

Learning and Skills Improvement Service Frequently Asked Questions



General

Q1 What is LSIS?

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) is the new sector-led body, formed from Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) to develop excellent and sustainable FE provision across the sector. LSIS will work in partnership with all parts of the sector to provide vision, leadership, clarity and high quality support; practising and enabling continuous self-improvement and capacity building.

Q2 When did LSIS come into existence?

On 1 October 2008, CEL and QIA completed the transfer of their businesses and contracts to LSIS.

The intention to set up LSIS was announced at the AoC conference in November 2007. The concept of a 'rationalised, coordinated and focused' sector landscape was, however, first conceived during extensive consultation with the sector as part of Sir Andrew Foster's review in 2004.

Q3 What is the official classification for LSIS?

LSIS is a 'sector-led body in the public sector'. It is also a registered charity and company limited by guarantee.

Q4 What is LSIS's remit?

The aim is for LSIS to be a national centre of expertise and innovation for excellence and to become the focal point for enabling innovation in the sector, supporting it to become ever more effective in responding to the needs of learners, employers and the community.

Building on the legacy from QIA and CEL, LSIS will take a comprehensive approach to whole organisation improvement, offering services which are based on leading edge practice from within the sector and further afield and building and sustaining capacity for self-improvement across the sector.

LSIS will consult with the sector during autumn 2008 and spring 2009 about its priorities and remit.

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Q5 What are the immediate plans for LSIS?

Immediate plans for LSIS include:

- delivering existing CEL and QIA programmes and services until July 2009;
- leading the renewal of the National Improvement Strategy;
- preparing a statement of strategic intentions for consultation;
- developing an outline of our corporate plan, including mission and vision, through extensive consultation;
- consulting the sector in ways that recognise demands on time and endeavour to make best use of existing opportunities:
 - at existing regional and national events
 - at dedicated meetings, workshops and seminars
 - through ongoing programme activities
 - through online surveys;
- designing communications channels that reflect a sector-led approach; and
- gradually bringing the two former organisations together into one, developing its own structure, values and culture.

Q6 Will LSIS be a commissioning or delivery organisation?

The distinction, in practice, is not as clear cut as is often thought. For example, while CEL was often thought of as a 'delivery' organisation, it frequently contracted from the same pool of consultants and associates as QIA to actually deliver training in institutions. Similarly, while QIA was assumed to be purely a commissioning organisation, it was frequently involved in shaping the delivery of training. LSIS will have to juggle three factors: 1) identity 2) control 3) scale. The likelihood, therefore, is that we will operate in mixed mode depending on the scale and nature of each programme.

Q7 Why are some LSIS products and services free of charge at the point of delivery when others have to be paid for?

CEL was set up on a long-term self-funding trajectory and thus operated a mixed economy finance model, including grants, contracts and fees and therefore charged for some of its programmes and services. All QIA programme activity was grant-funded and provided free of charge at the point of delivery. LSIS has inherited this mixed model and has a separate trading subsidiary company which will operate on a

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commercial basis for certain types of work. LSIS may also continue to change for some grant-supported programmes. There are good reasons for charging for some programmes and not others, such as access, securing sufficient resources, gaining commitment to the programme and so on.

Q8 What is the LSIS charging policy?

Currently the majority of LSIS programmes and services are fully subsidised. Some services provided by its London office are the subject of a charge and there is a programme of subsidies available for some of these services (see website <http://www.centreforexcellence.org.uk/>).

LSIS must not compete unfairly with other organisations and where it charges it must do so in accordance with government pricing guidelines. Currently it adds a standard mark-up to direct costs calculated by a firm of professional accountants to calculate its charges.

The future LSIS pricing policy will be determined by the Board as part of the strategic planning exercise this coming spring.

Programmes and services

Q9 What will happen to the existing CEL and QIA programmes?

LSIS will continue with all major streams of CEL and QIA activity until at least July 2009 and any changes to those programmes will be phased in from academic year 2009/10 or at contract expiry date if that is sooner. LSIS will honour contractual commitments made by QIA and CEL.

During 2009 LSIS will review its inherited programme portfolio based on feedback from the sector and in light of changes to policy by the Government. New programmes and changes to existing programmes will be published on our corporate website.

If you would like to view what programmes, events and services are currently available please refer to the existing CEL and QIA websites:

www.centreforexcellence.org.uk

for former QIA programmes please refer to the Excellence Gateway:

<http://excellence.qia.org.uk/>

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Q10 How can individual providers influence the future decision-making processes around the products and services offered by LSIS?

Providers will be able to influence the future direction through in a number of ways including through:

- Council members, their constituencies, organisations and colleagues;
- online and paper questionnaires, polls and online discussion groups;
- existing groups provider groups including the National Improvement Partnership Board and the Regional Quality Improvement Partnerships;
- building opportunities for feedback into every LSIS programme, service and event;
- consultation seminars, focus groups and interactive workshops at other events and conferences run by LSIS;
- the Single Voice, sector representative bodies and partners;
- working with the National Learner Panel and the Leading Learners cohorts;
- face to face and telephone interviews or more informal discussions;
- formal quantitative and qualitative research activities; and
- nominated sector champions.

To ensure this dialogue is meaningful LSIS will ensure that the sector has the relevant information and knowledge to contribute constructively. Therefore LSIS will also develop effective mechanisms for briefing providers on policy developments, research findings and the results of evaluations and other studies and will disseminate performance data, benchmarks and international comparisons.

Funding

Q11 How is LSIS funded?

Most of the funding for LSIS comes from the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and also the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). In March 2008, the Secretary of State for DIUS, the Rt Hon John Denham MP, sent LSIS a letter announcing a grant of £129 million for 2008-09. This figure has since been raised to £145 million.

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In August, the interim Board of LSIS approved a budget for 2008-09. In addition to the grant funding, the Board undertook to raise a further £1 million from donations and £1 million from commercial activity.

The Board has decided to allocate its resources as follows:

£98 million	Specific commissions funded by the government, for example, the <i>Principals qualifying programme</i> and <i>14-19 diploma support</i>
£42 million	Sector-directed programmes, for example, <i>Support for excellence</i>
£5 million	Administration
£2 million	The costs of transferring QIA and CEL to LSIS

The Board

Q12 Is there an LSIS Board?

The LSIS inaugural board was announced in June 2008, it comprises 13 full members and four observers from stakeholder organisations. The members were selected through an extensive interview process to be truly representative of the learning and skills sector; together they bring diverse experience, varied perspectives, complementary skills and vast expertise.

Q13 Who is on the Board?

Paul Head	Principal & CEO, College of North East London
Keith Brooker	Director, City & Guilds of London Institute
David McNulty	Chief Executive, Trafford MBC
Asha Khemka	Principal & Chief Executive, West Notts College
Neil Bates	Chief Executive, Prospects Learning Foundation
Simon Withey	Managing Director, VT Education & Skills
Walter Brown	Former Principal, Liverpool Community College
Christine Braddock	Principal & CEO, Matthew Boulton College
Ann Robinson	Former Principal, Woodhouse College
Bill Moorcroft	Principal, Trafford College
Stella Mbubaegbu	Principal & Chief Executive, Highbury College
Meredydd David	Principal, Reaseheath College
Ruth Silver	Chair, LSIS
Roger McClure	Chief Executive
Observers	Ofsted, DIUS, NUS

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Q14 What will the Board do?

The role and duties of the Board are to:

- direct the new organisation's strategic aims and direction, subject to final approval by the LSIS council;
- monitor the strategic performance of the organisation;
- receive and review a draft corporate plan, to submit to the council for final approval;
- develop the organisation's key relationships with government, sector bodies and other major stakeholders;
- communicate the development of the new organisation and its achievements to stakeholders, the government, employers, the wider public and staff;
- accountability and monitoring of performance of the new organisation; and
- monitor budget spend against service delivery and targets.

The Council

For information on the LSIS Council please visit the separate FAQ on the website:
http://www.lsis.org.uk/Libraries/Documents/BPAnnex_1%20paper_0331.sflb

National Improvement Strategy

Q15 I've heard that the National Improvement Strategy (NIS) is going to be refreshed, is this correct?

Yes, this is correct. LSIS is consulting the sector on a new National Improvement Strategy (New NIS) that will replace the current strategy published in January 2007.

Q16 Who is leading on the development of the new NIS?

The development of the NIS is one of the key strategic priorities that the DIUS has set for LSIS. DIUS has agreed that LSIS should consult on a new direction for the NIS this autumn with a view to finalising it in spring 2009.

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Q17 What will be different about it?

The New NIS is intended to be a truly national strategy which will govern the sector-support strategies of the national partners including LSIS, and thereby in time target all support funding by all the partners onto a coherent, concentrated package of support activities.

The new approach is to build consensus among providers and partners for a manageable number of core self-improvement principles based on trust and ownership. These core principles are to be the fundamental states which, if achieved by the sector, would be most likely to lead to a highly effective, continuously self-improving sector.

Once agreed, these principles will be the focus for all relevant support activities by national partners and for funding by government departments. They will also determine LSIS's future programmes of support to the sector.

They will provide the platform for a coherent, concentrated set of improvement activities, likely to have the greatest impact on further improving the performance of the learning and skills service.

Q18 What are the NIS principles about?

The principles are directed at self-improvement: by individual members of staff, by individual providers, by staff or providers working together in groups, and by the sector acting collectively. They are intended to define the sustainable characteristics of a self-improving, self-regulating sector.

Q19 How will the sector be involved in developing the New NIS?

The proposed approach and principles have been subject to very extensive informal prior consultation with leaders of the representative bodies and the national partners and have received a universally positive response.

On Monday 8 December LSIS will launch a 12 week period of consultation with the sector on the proposed New NIS. LSIS will publicise this consultation through the press and other media and will be running a series of consultation events and focus groups, further information on these will be made available on the website in due course.

Q20 When will the New NIS be published?

The New NIS will be published in spring 2009.

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Strategic Intentions

Q21 What is the LSIS statement of draft Strategic Intentions?

This statement sets out LSIS's initial draft proposals for its strategic direction. In the light of responses to the draft Strategic Intentions LSIS will develop the proposals into its first corporate plan.

It sets out how LSIS proposes to:

- embody the draft National Improvement Strategy (NIS) principles;
- interact with the full range of providers in the sector;
- work with other national partners; and
- develop new mechanisms for supporting and funding performance improvement in learning and skills providers.

Q22 What is the relationship between the Strategic Intentions and the New NIS?

LSIS's proposals for its strategic direction draw heavily from and are closely aligned with the proposals for the New NIS.

Q23 What are the emerging themes or priorities for LSIS?

Emerging thinking on strategies for LSIS include:

- working with the sector to define demanding professional standards of performance;
- further developing the processes of peer review and development; and
- working with partners to raise the profile and effectiveness of governance throughout the sector; and
- establishing centres of expertise to ensure the sector has access to the best current research and knowledge of key aspects of performance

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Q24 Will LSIS be consulting the sector on its Strategic Intentions?

Yes, as a sector-led body, LSIS will consult widely on these proposals. The consultation will commence in December LSIS alongside the consultation on the New NIS.

Q25 When will LSIS publish its first corporate plan?

LSIS will publish its first corporate plan, for the period 2009-12 in late spring 2009.

Partnership working

Q26 What is the relationship between LSIS and the Single Voice?

Single Voice will organise the elections for members of the LSIS Council.

Working with contractors

Q27 When will new corporate and programme branding be launched?

The corporate branding was launched at the 2008 Star Awards on 24 November.

Q28 Will there be an immediate or phased implementation and if the latter, what are the timescales and procedures for this?

You will see the new visual identity on most of LSIS's publications and materials from now on; you will also notice it on most programme materials as contractors are introducing it in phased approach over the coming weeks. Full implementation of the programme branding (or sub-branding) will not take place until LSIS's portfolio of services has been developed next year. Our partners and contractors will be kept in touch with any enhancements via an extranet facility which is being set up and via LSIS e-newsletters.

Q29 Who should contractors contact for guidance?

Contractors have attended a presentation on the brand guidelines and will shortly have access to these on the extranet but in the meantime if there are any queries, they should contact Candice Kass: candice.kass@lsis.org.uk or jay.kamara@lsis.org.uk

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Q30 What will happen to existing programmes in the new organisation? Will there be opportunities to bid for new programmes?

Most LSIS programmes will run on a "business as usual" basis until the summer of 2009. Over the next few months LSIS will determine which programmes it wishes to run funded by sector-directed grant from September 2009 onwards. In addition LSIS has to take account of changes to its specific grants which its sponsoring departments require. As a result many of the main LSIS programmes will be tendered or re-tendered during 2009. In addition we are planning to retender our small contracts framework. Therefore there is likely to be opportunities to bid for new work in the coming months.