



FURTHER EDUCATION  
TRUST FOR LEADERSHIP

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# About FETL

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Informing the future

# Welcome to FETL

FETL is the sector's first and only independent think-tank and was conceived to offer sector colleagues the opportunity to spend time thinking, on behalf of us all, about the concerns of leadership in today's complex education and training system and to do so in order to advance knowledge and ideas for the sector's future.



**We know that English FE and Skills is under-conceptualised, under-researched, under-theorised, and as a result, it is too often under-understood.**

FETL works to change this by building through colleagues, a body of knowledge that has a real legacy, strengthening the leadership of thinking in FE and Skills and promoting new ways of working for excellence in learning.

We will contribute to a better way of understanding and talking about what we do, to lead thinking about this sector and its place in the overall system, and in doing so, make a clearer case for our future strategic place in that system.

**Dame Ruth Silver, DBE  
President**

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 @VetNet\_LLN

*@FETforL thank you for working hard to raise the awareness and the importance of vocational teaching and learning.”*

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# Introduction

**As a leader in the sector I know how vital exploratory and reflective practice is to both leaders and teachers.**




FETL is unique in that it provides the opportunity for colleagues, at all levels in UK FE and Skills, to take time to explore possibilities, reflect and to make sense of the practices, the organisations, the systems and the structures that together create the world we inhabit, and thereby be proactive in creating our futures. This is the leadership of thinking and this is the vision that informs our work.

I hope that you are as excited by this as I am and eager to take up the opportunities FETL offers.

**Jill Westerman**  
Chair FETL



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 @cwhinney

“Pleased to see @FETforL promoting Systems Thinking in their Inaugural Lecture and their first round grants. Long overdue in sector.”

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# Our core purpose

As an independent charity and think-tank, FETL works to build and promote a body of knowledge, to inspire thought and to help prepare the FE and Skills sector for the challenges it faces now and in the future.

## Our vision...

...is of an FE and Skills sector that is valued and respected for:

Innovating constantly to meet the needs of learners, communities and employers

Preparing for the long term as well as delivering in the short term

Sharing fresh ideas generously and informing practice with knowledge





*“What we do today informs  
the sector’s future.”*

## Our mission...

...is to provide via opportunities, research grants, fellowships and other opportunities, building the evidence base which the FE and Skills sector needs in order to think, learn and do, to change policy and to influence practice.

## Our value proposition

We are loyal to the future, focused on developing the leadership of thinking in FE and Skills, as well as making a difference through scholarship that adds value for the sector as it moves forward.

# Our values

As an organisation we strive to be:

## ✓ *Bold*

We encourage new ideas to improve all aspects of FE and Skills leadership

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## ✓ *Valued*

We are creating a body of knowledge to transform both leadership learning and learners' lives

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## ✓ *Expert*

We use evidence, networks and resources sensibly and impartially

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## ✓ *Proactive*

We provoke new ways of working to deliver excellence in learning within FE and Skills

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## ✓ *Responsible*

We use our voice and assets wisely at all times

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*“I thought it was an excellent event, a great lecture and a great start of all sorts of thinking and ideas and ambition for the sector! I’m really delighted to be involved and very much looking forward to working with you on our exciting project.”*

**Independent Training Provider**

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# Developing thinking in FE and Skills

## An invitation to help shape the future.

At FETL, we want to build a body of knowledge to shape leadership in FE and Skills. We recognise that crucial as they are, the skills of leadership are insufficient for the leadership of a constantly adaptive layer in the education system.

FETL is determined to change this. Working with the University College London, Institute of Education, we are funding a new University Chair in FE and Skills leadership to guide and develop leaders across the sector. This will be unique: the world's first University Chair in FE and Skills leadership.

It will encourage academic and practitioner research focused on distinctive challenge of leading FE and Skills: leading education and training, in the service of learners and learning.

FETL Fellows and Grant holders will undertake research projects which develop the leadership of thinking in FE and Skills. We welcome expressions of interest from individuals, institutions, sector membership bodies and other organisations with innovative and visionary ideas who work in the field of FE and Skills.

“*Having the opportunity to step back from my day job...and just think about things...allowed me to ask some important questions. That will be reflected back in the things I do in the future.*”

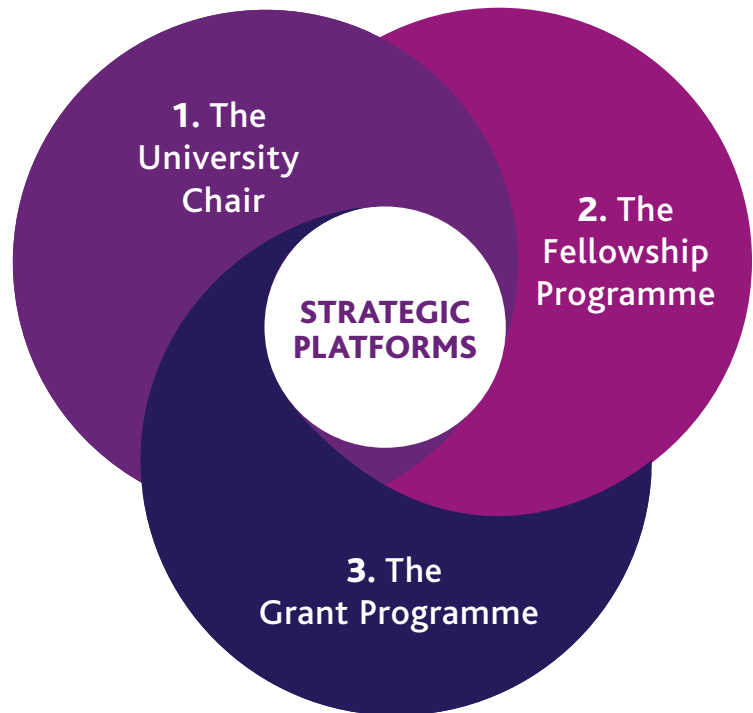
Tim Ward, FETL Fellow

# Strategic platforms

**FETL is ambitious for FE and Skills and our focus is on the leadership of thought.**

Our aim is to strengthen the sector, develop practice and build a credible body of knowledge that is authoritative and compelling. We do not wish to duplicate existing programmes or deliver leadership development. We aim instead to complement and enhance what other organisations and individuals do by working collaboratively and adopting an approach that is supportive and in the best interests of the sector as a whole.

Our work is built around three crucial strategic platforms which are mutually supportive, integrated and linked. The platforms of our work are:





Everything we do is focused on outcomes.  
Each strategic platform will:

- encourage new ideas to improve the leadership of thinking in FE and Skills;
- lead to the creation of a body of knowledge to transform the leadership of thinking;
- provoke new ways of working to deliver excellence in learning within FE and Skills.

In achieving these outcomes FETL will:

- use evidence, networks and resources sensibly;
- use our voice, maintaining our impartiality and independence, to highlight emerging themes and publishing our findings; and
- use our assets wisely by being efficient, effective and economical at all times and in all our activities.

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*“It’s been a really interesting journey and it has been great to work with the other FETL Fellows. We’ve all got different skill sets and are from different environments. Putting us all together has led to some very interesting conversations.”*

**Alex Day**  
FETL Fellow

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# 1. The University Chair

**FETL will fund a University Chair from January 2016 for a period of three years. The post will be based at the University College London, Institute of Education, a world-leading centre for research and teaching in social science and education, and will provide an opportunity to develop new thinking and evidence and to support its widespread dissemination and impact.**

The rationale for this unique partnership can be found in the changing context in which we all work. The FE and Skills sector faces a distinctive set of challenges. These relate to its diverse organisational nature, as well as to the need to respond to the policy imperatives and practices of the public and private sectors and to the different expectations that exist in each sphere.

The University Chair will lead the academic work for FETL, will be highly engaged with policy and practice across the sector and sufficiently independent to provide challenge to sector bodies, FETL and government. The role will:

- Advance the strategic development of thought leadership in FE and Skills to increase knowledge transfer and impact;
- Publish rigorous research and original work on the leadership of thinking in FE and Skills;
- Play a public role in disseminating research and challenging policy and practice in FE and Skills; and
- Foster strategic partnerships and networks to enhance the quality of debate and leadership of thinking.



*“Being a FETL Fellow is the chance to do something different that you’re passionate about and that’s not a chance that comes around that often”*

Ruth Allen, FETL Fellow

## 2. The FETL Fellowship Programme



### What is it?

The FETL Fellowship is a structured programme that allows current FE and Skills practitioners in the UK to pursue a research interest that benefits thinking in the FE and Skills sector.

There will be an opportunity to interact with other Fellows, FETL Trustees and a prestigious Higher Education institution.



### Who is it for?

We are looking for ambitious, bold, creative individuals who are passionate about FE and Skills learning.

- You should have a burning desire to explore (and write about) an aspect of leadership thinking that will ultimately benefit learners
- You should be working with a current provider of FE and Skills in the UK
- You should have a background in leadership at whatever level
- You should share our vision of an FE and Skills sector that is valued and respected for innovation, long-term planning, and sharing knowledge
- You should have a sponsoring organisation.

We are interested in the outcomes of your research and the difference it will make to FE and Skills in the UK.



## What Fellowships have you previously awarded?

*Fostering Creative Leadership in FE – Ruth Allen, The Cornwall College Group.*

This research focused on leadership strategies which 'foster a creative culture in further education', a critical issue in a sector in which pressures of policy turbulence and accountability make the creation of collaborative, imaginative workplaces particularly challenging.

*The impact of leadership on part-time teachers – Ann Creed, The Workers' Educational Association.*

This research examined how different leadership styles and behaviours affected the attitudes and wellbeing of part-time teachers in outreach locations – and what impact this has on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

*Attitudes to leadership of diversification & risk in sixth form colleges – Alex Day, Peter Symonds College.*

This research identified the barriers to risk-taking and the interventions that might support planning and risk calculation when considering diversification.

*Leadership Challenges of Third Sector Providers – Tim Ward, The Learning Curve.*

This research identified the particular challenges faced by third-sector leaders in learning and skills, including the difficulty small providers face in meeting the demands of a highly regulated sector. The findings will enable third-sector leaders to better understand and describe the challenge of leadership in this part of the sector and identify how best to target support for leaders in the sector.

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*From my experience as a FETL Fellow, I have learned to value qualitative research far more and the insights it can give into what is happening the sector.”*

**Ann Creed, FETL Fellow**



### How is it structured?

That is very much up to you! FETL does not want to create structures that get in the way of good research. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to the FETL Fellowships.

However we will help you ensure that you have the right programme for you. This will involve taking time away from work on a full or part time basis to focus on your research. You can work from home or make other arrangements. There will be a requirement to attend some events/seminars at the University College London, Institute of Education.



### How will I be supported?

All FETL Fellows will be offered the support of the FETL team. This is most likely to involve a monthly telephone call to discuss progress. However you can contact FETL at any time. There will also be the opportunity to discuss your research project with the University College London, Institute of Education and you will have access (including virtual) to the University College London, Institute of Education library and online resources.



### When do I start and how long will it take?

To some extent that is up to you and the nature of what you propose to us. Once a Fellowship has been awarded, FETL would be ready to fund you to start immediately but we realise that you will have existing commitments. We would generally expect a Fellowship to start within a few months of an award.

As for length of Fellowship, we feel the optimal period is up to 6 months. This will allow you to fully immerse yourself in the subject and write up your thoughts.



### How will I be funded?

FETL will fund your sponsoring organisation with a block grant to cover your time and approved expenses (travel, books, subscriptions) during the period of the Fellowship. This is generally paid in two parts, one at the start of the Fellowship and one at the end.

## 3. Grants



### What is it?

The FETL Grant Programme is aimed at organisations operating in the field of UK FE and Skills. It provides grant funding of up to £100,000 per project for new research into the leadership of thinking in FE and Skills.

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### Who is it for?

Any organisation (or consortium of organisations) with a track record of leading thinking in FE and Skills or related fields. This includes independent training providers, third sector organisations, adult and community learning providers, and colleges (further education, landbased, and sixth form) and leadership organisations.

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### What is eligible for funding?

Proposals should add value to the current knowledge base in the sector. FETL focusses on the leadership of thinking rather than leadership of doing and projects that consider the future of FE and Skills rather than current issues are preferred. Applications should focus on new ways of working. This may be:

- academic and practitioner based research;
- fresh innovative and visionary ideas developed in think-pieces or through strategic seminars;
- projects which build the body of knowledge for the sector.

We are seeking projects that will develop new thinking about the leadership of learning both now and in the future, for UK FE and Skills. Projects generally run for around one year.

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### What is not eligible for funding?

- FETL will not be delivering improvement services to the sector and so training events or service delivery will not be funded.
- We will not fund capital expenditure nor the purchasing of equipment.
- Whilst applicants can learn from international best practice, we don't fund projects unless the ultimate focus and priority is clearly for the benefit of learners in the UK.





## What type of projects have you previously awarded a grant?

FETL has funded two rounds of grants which is comprised of seven awards. These projects are currently in progress.

*The Association of Employment & Learning Providers (AELP)*, which represents over 670 UK vocational training providers, is investigating the impact of new leaders on the leadership of thinking in FE and Skills. AELP will be working closely with the 157 Group of colleges in delivering this project.

*Coleg Gwent* is working with further education colleges in Wales to look at the impact of austerity measures on provision, and in particular the role of governors in fostering a culture of enterprise and innovation.

*The East Midlands Further Education Colleges (EMFEC)*, a membership organisation of 26 FE, land-based and sixth form colleges in the East Midlands of England, has received funding to develop new models of leadership through innovative governance.

*The University of Hull project, Leadership for Learning – Ethical Practice*, aims to develop a practical understanding of behaviours and approaches adopted by ethical leaders in FE and Skills.

*Working Well*, a private sector company that specialises in organisational development, is working with FETL on developing a series of strategic seminars and think pieces that focus on systems thinking and its applicability to UK FE and Skills.

*The Association of Colleges (AOC)* is the membership body for UK FE Colleges. It is made up of over 320 further education, sixth form, tertiary and specialist colleges across the UK covering over 95% of the sector. Working in partnership with the University of Oxford, this research project investigates the impact of 'localism' on FE and Skills.

*Policy Connect* is a not-for-profit organisation which has been researching and influencing policy for over 20 years producing reports and engaging Parliamentarians. This research project will seek to establish how innovation is led across the FE and Skills sector. This will eventually result in an inquiry report being launched to government in 2016.

## FETL is an independent charity and think-tank

Further Information on the work of FETL  
can be found at [www.fetl.org.uk](http://www.fetl.org.uk)

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“*The notion behind this is not that the future is a place you’re going to, it’s a place you’re making and you need to think about what it is you want to make – the Fellows are the first to do that.*”

**Dame Ruth Silver, DBE**  
**FETL President**

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