once preparations are ready, the Awarding Body arranges a JCQ Centre Inspection Service site visit. During this visit, the JCQ Centre Inspector will be looking for evidence that the centre meets the requirements laid down in the JCQ General Regulations and will be capable of complying with the Instructions for Conducting Examinations and other relevant documentation.

The JCQ documentation is available to download from the JCQ website within the Exams Office section: www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations

2.5 Staff training

One useful technique you may wish to consider is conducting a staff audit to gain an understanding of your staff's knowledge and understanding of GCSEs, their own English and maths skills, their English and maths teaching experience, and their generic and any specialist teaching qualifications. Such an audit should allow you to identify any skills gaps in the existing team.

To address any skills gaps it is likely that you will need to get teachers to participate in some professional development work or training. This might be coaching or mentoring of staff with more experienced colleagues, external training (perhaps from an Awarding Body or a national organisation such as the Education and Training Foundation¹¹ or National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics) or it may be possible to develop a range of in-house training activities.

The AELP publication [English and mathematics in Apprenticeships \(2015\)](#) includes a sample CPD activity for English GCSE.

Although it is important that teaching staff have a strong understanding of the subjects they are teaching, at present there is no requirement for staff to hold specific teaching qualifications to teach GCSE English and Maths. Suitable qualifications are desirable, but it is up to each provider to decide if a teacher has sufficient knowledge and experience to teach GCSEs.

2.6 GCSE teaching resources

Good quality teaching resources will assist you to deliver GCSE and can engage learners effectively. Good online materials in particular can

¹¹ Details of the ETF's English and Maths pipeline courses can be found at: <http://www.etf-foundation.co.uk/supporting/support-practitioners/maths-pipeline/> and <http://www.etf-foundation.co.uk/supporting/support-practitioners/english-pipeline/>

emphasise the difference between studying English and maths at school and as part of vocational training.

Some materials you currently use may be adaptable for use with GCSE courses, but it is likely that some investment will be needed. There is a wealth of resources on offer on the internet; the problem comes in evaluating which are useful and which are not. While there are some very good maths materials available through national organisations such as NCETM or the STEM Centre, it is harder to find English resources with any clear “badge of approval”. The only way is to try them and pass on recommendations within your team¹².

2.7 Evaluate and revise delivery for the next cohort

Once you have delivered your first cohort it is vital that you monitor the quality of your English and maths provision, reflect on your findings and revise processes for the next cohort. It is a good idea to do this as a group, sharing views on current delivery and effective practice. Staff should reflect on the resources used and their effectiveness, on methods used to monitor progress and achievement. They may want to consider revising ideas on targets for progression, tracking systems or observation of colleagues’ teaching practices. This will enable you to demonstrate further progression as the organisation moves on in its delivery of GCSEs.

In their reflection phase Chiltern Training decided that trying to go over the entire syllabus in a year had proved a hopeless task. They decided to experiment with putting learners into smaller, streamed groups and being led by the learners in what topics they need to cover. They also plan to run GCSEs in English and maths as evening classes for their own learners, but also open to others. They are also stocking textbooks to sell to learners, and facilitating a second hand market, so that books are traded on to next year’s learners.

¹² See also the ETF’s Excellence Gateway, <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/>, which provides online access to a breadth of resources for everyone working in the wider learning and skills sector in England.

Action Plan template

<i>Development actions</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Personnel</i>	<i>Milestones</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Progress</i>
<i>Writing Action Plan</i>					
<i>Engaging with awarding body</i>					
<i>Staff training & development</i>					
<i>Registering with JCQ</i>					
<i>Review resources</i>					
<i>Include GCSEs in learner ILPs</i>					
<i>Commence delivery of GCSEs</i>					
<i>Reflect on progress and revise processes</i>					

Appendix 1: Policy Overview

1. About this project

This Strategic Guide was compiled to support providers in meeting the challenge of the new requirements for the delivery of GCSE English and Maths to the 16-19 cohort. It was developed by the UCL Institute of Education (IOE) as part of a project to identify and document effective practice in delivering English and maths to 16-19 year old students, with a specific focus on GCSE provision. The project was commissioned and funded by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) as part of a range of initiatives that aim to improve sector capacity and capability to deliver maths and English, to raise awareness and to directly support improved achievement in GCSE results. Research and development activities were carried out by the UCL Institute of Education between January and July 2015.

The aims of the project were:

- To identify and categorise critical success factors to achieve a strategic approach to delivering maths and English at all levels.
- To identify and categorise critical success factors to achieve a strategic approach to delivering maths and English in different educational settings.
- To identify organisations where effective and promising practice is occurring, and to engage five of these providers as partner organisations to collaborate on project outputs.

2. Policy background and rationale

2.1 Changes to GCSE requirements

In March 2011, Professor Alison Wolf of King's College, London, carried out an independent review of vocational education to establish how it could be improved for 14 to 19 year olds¹. The report identified achievement of GCSE at grades A*-C in English and Maths as of 'critical importance' for successful progression into employment, arguing that employers will often not consider for jobs young people who do not hold these qualifications. The report also described English and Maths GCSEs as important gateway qualifications for students seeking places in further education and higher education at Levels 3 and 4.

In its formal response to the Wolf Review², the government stated that it would:

Ensure that all young people study and achieve in English and mathematics, ideally to GCSE A-C, by the age of 19. For those young people who are not immediately able to achieve these qualifications, we will identify high quality English and*

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180504/DFE-00031-2011.pdf

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180868/Wolf-Review-Response.pdf

mathematics qualifications that will enable them to progress to GCSE later. We will also reform GCSE to ensure that they are a more reliable indicator of achievement in the basics, in particular by ensuring that GCSEs are reformed alongside our current review of the National Curriculum.

As a result, from September 2013, the government introduced new specifications that all students yet to achieve a GCSE grade C or above in English and Maths by age 16 would be required to work towards achieving these qualifications. This applied to all students aged 16 to 19, whether on academic and/or vocational courses. 16-19 Study Programmes reflecting these requirements were introduced for all post-16 students attending schools, colleges and work-based learning providers. This requirement was further enforced by making it a condition of 16-19 funding from September 2014³.

September 2013 also saw the implementation of policy on the raising of the participation age. This requires every young person leaving school to be involved in some form of education, training or employment up to the age of 17 in 2013, and up to 18 by 2015. Thus the numbers of young people remaining in education or training is increasing year on year.

In setting out the government's policy on post-16 maths and English provision in July 2014⁴, then Minister of State for Skills and Enterprise Matthew Hancock also outlined plans for phased reform of GCSEs between 2015 and 2020, making them 'more stretching at the top, and more practical than existing GCSEs'. For example, from September 2015, more marks in GCSE English will be allocated to the end of course exam (60%) compared to the mark allocation for controlled assessments (40%). Speaking and listening assessment results will no longer count towards the overall mark, but will be reported separately.

Functional Skills qualifications will continue to be seen as valuable qualifications for adults, especially as stepping stones to GCSE achievement. Functional Skills will continue to be a part of Apprenticeship completion requirements but Government has stated its intention to work with Apprenticeship employers, FE colleges and training providers and others to identify how to achieve its ambition and remove barriers which prevent learners from choosing GCSEs. From the beginning of the 2015-6 academic year, providers who teach GCSE English and Maths to adults (19+) outside apprenticeships will receive a higher rate of funding through the Adult Skills Budget. Also at this point, funding for existing stand-alone English and maths units ceases, so that adults studying at level 2 will have to take either Functional Skills or GCSEs⁵.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/16-to-19-funding-mathematics-and-english-condition-of-funding>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/mathematics-and-english-provision-in-post-16-education>

⁵ As the stand alone units are not available for discrete funding, awarding organisations have developed qualifications that accredit combinations of the units

<http://www.cityandguilds.com/qualifications-and-apprenticeships/skills-for-work-and-life/english-mathematics-and-ict-skills/3847-english-skills-and-mathematics-skills#tab=information>

This would be funded as e.g. City & Guilds Entry Level Award In English Skills - Reading (Entry 3) (QCF)

However, despite the Government's statement in March 2014 that 'once the new GCSEs are available they will replace other qualifications as the single gold-standard for literacy and numeracy at level 2 funding', a House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee inquiry into adult literacy and numeracy, reporting in September 2014⁶, rejected GCSEs as the only qualification by which attainment in numeracy and literacy should be judged:

We are not persuaded that GCSEs are the gold standard by which adults' skills should be measured and assessed, and we urge the Government to take a more flexible approach to the way in which skills in adults are measured.

The government's official response to the Select Committee report (December 2014⁷), concurred:

We do...agree with the Select Committee that GCSE level and type of study is not always appropriate for all young people and adults. Some learners will need to study for other qualifications as they progress towards GCSE and for some a shorter, vocationally orientated qualification will be the right choice. We have been clear that it remains possible to complete an apprenticeship or traineeship using Functional Skills qualifications.

2.2 Revised GCSEs

In 2013 the Government announced changes to the GCSE examinations in English and Maths and these are due to be implemented for all students starting the two year GCSE courses in 2015. The aim of the reforms is to provide all students with a robust foundation of reading and good written English, and a greater emphasis on accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. In maths the reforms are designed to encourage deeper and broader mathematical understanding and to provide all students with greater coverage of key areas such as ratio, proportion and rates of change and require them to apply their knowledge and reasoning to provide clear mathematical arguments. The intention is that both exams should be more demanding and rigorous than is currently the case.

In practice this means that alongside reform of subject content, GCSEs must be fully linear, with all assessments taking place at the end of the programme (generally in June, or December for autumn re-takes). Assessment for English language will be through exams only and the only controlled assessment will be for Spoken Language. A new grading system will operate producing results from 1 (low) to 9 (high). The equivalent of Grade C will be either Grade 4 or Grade 5. It will no longer be possible to choose between taking a higher (grades 4-9) and a lower (grade 1-5) tier paper for English, but this will still be an option for Maths.

⁶ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmbis/557/557.pdf>

⁷ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/395304/bis-15-47-government-response-to-the-bis-committee-fifth-report-of-session-2014-to-2015-on-adult-literacy-and-numeracy-Cm-8982-web-version.pdf

Currently providers have an option of choosing to take GCSE English, GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature. From autumn 2015 English will no longer be available as a separate course.

For further detail on the reformed GCSEs see the documents and consultations at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/reform-of-gcse-qualifications-by-ofqual>

3. Implications for Post 16 settings

The government policy outlined above will have differing levels of impact on the different settings of post-16 education. There are many strands to the policy and the changes to the GCSE exams, and each organisation will need to explore carefully how these changes will affect them.

3.1 General Further Education Colleges

The policy of requiring learners who have attained a Grade D at GCSE English or Maths to study for a retake as a condition of funding has immediate and profound impact on FE Colleges. This Strategic Guide is inevitably shaped by the challenges affecting FE Colleges now and by the positive ways forward some colleges have adopted. None of the colleges we spoke to believes it has all the answers to the massive rise in enrolments, of how to maintain learner motivation or how to preserve current achievement rates, but the ideas set out here represent a number of starting points. While these solutions have been largely drawn from the FE Colleges, we believe that they will have application for other settings if suitably contextualised.

3.2 Private training providers and Work Based Learning

Most private training providers we spoke to are currently reluctant to make the considerable investment necessary to commence delivering GCSE English and Maths. This is largely because there is a belief in the sector that the requirement for those on apprenticeships to undertake GCSEs as their English or Maths component will not be implemented. However, current policy makes it clear that it is expected that private training providers will offer all apprentices between 16-19 an opportunity to progress towards achieving a GCSE at grade A*-C in English and/or Maths even if they have already achieved the equivalent Functional Skills qualification at Level 2. Similarly, although Level 1 English and maths is the minimum requirement for completing an Intermediate Apprenticeship, all apprentices must be offered a Level 2 Functional Skill or GCSE in English and/or Maths if they have not already achieved Level 2 in these subjects. Ofsted will also be looking closely at how successfully training providers are meeting these English and maths policy objectives.

The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Implementation Plan (BIS, 2013) sets out the intention for GCSE to become the English and maths requirement for completing apprenticeships once the current reforms have been successfully implemented. One exception is the Level 3 Early Years

Educators apprenticeship which already requires the English and maths component to be a GCSE rather than a Functional Skill. In July 2015 the government announced a relaxation in that attaining English and Maths GCSE will be an exit rather than an entry requirement (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/help-to-up-skill-childcare-staff-before-they-reach-the-frontline>). Training providers specialising in delivering these apprenticeships are having to work out how they can meet this revised requirements; one option is to start delivering English and Maths GCSE themselves.

Although the details of policy will inevitably change, the direction of travel seems clear. Over the coming years there will be an increasing emphasis on GCSE English and Maths as an integral part of apprenticeships and other vocational qualifications. The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) suggest that all Training Providers need to engage with this issue.

For reasons outlined above, many Training Providers will be considering delivering GCSEs from scratch. We have consulted with a number of these organisations, and it is clear that taking this path is a challenge. Their experiences and recommendations for other providers are captured in Chapter 3 of the Strategic Guide: Delivering GCSEs from Scratch: the essential guide.

3.3 Adult and Community Learning (ACL)

The ACL sector has not been greatly affected by the new English and maths policies. Most large ACL providers are in a stronger position than private training providers as they often have previous experience of delivering GCSEs and delivering to adults. The majority of ACL learners are in a position where they can chose the qualification they want to study and do not have to take any particular course. Providers we spoke to have seen a small increase in 16-19 learners sitting retakes of English and maths, but these are often directed to ACL provision by private training providers who do not deliver GCSE. Although the ambition of the policy is that GCSEs should be the destination qualification for all adult learners, there is little evidence that this will be implemented for some years.

3.4 Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS)

There are currently four OLASS providers in England: The Manchester College, Milton Keynes College, Weston College and A4E. When contacted all confirmed that there was no current delivery of GCSE English or Maths to any 16-19 year olds in prison.

The prison population is always subject to “churn”, with prisoners moving from prison to prison during their stay in the custodial system. The 16-19 cohort in the prison population is also the most likely to be serving short sentences.

English and maths delivered to this age group tends to be Functional Skills, often through the shorter QCF registered modules which give prisoners the

chance to complete a small piece of learning before moving on. The providers feel that the number of prisoners of this age who are in a position to undertake a year of study is very small indeed, and so their GCSE provision is targeted at more long-term prisoners who are often older.

3.5 Third sector providers

We have been unable to find many examples of third sector organisations delivering GCSE English or maths. Those that have this ambition will be in a very similar position to Private Training Providers and should look at Chapter 3 of the Strategic Guide: Delivering GCSEs from Scratch: the essential guide.

4. Challenges

4.1 The cultural challenge – learner and staff buy-in

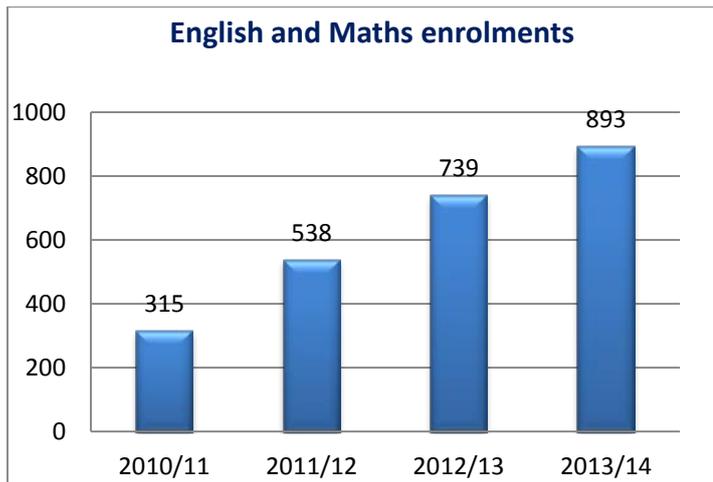
“Culture eats strategy for breakfast” was Peter Drucker’s quote. To change culture requires attitudinal change, and we recognise that clear communication and explanation of expectations plays a critical role in achieving this. (AccRoss)

Many colleges and training providers have traditionally put their vocational provision at the centre of their ethos, so changing the focus to English and maths requires a major cultural shift for all staff. Several of the case studies suggest that changing the culture is as important as having the right policies in place. This change of culture has to start with the senior leadership but then move through curriculum managers and embrace both the English and maths departments and the vocational areas. Buy-in from the learners themselves and employers is also important.

[The strategy required] buy-in from subject staff and guidance and support tutors to enforce messages about English and maths and positively support and encourage learners to attend. (SC)

4.2 Staff capacity & quality

The policy change outlined above has led to a very large increase in the number of learners entering the FE sector who are re-taking GCSE English and Maths. The scale of this increase is bound to prove demanding on providers. As an example, this chart shows Selby College’s English and maths enrolments over the past five years; an increase of almost 300%.



The rapidly increasing number of learners taking English and Maths GCSE has a number of immediate impacts. One of these is the requirement for more teaching staff qualified to deliver GCSE to those learners. If the number of learners taking GCSEs is doubling, ideally twice the number of GCSE teachers would be available as well. Unfortunately, there are not sufficient trained English and maths GCSE teachers within the sector.

Accordingly, colleges are required to find capacity within their current staff adding to their skills as necessary, or compete with schools and wider industry to recruit new teachers on the open market.

Those colleges which developed strategic approaches put an audit of teaching staff experience and qualifications as an early priority. For most organisations there will be a need both to recruit new staff and to train existing staff to undertake new challenges. Both need to be planned well in advance to ensure the teaching staff match the expanded learner need.

Be clear about staffing needs and ensure prompt recruitment – plan when to advertise. Consistency is important in ensuring learner motivation and subsequent success. (EBC)

4.3 Motivation

Another issue is the changing nature of the cohorts. Traditionally, FE Colleges have been able to offer learners courses which they elected to follow. Where there has been a mandatory English and maths element, this has largely been in the form of new qualifications which learners are not familiar with and which have been designed to be more relevant to those on vocational study. This new cohort of learners will include many who do not wish to study English or maths, but specifically have already “failed” these subjects at GCSE and have no confidence in their ability to do any better this time round. Motivation is a huge problem.

4.4 Logistics

The scale of the challenge is quite hard to appreciate. Firstly, there is the impact of the huge increase in numbers. For the colleges we have worked with on this project, the number of GCSE entrants has at least doubled and a further large increase is expected for 2016.

To cope with these numbers colleges have to find sufficiently large spaces to hold examinations, they need to get all their learners to those spaces, they need to be able to securely log examination papers in and out and keep careful records on all scripts. City College Norwich famously tweeted a picture of their “mock” GCSE exam day, in which a total of 900 people sat exams at Norwich showground, the learners ferried between the college and the showground in a fleet of 10 double-decker buses, with exam staff using coloured umbrellas to help learners find their place in the hall⁸. Given that it costs between £80 and £100 for each exam entrance, there is a significant cost involved as well.

4.5 Reputational risk

One reason why some colleges have been very quick in responding to these challenges is recognition of the risk to their corporate reputations of failing to meet the challenge of the increased GCSE cohorts. All providers are likely to see sharp falls in their achievement rates, and there is a great deal of work to be done to ensure these dips are temporary and that any inspections will look favourably on the measures colleges have taken to improve their results. Any Grade 1 listed college will be very aware that poor results from their English and maths departments will threaten those grades and their local reputations, and ultimately their economic viability. Most of the Strategic Guide concentrates on the educational and organisational aspects involved in meeting the challenge, but there is a very strong economic case for backing the English and maths departments and giving them all the support they need to lift the attendance and achievement results to the highest possible level.

⁸ See also: <https://www.tes.co.uk/news/further-education/breaking-news/colleges-cancel-classes-cope-gcse-resits-boom>

Appendix 2: Resources and Guidance

Department for Education subject content and assessment objectives for GCSE English language for teaching from September 2015 are available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254497/GCSE_English_language.pdf

Department for Education subject content and assessment objectives for GCSE mathematics for teaching from September 2015 are available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254441/GCSE_mathematics_subject_content_and_assessment_objectives.pdf

Other useful websites and reading:

FE Week in partnership with Tribal (November 2013), *Maths & English* supplement, available at: <http://feweek.co.uk/2013/11/01/mathematics-and-english>

Association of Employment and Learning Providers: <http://www.aelp.org.uk>

The Education and Training Foundation: <http://www.et-foundation.co.uk>

Joint Council for Qualifications: <http://www.jcq.org.uk>

Innovators in Mathematics Education (MEI): <http://www.mei.org.uk>

National Association for Numeracy and Mathematics in Colleges (NANAMIC):
<http://www.nanamic.org.uk>

National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE):
<http://www.nate.org.uk/page/home>

National Apprenticeship Service: <http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk>

National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM):
<https://www.ncetm.org.uk>

Awarding Organisations:

AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance): <http://www.aqa.org.uk>

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA): <http://www.ocr.org.uk>

Pearson Edexcel: <http://www.edexcel.com/Pages/Home.aspx>

WJEC <http://www.wjec.co.uk>