



8 September 2011

John Hayes MP
Minister of State for Further Education, Skills & Lifelong Learning
Department for Business Innovation and Skills
1 Victoria Street
LONDON
SW1H 0ET

Dear John

RE: Functional Skills in Apprenticeships

In our letter of the 8th November 2010 we set out the concerns of our organisations, and the members which we represent, in relation to the implementation of Functional Skills into Apprenticeships. We welcomed your response of 7th December inviting us to work with your officials in order to make progress on the issues we had collectively identified in relation to implementing Functional Skills in Apprenticeship programmes. However, we are concerned that not enough progress has been made.

We understand that there is a view from departmental officials that Functional Skills can simply be dropped into Apprenticeship programmes as a direct replacement for Key Skills. We believe this is not the case and furthermore does not deal with the concerns raised last year. As a standalone qualification, delivered to appropriate learners, we believe that Functional Skills can achieve their intended purpose. However, as we stated in our letter of 8th November, Functional Skills as they stand currently are not suitable for Apprenticeships because they are difficult to deliver and assess within the workplace and with employer involvement. Whilst we welcome the delay in withdrawing Key Skills, our concerns remain.

Since your response to our concerns late last year we have only had one meeting with your officials to discuss our issues. We are not content that our view, which is based on years of experience our members have involved in the delivery of Apprenticeships, is understood or accepted by those in the department working on your behalf. We are also concerned that should the voice of employers (particularly in some sectors) be ignored, not only will Apprenticeships with Functional Skills be difficult to deliver; many employers will simply pull out of the programme and could detrimentally affect the overall success rates of the Apprenticeship programme which could impact on the standing of this high quality programme

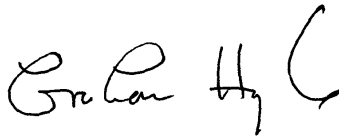
We would like to meet with you specifically as a tripartite, to discuss this as a matter of urgency and identify how we may resolve the impasse that has developed on an issue critical to the success of one of the Government's key policy areas, which, if unresolved, will have consequences for generations to come.

We look forward to meeting with you in due course to discuss this with you.

Yours sincerely



Jill Lanning
Chief Executive, FAB



Graham Hoyle
Chief Executive, AELP



Martin Doel
Chief Executive, AoC