

## Member Position Paper – November 2011

### Delivering Functional Skills in Apprenticeships – Survey Two

#### Background:

Building on previous research among AELP members showing that 84% of ITPs are delivering Key Skills in most of their programmes, AELP put out an additional survey to providers in order to answer calls as to **why** they are delaying switching from Key Skills to Functional Skills in Apprenticeships.

#### Introduction and Methodology:

After an initial article in Countdown AELP collected responses for just over a week, with the survey comprising of two main questions:

- 1. Why has your organisation chosen to deliver Key Skills for apprentices in preference to Functional Skills?*
- 2. As they stand, what are the likely implications for the apprenticeship programme should Functional Skills be the only assessment option?*

The questionnaire again received a quick and significant response. AELP received **117 responses** accounting for **25% of AELP SFA contracted members** and subcontractor organisations delivering Key Skills or Functional Skills.

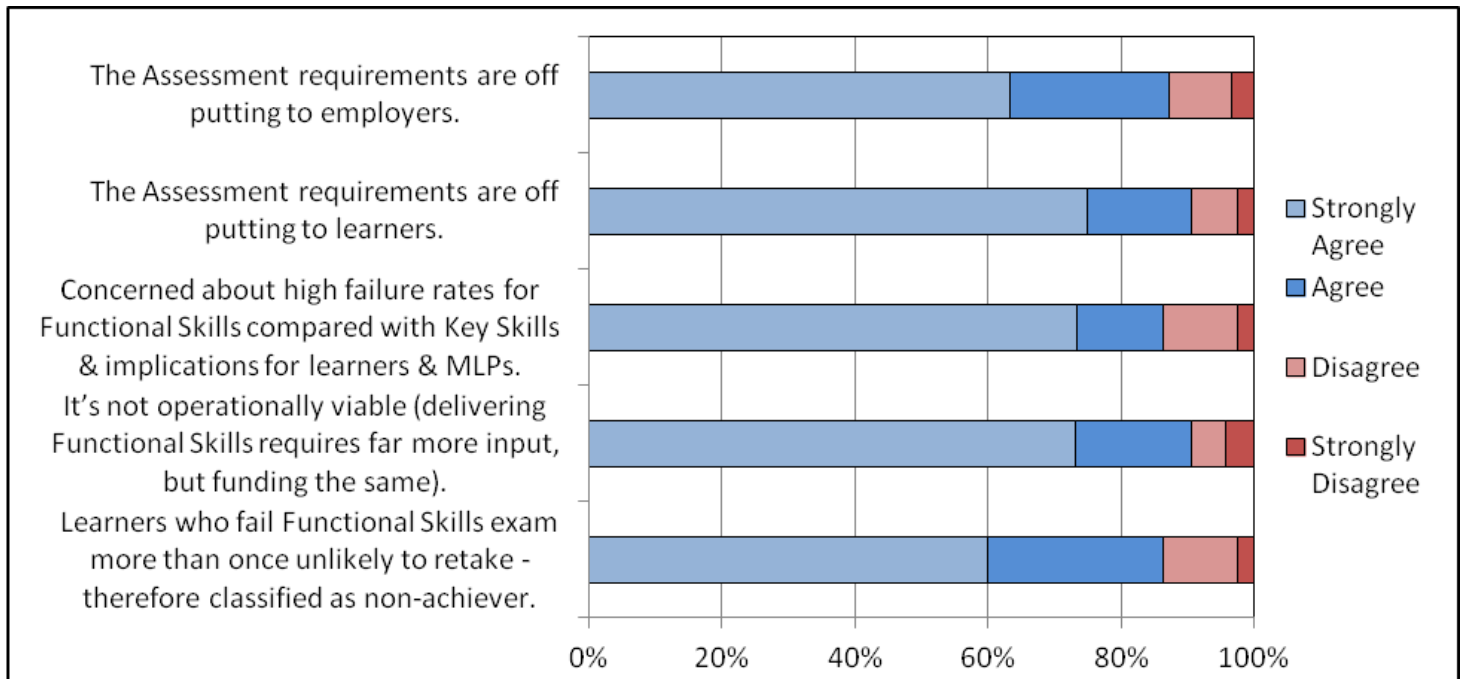
Due to the nature of the survey and AELP's previous research, it is estimated that most responses are from those delivering mainly Key Skills – something that needs to be taken in consideration when interpreting the results.

#### Summary of Findings

##### 1) Why has your organisation chosen to deliver Key Skills for apprentices in preference to Functional Skills?

- **87%** of respondents felt the **assessment** requirements (i.e. classroom taught, examination based, external marking, pass/fail no feedback) are off putting **to employers**, while **91%** of respondents felt that the assessment requirement are off putting for **learners**.
- **86%** of organisations showed concern over the potential **high failure rates** for Functional Skills compared with Key Skills and implications for learners their employers and also for Providers trying to meet/exceed the annual SFA Minimum Levels of Performance (MLP) targets.

- **90%** of providers felt Functional Skills is **not operationally viable under current funding arrangements** as it is widely acknowledged the level of teaching input per learner is significantly higher than applies for Key Skills yet the same funding rate applies...!
- **86%** felt learners that **fail** their Functional Skills exam more than once will become disillusioned at the prospects of retakes and risk failing the whole apprenticeship as a result



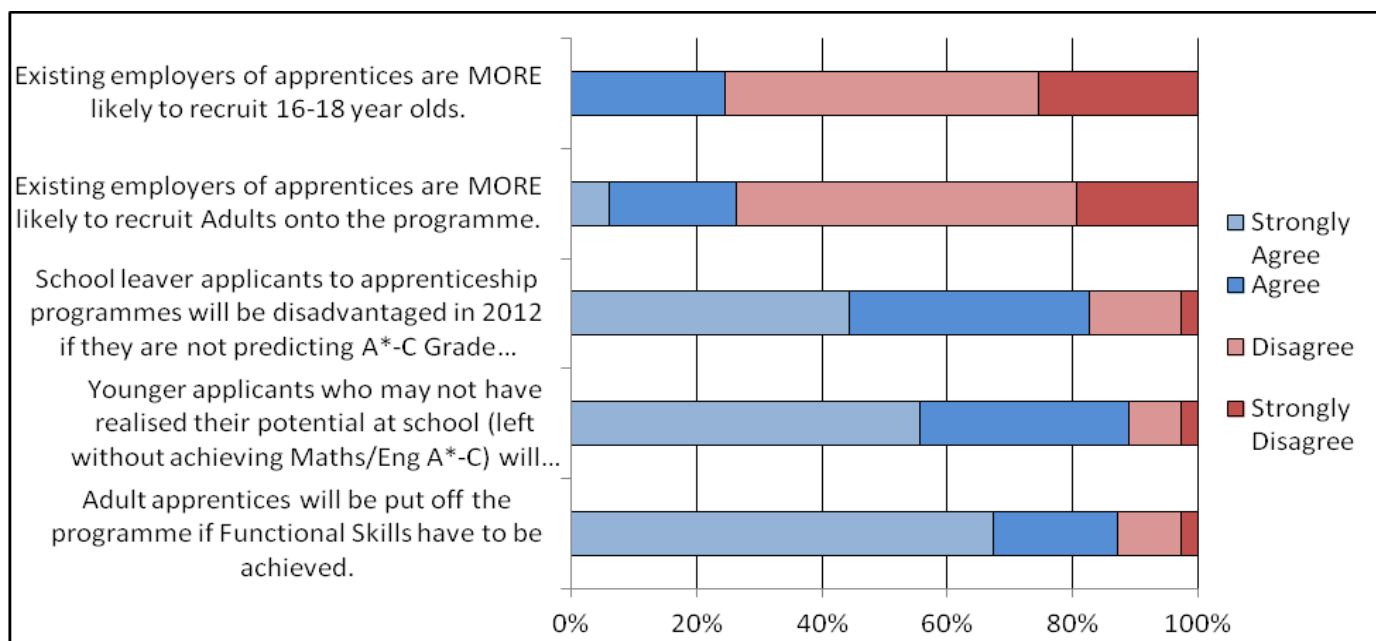
### Other reasons given by respondents as to why their organisation is concerned about the introduction of Functional Skills in their current state:

#### General themes from 65 written responses received:

- The apprenticeship route is seen as a work-based route to achieving qualifications – Key Skills reflects this and gives greater understanding of the vocational areas and is able to occupationally adapt. Functional Skills is very much generic and classroom/academically based.
- Many providers feel that if 11 years of learning within a classroom environment has not helped an individual achieve adequate grades in Maths and English, there is little chance Functional Skills will work at FE stage if continued to be taught in a similar way.
- Concerns were raised around the timing of exams as well as the often lengthy wait for results.
- Change in delivery structure and capacity of staff is a concern for several providers.
- Lack of resources and clear guidance to ensure a smooth transition to Functional Skills.

## 2) As they stand, what are the likely implications for the apprenticeship programme should Functional Skills be the only assessment option?

- **75%** of respondents felt existing employers of apprentices would be **less** likely to recruit **16-18 year olds**, and **74%** felt existing employers are **less** likely to recruit **Adults** onto the programme.
- **83%** felt school leaver applicants to apprenticeship programmes would be **disadvantaged in 2012** if they were **not** predicting a GCSE A\* - C grade at point of application
- **90%** of respondents felt younger or NEET applicants who may not have realised their potential at school (**left without achieving Maths/English A\*-C**) will find it **more difficult** to secure an apprenticeship place from October 2012.
- **87%** of providers envisaged that **adult apprentices** are not looking forward to the prospect of spending time off the job to learn English and Maths Functional Skills from October 2012 and may decide not to pursue an apprenticeship.



### Next Steps:

AELP thanks our members who responded so promptly to the questionnaire and rest assured findings will be used productively in discussions with Government Officials in the weeks and months ahead. These results and further exploration of capacity building needs including staff development activities will be conducted through November and December at the various Sector Forum and SIG events and more details can be found in Countdown.

**End**