

# EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE



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# Welcome to this *FE Week* supplement



**Rebecca Cooney**  
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College leaders operate in an ever-changing world against which they must act predictively and react prudently.

From considerations surrounding the new student intake every September and the vagaries of local and even national business needs, to changes in government policy and the resultant shifts in funding hoops through which to

jump — it's tough at the top.

This supplement aims to look at some of these and other issues, casting a critical eye over where the main challenges lie and what the current thinking on them is.

Uncomfortable it may be, but it would be unwise to ignore questions about the future of this supplement's sponsor, the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), and what next for the sector in its impending absence.

And so that's where we begin, on the page opposite.

We then report on speeches made by Skills Minister Matthew Hancock and Ofsted chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw, who have both drawn attention to the importance of education governance this year.

A selection of principals, including Blackpool and The Fylde College's Pauline Waterhouse OBE, moves us into the next article, on page 4, where they discuss why they took on the role and what challenges they have faced.

A selection of governor chairs, including Grimsby Institute of Further & Higher Education's Mike Parker, on page 5 then takes matters into the boardroom as they talk about their experiences.

A range of issues including Ofsted inspections and black and minority ethnic considerations are the focus of concern for Robin Landman, chief executive of the Network for Black Professionals, on page 6, before entrepreneurialism is investigated by Lynne Sedgmore, executive director at the 157 Group.

We hear from LSIS chair Dame Ruth Silver about the importance of quality governance on page 7 where her chief executive, Rob Wye, then goes on to outline how the government's New Challenges, New Chances policy document changed the college landscape.

A two-page advert from my own publication, *FE Week*, then breaks up

proceedings, before we get back down to business on page 10 with a feature on college staff, including Loughborough College principal Esme Winch, who have taken LSIS advice. They all now sit in senior posts.

The same issue is then explored in relation to governance, including West Herts College's Sheila Selwood, on page 11.

Coverage of the LSIS leadership and management conference in London, late in February, is on page 12.

The LSIS annual governance conference, held in Manchester mid-March, takes up the following, and final, three pages, kicking off with the Q&A held by a panel including Skills Funding Agency chief executive Kim Thorneywork.

Conference chair Professor Bill Lucas and Exeter College principal Richard Atkins follow, giving their overview of the rest of the conference.

They cover the theme of leadership, something that has been emphasised to me time and again while putting this supplement together.

It has become abundantly clear just how vital good leadership, good management and good governance are to producing outstanding teaching and learning.

With that in mind, whatever your role in the sector, there's plenty here to get you thinking, debating and discussing and the team at *FE Week* wish you good luck in facing the challenges ahead.

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## News

# The future of FE leadership services

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Leadership, management and governance will be “a priority” for the FE Guild — but the future training for such skills remains in question.

With the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) to cease operating at the end of the current academic year, the future of senior FE management development programmes has been thrown into doubt.

David Hughes, chair of the guild steering group, said it was “too early to be very specific” about the new organisation’s role.

But he suggested it was unlikely the guild would be a major provider of leadership and management development.

Mr Hughes, also chief executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, said: “It is a bit too early to say yes or no to this or that programme,

but what we can say at this stage is that it’s really very clear that leadership, management and governance are a priority for the guild.”

He added that the two-week consultation on the sector’s expectations of the guild had confirmed how essential leadership, management and good governance were for the health and professionalism of the sector.

However, Mr Hughes said the guild was likely to play a role of guidance rather than provision of training.

“We don’t see the guild as the provider of all leadership and management development in the sector because that doesn’t feel like the right thing to do, or realistic given the amount of money the guild might have available,” he said.

“So the guild might play a role to promote good leadership and management, provide opportunities to discuss what good leadership and management looks like and what good leadership and management development



From left: Martin Doel, Peter Davies, David Hughes and Graham Hoyle on the FE Guild panel at the Association of Colleges annual conference and exhibition in Birmingham last year

will look like, possibly sign posting providers that do it really well, or providing forums for people to discuss how to improve.”

Mr Hughes pointed out that there were commercial programmes available, such as a level five diploma and an MA in FE sector management provided by the Association of Colleges.

“All the best colleges should, and do, have their own programme for leadership and management, and their own development of good governance.

“What we want to try and do is to provide as much guidance, support and promotion of that as possible,” he said.

However, he agreed with LSIS chair

Dame Ruth Silver, who said continuity between the two organisations was vital for the sector.

“We’re very keen to pass on what we’ve learned, and very ambitious for the next phase of the sector and its improvement bodies, its improvement, and hopeful the sector can build on the systems that do well,” she said.

Mr Hughes said: “LSIS has done really good work around leadership, management and governance and what we’re doing is working very carefully with them to ensure we learn from that and try to create continuity where we can in terms of the work they’ve been doing around the sector.”

## Time to shine a spotlight on college governance

**Rebecca Cooney**  
@RebeccaKCooney

Skills Minister Matthew Hancock and Ofsted chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw have both drawn attention to the importance of FE governance.

The minister spoke of the contribution made by governors when he addressed a gathering of 130 FE governors and chairs of governors, at Lancaster House, London, early in the year.

“I am deeply grateful for the commitment and energy you bring to your roles as governors,” he said.

“Just over a year ago, New Challenges, New Chances advocated an increasingly important role for college governors in their institution’s decision-making.

“I have been impressed with the way the best colleges have taken ownership of this approach and responded positively.

“I know that achieving effective college governance is not easy.

“Colleges are large and complex businesses serving a wide range of customers, striving to meet the aspirations of learners and employers alike, as well as performing a vital role at the centre of their local communities.”

But ultimately, he said, institutions with effective practice and successful

governance were those in which decision-making was “transparent, properly informed, rigorous and timely, where there are appropriate and effective systems of financial and operational control.”

Mr Hancock said: “Above all, where there is a strong commitment to providing a quality service for all those that the college serves.”

He said that being a college governor was “a serious job”. It needed a lot of commitment especially from chairs. “It is therefore timely to consider how we support governors” he said. “We want to work with you to look at this matter.”

The minister reminded governors that it was their responsibility to ensure their board contained the breadth of skills that it needed, and to take up their new freedom to form a wider range of strategic partnerships.

“Much has already been delivered, but there is more to do,” he said. “Rest assured, we will help you in whatever way we can to ensure that you get the support and development that you need.”

Meanwhile, Sir Michael spoke about the role of governance for schools and colleges at the Association of School and College Leaders’ annual conference on March 15.

He said: “It is important governors support heads who are trying to make a difference and play an active part in



Skills Minister Matthew Hancock at Lancaster House, London, earlier this year

challenging the school to do better.

“Consequently, Ofsted is reporting on governance in much greater depth and with much greater rigour.”

Sir Michael acknowledged the “consternation” caused by his proposal to offer payment to attract more professional governors to boards that failed to hold schools and colleges to account, but said it was an option that should not be ruled out.

“All our evidence at Ofsted shows that in the best governing boards, it is often a small core of governors who lead the other members of the governing board and take on the greatest burden of work,” he said.

“However, where this small core of people does not exist or is hard to recruit, especially in our most difficult schools and areas, then we should incentivise good people to do this job.”



# The leadership challenge

**Lindsay Plumpton**

**It's a time of transition in FE as high profile principals retire and a new generation of college leaders emerges. But what does it take to run an effective and successful organisation? Does a principal need experience of teaching or does he or she simply need a flair for management?**

It's not an easy time to become an FE college principal. Salaries might stretch to £200,000 for some elite posts, but changes in priorities, funding and politics mean that college leaders need to be more responsive than ever to comply with policy, to balance budgets, and to develop and motivate staff — while also ensuring that students leave fit for work.

Pauline Waterhouse OBE, retiring after nine years as principal at Blackpool and The Fylde College, looks back fondly on her time with the college. "It's a great job and a true privilege to be a leader within FE," she says. "It's the area of education that has the greatest capacity to impact positively on people's lives.

"The job's changed since I first began my post; a principal now has more scope than ever to make a difference, not just to individuals but to whole communities."

However, she accepts that the job is not without its challenges. "As a 'dynamic nucleus' within the community, colleges have the opportunity to contribute to economic growth and social inclusion," says Waterhouse.

"However, it's difficult for certain colleges — particularly within big cities — to gain a 'seat at the table' as a strategic partner rather than just a provider.

"It's also a risk to be viewed as a strategic partner — as well as a great opportunity. There's the danger that colleges could become distracted from their core purpose."

With years of experience behind her, Waterhouse says that her 'top tip' would be to determine the right balance between strategic, external commitments and time spent inside the college with staff. "A good principal needs to have a strong focus on teaching, learning and the quality of learner experience. That's what matters," she says.

And does she have any thoughts on principals who enter the profession from outside the sector?

"It's perfectly possible to be a good principal without working up the ranks in FE," she says. "There are lots of careers that prepare you for being a strong leader and give you transferable skills.

"The only thing I'd say is that you might gain more credibility from your staff if you have teaching experience. But I wouldn't

say that it's a necessity — you just need to be able to lead with the learner experience at heart."

Data from the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) shows that more than 90 per cent of principals in 2010–11 were over 40, suggesting a wealth of experience is key for this line of work. It's no surprise; incoming principals face a number of challenges in the current climate and some might be discouraged by the intense pressures of the job.

Mandie Stravino, recently appointed principal of Derby College, is one new leader who's not deterred by the job's pitfalls.

She says: "I'd describe my new role as exciting. It's an honour to be at the helm of an organisation that exists to shape lives and futures. Naturally, there's an anxiety that comes with it — it's a big responsibility to be accountable for the lives of 30,000 learners. But it's a great opportunity."

**“It's an honour to be at the helm of an organisation that exists to shape lives and futures**

Stravino considers that the main challenges are in her collaborative work with employers to ensure that students leave the college fit for work. "It's an exciting challenge to build a package of education for young people that will prepare them for the competitive labour market," she says.

"And, of course, the future holds new challenges of its own; the pace of change this year has been huge with the raising of the participation age, the study programme, learning loans, opening up FE colleges to students as young as 14... But the good thing is that you can be instrumental in change through consultation a lot of the time— policies aren't imposed on you as you're central to the discussion."

Stravino was well equipped for her role having completed teacher training, training in leadership and management and an MBA in business studies, something she found useful preparation for the 'chief executive' part of her job that requires a business brain.

However, she says that peer support has been invaluable: "Most of all, I've

learned so much from experienced principals in other colleges who are leading successful organisations," she says. "Even principals from local competitor colleges have been forthcoming in offering help, advice and support. The LSIS induction programme was also worthwhile in terms of establishing a network of other new principals."

Verity Hancock also recently made the leap to college principal at Leicester College, having worked as executive director of the Skills Funding Agency and personally developing the National Careers Advice Service. She has never worked in teaching, so college life is a new experience.

"I've been a college governor and worked with colleges but not in one," she told *FE Week* last year. "I feel it's very much incumbent on me to gain credibility and I'm conscious that most people expect you to have come up through the ranks.

"However, I'm confident that I have the leadership, financial skills and knowledge to make it work.

"I'm not complacent but not full of trepidation," she said.

"I expect to work very hard as principal. I'm looking forward to the responsibility of steering the ship — I'm really excited."

It seems that Hancock's situation is unusual within the sector as the Association of Colleges' director of employment policy, Emma Mason, comments: "Where there is movement, it tends to be within the sector and, most commonly, senior managers move internally or on to other colleges. The largest proportion of senior management departures is due to retirement."

She says that internal transfer is the major source of recruitment at senior level in colleges and that succession planning is key in organisational development strategy.

This is supported by national programmes, such as the Sector Management College offered by AoC Create, and other similar initiatives to develop leaders and managers across the sector.

LSIS confirms the importance of tailored training. Gill Reynolds, head of improvement services: leadership and curriculum design, says its programme for aspiring principals prepares potential principals for life as a college leader.

"We're also working on a talent mindset framework that's intended to give the sector some approaches, tools and techniques for maximising potential, rather than focusing just on succession planning," she says.

"Our senior leadership and management development programme aims to prepare second and third-tier leaders for executive posts, should they have the ambition to seek further promotion."



Pauline Waterhouse OBE, principal of Blackpool and The Fylde College



Mandie Stravino, principal of Derby College



Verity Hancock, principal of Leicester College



# The governance challenge

**Rebecca Cooney**  
@RebeccaKCooney

**Huge responsibilities, you don't get paid and there's little in the way of a public profile — why would anybody want to be a college governors' chair?**

The role of governance has been nudged into the spotlight by a joint report from the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) and Ofsted, and by a new debate on whether governing bodies – and particularly their chairs – should be paid.

The joint report, *How Colleges Improve*, highlights the need for strong and effective leaders. The debate on payments for the legions of volunteers in schools and colleges was prompted by Ofsted's chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw.

So what are the qualities that you need to become a chair?

For Mike Parker, who holds the post at the Grimsby Institute of Further & Higher Education, it's something of a balancing act.

"You've got to be a good listener and sounding board, and you've got to be able to walk this line between the executive and governance . . . and you've got to do that skilfully," he says.

Janet Morgan, who has been chair of Derby College for three years, shares that view.

She says: "You need someone who is available to support the principal, and work well with them, but who realises their role is one of governance and not of operating the college.

"They should be able to draw the distinction between fulfilling their role as a governor rather than getting involved in the operational side of it and keeping an objective view of what management is doing."

Meanwhile, for Angela Lloyd, chair of governors at Coleg Gwent since October 2011, previous experience of a management role is essential.

"In the same way you look for leadership qualities in a principal and chief executive, to be an effective chair you also need good leadership qualities," she explains.

"You also need to come up with ideas to be innovative and creative in your contribution."

But, according to Iain Mackinnon, who was chair of Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College for five years from 2005 and continues to govern there, the perfect chair doesn't exist.

"I don't think there is such a thing," he says.

"Part of it is having some variety, people are different — there are people at the end

of their careers who devote quite a bit of time, there are people who are currently working who can bring in knowledge and experience and expertise from their work, there are people who've got fingers in pies locally, which is invaluable, and there are people who can offer a bridge across from another sector they've worked in."

The one thing that it seems all chairs must have is time, something that often surprises new incumbents.

"It's probably been more involved than I expected," says Janet Morgan.

"As a board member you perhaps don't see how much extra the chair puts into the role, you feel that they come, they chair the committee meeting and that's probably it . . . but it's quite a lot more."

Angela Lloyd agrees. "Until you actually take on the role, you don't realise the amount of work that is involved," she says.

**You've got to be able to walk this line between the executive and governance**

"On top of your main responsibilities there are things like additional meetings, chair's meeting with the principal, the agenda planning, which you carry out, events which you might be invited to, as well as individual responsibilities that you have as chair."

Iain Mackinnon thought long and hard before he took on the role at his West London college.

"I wanted to do it properly, but I was anxious and I was aware that finding the time would be difficult, and so it has proved," he says.

He decided to take up the position because he felt he could make a difference to the college, and although he was forced to step down to focus on his own business, he feels he succeeded.

"I enjoyed my work as a governor, I think the work that colleges do is important, I think I got to the stage where I'd got some things I wanted to say and things I wanted to see happen," he explains.

But it was a much swifter process for Mike Parker. He was fast-tracked into the role after a long-standing chair stepped down, and no one from the existing board stepped forward.

When the college principal approached him, Parker says it was his commitment

to the Grimsby community that persuaded him to agree.

"I was born and bred in Grimsby," he says. "I'd spent my whole business career working in Grimsby. I am committed to the area and recognised the importance of such a substantial institution to the local community. I wanted to be involved."

"Doing it the way I did really gives you a fresh eye."

"I'm not sure that's a bad thing in the current climate actually, because you do have to be very innovative and ask questions that might have been asked before. I wasn't too precious about getting lots of previews about the institution."

Following his stint as chair, Mackinnon has some sympathy with Parker's view, but says his advice would be to talk to the current chair.

"Get to understand how they play the role, you may well want to do it differently, but you'll learn a lot talking to them," says the London governor.

Chairs don't need to have an education background, he thinks, but they do need to keep themselves informed about the wider sector.

"You can't simply rely on you principal as a source of information, Chairs have to build their own source of information," he says, advising chairs to read the sector press and use Twitter to follow influential figures in the sector.

"Also, you need to be sure you've got the confidence of senior managers, the principal and fellow governors."

This is a key piece of advice from Morgan, too, who says: "Work closely with your principal, work closely with the clerk, find out what the life of the college is about really, get out and meet the students, get out and meet the staff, find out what they feel about it."

For many chairs, this final piece of advice is also the most rewarding part of the role, which makes all the commitment worthwhile.

To this end, the best bits for Morgan have been, "meeting with the students, being able to support the students, their enthusiasm, and being a part of the achievements of the college".

And Mackinnon also talks warmly about his college.

"You don't want to get in the way of what the principal and their team are up to, but just popping your nose in and finding out what's going on can be helpful, because as a governor you can understand where there are barriers which people have just accepted which you can find a way around," he says.

And for Parker, who describes himself as "relative newcomer," the entire process has been "extremely rewarding". He adds: "I have absolutely no regrets getting involved in the sector at all."



Mike Parker, chair of governors at the Grimsby Institute of Further & Higher Education



Janet Morgan, chair of governors at Derby College



Angela Lloyd, chair of governors at Coleg Gwent



Iain Mackinnon, former chair of governors at Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College



# At the heart of the matter

Outstanding teaching and learning is back at the centre of leadership focus – which is where it should be, says Lynne Sedgmore

Leadership in colleges constantly receives attention. It almost has become a cliché to say that excellence in all aspects of an organisation is dependent ultimately upon the quality of its leadership.

Of course there is a correlation, but when I first came into FE as a lecturer my teaching and student learning experience was so remote from that of college leaders that they had no impact, for better or worse, on my students — or me. Luckily, all that has changed.

Leadership trends ebb and flow. Post incorporation we needed financial leaders; then, as the focus went too far away from the curriculum and student standards were questioned, the clarion call became the need for leaders with curriculum and teaching experience.

Leadership of quality then entered our parlance as we led our colleges on total quality management (TQM) and quality kite marks; then customer service dominated and the leader as communicator, marketer and stakeholder manager filled our leadership intrays.

Amid all this, we had to be transformational, have many competencies as well as magnificent qualities, be effective change agents, performing artists and cheer leaders. We had to be trustworthy, authentic and approachable while simultaneously ensuring outstanding results and 100 per cent student, staff and employer satisfaction.

Oh, and I forgot, we all now have to be entrepreneurial leaders; to lead with ever-diminishing finances to higher standards, to be at the leading edge or centre of our locality systems and ecosystems.

I need a lie down just thinking about it all, never mind having to live it on a daily basis.

Having been a senior leader in FE since 1984, a leadership developer since 2008 and a member of the Prime Minister's review of all public sector leadership in 2009, I have been fascinated by the holy grail of leadership, which seems to harbour as many questions as it does answers, and as many different approaches as there are leaders.

The Centre for Educational Leadership was successful because it listened to what the sector wanted, putting learning and learners at the heart of its leadership mission and developing a wide range of



more than 30 different services to suit every leader and every college.

Nearly 40,000 leaders travelled voluntarily through the centre's services in a four-year period.

So what will be the next steps for leadership, post the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS)?

If I am to have only one wish from the leadership fairy godmother, it is for sector leaders to become highly skilled, exquisite leaders of teaching and learning excellence. The 157 Group, supported strongly by LSIS, has identified a range of actions and themes for leaders to bring about such excellence.

Leadership is a serious business. It really does matter how leaders lead. But, as with every profession, there is also a simplicity at the heart of everything that we do. For colleges into the future, this simplicity has to be primarily that the core focus of all leadership has to be about outstanding teaching and learning, and about leaders being expert in and conscious of how and when to create the 'right' environment for learners and staff to flourish to their maximum potential.

Consistently spoken rhetoric, maybe, but we are only beginning to articulate systematically the answers needed to ensure outstanding teaching and learning throughout every layer and aspect of our colleges, and to find real and grounded solutions.

I recommend the work of 157 in this arena, and I recommend a new publication, soon to be launched, sharing the excellent work of Highbury College in Portsmouth.

I look forward also to being a key partner with the FE Guild to ensure that leadership excellence and the leadership of excellent teaching and learning continues to be a top priority within the sector.

*Lynne Sedgmore, executive director of the 157 Group and former chief executive of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership*

# Freedoms and flexibilities bring extra responsibility

The government gave college leaders greater scope to shape provision and the future of their institutions with its New Challenges, New Chances policy document. But those increased flexibilities have brought with them added responsibilities and that means governance has to be the best it possibly can be, says Rob Wye

For me, there are two major challenges facing leadership and governance in the sector at the moment.

One is the environment leaders are faced with — the changing landscape around the FE offer, the government's expectations of FE and the huge pressures on funding.

New Challenges, New Chances is one policy — but that policy has brought about change within the sector.

It has devolved responsibility to make sense of all that and to come up with an offer within these tightened constraints.

In one sense, this is liberating and FE needs to rise to the challenge.

The problem we've got is that after many years of top-down direction for what colleges should do and how, a lot of the skills around curriculum development and dealing with these sorts of freedoms haven't been developed in the people who are coming into leadership, so there's work to be done in terms of developing those skills in people.

This brings us to the second challenge — we have an ageing population among the leaders of the college sector with a lot of principals retiring, so have we got the talent coming through to fill their shoes?

Colleges can learn a lot from each other and need to be open to the idea of improvement.

Interestingly, last year when we offered free, personal consultancy support to a wide range of principals, it was surprising how many said either 'I don't need any support because I'm fine as I am,' or 'I don't need any support because I'm retiring soon'.

We need to get principals out of the mindset that they don't need any further development and support, because everybody does, right the way through their careers.

Colleges and leaders have to be open to the fact that the world is changing — that there are these challenges around, if not for themselves, for their teams and for the future.

Everybody needs to be investing in



bringing leadership through both now and for the future.

At the moment the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) provides support for new, aspiring and current leaders, as well as a range of development and support services for governing bodies.

With LSIS funding ceasing in July and the FE Guild's remit still uncertain, there is a danger of a hiatus between LSIS services finishing and guild services beginning.

**“It was surprising how many principals said either ‘I don’t need any support because I’m fine as I am,’ or ‘because I’m retiring soon’**

Everyone we talk to, from providers to Ofsted and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, says there needs to be support arrangements in place for people when they're first thinking about becoming leaders and as they move up the ladder.

Ultimately, leadership and governance are vital to the success of FE.

They're not the only factors, but great teaching and learning will happen in institutions where the leadership of teaching and learning is excellent. It's about getting that up the agenda.

One way or another, the support for leaders, managers and governors, as has been offered by LSIS, has got to carry on.

*Rob Wye, chief executive of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service*



# Enter governance, centre stage

**Rebecca Cooney**  
@RebeccaKCooney

There's a "crucial" offstage layer in society, according to Dame Ruth Silver, chair of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS).

This layer is governance and, she believes, it is vital to modern society and to the public sector — yet it remains in the shadows.

"All forms of governance are little known, under-scrutinised, and not given the status and stature they deserve," says Dame Ruth (pictured right).

"I think governance is the most amazing piece of public contribution and completely undervalued within both public and private organisations."

Drawing on her experience as Lewisham College principal where, before her arrival, senior staff were not invited into governors' meetings, she says: "Our vice principals attended the meetings, whereas in the past they had been unknown territory.

"How can you be a principal without knowing anything about this group who can dismiss you in a heartbeat?"

Recently, she continues, society has seen many failures in governance.

"In the cases of the banks, the police force, the press and the food agencies,

something was wrong not just in the management of the organisation, but also in the role of governance," she says.

"When governance goes wrong you get these corruptions — I don't mean criminal corruption, but transgressions and a distortion of people in their roles.

"Governance needs to come out of the shadows further in this sector, to take more authority and responsibility for the long-term future of a college."

For Dame Ruth, the era of the 'big society' and New Challenges, New Chances, has created an extra focus and reliance on good governance.

She says: "In the end, governors' responsibility is for the institution's performance, but actually their authority comes from being that place where the community's assets for the future are looked after.

"A college governing body has to take care of the college so that it is of service to the local community, which sometimes means doing things that are difficult for their colleges.

"The role of governing bodies is to steer, not row, the organisation and those behaviours of steering it, with the senior team's advice, towards that moral course are underdeveloped.

"We need to ask ourselves 'do we have governance for modern times?'"

"I'm campaigning for governance to

be recognised and modernised, to be developed, valued and not compromised, as it is in some cases by folks the principal knew and asked to help. It is a more formal role than that and a more formal authority."

She points to governance in other areas of public life, such as hospitals, where governors are advertised for, trained and placed in the right institution.

"In this sector, the agenda, the context and the resources have changed, and there's a real need to examine truthfully whether the governance layers and organisations have changed sufficiently to handle that."

The way to do that, she insists, is through a sector-led commission on governance.

"The last major piece of work for the public sector world was the Nolan Commission on Principles of Public Life.

"We need a review exploring our modern contexts and responsibilities in this time of deregulation... something that moves on what we have now but really takes this chance to arrive at something new and wonderful. Had LSIS been continuing, that's absolutely what we would have done."

In spite of LSIS losing its funding and the challenges facing FE, Dame Ruth is optimistic about what she describes as "a terrifically exciting time for the sector".

"The deal and resources have never been clearer; there is no rescue," she says.

"It's now in the hands of impressive professionals and I know my colleagues will



be up for that. We've never had such policy stability, with little change in government or ministers.

"We're finally getting a clear day in FE governance and leadership."

Leaders should recognise that governors, not funders, set the agenda for their college, she believes.

"There are some fabulous governors in the sector, and my experience at Lewisham was that without such visionary, courageous governors, creativity wouldn't have been invited and enabled in my staff," adds Dame Ruth.

"We need to lift the ambition of governance — forget excellent, excellence is easy, let's go for 'amazing'.

"Governors need to not just do a good job, but to really amaze communities, to be there in service to them and their futures."

# Keep up with the changes, governors told

**Rebecca Cooney**  
@RebeccaKCooney

The chief executive of the Network for Black Professionals has challenged FE and college governors to respond to change more quickly and effectively.

This need for change, says Robin Landman OBE (pictured right), can be seen in the response of FE governance to the new Ofsted framework, launched last September.

"One of the big challenges is understanding and responding to the changed Ofsted grading and preparing appropriately for it," he says.

"The guidance is very clear. The problem tends to be... putting it into the practice.

"It's taking people a long time to respond proactively. Some governing bodies or principals carry on until they find the rules of engagement with Ofsted have changed and they struggle to deal with preparation for the inspection."

He says this has caused the 'general fall' in Ofsted grades. "People didn't actually read and see that if their teaching quality wasn't up to scratch they weren't going to

get a grade one," he says.

Self-assessment played a major part in LSIS and Ofsted's recent report, How colleges improve, which emphasised how important leadership and governance were to performance. But, says Mr Landman, once again, self-assessment is only a useful tool if governors recognise the need to change how they measure themselves.

"Everybody carries on doing self-assessment as they've always done it and not responding to the changes unless there's somebody who can say 'That was fine last year, but we can't use that criteria for our self-assessment this year; those things have changed'," says Mr Landman.

He says that senior management and leaders should never develop an "over-cosy relationship" with governors.

"There's got to be more of a creative tension in the relationship," he says. "It's important to see challenge in the minutes of governing body meetings — something that requires fairly robust and astute governors.

"The world is changing but in some cases governance hasn't changed at the pace that's required."

This also applies, he says, to the

representation of black and ethnic minority groups on governing bodies.

"The pace of change in the demographics of the country is ramping up but we're still coasting along and not addressing the changes," he says. "We have a leadership and governance that looks like Britain 30 years ago."

Mr Landman says that while 22 per cent of FE students are black or of ethnic minority (BME), only around 8.5 per cent of staff are.

"That figure drops like a stone at senior levels... and if you look at the position of governance, it's as bad, if not worse."

"So in terms of social justice and equality of representation there's an issue. And as FE thinks of itself as a second-chance sector and a social justice sector, it seems a bit strange that it doesn't talk about this.

"I've got quite a high level of confidence in Ofsted. It has been doing the right thing. An indicator of that is its partnership with the Black Leadership Initiative and the network that has generated some genuine changes at senior levels."

He says that he is concerned about the interregnum between the disappearance



of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) and the appearance of the FE Guild. "There's real risk of things being lost in that changeover," he says.

"I'm not confident about what's going to happen in the short term, but I am clear that the network and our supporters will be keeping a close eye on how things develop to make sure racial equality doesn't drop off the agenda."



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### Richard waits for minister's verdict

Entrepreneur Doug Richard has reignited his argument with the Association of Employment and Learning Providers that workforce tax breaks were "integral" to the success of apprenticeships. The former Dragons' Den...

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### Value of new FE quality kitemark questioned

Eleanor Radford  
Mar 15, 2013

Sector bosses have called into question the "worth" of a new quality marker launched by FE Minister Matthew Hancock. Sir Geoff Hall, chair of the Information Authority, asked...

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...and are... ensure that the... and are...  
...proved," she said. "We have met with all of our...  
...internal teams, from governors to...  
...teaching staff, and we are certain...  
...that there is a strong commitment to...  
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...college is providing outstanding...  
...opportunities for students...  
...work-based learning...  
...part of the provision...  
..."It also highlights...  
...college environment...  
...students, and this is hugely important...  
...to us."

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It all went wild for beauty...  
students in Somerset when the...  
had the chance to see who...  
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...creative flair...  
...make-up competition...  
...the theme 'wild...  
...They were set the challenge of...  
...creating a complete look using...  
...make-up, hair styling, an outfit...  
...accessories and nails. Beauty therapy teacher Marcie...  
...A snow leopard won first...  
place in the level three category...  
designed by Charlotte Collins, 18...  
from Yeovil, and modelled by Celia...  
Graziano, 17, from Henstridge...  
The level two category was...  
won by Emma Daley, 16, from...  
Somerton with a mermaid design...  
modelled by Sophie Satin, 16, from...  
Yeovil.

More campus round-up on pages 13-16





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# What to do when you want to move up a level

**Rebecca Cooney**

**@RebeccaKCooney**

The prospect of making the leap into leadership without any guidance can be daunting for senior staff.

"I'd been challenged by my then chief executive, who said "Do you want to be a principal or not?" says Esme Winch.

"And having decided I did, I thought the LSIS senior leadership and management development course would be a good way to take that forward."

So she enrolled last year – and has since been appointed principal of Loughborough College.

**“It was great being able to have a look on the course at issues around change management**

The LSIS course, a series of short residential modules over nine months with follow-up work, aims to prepare senior managers for the challenges of leadership as principals or chief executives.

As Ms Winch discovered, these challenges can be external to the organisation, and internal.

"There's a whole host of stuff going on, the policy and funding environment, the local enterprise partnership (LEPs) . . .," she says.

"All of that is good when you're an established principal but as a new principal in a new college, you've got to get that on board with a new team around you and new set of governors.

"It was great being able to have a look on the course at issues around change management. In a new job you are going to want to change things, and we're in a sector that constantly has to change and reinvent.

"You need the skills, expertise and confidence to be able to do that."

An emphasis on theory into practice is central to the revamped course, which took over from Aspiring Principals in 2011.

Participants are encouraged to apply their new skills in the workplace as they learn, and are offered mentoring via email, telephone or in person.

This was one of the course's strengths for Graham Towse, who is now about to take up his first principal's post at Hull College.

"It was very much about not just being lectured to.

"Instead, it was about practical application of what you'd been learning," he says.

"You studied your module, practised scenarios with your colleagues on the course, then went back to base, experimented with it and applied it, with the support of mentors.

"I learnt a lot from the first couple of modules and was able to apply that learning very quickly in my normal working. As a result I saw some real

changes and improvements in the way I led and managed, and engaged with people.

"You got out of the course what you wanted to put in.

"It's the type of course where the emphasis is very much on you as a person to develop."

Many participants find that a major part of this development comes through the opportunity to network.

**The senior leadership course was very specific, which I thought was very good**

Mr Towse says: "As a deputy principal you don't always get the opportunity to get out and about and network with other colleagues at the same level. You tend to be back at base managing things.

"Following the course I've got a network of 20 or 30 people who regularly share things. We've been looking for opportunities for joint development as well — that's been really useful."

Ali Foss, vice principal at Queen Mary's College Basingstoke, was part of the first cohort on the revamped course.

"Once you get a large group together

who are working closely enough to be very open and honest with each other, then you begin to work out who's got the greatest expertise in different areas," she says.

"We were able to be stronger than the sum of our parts because there was probably nothing between us that one of us had not come across before.

"We've all stayed in touch, we're all sharing strategies. That kind of professional relationship that continues beyond the end of the course is always valuable."

Ms Foss acknowledges that it can be difficult in a rapidly changing sector to find the time to reflect alongside senior practitioners; training that allowed that to happen was important not just for individuals but for the sector as a whole.

Esme Winch adds: "It is undoubtedly important for more principals and aspiring principals to engage with training like this.

"The senior leadership course was very specific, which I thought was very good – and I'm not sure what else there is around for aspiring principals without getting into very general leadership training."

LSIS is currently recruiting the fourth cohort, offering modules into 2014, but the loss of funding makes the course's future look uncertain.

Graham Towse describes this as "a shame".

"The sector needs a senior leadership programme to help to develop the leaders of the future — and this has been a very good course," he says.

"I'm hoping there will be something within the new FE Guild that aspiring leaders will be able to access when they want to move on to the next level."



Esme Winch, principal of Loughborough College



Graham Towse is currently vice principal at the Grimsby Institute for FE & HE and will take up his new position as principal of Hull College in April.



Ali Foss, vice principal at Queen Mary's College Basingstoke





Sheila Selwood, director of governance at West Herts College

# Getting the outside view

**Rebecca Cooney**

**@RebeccaKCooney**

Sheila Selwood finds it easy to explain the inspiration for the Learning Board, LSIS's support for governing bodies. "We don't always see ourselves as others see us," says the director of governance at West Herts College.

The support programme developed when West Herts governors approached LSIS after realising that they wanted more than the internal view provided by self-assessment and, as Ms Selwood says, there was "nothing out there".

West Herts and the service partnered to develop the programme, which examines how FE governors work as a team, and provides feedback and suggestions to allow them to improve their effectiveness. It was trialled at the college before it was rolled out nationally.

**“The whole idea of other people coming in and observing the meetings works**

The governors of St Helen's College, Merseyside, used the Learning Board last year, after the clerk to the corporation, Chris Jones, picked up a leaflet at the LSIS annual governance conference.

Ms Jones says: "Another clerk at the conference had had it in her college and was recommending it at one of the workshops, so I brought it back to our board as an idea and our governors decided to go with it.

"Initially, the Learning Board facilitators came in and discussed it with the principal, the chair and myself, and gave us quite an extensive questionnaire."

The facilitators then conducted interviews lasting an hour and a half with governors, face-to-face or over the phone.

"I thought 'this isn't going to go down very well with the governors,' and I don't think they thought it would take an hour and half. But once they started talking about the college it was hard to stop them," says Ms Jones.

Interviews include questions on the core purpose and values of the college, the risks to it, the relationships between board members, the chair, senior management teams and stakeholders and how each governor saw themselves as fitting into that picture.

The consultants also attend and observe

a range of board meetings: to "get under the skin" of how the board operates, as Shelia Selwood explains.

"The whole idea of other people coming in and observing the meetings works. They see how the board communicates, how the board and management interact and how they behave as a corporate team – an external person can often see things that you don't see yourself because you're enmeshed in the process," she says.

Rather than compliance, the process focuses on five key areas: core business, trust and support, contribution and execution, stakeholder engagement and leadership. It is based largely on a model developed by Patrick Lencioni in his 2002 book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, which puts effective teamwork at the centre of the success of any business or organisation.

Consultants take their findings and compile a report which is fed back to the college but, says Ms Jones, the feedback still takes into account the thoughts of the board.

"The report came back to the chair and was very much of the view that it was our report. We were told to amend anything if we wanted. So, for example, there were recommendations based on comments by just one governor, and the chair was keen for those to be separated out from things flagged up by a larger number of governors."

Ms Selwood has continued to be involved with the programme, and has contributed as an external assessor at another college.

She says: "It has enabled people to look at their framework of governance; it has enabled them to look at the quality of information they receive, to look at the relationship between the board and the college managers."

Although not a problem at her own college, the Learning Board has also helped colleges that have "thornier issues", such as the dominance of a particular governor, the chair or the principal, or an imbalance in the relationship between manager and governors.

"If there are difficult issues, hearing them from somebody else can sometimes be easier than hearing from a colleague," she says.

However, it is also able to flag up much simpler changes that could make a huge difference to the operation of even a fairly effective board.

Ms Selwood says: "The external assessors noticed the board didn't have an opportunity to socialise and to talk to each other outside meetings, so we introduced a break half way through a meeting. That was just one simple thing we were able to change, which we

hadn't spotted at all."

Governors at St Helen's College had a similar experience when their feedback suggested they move their development session to a separate evening, rather than the usual slot before the board meeting.

Ms Jones says: "It focuses the governors' minds on 'that's training, this is board business', which was an interesting observation. It's not rocket science, is it? But it's made a difference."

**“There's a whole impetus of self-assessment that we cannot afford to lose**

The concept of the Learning Board is based on a theory of group problem-solving developed by theorist Peter Senge, which describes a learning organisation as one where members are continually reflecting and learning as they work, so the feedback is only the beginning.

Ms Jones says: "We dedicated a whole meeting to the LSIS report. We went through it systematically and picked out actions, and I'm now going to develop a quality improvement plan that we can follow up in the long term."

For Ms Selwood, the facilitated self-assessment must be built on with continuing self-assessment.

"You're in a changing sector so you should be robust about your own strategic leadership role — which many colleges are," she says.

"If you don't, you'll never identify improvement and you can become incredibly complacent. What a rotten role model that would be to the rest of the college . . . when we are demanding self-assessment and improvement and high aspirations, that has to start with the board.

"There's a whole impetus of self-assessment that we cannot afford to lose when LSIS goes, which I think boards are aware that they need to do."

Having watched the Learning Board from its conception, Ms Selwood believes the project has been a success.

"I think it's been very well received – we were certainly glad we did it, and I know others who've they've been glad they did it too," she says.

"It's not dictatorial, it's an enabler. It enables you to look at things from a different perspective."



Chris Jones, clerk to the corporation of St Helen's College



# Why all workplaces are sites of learning



Professor Unwin addresses delegates at the LSIS leadership and management conference in London

Pictures by Nick Linford

**Rebecca Cooney**  
@RebeccaKCooney

**“H**ave you been sent here as a reward . . . or as a punishment?” Lorna Unwin asked more than 100 delegates at a LSIS leadership and management conference in London late last month.

Throughout the day, delegates heard how leadership could support excellent learning, and how to lead outstanding learning.

**In the most expansive workplaces, the process of management is regarded as a form of pedagogy**

Professor Unwin, of the Institute of Education, examined leadership and learning from a slightly different perspective.

She pointed out that most delegates had actually come to the conference as an experience that was simultaneously working and learning.

“All workplaces are sites of learning –

it doesn’t matter how big they are, how small they are, what they produce, what services they provide,” she said.

“Most people still tend to think learning only takes place in classrooms or in settings designed for learning.”

Professor Unwin urged delegates to think about what their workplace was like as a learning environment.

“Maybe you have never thought of it as a learning environment, except for students, trainees and clients,” she said.

“Our institutions are workplaces. But because their focus is on the learning of those they wish to serve, they tend not to be thought of as workplaces, and I think they’re the poorer for it.

“If colleges and providers thought of themselves as workplaces they could model what good workplaces would look like, and use those new ideas with the workplaces they send learners and apprentices to.”

Professor Unwin queried why some workplaces made better learning environments than others.

“In the most expansive workplaces I have researched, the process of management is regarded as a form of pedagogy,” she said.

In one workplace, she had been told: “To create a learning environment we need our managers to understand how learning takes place, how to foster it and nurture it and almost for managers to see themselves as teachers or tutors.”

She added: “Key to that idea is that managers spend most of their time giving feedback, listening to employees in a way that would be similar to what you’re doing with your learners.”

Anthony Bravo, principal of Basingstoke College, said the key was to have high expectations of student, staff

— and yourself.

“You have to know that your college is great — or, if it’s not great, that you want to make it great. If you don’t have that belief, the college is sunk,” he said.

“Our vision is simple: every learner will succeed.”

This might be ambitious, he admitted, but having visited colleges awarded grade one by Ofsted, this ethos had stayed with him.

“Every teacher must fight for every learner. I have ridiculously high expectations, I can’t help it.

“I dream of having 100 per cent success rates, and that’s what I largely get,” he said.

“If you have low expectations the vast majority will live down to those expectations. When you have really high expectations, the vast majority will live up to them.”

Like Professor Unwin, he argued that the best support a leader could provide might be to allow people to use their own judgment.

“You must trust people,” he said. “You must allow them to fail. Not twice on the same thing, but definitely once.

“What’s important is that your people know what support is available for them to meet those expectations.”

He gave delegates a taster of some of the strategies for improvement he and his curriculum manager had designed, and provided copies of a teaching and learning assessment strategy for them to take away.

“There is no best way of doing anything. Whatever you do has got to be a conscious decision on your part to try and be as good as you can be,” he said.



Professor Lorna Unwin, Institute of Education



Anthony Bravo, principal of Basingstoke College





Panel from the second day of the conference. From left: Professor Bill Lucas, from the University of Winchester, Kim Thorneywork, chief executive of the Skills Funding Agency, Peter Lauener, chief executive of the Education Funding Agency, and Bobbie McClelland, deputy director at the Department for Business, Innovation And Skills. Pictures by Andy Whitehead for *FE Week*

# A new focus for governors in a new era

**Rebecca Cooney**  
@RebeccaKCooney

More than 250 delegates went to this year's LSIS annual governance conference, held at Manchester's Palace Hotel on March 14 and 15. They heard talks and joined workshops and Q&A panels on the theme 'Impact in the new era'. *FE Week* went to find out more; here's a taster of some of the things we heard.

On the first day, conference chair Professor Bill Lucas and Exeter College principal Richard Atkins talked about the sector's renewed focus on teaching and learning. Delegates also heard more about the new Ofsted common inspection framework from senior inspector Beverley Barlow. They also took part in interactive and workshop sessions.

The major theme of the day was: given the enhanced status of teaching and learning, with the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL), the Ofsted framework, the massive increase in apprenticeships and the pressure to make sure that the pedagogy is right, what's the role of governance in all of this?

The day explored how governing bodies can be more actively involved at

an appropriate governance level, without dipping into management.

How can governors be strategic, ask the right questions but not end up doing the stuff that's really an executive function?

One example that came out in the afternoon sessions was that traditionally at board meetings, you spend 70 per cent of your time talking about money, buildings and staff contracts and 30 per cent on learning, student voice and student engagement. Why not reverse it?

Governors were asking questions such as: 'I don't really understand teaching and learning. When I went to school or college or university, it was very different so how would I know what good is?' 'How can we ensure that we have on our governing body the kind of breadth that would enable us to have the best advice on teaching and learning?'

Delegates also looked at the two strands which often exist in FE vocational teaching. There's whatever the vocational subject is, whether it's as a plumber or a hairdresser or an accountant or an engineer, and there's the teaching bit.

To be outstanding you need to have an outstanding teacher with relevant recent experience in that particular vocation.

That arguably makes teaching and learning in a college in many ways more complex than academic teaching in a school. If you asked the man or woman in the street they'd probably say the reverse.

Day two opened with a funding and finance panel.

Here's some of the questions and answers from panellists Bobbie McClelland, deputy director at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Peter Lauener, chief executive of the Education Funding Agency, and Kim Thorneywork, chief executive of the Skills Funding Agency.

**How can splitting funding into two sets of terms and conditions possibly be a simplification?**

**KT:** The two funding systems from the adult side and the young people's side were designed to underpin different sets of priorities...

On the adult side we have only one set of terms and conditions, and part of the simplification was to move from two strands of funding, learner responsive and employer responsive, to a new system, with one set of funding rules and one set of terms and conditions.

Two years ago there was a huge pile of funding rules. We went to single document last year and we're launching an interactive form because we do know, particularly for college governors and finance directors, that seeing the evidence requirements and the audit requirements against the funding requirements is important.

However, there is still more to do. We've been working with the education funding

agency to work towards a single financial memorandum for colleges.

**What happens if FE loans are not taken up?**

**BM:** We've done a lot of work in this area looking at the potential impact of loans. We've asked individuals their views and we've had a very positive reception. When you then explain the terms and conditions, loans have been welcomed.

So we're confident there is the capacity and inclination there for people to take it up. It does require the technology and that's on track for delivery in the next few weeks, but it's also dependent on providers and colleges engaging with learners for them to understand how to access loans.

**Where will the money come from for 16 to 19 traineeships?**

**PL:** Traineeships are not a new programme with a separate funding line — and introducing a separate funding bundle would be a really retrograde step. Funding is already in the system for 16 to 19 and we're well advanced with the funding applications for 2013/14.

For 16 to 19, the principles of traineeships will be similar to those of study programmes.

But with the emphasis on work experience, and English and maths for those who didn't get that at 16, with progression on to apprenticeships or jobs. The funding will be there.





“Is small beautiful?” was the big question for a session called ‘Debating the smaller board’, chaired by Professor Bill Lucas, with contributions from, amongst others, John Graystone, chief executive of Colegau Cymru, Jennifer Foot, clerk at Carlisle College, Sue Daley, director of the Women’s Leadership Network, and Carole Stott, chair of the Association of Colleges.

John Graystone (pictured above) introduced the debate with the key issues of the situation in Wales:

“The Welsh Assembly government... set up the Humphreys Review [in 2011] to look at corporations but also to explore... the accountability of governing bodies, and basically argued for smaller boards.

“His [Rob Humphreys, director for Wales at the Open University] view was that a smaller board would only work if you had a larger membership body to give accountability to the local community.

“The main criticism of governing bodies was ‘well who are you answerable to?’

“This was quite a simple model of governance, a smaller board of 10 to 12, that would include student and staff governors, drawn from a wide range expertise as they already are...

“It would be linked into a membership body, which Humphreys said should be from 25 to 50 people... Those in the membership group would have complementary expertise and their purpose would be to hold the board to account.

“The membership body would be appointed by an independent search committee and would challenge the board over the achievement of objectives.

“A number of colleges are very interested in taking forward this model... so we’re going to try this out and see if it will help to make colleges more closely linked to local communities.”



Fintan Donohue, chief executive of North Herts College (pictured above), spoke about taking risks and entrepreneurial governance.

He said: “We all have different hopes for our colleges and my hopes are very much on the entrepreneurial focus and risk-taking, and the changes I believe many of us are going to have to embrace if we’re going add any real value to our communities.

“For those of us in the Gazelle group, we’re trying to focus on whether or not our role and the role of our boards are significantly more than the provision of publications, but actually about building wealth and opportunity and resources.

“My proposition is that ... governing bodies have a legitimate role in questioning the quality not just of traditional

pedagogy but actually the impact of what that teaching and learning is doing at community level...

“So the challenge I present is ‘are we really thinking outside the traditional paradigms? Do we really need to start to debate what a truly entrepreneurial culture looks and feels like, that can add greater value to our community and make more of the resources we’ve got?’

“Our students... are not going to emerge into employment in any serious way... in the immediate future. Therefore their only future is to create their own wealth, confidence and employment in much larger numbers than they’ve ever had to do before.

“Therefore the challenge for us and our corporations I think is to say how do we make that happen?”



More than 250 delegates attended the LSIS governance conference at the Palace Hotel, Manchester





Asha Khemka OBE, principal of West Nottinghamshire College speaking to Helen Pettifor, executive director of leadership and professional development

In her remarks to close the conference, Asha Khemka OBE, principal and chief executive of West Nottinghamshire College, said: "It's been an amazing conference. You have been engaged with keen interest in debating the very pressing issues of our time.

"The spectrum of the topic we have debated has covered the full range of the challenges we face, the things we do well, and the things we need to do even better.

"In talking to groups of governors in

the past few days, I have discovered a keen interest in being closer to teaching and learning, and to understand data.

"When I opened the conference, I outlined three key challenges: steering learning, steering impact, steering reputation. I am sure that you will agree there has been full debate, and lots of exemplars are best practice in our sector.

"How do we make sure that dialogue continues? How do we make sure that there's a framework in place to continue

to support our governors and clerks?

"Some of you are well ahead of the game, with systems and processes in your colleges where you are closer to teaching and learning... Some of you are anxious and not clear how to ensure teaching and learning are right. For that there is no quick answer but there are going to be regional teaching and learning workshops...

"On data... bring a group together sit down and look at what you are getting and

ask 'is this the right information? Does it show us destination and progression?...' "

"What we need to be asking is 'are we skilling our students for the right jobs? If we are going to be competing in the global market place, are we giving them the right skills and opportunities?'

"I hope moving forward you will reflect back on your journeys, what we have been able to debate and discuss at this conference, and I hope that you found the conference useful."

One of the most rousing speeches was given by Liam Burns, president of the National Union of Students (pictured right), on learner-led feedback.

"I was NUS president of Scotland, where 90 per cent of my time was spent... trying to assert parity of esteem between the college and university sectors," he told delegates.

"Our post-16 system is riddled with strange assumptions that do us absolutely no good in the modern age... we compulsively rank our universities and colleges and compulsively ignore our FE sector... I want to argue for a truly tertiary education system that will shatter these false boundaries and the false oppositions between them.

"Why not further education after higher education? Why not the two at exactly the same time?... Is it really beyond us to enable people in this country to study a history degree and a BTec in management? ...Other countries, other economies and other societies don't believe so."

He moved on to talk about student representation after New Challenges, New Chances.

"We had a fight to keep student member-

ship of your corporations," he said. "Some of you have reduced the number of student governors from two to one.... Some colleges changed it just because they can. Some of you don't have proper student unions in your colleges, because you don't have to...

"To those this applies to, I say: be careful. Just because you are free to do these things, doesn't mean you should... just because you don't have a curfew anymore, doesn't mean you should stay out all night.

"Elected student unions are not a luxury they are a necessity.

"If you're going to decry that we don't have enough politicians who come from vocational backgrounds, if you're going to rightly challenge that we don't have enough sector leaders who know colleges inside out, then that responsibility is on your doorstep, because if you think you can do learner engagement simply by sending out surveys rather than engaging young people to be active leaders... then that's not our fault, that's yours.

"Could your time [as a governor] be about celebrating your place in taking tertiary education allowing those most disenfranchised in society to thrive? I think the answer... is yes."





# LSIS Accounts Closure



Services from LSIS will cease at the end of the 2012/2013 academic year so we have taken the decision to close all LSIS Accounts on 31 May 2013.

Don't miss out on your chance to use your LSIS Accounts balance and gain valuable support and personal development.

You can use your allocation to book onto events up to **31 July 2013**, but must have made your booking by **31 May 2013**.

There is a high demand for our remaining events and programmes so book now to avoid disappointment.

All bookings are dealt with on a first come first served basis.