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DEVELOPING INDUSTRY-EXPERT TEACHING FOR HIGHER SKILLS

A Report by the Lifelong Education Commission

*In Partnership with the
Chartered Institution for Further Education*



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**THE CHARTERED INSTITUTION
FOR FURTHER EDUCATION**



ABOUT THE LIFELONG EDUCATION COMMISSION

The Rt Hon Chris Skidmore MP launched the Lifelong Education Commission under his Chairmanship at ResPublica in February 2021. The Commission will seek to recommend how the multiple and varied barriers to lifelong learning can be removed, what future investment is needed to support this, and what regulatory change is needed to ensure the maximum possible flexibility that will benefit learners and deliver on the promise of a whole system change for education post-18.

The commission will focus on how post-18 education and skills ought to be designed, so that both Higher and Further Education institutions are valued, but also how the individual learner can be better empowered to make decisions and undertake their learning. Lessons can be learnt from abroad, as well as from mistakes made in the past, but post-Covid, the need to act differently for different outcomes will be essential.

THE CHARTERED INSTITUTION FOR FURTHER EDUCATION

The Chartered Institution for Further Education (CIFE) is the voice for technical and professional education. The CIFE was established by Royal Charter to highlight and promote the excellence of further education and skills training providers and celebrate individual contribution to the advancement of vocational, technical and professional education in England.

Membership encompasses organisations across the whole Further Education sector and includes colleges, higher education institutes (HEIs) and independent training providers (ITPs). Members have strong track records and a commitment to high standards in the delivery of skills needed in modern Britain, a firm ethos of collaboration for the benefit of their key stakeholders and excellence in leadership and governance.

The CIFE works alongside industry to influence and shape the national skills system to ensure that technical and professional education is understood as a critical driver of economic development and growth within local communities and the country at large.

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FOREWORD

*by The Rt Hon the Lord Lingfield
Chairman, the Chartered Institution for Further Education*

If the United Kingdom is to remain commercially competitive in a fast-changing world, it is essential that our acute current skills shortages are remedied.

This report looks in depth at the difficulties currently faced by further education colleges and other training providers when they come to recruit and retain teaching staff with the right skills to deliver a step-change in higher technical education, one without which our economic performance will certainly falter.

Key industry sectors that rely on a high level of technical expertise (for example, advanced manufacturing, engineering, construction and digital technology) are particularly badly affected. There is also a risk that the emerging industries that will

provide the new jobs of the future, such as those in the green energy sector, will be held back by a lack of suitably skilled recruits.

Hence the Government has made it a priority to expand and improve training in advanced technical skills to meet the challenge. Recent initiatives, such as the new T Level courses and Higher Technical Qualifications, along with the expansion of higher and degree apprenticeships and Institutes of Technology, are all very welcome.

However, it is an irony that those colleges and training providers which are being called upon to deliver more and better training to reduce shortages are now themselves being hampered by a lack of skilled staff.

So the further education sector faces a huge challenge for, just like other employers, colleges are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain appropriately qualified people to deliver high-level courses. Most simply cannot afford to offer the much higher salaries that are required to compete with the private sector for industry-expert lecturers. Post-Brexit and post-pandemic, the loss of hundreds of thousands of experienced professionals from the labour market is compounding an already difficult situation.

This country urgently needs many more “dual professionals” – lecturers who are experienced industry practitioners and *also* excellent teachers – to deliver higher skills training. This report looks at the reasons why this is the case, and it reviews the progress in identifying and developing a new cadre of industry-expert teachers. It looks at the barriers (including issues of pay, training and policy implementation) that are holding us back.

Through the network of colleges and providers which are members of the Chartered Institution for Further Education, this report has gained an acute insight into the challenges being faced and the energy and creativity of managers struggling to find practical solutions to the current problems.

This report sets out exactly what focused support is needed from Government to enable the UK's further education sector to supply experienced professionals to teach the next generation of students the skills that are so seriously needed. It is a clarion call for action in a policy area where, as a nation, we simply cannot afford to fail.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a broad consensus across the political spectrum that we need to radically improve the quantity and quality of technical and vocational education to address the skills shortages that are holding the UK economy back. However, in common with many other sectors, the further education and skills sector is facing a growing crisis in recruiting and retaining appropriately qualified staff.

It is widely acknowledged that the best people to deliver the skills training and education urgently needed are “dual professionals”, staff who can combine up-to-date experience and expertise in industry with the ability to teach young and adult students to a high standard. This report reviews progress so far in recruiting and supporting dual professionals, particularly in the FE college sector, and identifies the key barriers that are being faced. It then explores what new policies and strategies are required to attract and retain more of these professionals into the FE and skills workforce.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Department for Education should recognise the importance of the FE and skills sector in the continued recruitment of industry professionals and actively support the sector in attracting and retaining dual professional teaching staff as a key element of its long-term strategy for workforce development.
2. As soon as possible, funding for colleges delivering technical courses in skills shortage sectors should be increased to a sufficient level to enable expert teaching staff to be paid at rates comparable to those in the private sector.
3. The DfE should move away from piecemeal initiatives towards a more integrated strategy for increasing the volume of industry-expert teachers.

4. Initial teacher training for FE lecturers should be reviewed and modified to better reflect the role of dual professionals and support their transition into teaching.
5. The Government needs to speed up the evaluation of the effectiveness of new initiatives and publish the results to enable the most promising new practices to be identified and disseminated across the further education sector.
6. The collection and reporting of FE workforce data by the DfE from now on needs to be detailed enough to facilitate analysis of the proportion and range of industry-expert teachers, in order to enable better planning for their recruitment and retention.
7. Future workforce development policies and strategies for delivery of Level 4 and 5 should apply across the post-18 sector, addressing the HE as well as the FE sector.
8. The DfE should build on the ideas being developed by the Chartered Institution for FE to mobilise direct employer support and resources to improve higher technical skills training and explore how such approaches could be scaled up to national level.
9. The Treasury should consider providing incentives, such as tax breaks for companies and individuals, to encourage the release of members of staff to deliver higher skills teaching.



1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past five years a strong consensus has developed amongst educators, policy makers and politicians that the UK needs to increase the delivery of higher technical education. Alison Wolf published a detailed analysis in 2016¹, later reinforced by Simon Field's *The Missing Middle*² and by the Augar Post-18 Review of Education and Funding, published in 2019. All came to the same conclusion: there needs to be a step-change in the volume, geographical spread and quality of technical skills training to address the growing challenge of skills shortages in key industry sectors.

This is not just an educational issue; it's a critical economic priority. National economies in the developed world are reliant on technical expertise and know-how to drive productivity and growth. To do this, governments have to ensure that national education systems produce the right volume of skilled and qualified professionals to meet the imminent need. The Leitch review of 2006, for example, estimated that for every £1 invested in skills, there would be a net benefit of at least £4 to the British economy.³ In a nutshell, English post-18 education needs a system-wide upgrade to bring it fully into the 21st century and improve the supply of higher level skills to the UK economy.

While there has been a great deal of discussion and debate about the regulatory, funding and qualification reforms needed to tackle this challenge, this report focuses on one crucial aspect of the problem which has so far not received the attention it deserves: the need to recruit and retain good teachers with recent industry experience. The authors of a 2007 report on the world's best performing school systems observed that "the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers."⁴ This also applies to the quality of higher technical skills provision; it is largely dependent on the quality of the teachers and lecturers who deliver it. This is not just about the ability of teachers to deliver a high standard of general teaching, but

their ability to teach cutting-edge technical content, both theoretical and practical, and develop students' high-level technical skills. But it's not easy to find staff with this combination of skills, especially when the FE sector is suffering from a growing crisis of teacher recruitment and retention.

Just as there is consensus about the pressing need to expand higher technical provision, so there is unanimous agreement about the need to develop a bigger, more capable workforce to implement this expansion successfully. The Augar review of post-18 education could not have been more explicit about the importance of this issue. It noted in detail the mounting evidence of the difficulties that colleges were having in recruiting suitable staff, particularly in subject areas such as engineering, manufacturing, construction, maths and digital skills.⁵ The situation has worsened considerably since then. A recent survey of college staffing by the Association of Colleges found "high levels of persistent vacancies in construction, engineering, health and social care and science and maths".⁶ Meanwhile, recruitment agency Morgan Hunt reported recently that FE vacancy levels were 32% higher in 2021 than they were in 2020.⁷

Interviews conducted with ten FE colleges across England as part of the research for this report vividly illustrate just how severe the problem has now become. In line with most employers today, colleges are now struggling to recruit appropriately skilled and qualified staff in a growing number of subject disciplines and have particular difficulties in finding and retaining lecturers able to teach higher technical subjects.

This recruitment and retention crisis is now a critical barrier to meeting the increased demand for Higher Technical Qualifications which current policy is rightly designed to stimulate. An inadequate supply of good quality staff will make it impossible to properly implement the reforms now under way.

While the challenge is clear, there is much less clarity about how to tackle the problem. This report reveals the impressive amount of energy and ingenuity colleges are using at local level to address the issue. But these efforts are by their nature piecemeal, and national strategies designed to assist colleges have not had much impact so far. Recruiting and developing industry-expert teachers therefore remains a key concern of managers in the field, and the space remains open for developing better solutions to move us forward.

Whilst acknowledging that this issue affects all areas of the FE curriculum, this report focuses on the post-18 sector and specifically on the staffing of higher technical skills courses. This is because of the high priority being given to expanding Level 4 and 5 provision, and because of the unique nature of this challenge. The report will touch on issues in the higher education sector but will predominantly focus on the barriers and opportunities faced by the further education sector. It will review the position out in the field in the context of the current policy framework and explore the concept of dual professionalism, which has emerged over the past decade as the leading framework for analysing issues around the development of industry-expert teaching. It will attempt to answer the key question: what needs to change in policy and practice to enable Industry-expert teaching to become the norm for the delivery of higher technical skills?



2. BACKGROUND TO THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGE

2.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF HIGHER TECHNICAL EDUCATION

For decades, education policy has acknowledged the need for a better skilled and qualified working population as the economies in developed countries have made the transition from relying primarily on the production of physical goods and extraction of natural resources to the “knowledge economy”, in which expertise and know-how are the primary drivers of prosperity and growth. Since Tony Blair’s famous mantra of the 1990s – “education, education, education” – Government investment in education has increased significantly, most dramatically in the rapid expansion of higher education through the student loan funding system.

But despite the undoubted successes of this expansion – not least in increasing the number of UK school leavers going to university by over 20% in the last decade – there has been a growing awareness of what has been described as “the missing middle”; a shortage of adults who hold qualifications at Level 4 and 5, particularly in technical subjects such as engineering, manufacturing, construction and applied science⁸. These qualifications, which sit in-between Level 3 courses (such as A Levels and BTEC diplomas) and undergraduate degrees, are delivered by a mixture of further education colleges and universities, typically to mature students on a part-time basis. Because of the strong financial incentives within the student loan system for institutions to prioritise the recruitment of students to three-year full-time degrees, numbers enrolled on Level 4 and 5 in England have declined steeply. The Augar review noted that enrolments had fallen from 510,000 learners in 2009/10 to 190,000 in 2016/17.

The most recent data, from the Higher Education Statistics Agency, shows that there has been virtually no change since then: in 2020/21 there were 190,705 enrolments recorded. This represents only a small proportion - around 3% - of all higher education enrolments nationally, and means that England lags well behind most other OECD countries, which typically have at least twice the number of learners studying at these levels.⁹ The higher education funding reforms have inadvertently created a system which offers little or no incentive to focus on the enrolment of part-time students of any kind, as providers are only able to draw down a fraction of the loan funding available for teaching full-time students.

Higher technical education, which includes most of the courses delivered at Level 4 and Level 5 in England, is particularly important for working adults who want to improve their qualifications for career purposes but don't want or need to undertake a three-year degree programme. These courses offer a direct route into a higher level job in specific industry sectors. They are intrinsically more flexible than degree courses, enabling learners to progress step by step, through part-time and full-time pathways, all the way through to a degree level qualification if they choose. Most importantly, they are explicitly tailored to the needs of the labour market.

Since 2017 there has been a series of national policy initiatives designed to halt and reverse the long-term decline in higher technical education, including the introduction of T Levels, the development of a new suite of Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) and a renewed emphasis on expanding the volume and range of apprenticeships at higher levels. But these initiatives are largely focused on young people seeking their first job, which is only a small fraction of the overall workforce.

A crucial component of this challenge is to develop an education system that not only develops high level technical skills amongst entrants to the labour market, but also supports adults throughout their lives to retrain continuously in order to keep pace with technological changes in the workplace. And yet, the data shows a strong correlation between the decline in numbers taking Level 4 and 5 qualifications and a decline in the number of adult part-time student enrolments. While the number of mature entrants to full-time degree courses has increased to record levels – up 24% in 2021/22 – mature part-time enrolments dropped by 40% between 2010/11 and 2017/18¹⁰. Part-time adult Level 4/5 students have become almost extinct as a species of learner, with only 4% of 25-year-olds holding a L4/5 qualification as their highest qualification in 2017, compared to 30% with A Levels and 30% with honours degrees.¹¹

Adult part-time students are precisely the demographic that the recent Skills Act is designed to attract back into higher education. They are far more likely than other learners to be studying at Level 4 and 5 than taking full degree programmes; in 2019/20 a massive 79% of students starting at these levels were aged 21 or over, 51% of them over 30¹². Unsurprisingly, according to a survey by the Open University, an estimated 75% are in employment. The introduction of a lifelong loan entitlement for all mature students – the flagship measure in the Skills Act – is explicitly designed to make part-time higher education study far more accessible and attractive to working adults, and the hope is that it will greatly increase the take-up of Level 4 and 5 higher technical courses.

2.2 THE FURTHER EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE

In the academic year 2020-21 there were 234 colleges in the FE sector, of which 24 were specialist or adult-only colleges, 47 were sixth form colleges, and 163 were general further education colleges.¹³ This figure is changing on a regular basis, as colleges merge with each other to form larger institutions, and more mergers are planned for 2023.

Until recently there hasn't been any statutory requirement to collect central data on the FE workforce. Until this year, staffing information was collected on a voluntary basis by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), and only a part of the FE sector submitted data annually. This means that any discussion of FE staffing is based on estimates extrapolated from these returns, and we will have to wait a while longer, until the DfE publishes its analysis of the 2020/21 national data, before we get our first fully comprehensive snapshot of its true size and nature.

The latest estimate, based on 2018/19, is that there is a total of around 216,500 staff working in the FE and skills sector. Of this total, 41% are teaching staff, around 89,000. Until 2019/20, which saw the beginning of an upward trend in the number of 16 to 18-year-olds, enrolment trends have been moving steadily downwards. Therefore the likelihood, given that fewer teachers have been needed, is that this figure has decreased further. One report estimated that there were 326,000 staff in the sector in 2013/14¹⁴, which would suggest the overall number has dropped by about a third over the past ten years.

Against this background, it's not surprising that FE staffing issues have become a major concern. The Augar review was very emphatic on this point: "The vision we have for FE requires a greatly enlarged and professionalised workforce." Recommendation 4.8 of the report stated: "Investment in the FE workforce should be a priority, allowing improvements in recruitment and retention, drawing in more expertise from industry, and strengthening professional development."

In its review of FE staffing, the report revisited a number of themes that had been the subject of discussion and debate since 2012, when Lord Lingfield's Review of Professionalism in Further Education published its final report¹⁵. The Lingfield review advanced the policy debate around further education teaching in three important ways. Firstly, it advocated a devolved model of professional training and development, which it argued was more in keeping with the idea of further education colleges as autonomous, self-governing organisations. Instead of top-down regulation, the aim was to create "an environment in which professionalism might thrive naturally, refreshing the sector with creative new ideas and continuously improved practices which do not rely on government and its agencies either for permission or promoting."¹⁶

The second key theme of the report was its firm emphasis on vocational education as the core aim of the FE sector; "teaching occupational skills", above all other competing aims: "We suggest that the vocational role of FE (at both further and higher education levels) should be regarded as having primacy, while community

provision has an important subsidiary role.”¹⁷ This, in turn, led to the third important proposition, that the professionalism of FE teachers should be based on this vocational mission, and “reflect its central concern with the application of technology and skill”¹⁸.

It was from this idea that the notion of dual professionalism was born, or to be more precise, was reborn. The kernel of the idea has been around for a long time, as reflected in the academic literature. Leonard Cantor and Francis Roberts, in their 1972 book *Further Education in England and Wales*, observe that: “The teacher in a local technical college tends not to regard himself primarily as a teacher of a specific subject like mathematics or technical drawing, but rather identifies with his former profession and considers himself an engineer or draughtsman who happens to be teaching”.¹⁹ The report of the independent Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning, a body established by the Government following the Lingfield review, made dual professionalism a central concept in its analysis.

The CAVTL report was unambiguous that the two fundamental characteristics of “world class” vocational education were what they called “a clear line of sight to work” and “a two-way street between providers and employers”. Preparing learners to be work-ready should be the main focus of FE teaching. Collaboration between industry and training providers was essential, and this meant seeing employers as “not just customers of vocational teaching and learning, but...engaged at every level in helping create and deliver excellent vocational programmes.” This collaborative process “demands ‘dual professionals’ – teachers and trainers with occupational expertise and experience, who can combine this with excellent teaching and learning practice.”²⁰

The powerful and lasting influence of these arguments can be seen in Government FE policy since 2013. “Putting employers at the heart of the system” has been a common thread of successive policy initiatives and reforms around both classroom and work-based programmes, including apprenticeships, T Levels and Higher Technical Qualifications. The idea of employers being directly engaged in the design and delivery of vocational programmes and qualifications has been a cornerstone of curriculum development in the English FE sector for the past decade.

The concept of dual professionalism has not been without its critics. A few commentators have argued that the concept is “too reductionist”, and that the terms “multi-professional” or “inter-professional” might be better ²¹. However, most of the criticisms are about the gap between theory and practice, not about the validity of the concept itself. James and Unwin’s report notes the practical difficulties vocational teachers face in trying to find a balance between professional development and “the demands of the job”.²² Their review found substantial evidence that most FE teachers only manage to update their industry expertise through informal or semi-formal networks, and that much of their activity was “under the radar, unknown to managers”. These findings have been replicated in research by Edmond and Woods ²³ and Rachel Kirk ²⁴, although both studies are based on very small samples of teachers and colleges.

These reports also found evidence that practitioners who were recruited from industry quickly switched to identifying themselves primarily as teachers, rather than industry experts, perhaps because of the perceived higher status of the teaching profession. The fact is that majority of provision in almost all FE colleges is focused on teaching 16 to 18-year-olds at GCSE and Advanced Level, not on training adults at higher levels. This has created and reinforced a workplace culture in colleges which places far more value on general teaching skills and the ability to relate to young students in the classroom than the demonstration of technical expertise.

2.3 CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR FURTHER EDUCATION TEACHERS

The Lingfield review's vision of FE colleges as autonomous institutions able to develop a strong culture of professional development has in practice been undermined over the last decade by the deterioration in colleges' financial health. A clear theme that emerges from research studies is that any opportunities to pursue professional development as a dual professional have been in practice highly constrained by a shortage of resources and the priority college managers are forced to give to delivering teaching rather than developing reflective practice. An emphasis on keeping learners on course and achieving high qualification pass rates meant there was little support for lecturers' maintaining links with their previous industries to ensure they kept up-to-date with best practice.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is of course already embedded in all educational institutions and is widely acknowledged as an essential part of maintaining and improving the quality of teaching. But as the research reveals, almost all CPD, including CPD in FE colleges, typically focuses on issues of pedagogy and curriculum innovation, not on industry expertise. National standards specify that there should notionally be a total of 30 hours of CPD available per year to FE teachers, which compares with the 35 hours recommended for school teachers. Disturbingly, a very extensive review commissioned by the DfE found that the average in practice is closer to 15 hours a year, and in an analysis based on an investigation into academic year 2015/16, 60% of lecturers reported that they had undertaken no CPD at all²⁵. The conclusion has to be that the fragile financial position of many colleges has meant that in-service development of teachers has been squeezed to a bare minimum for many staff. Financial constraints, when combined with an emphasis on generic teacher training, has left industry updating in the position of being a "nice to have" extra, rather than an essential priority, for post-16 CPD strategies.

2.4 FURTHER EDUCATION TEACHERS' PAY

It's beyond the scope of this report to address the issue of FE teachers' pay in any detail. However, it is of course a vital part of the context for understanding the challenge of professionalism and professional development the sector is facing.

There's little doubt that progress on the ground since the CAVTL report of 2013 has been greatly hampered by the difficult funding environment the FE sector has had to contend with. The facts are stark. In their most recent analysis of educational spending in England, the Institute for Fiscal Studies concluded: "Further education colleges and sixth forms have seen the largest falls in per-pupil funding of any sector of the education system since 2010-11".²⁶

The impact of this decline on colleges has, to use the words of the Augar review, "been predictably dire for FECs' financial position".²⁷ Most pertinent to this report is the impact on FE teachers' pay. In contrast with the school sector, there is no statutory pay structure for FE, and national pay negotiations between the Association of Colleges and teaching unions only result in an annual recommendation over pay rises, which individual college corporations are free to accept or ignore. As recommendations are not backed by additional Government funding, many colleges simply can't afford pay rises, so average pay across the sector has stagnated. While it's true that pay across all education sectors has failed to keep up with cumulative inflation of over 30% for the past ten years, further education pay, with a 5% aggregate increase in cash terms during that period, has lagged well behind school teachers' pay, which has seen a 25% increase.²⁸

The latest Government data, based on the ETF annual survey mentioned earlier, is that the median annual pay for full-time FE teaching staff was £32,500 in 2018/19. Astonishingly, this has only increased by £1,500 from the 2010/11 figure of £31,000. For comparison, school teachers' average pay was £41,799²⁹ and for university lecturers, most estimates put the median at around £45,000³⁰. Unsurprisingly, employment attrition rates have surged in colleges. Recent analysis by the Department for Education found that over half – 53% – of FE teachers working in 2014/15 were no longer teaching five years later. This is mainly driven by the proportion of teachers leaving within the first two academic years, which has more than doubled from 13% to 28% over this period³¹.

The inability of colleges to compete on pay to recruit and retain skilled technical teachers is a serious limiting factor in their ability to deliver higher technical education. But it's also important to note that in relation to the challenge of recruiting industry-expert teachers, the most important pay comparison is often with the private sector in those industries. In many cases, it's arguable that restoring parity with school teachers' pay – although it would undoubtedly help – would not solve the problem. Skilled professionals working in advanced engineering, manufacturing or digital industries command premium pay rates and receive other attractive benefits. Even in the skilled trades and in the wide range of technician occupations, pay rates are typically considerably higher for an experienced employee than colleges are likely to be able to offer. In short, the retention problem in FE is part of a broader problem; a persistent risk that teachers in secondary and tertiary education on precarious contracts with uncertain pay prospects will get siphoned off into better-paying industry jobs, unless some form of mitigating action is taken.

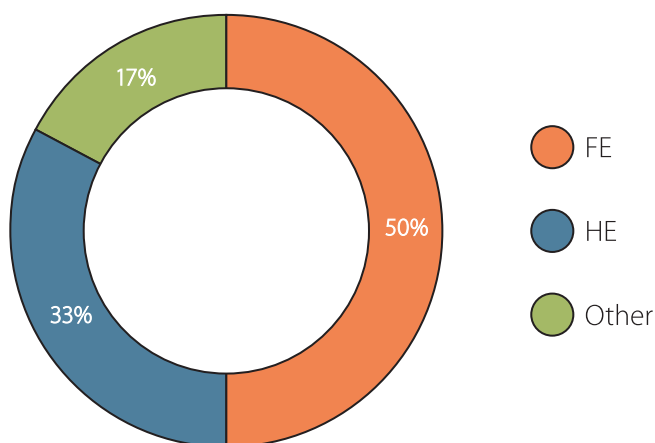
It's also important to recognise that the failure to focus on the industry expertise of staff is not simply a consequence of pay issues. Pressure of work, demanding teaching timetables, the focus in 16 to 18-year-old study programmes on students receiving a broad education, the lack of emphasis given to industry-expert teaching in Ofsted inspections, and the consequent lack of priority afforded to industry updating by senior managers, have all played a part.

There is an urgent need to address the staff recruitment crisis affecting colleges and other providers through targeted policies, at least until the underlying problem of the barely adequate core funding of FE colleges is resolved. An immediate increase in funding for colleges delivering technical courses in key skills shortage areas, sufficient to enable them to pay expert lecturers at rates comparable to the private sector, should be urgently implemented. Other practical ideas for tackling the specific issue of recruiting industry-expert teachers are explored later in this report.

2.5 THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

Any discussion of the delivery of higher technical skills at Levels 4 and 5 brings into sharp focus the importance of partnership between further and higher education institutions, which are both involved in teaching at this level. Based on 2016/17 data, around 50% of all Level 4 and 5 students are taught in FECs and about 33% in universities, with the remainder enrolled with a variety of private providers.³² According to the Association of Colleges, in 2020/21 colleges enrolled 66% of all Higher National Diploma (HND), 67% of all foundation degree and 84% of all Higher National Certificate (HNC) students³³. The fact that the great majority of Level 4 and 5 provision is delivered by FE colleges underlines the importance of better supporting this sector to thrive.

FIGURE 1: DELIVERY OF LEVEL 4 & 5



Those HE institutions that are active in offering Level 4 and 5 provision tend to be either the more vocationally orientated departments in larger universities, or the growing number of relatively small, specialist institutions that are focused on particular niche occupational sectors. In this sub-sector of HE, the role of industry-expert teachers is crucial to success, and GuildHE, the membership body that represents these institutions, published a major report in 2019 entitled *Practice-Informed Learning: The Rise of the Dual Professional*³⁴. Drawing on case studies from 19 of their members, the report reviewed the benefits and challenges of dual professionalism at HE level.

The policy and funding context for HEIs is of course very different from the FE sector. The rapid and sustained growth in student numbers has meant that most HE institutions are in a much stronger financial position than FE colleges. A recent study of UK HE staffing trends documented an increase in the number of university teaching staff of nearly 35% between 2005/6 and 2018/19.³⁵ As already noted, pay levels for academics are much higher in universities, and there has been no evidence – at least until recently – that universities have struggled to recruit or retain teaching staff, even in the technical subject areas which FE colleges have found difficult.

All this means that the kind of practical limitations caused by scarcity of resources found in the research into dual professionalism in the FE sector have until recently been nowhere near as significant a factor in HE, and there is little or no discussion of budget constraints in GuildHE's report. However, in the past year some universities have also begun to experience difficulties, to a lesser extent than FE colleges but still noticeable, in recruiting teaching staff in technical subjects such as robotics, AI and data science in the very tight post-pandemic labour market that all employers are now facing.

GuildHE's research identifies two challenges that are very similar to those found in the FE sector. One is the difficulty of integrating practitioner-teachers, who are often part-time, into the academic community and developing their professional identity as dual professionals. The other is the potential barrier caused by insisting that practitioners undertake teacher training that is not tailored to their specific needs, and risks being either irrelevant or off-putting: "CPD is often not focused on the particular roles of practitioner-teachers; rather it is focused on the teacher while side-lining the practitioner"³⁶. Of course, HEIs have the advantage of being able to design, develop and validate their own tailored programmes. One of the case studies details the success of a course launched by the University College of Osteopathy, a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic and Clinical Practice which, as the title suggests, combines elements of pedagogy with clinical practice.³⁷

The GuildHE report emphasises the importance of giving greater recognition to and providing better support for the role of practice-informed learning, as "a key part of the complex tapestry of UK higher and further education".³⁸ The convergence of thinking across FE and HE on this issue is important, especially in the context of Level 4 and 5 developments. Despite reservations expressed by some about whether dual professionalism is the right framework for teachers delivering vocational education, and despite the slow progress made since the concept was embraced by the further education sector ten years ago, there is now broad agreement that it is the best approach, and that far greater resources need to be devoted to making it work in practice.



3. IMPLEMENTING INDUSTRY-EXPERT TEACHING IN FURTHER EDUCATION

3.1 THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF THE CHALLENGE

There are three distinct dimensions to the challenge of building and sustaining an effective industry-expert workforce in further education.

The first dimension is the issue of initial teacher training; the question of how to attract and train new entrants from industry into the FE teaching workforce. These are individuals who make a decision to change careers, switching from employment in their occupational sector to full-time or very substantial part-time employment in the education and skills sector.

The second dimension is the issue of developing the knowledge and skills of existing professionals within the FE workforce who have a background in industry. These can be long-serving teachers who need to keep abreast of new techniques in the specialist fields they used to work in, or relatively recent recruits who need to maintain contact with the sector they have moved from.

The third dimension is the issue of supporting industry experts to become part-time or guest lecturers, a practice well-established in the HE sector, but far less so in the FE sector. These are arguably the most complete dual professionals, simultaneously working in education whilst also maintaining their employment in their specialist occupational sector.

3.2 THE SKILLS FOR JOBS WHITE PAPER

The Skills for Jobs White Paper published in January 2021 made detailed commitments to initiatives in all three of these aspects. It acknowledged the difficulties the FE sector is facing in recruiting high-quality staff and outlined the scale of the challenge, echoing much of the Augar review's analysis. Recognising that "none of our reforms can be delivered without excellent teaching in further education"³⁹, a whole chapter of the White Paper was devoted to workforce development.

3.3 THE TEACH IN FURTHER EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

In relation to the issue of initial teacher training, the White Paper made a specific commitment to improving the recruitment of new teachers, with explicit reference to the need to attract experienced industry experts. A year later, in January 2022, a Teach in Further Education campaign was launched, which included the key message that technical experts could work part-time in the sector while continuing with their existing careers. The campaign was reinforced in March 2022 by a new DfE survey of 2,000 employees, which found that over half would consider teaching full time or part time in FE⁴⁰.

It's not clear how much money has been spent on this campaign, or how long it is planned to last. It's also very difficult to establish the starting point for this challenge, since the lack until recently of any central government requirement to collect data on the FE workforce makes it impossible to quantify the existing number of part-time FE dual professionals, or to analyse trends in their employment. It's therefore much too early to evaluate the campaign's impact, but it represents a major step in the right direction. The key question will be the extent to which this kind of marketing strategy can overcome the barriers presented by pay and conditions in the FE sector.

3.4 THE TAKING TEACHING FURTHER PROGRAMME

The Taking Teaching Further programme has been for some time the flagship initiative in FE workforce development, having been launched in 2018, a long time before the Skills for Jobs White Paper. There have been four annual rounds of funding so far, with a fifth round currently under way⁴¹. Colleges and training providers are invited each year to bid for funding to recruit and train industry professionals, with a total of £18,200 per head available to pay for the full cost of initial teacher training, and the provision of intensive support and a reduced teaching workload for new recruits. The programme has evolved since 2018/19, with a part-time option now being added and the inclusion of English and maths subject teachers in the most recent round. It started small, funding 47 recruits in the first round, but has since scaled up considerably and more than 750 staff have been recruited over the first four years. Since the White Paper, additional funding has been allocated, and it could potentially almost double in size if all places are taken up in 2022/23. The DfE have already committed to a sixth round of funding for 2023/24.

Despite the relative longevity of the programme, there is as yet no publicly available evaluation of its effectiveness. Managers at the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), which is contracted by the DfE to manage the programme, report that it has been internally evaluated each year, and its continuation is evidence that it is considered a success. The average age of recruits has been the mid-30s and the proportion of new recruits successfully gaining employment after the two-year programme is reported by those managing the programme to be “pretty good”. According to one ETF senior manager, it has never failed to meet its targets. However, the fact remains that there is as yet no information publicly available on how many TTF recruits have been retained and are still teaching in FE. Long-term evaluation has been hindered by the fact that it runs on an annual grant funding cycle, but it’s essential that a fuller evaluation of the programme’s cumulative impact is undertaken soon. Evidence presented below from interviews with colleges suggests that the impact of TTF on the ground is very mixed.

3.5 FURTHER EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

The White Paper promised a number of new measures to improve in-service training for FE teachers, and a start has been made on all of them.

A £9.5m FE Professional Development Grants pilot was launched in 2021⁴² and there were 22 successful consortium bids, representing 92 providers in total, including 69 FE colleges, with each provider receiving an average of £103,000. The focus on strengthening the capacity of providers to offer a greater volume and range of CPD is very welcome after the previous decade of declining funding. However, there was only brief reference to “expert practitioners” in the guidance for bidders, and the aims of the pilot are much broader than the development of industry-expert teaching, so it’s not clear how much of the available funding will be utilised to enhance dual professionalism. All projects were funded until April 2022, so once again it’s too early to evaluate the impact. To date, no further funding round has been announced.

An Apprenticeship Workforce Development offer was also launched early in 2021⁴³, with the stated aim of supporting “staff delivering apprenticeships in the FE sector with the teaching skills, subject knowledge and confidence they need”. This is a free online service, open to all providers. At the time of writing this report there had been nearly 4,300 enrolments to this scheme and just over 3,000 starts, with the most popular areas so far being teaching and learning (1105 starts) and leadership (646 starts). Given that there are an estimated 11,000 apprenticeship trainers and assessors in the current FE workforce, this represents a promising level of engagement.

Most recently, in April 2022, the DfE launched a national Strategic Development Fund⁴⁴, following a small-scale pilot in 2021/22. This is a programme designed to support a whole range of capacity building projects in the run-up to the development of the Local Skills Improvement Strategies (LSIPs) which form a key part of the new Skills Act. Of the £92m available, £42m is earmarked for programmes including “provider quality improvement through FE workforce training, developing sector-led approaches to peer-to-peer support, sharing good practice including two-way industry exchanges with FE providers”. Projects will be funded until March 2023.



4. LOCAL INITIATIVES – EVIDENCE FROM COLLEGES

4.1 A GENERAL OVERVIEW

Colleges and other providers across the country are pursuing a wide variety of local strategies to try to recruit more industry-expert teachers and fill the growing skills gaps in technical education. The Association of Colleges recent survey on staffing included a list of 24 different tactics colleges are using to try to generate more applications, ranging from various forms of salary enhancement to local campaigns targeted at professionals from specific industry sectors⁴⁵. Where colleges have been fortunate enough to find additional funding to properly resource local campaigns, such as the Teach Your Trade scheme run by Peterborough College (see box below), they have had considerable success. But most colleges are having to find solutions without having access to any significant extra funding.

TEACH YOUR TRADE – PETERBOROUGH COLLEGE PROJECT

Peterborough College, part of the Inspires Education Group, has been running a project called Teach Your Trade since February 2022. The college successfully bid for funding from the Cambridge and Greater Peterborough Combined Mayoral Authority's Innovation Fund and received a £90,000 grant which enabled it to recruit a part-time project manager and pay for a whole range of marketing and publicity, including leaflets, videos, advertisements on social media

and local radio. Staff also worked directly with local Job Centres. This resulted in events held at the college, which altogether attracted 60 local professionals from construction, engineering, hairdressing and other business sectors. The college now has 11 people undertaking various training activities – including one recruited to the DfE Taking Teaching Further programme – and expect to employ at least six new teachers, four of them full time, in areas such as heating and plumbing, motor vehicle, health and social care, and carpentry. Project coordinator Kim Cooke reports that the extra support they have been able to provide has been vital to supplement the funding available through Taking Teaching Further.

4.2 THE CHARTERED INSTITUTION FOR FURTHER EDUCATION RESEARCH

Nine colleges and one private training provider which are members of the Chartered Institution for Further Education were interviewed in August and September 2022 as part of this report.

The CIFE was established in 2015 with a mission to establish the kind of autonomous professionalism across the FE sector envisaged by the Lingfield review of 2012. It is growing steadily, now having a membership base of 20 colleges and training providers that have demonstrated a commitment to quality improvement. Professional recognition from the Chartered Institution is prestigious and is a meaningful mark of excellence which signals a high level of quality, experience and impact to colleagues, employers, students and potential educational partners from the FE and HE sectors.

First and foremost, the picture that emerges from the interviews underlines the seriousness of the situation and how rapidly the recruitment crisis is spreading to more and more areas of post-16 teaching. Colleges' vacancy levels are now typically running at 8-9%, double the typical rate prior to 2019, leading to a situation where in some cases managers are having to merge classes or even stop delivering courses altogether because of staffing shortages. One college saw the number of recruitment attempts needed to successfully appoint a new member of teaching staff rise from an average of 1.4 before the pandemic to 2.7 during lockdowns, and the post-pandemic rate is still high at around two attempts for each successful appointment. This is time-consuming and expensive. Staff recruitment in specific specialist disciplines is reported as being "almost impossible", and the majority of colleges rely on temporary agency staff to cover classes, which is costly and doesn't always ensure a high quality of delivery. Not surprisingly, staff recruitment is now at the top of the risk register for several colleges.

In line with the findings of recent surveys by the AoC, all CIFE colleges interviewed use pay supplements of around £3,000 to £7,000 per year – variously described as "market supplements", "scarcity allowances" or

“golden hellos” – to attract staff in shortage areas. The issue of pay is the most obvious hurdle to recruitment, and it’s notable that the only college in the interview sample that has avoided the worst of the problem is one which has taken the strategic decision to use its financial strength to offer teaching salaries comparable to the school sector and provide lighter timetables for teachers.

However, even higher pay is not always enough; one college gave the example of losing its only specialist lecturer in geo-spatial surveying – a key curriculum element of their Institute of Technology initiative – to a local university able to offer a salary £15,000 a year higher and a teaching load 50% lower.

Unable to close the pay gap, all colleges are focusing on non-pay benefits to try to attract and retain teachers. These include additional holidays, enhanced induction and support for new recruits, and greater flexibility in supporting working from home, with one college experimenting with a four-day working week for lecturers in selected areas. A strong emphasis on organisational values and culture is a common feature of recruitment campaigns, with an emphasis on the job satisfaction associated with working for non-profit organisations dedicated to delivering the public benefit of education.

A very mixed picture emerges from CIFE colleges in relation to the Government’s Taking Teaching Further scheme. Two colleges have not used it at all, and only one has found it very helpful, with most reporting it has had limited effect, due to what is regarded as the inflexible and overly-bureaucratic nature of the scheme’s design. While it has been a useful supplement to college recruitment strategies, it has only had a marginal impact so far.

Closer relationships with partner universities as part of the development since 2019 of Institutes of Technology potentially offer another route through which to recruit higher technical skills lecturers, but the wide gap between the pay and conditions of higher education lecturers and their further education colleagues has made this difficult to implement in practice. CIFE colleges have been able to work closely with university partners to fill specific vacancies on a temporary, case-by-case basis, but despite a willingness on both sides to collaborate to address staffing issues, this has only provided short-term solutions.

The greater emphasis on addressing local skills needs through place-based collaboration offers the opportunity for a longer-term, more strategic approach at local level. The development of Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) might open up the possibility for local universities, colleges and employers to be able to design place-based shared resourcing models that would help meet the staffing challenge. However, these new approaches are as yet untried and untested, and the effectiveness of LSIPs will need to be evaluated nationally to identify any promising practices that could be replicated more widely.

Industry partners have been helpful in filling some of the gaps, but releasing expert staff from local employers to deliver teaching requires a great deal of training and support, and is in most cases a costly solution. In the absence of any structured incentives to encourage employers to collaborate with providers

to address teacher shortages, success stories are few and far between, and often work as temporary stop-gaps, not as long-term solutions. One striking exception is the partnership between Burton & South Derbyshire College and St Modwen Properties Ltd, which illustrates what can be done where there is good will and a close relationship between leaders and managers on both sides.

BURTON & SOUTH DERBYSHIRE COLLEGE AND ST MODWEN PROPERTIES LTD

For the past three years Burton & South Derbyshire College has benefited from a strong and supportive partnership with St Modwen Properties Ltd. The managing director of St Modwen is an ex-student of the college and the company has developed a very pro-active approach to education and training, including investment in apprenticeships, school links and sponsorship of the 2021 World Skills UK Bricklaying competition. At the heart of its strategy is a commitment to invest 1% of the company's cash profits every year into education partnerships by 2025.

As part of this, St Modwen has created a scheme to attract and retain good teachers in construction-related areas of the Burton & South Derbyshire curriculum. This involves providing bursaries worth up to 8% of annual salary to selected staff to top up their pay, and so far the bursary has supported 17 teachers at the college. The impact has been very positive; managers report that the turnover of teaching staff in these curriculum areas has fallen from 30 a year to only five in 2021/22 and the college has been able to greatly strengthen its staffing of key technical education provision, including higher technical courses.

4.3 NEW THINKING FROM THE CHARTERED INSTITUTION FOR FURTHER EDUCATION

The idea of tapping into employer good will to mobilise additional resources for staff recruitment and CPD is a very promising one, potentially enhancing the role of employers – who in the end stand to benefit directly from improved skills in the labour market – as active contributors to higher skills training. However, this approach would need much greater support and investment from the DfE or other national government bodies to enable it to be scaled up sufficiently to have a significant impact.

Local schemes, such as the ones run by Burton & South Derbyshire and Peterborough colleges, demonstrate what can be achieved. But colleges can't be dependent on the good fortune of having a highly committed local employer on hand, or winning a successful bid from devolved funding pots. In future, more could

potentially be done at local area level through LSIPs, where they are working well and fostering successful partnerships between FE, HE and the wider employer community. In the meantime, better national policies are urgently needed, and there is a strong case for providing better incentives for employers and employees in industry sectors to consider taking up teaching opportunities. This could be done for individuals through targeted income tax allowances, and for businesses through corporation tax breaks such as the tax credits already available for firms involved in research and development activities.

One promising idea recognises the potential for recruiting industry experts who are in the later stages of their career. Employees beginning to reach retirement age would be targeted with a remuneration and training package to support a phased transition from full-time employment to a mixture of employment in industry combined with teaching. This approach would take advantage of two themes that have emerged from recent research into the main reasons experienced professionals consider becoming teachers. According to a DfE survey: "Over a third (34%) of people say they would like to pass on their skills to others in their field of work, and more than a quarter (29%) of people want to help the next generation."⁴⁶

The Chartered Institution for Further Education is currently developing a scheme along these lines. It has the prestige and status to attract major employers into associating with it as a way of enhancing their reputation and brand. The CIFE's scheme envisages using large employers' corporate social responsibility budgets to fund the release of members of staff to become part-time teachers in local colleges. Individuals who participated in the scheme would be granted associate or licentiate status by the CIFE to recognise their successful development as trainee teachers, and could, if they chose, go on to do more extensive teacher training. CSR is well supported by corporate organisations and typically is used to fund activities considered philanthropic, activist or charitable in nature, such as school-links programmes, charitable fund-raising activities and social or ethical campaigns. The provision of industry experts at low or no cost to support higher skills training would be a legitimate extension of this practice.



5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The urgent need to improve the teaching of higher technical skills is accepted by the education sector, employers of all kinds and Government. That this in turn requires a major improvement in the recruitment and retention of industry-expert teachers is also unanimously acknowledged. This is a challenge that many see as “make or break” in relation to the Government’s post-18 policy reforms, and critical to the UK’s future economic prospects.

The challenge has multiple dimensions.

- » How do we attract new staff into teaching direct from industry?
- » How do we ensure existing further education staff are at the cutting edge of their specialism, even if they have been in FE for a long period, and keep ahead of technological and business developments continuously?
- » How can teacher training encompass these crucial dimensions and not focus exclusively on general pedagogy?
- » How do we ensure regulators – such as Ofsted – value the technical expertise of teaching staff rather than only focusing on academic teaching qualifications and general classroom skills?

FE colleges and training providers should not be treated as if they are a form of secondary school with technical education added extras, but through the lens of their key purpose: as vocational training institutions with a direct line of sight to the workplace at their core.

For the past five years, accelerated by the recommendations of the 2019 Augar review, Government policy has pivoted towards addressing many of these issues directly, with new schemes and greatly enhanced resources devoted to implementing system-wide changes.

Although the DfE is nominally reticent about using the term “dual professional”, most of their recent initiatives have embraced the idea in practice. The introduction of programmes such as Taking Teaching Further, Professional Development Grants for FE, Apprenticeship Workforce Development and the Strategic Development Fund has been welcomed and applauded by the Association of Colleges and many college principals. The FE sector has responded positively: many colleges have actively engaged with one or more of the schemes available. But not all; some have found it difficult to identify and make contact with industry professionals who might be suitable recruits for these schemes, and some have found the timescales too inflexible. Overall, it’s too early to know how effective these combined efforts will be and the evidence from the field is that there is still a very long way to go.

The concern is that these new initiatives and funding are a drop in the ocean, and that it will take a long time to revive a FE and skills sector which has languished in financial difficulties for so long. This concern is even greater when the ambition of the new Skills Act is taken into account. Quite rightly, the Government has been clear that new resources are not meant simply to maintain some sort of status quo, but to greatly expand the quality and volume of vocational skills training, especially at higher technical skill level, and reach out to a much wider range of the population, including adult learners already in the workforce. The welcome clarion call for a “skills revolution” that will create a lifelong education system at all levels, including Level 4 and 5, represents a hugely ambitious vision. This vision will require, in turn, a greatly enhanced FE workforce.

The case for much-improved core funding to stabilise the finances of colleges and providers remains compelling, as it would provide a much more solid and secure base on which to build new capabilities and capacity.

A key problem with the Government’s raft of current initiatives is the fragmented way in which they have been implemented, through an array of pilot schemes and different funding pots, each with slightly different timescales and criteria. Although they all stem from the single strategy laid out in the Skills for Jobs White Paper, their piecemeal implementation makes administration on the ground overly complicated, and an overall assessment of their impact quite difficult at this stage. In addition, many of them have a much broader focus than industry-expert teaching, having incorporated a number of much more generic objectives around employer partnerships and teacher training.

The lack of comprehensive data on the FE workforce makes it hard to measure progress objectively. The introduction of a national system is long overdue and very welcome, but it needs to collect information at a level of granularity that enables analysis of the industry-expert workforce, for example the number of full and part-time teachers who have previously or are currently working in industry sectors.

In the light of the priority being given to expansion of Level 4 and 5 provision, the division between the FE and HE sectors in terms of policy initiatives is also unhelpful, and needs review. Given that universities and alternative higher education providers are active in delivering higher technical skills courses alongside FE colleges, training providers and adult education services, there is a pressing need for a much more integrated tertiary education strategy. Workforce development strategies should also be considered in a more integrated way, since FE and HE providers share many of the opportunities and challenges involved, and are in many cases trying to recruit and retain staff with similar industry backgrounds and levels of expertise.

The energetic and imaginative efforts in the field to find practical solutions need to be reviewed and, where they offer promising new avenues, new ideas need to be piloted on a larger scale. There is a need for much greater transparency and speed in evaluating impact, sharing lessons from the field, and incorporating promising new practices into future funding rounds and projects.

There is also a need to review initial teacher training for FE teaching staff to ensure an appropriate balance between developing generic teaching skills and applying industry expertise to teaching. A more flexible, modular approach would better support new entrants from industry in making a staged transition from their previous professional role into a teaching role.

The Government's vision of a lifelong skills revolution is an exciting one. It will, however, require a concomitant skills-teaching revolution. This entails the development of a far larger cohort of industry-expert teaching staff, with contracts, initial training and continuous professional development that specifically meets their needs and builds a stronger sense of distinct professional identity. The "clear line of sight to work" promoted by the CAVTL report a decade ago needs to be a reality in the design, teaching and staffing of vocational courses, especially at higher technical levels.

It's time to make a clear long-term commitment: the era of the dual professional needs to be ushered in. To do this requires new policies and strategies, better targeted resources and a much greater investment in the FE and skills workforce.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The DfE should recognise the importance of the FE and skills sector in the continued recruitment of industry professionals and actively support the sector in attracting and retaining dual professional teaching staff as a key element of its long-term strategy for workforce development.
2. As soon as possible, funding for colleges delivering technical courses in skills shortage sectors should be increased to a sufficient level to enable expert teaching staff to be paid at rates comparable to those in the private sector.
3. The DfE should move away from piecemeal initiatives towards a more integrated strategy for increasing the volume of industry-expert teachers.
4. Initial teacher training for FE lecturers should be reviewed and modified to better reflect the role of dual professional and support their transition into teaching.
5. The Government needs to speed up the evaluation of the effectiveness of new initiatives and publish the results to enable the most promising new practices to be identified and disseminated across the further education sector.
6. The collection and reporting of FE workforce data by the DfE from now on needs to be detailed enough to facilitate analysis of the proportion and range of industry-expert teachers, in order to enable better planning for their recruitment and retention.
7. Future workforce development policies and strategies for delivery of Level 4 and 5 should apply across the post-18 sector, addressing the HE as well as the FE sector.
8. The DfE should build on the ideas being developed by the Chartered Institution for FE to mobilise direct employer support and resources to improve higher technical skills training and explore how such approaches could be scaled up to national level.
9. The Treasury should consider providing incentives, such as tax breaks for companies and individuals, to encourage the release of members of staff to deliver higher skills teaching.

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There is a broad consensus across the political spectrum that we need to radically improve the quantity and quality of technical and vocational education to address the skills shortages that are holding the UK economy back. However, in common with many other sectors, the further education and skills sector is facing a growing crisis in recruiting and retaining appropriately qualified staff.

It is widely acknowledged that the best people to deliver the skills training and education urgently needed are “dual professionals”, staff who can combine up-to-date experience and expertise in industry with the ability to teach young and adult students to a high standard. This report reviews progress so far in recruiting and supporting dual professionals, particularly in the FE college sector, and identifies the key barriers that are being faced. It then explores what new policies and strategies are required to attract and retain more of these professionals into the FE and skills workforce.

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