

Collaboration, partnership and purpose: Further education after Augar

FE colleges should be required to break their different functions into separate institutions that have their own distinctive brand and identity, according to a new report from EDSK and FETL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) has published a new report that asks how further education can play a full role in the kind of collaborative, partnership-led education system envisaged in last year's Augar report on post-18 education.

Further consideration: The role of FE colleges in the post-Augar education system, written by Tom Richmond and Andrew Bailey of education and skills think tank EDSK and funded by FETL, draws on in-depth interviews with senior figures from FE to present a package of reforms that aims to ensure the FE sector is respected and valued, ambitious in its offer, responsive to the changing needs of learners and employers, and stable, operating in an environment that provides political and financial security.

Recommendations include splitting FE colleges into different institutions reflecting distinctive core responsibilities: community colleges offering basic skills courses, community learning and other entry level programmes (including ESOL); sixth-form colleges providing A-levels and other classroom-based Level 2 and 3 courses; and technology colleges offering vocational and technical training (including apprenticeships) up to Levels 4 and 5.

It also proposes the creation of a new area-level role of FE Director, who would act as the convener and ambassador for local FE institutions on both strategic and financial issues, and a substantial increase in College Collaboration Fund (CCF) resources to promote group structures among colleges within each Local Enterprise Partnership or Mayoral Combined Authority.

Dame Ruth Silver, President of FETL, said: 'This report takes Augar and its purpose to frame tertiary education policy for years to come seriously by offering a recipe – in the form of its set of intelligent, mutually dependent proposals – for whole-system reform capable of delivering its promise of a future for FE characterised by collaboration, partnership and purpose.'

'I am pleased to see this ambition reaffirmed in the report. But, of course, it is a challenging agenda. The issue of role and identity is a difficult one, a long-time bugbear of the sector, but it is one we must resolve if we are to act with strong purpose and self-confidence in this brave new world of cooperation and mutual support around a common aim.'

'The proposals in this report – aimed at delivering greater stability for the sector, more clarity and flexibility for learners and a greater, more dynamic utilisation of the levers of devolution in delivering local priorities – take us in this direction. I have no doubt it will resonate profoundly within the sector. But it is my hope, too, that it will be read widely across the education system, and within Whitehall, and that its thoughtful, far-sighted proposals and provocations will inform much-needed, open debate about the future of FE in England.'

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