



Skills Funding  
Agency

# The Offenders' Learning and Skills Service Phase 4 (OLASS 4)

Governance Guidance Note

September 2015

Of interest to Offenders' Learning and Skills Providers Phase 4



National Offender  
Management Service

# The Offenders' Learning and Skills Service Phase 4 (OLASS 4)

## Governance Guidance Note

### Introduction

1. The Offenders' Learning and Skills Service Phase 4 (OLASS 4) was introduced in August 2012. This phase saw the introduction of a new suite of contracts for the delivery of learning and skills in adult prisons in England. These new contracts reflected a series of significant changes that followed the earlier offender learning review and were set out in [Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation](#). Lead governors working with the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) providers are able to determine the most appropriate provision to meet the needs of learners in custody.
2. The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) remains accountable for funding, reducing the risk to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills acting through the SFA. The SFA also continues to be responsible for performance management of the OLASS contract across the unit of procurement. Lead governors will meet regularly with learning and skills providers to discuss and review delivery.
3. This document is one of three that support the effective delivery of OLASS 4; please read it in conjunction with [OLASS 4 Funding Rules and Guidance](#) and the SFA's [Performance Management Rules](#).
4. This guidance sets out the agreed governance arrangements for the management of OLASS 4, detailing key accountabilities and responsibilities. The guidance represents an agreed approach between the SFA and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) as co-commissioners.

### Governance Framework

5. Governance arrangements within a unit of procurement may vary across the country to reflect local circumstances. However, as a minimum, each unit of procurement should have an OLASS 4 Governance Board that meets the requirements set out in Paragraph 6. The Governance Board may appoint

subgroups at prison, cluster or unit level to monitor learning and skills delivery at a more local level. The Governance Board determines the number of groups, their membership and the frequency of meetings. The local SFA Deputy Director of Provider Management and Intervention determines SFA representation.

### **Governance Board**

6. We recommend that the OLASS 4 unit of procurement-level Governance Board meets formally to coincide with performance management points set out in the [Performance Management Rules](#). Boards can make decisions outside of scheduled meetings, subject to the chair's ratification. The main purpose of the Board is to ensure that careers services and learning and skills funded by the SFA target learners effectively, significantly enhancing the employment and wider post-release prospects of offenders in custody.

### **Key Responsibilities of the Governance Board**

- To review and assess the impact of SFA-funded provision through OLASS 4 and local National Careers Service contracted delivery. A locally agreed suite of performance reports will inform review and assessment. These reports will contain funding, participation and achievement data that the SFA holds through its national individualised learning record (ILR) collection arrangements.
- To ratify any proposed movement of funds between prisons and across clusters (where appropriate) within the unit of procurement that the Governance Board covers.
- To identify strategic priorities and specific actions to support the continuous improvement of SFA-funded provision and services. Also, to ensure alignment with ministerial policy objectives, including those linking skills and employability.
- To maintain awareness of emerging national policies and developments that may impact on OLASS 4 and National Careers Service contracted delivery. Where appropriate, to develop strategies to meet the challenges and opportunities these present.

- To consider how to use other private and public funding streams to support OLASS 4 delivery.
- To assess risk in accordance with national strategic intervention arrangements (as agreed between NOMS and the SFA's Strategic Intervention and Funding Policy teams).
- To identify and share best practice.

### **Membership**

- Deputy Director of Custody (Chair).
- Cluster governors' representative.
- Cluster Head of Learning, Skills and Employment (HOLSE) representative.
- Local SFA Deputy Director of Provider Management and Intervention, or appropriate representative.
- OLASS Provider Director.
- SFA Head of Consumer Services, or appropriate representative.

### **Performance Management**

7. Central to the performance management process is the establishment of regular reviews (the Review) between the SFA, as the accountable funding body, and the OLASS provider. They will carry out Reviews in accordance with the timetable set out in the SFA's [Performance Management Rules](#). Arrangements for performance-managing the custodial offer within the National Careers Service contracts will be part of the wider contract review arrangements of National Careers Service prime contractors.
8. The Review will include two key elements:
  - i. Assessment of delivery against profile.
  - ii. Assessment of progress against the recommendations of the offender learning review.

9. As confirmed in the OLASS contracts for the funding year 2015 to 2016, the SFA will continue to make profile payments where total funding allocation is split into 12 monthly payments.
10. The SFA's appointed contract manager can agree cost neutral revisions to the planned profiles at performance management points (please refer to Annex B of the [Performance Management Rules](#)), after consultation with the Governance Board.
11. The learning and skills provider will put in place a delivery plan that has been agreed with the prison governor or appropriate representative. An up to date delivery plan will be issued by the provider in advance of any review or board meetings.
12. At the Review the SFA and the learning and skills provider will assess planned profiles at individual prisons, and within each cluster, against actual delivery using validated individualised learner record (ILR) data only.
13. Where appropriate, the Review will consider transferring funding between prisons or across clusters in response to evidence-based changes in demand. The Governance Board would need to ratify any proposal (not necessarily at a scheduled meeting) and the SFA contract manager would duly advise OLASS funding and policy colleagues.

Where the SFA contract manager identifies underperformance at prison level, the provider will submit a remedial action plan.

### **Escalation Routes**

14. Local governance structures should make full provision for resolving grievances and potential conflicts. In exceptional circumstances, the provider may escalate issues directly to the SFA.
15. If the SFA believes the responsibilities and/or accountability of the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills may be at serious risk, then it reserves

the right to seek immediate dialogue with governors at cluster level and/or NOMS.



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