



ASSOCIATION
OF COLLEGES

"Issues facing colleges"

An Association of Colleges (AoC) survey in
partnership with Tes

May 2018

Introduction

This is the third year that Association of Colleges (AoC) carried out a survey in partnership with Tes with the aim of getting an update of the issues currently impacting on further education and sixth form colleges.

This document presents the summary tables for each of the questions asked.

Response rate

College type	Number of responses	Number of colleges in England	Percent
General further education college	69	181	38%
Sixth form college	10	62	16%
Specialist college (land-based, art & design, specialist designated)	8	26	31%
Total colleges	87	269	32%
Academy (Sixth form college conversions)	3		
Total responses	90		

Region	Number of responses	Number of colleges in England	Percent
Eastern region	11	29	38%
East Midlands	4	17	24%
London	6	38	16%
North East	6	16	38%
North West	17	44	39%
South East	15	44	34%
South West	10	24	42%
West Midlands	8	29	28%
Yorkshire and the Humber	10	28	36%
Total colleges	87	269	32%

Summary tables

Q4. Which of the following THREE issues are of most concern to your college? (Please tick and rank the top THREE (with one being the issue of most concern))	Number of responses	Percent
Funding rules too restrictive	35	39%
Staff pay	35	39%
Lack of capital funding	34	38%
Pressures caused by GCSE English and maths resits	33	37%
Difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified teaching staff	29	32%
Mental ill-health increasing among students	17	19%
Reduction in demand for apprenticeships	15	17%
Heavy workload of college staff	13	14%
The status of technical and professional training among parents and students	13	14%
Skills devolution	12	13%
Implementing the work placement requirements of the Post-16 Skills Plan	11	12%
Ofsted inspections	8	9%
Difficulty in accessing high needs funding	4	4%
Succession planning for senior management team	3	3%
OfS registration	3	3%
Results in Applied General qualifications	2	2%
Total	90	

Q5. What level of access is your college currently given to school pupils to inform them about the education and training pathways on offer in the further education sector?	Number of responses	Percent
Comprehensive access to most students	6	7%
Mixed access, depending on the school in question	69	78%
Limited access in most local schools	13	15%
Total	88	100%

Q6. Has the Baker amendment which requires schools to allow other providers access for Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) had a noticeable impact?	Number of responses	Percent
Yes	7	8%
No	83	92%
Total	90	100%

Q7. Has your college applied to be an early adopter of T levels?	Number of responses	Percent
Yes	52	58%
No	38	42%
Total	90	100%

Q8. Do you view T levels as offering better opportunities for your college and students than the current Level 3 offer?	Number of responses	Percent
Yes	27	30%
No	62	70%
Total	89	100%

Q10. How easy is it to secure work placements for your students?	Number of responses	Percent
Very easy	0	0%
Fairly easy	12	13%
Fairly difficult	62	69%
Very difficult	14	16%
Don't know	2	2%
Total	90	100%

Q14. What has been the overall impact of the apprenticeship reforms on your colleges apprenticeship offer? (Where 0 is entirely negative, 5 is no impact and 10 is completely positive)	Number of responses	Percent
0 (completely negative impact)	4	5%
1	3	4%
2	18	21%
3	13	15%
4	14	16%
5 (no impact)	11	13%
6	9	11%
7	8	9%
8	5	6%
9	0	0%
10 (completely positive impact)	0	0%
Total	85	100%
Weighted Average	4	

Q15. How will the number of apprenticeships your college plans to offer in 2018/19 compare with 2017/18?	Number of responses	Percent
Increase	38	43%
About the same	27	30%
Decrease	15	17%
Don't know	0	0%
College does not offer apprenticeships	9	10%
Total	89	100%

Q16. What barriers, if any, are there to your college creating more apprenticeships? (Please tick all that apply)	Number of responses	Percent
Not enough employers prepared to offer apprenticeships	55	68%
People not knowing enough about apprenticeships	49	60%
Uncertainty about government funding levels	41	51%
Insufficient suitable candidates	31	38%
Other	30	37%
Poor levels of pay	23	28%
Potential future apprentices	12	15%
No barriers	0	0%
Total	81	

Q17. Has there been any change in your colleges working relationships with universities following the rise in higher level and degree apprenticeships?	Number of responses	Percent
Positive change	21	24%
No change	47	53%
Negative change	20	23%
Total	88	100%

Q18. Do current funding levels allow your college to meet all demand for ESOL courses?	Number of responses	Percent
Yes	45	56%
No	35	44%
Total	80	100%

Q19. Does your college operate a waiting list for places on ESOL courses?	Number of responses	Percent
Yes	14	18%
No	65	82%
Total	79	100%

Q20. How will your colleges ESOL provision for 2018/19 compare with 2017/18?	Number of responses	Percent
Increase	16	20%
Stay about the same	51	62%
Decrease	6	7%
Undecided	1	1%
College does not have ESOL provision	8	10%
Total	82	100%

Q21. Will exiting the EU have any impact on European programmes or any international activity that your college is engaged in?	Number of responses	Percent
Yes	39	46%
No	45	54%
Total	84	100%

Q22. Has the proportion of students (16-18, 19+ and overall) with disclosed mental health conditions increased in 2017/18 compared with 2016/17? (Please tick one box in each row)	Significantly increased	Slightly increased	About the same	Slightly decreased	Significantly decreased	Don't know	Total
Students aged 16-18	56%	34%	7%	1%	2%	0%	100%
Students aged 19+	38%	48%	10%	2%	1%	1%	100%
Total (all age groups)	55%	35%	6%	1%	2%	0%	100%

Q23. Are you encountering other students in your college who are experiencing mental health difficulties even if they have not disclosed this?	Number of responses	Percent
Significant numbers	53	61%
A few	33	38%
None	1	1%
Total	87	100%

Q24. Does your college have a dedicated staff member to support students with mental health issues?	Number of responses	Percent
Yes	55	63%
No	32	37%
Total	87	100%

Q25. How have your colleges internal and external resources to support mental health issues changed in 2017/18 compared with 2016/17? (Please tick one box in each row)	Significantly increased	Slightly increased	About the same	Slightly decreased	Significantly decreased	Total
Internal resources	27	32	30	0	0	89
External resources	8	20	34	11	11	84
	Significantly increased	Slightly increased	About the same	Slightly decreased	Significantly decreased	Total
Internal resources	30%	36%	34%	0%	0%	100%
External resources	10%	24%	40%	13%	13%	100%

Q26. How is your college's relationship with each of the following? (Please tick one box in each row)	Very good	Good	Fair	Not very good	Non existent	Total
Director of Public Health	9	17	22	4	37	89
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Provider	19	42	19	8	1	89
Adult Mental Health Service Provider	9	31	29	10	8	87
Clinical Commissioning Group	7	23	29	7	23	89
	Very good	Good	Fair	Not very good	Non existent	Total
Director of Public Health	10%	19%	25%	4%	42%	100%
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Provider	21%	47%	21%	9%	1%	100%
Adult Mental Health Service Provider	10%	36%	33%	11%	9%	100%
Clinical Commissioning Group	8%	26%	33%	8%	26%	100%

Q27. Does your college have a food bank on campus?	Number of responses	Percent
Yes	12	13%
No	78	87%
Total	90	100%

Q28. Does your college offer any support for students struggling to feed themselves?	Number of responses	Percent
Yes	76	86%
No	12	14%
Total	88	100%

Q31. For 2017/18 and 2018/19, has your college set a budget to operate at a surplus, break even or operate at a deficit? (Please tick one box in each row)	Operate at a surplus	Break even	Operate at a deficit	Total
2017/18	56	15	18	89
2018/19	50	23	15	88

Q31. For 2017/18 and 2018/19, has your college set a budget to operate at a surplus, break even or operate at a deficit? (Please tick one box in each row)	Operate at a surplus	Break even	Operate at a deficit	Total
2017/18	63%	17%	20%	100%
2018/19	57%	26%	17%	100%

Q32. Do you anticipate that your college will be changing the size and structure of its workforce in the next 12 months? (Please tick all that are likely to apply)	Number of responses	Percent
Restructure(s)	40	46%
Seeking applications for voluntary redundancies	30	34%
Compulsory redundancies	28	32%
Reducing working hours (by agreement with staff)	20	23%
Nothing planned yet	14	16%
Recruitment freeze	14	16%
Enforcing a gap between leavers and new starters	13	15%
Increase size of workforce through recruitment drives	11	13%
Increase size of workforce through mergers	10	11%
Uncertain at this stage	9	10%
Other	7	8%
Increase size of workforce through TUPE	4	5%
Total	87	

Q33. Is youth social action part of the culture and practice at your college?	Number of responses	Percent
Yes - all college departments support students to participate	33	37%
Yes - over half college departments support students to participate	17	19%
Yes - under half college departments support students to participate	21	24%
Yes - only a single college department supports students to participate	2	2%
No - we'd like to do more, but we don't know how	7	8%
No - we'd like to do more, but the education system doesn't recognise the value it adds	0	0%
No - it's not something we'd thought about doing	0	0%
No - we don't think it would add value to our students and wider community	0	0%
No - for other reasons (please specify)	4	4%
Don't know	5	6%
Total	89	100%

Q35. If 'Yes' to Q33, are you working with schools and other educational providers to embed social action into their culture and practice?	Number of responses	Percent
Yes	27	40%
No	41	60%
Total	68	100%