



INSTITUTE OF THE
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LECTURER RESERVISTS

How the reservist model could work for Further
Education



The authors



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Dr Benjamin Silverstone holds an MSc in Management and a PhD in Engineering as well as a professional teaching qualification. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Ben has worked in education for almost 20 years and has held various teaching and management positions in Colleges and Universities. At present Ben leads skills policy and workforce transformation at WMG. His role places him as a thought leader in the space of future skills and he is regularly engaged with government bodies in establishing the evolution of skills in the UK. Ben is a founder of, and leads, the National Electrification Skills Framework as part of a coalition of leading UK institutions and industrial partners. As part of this work he also chairs the national forum on Electrification Skills. In addition to his leadership roles Ben has also published in a wide range of media on the topics of skills and human interaction with technology. Early in his career Ben spent a total of 15 years with the Royal Navy and HM Coastguard earning several commendations.

Brief

This initiative aims to address the acute shortage of skilled lecturers in the Further Education (FE) sector, particularly in engineering and technology disciplines, through a model akin to that of military reservists.

The Further Education Lecturer Reservists (FELR) initiative, developed by the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) and Warwick Manufacturing Group (WGM), which has garnered support from the University and College Union (UCU) and the Association of Colleges as well as support from providers, industry and combined authorities.

Key Issues

The FE sector faces a critical shortage of lecturers equipped with the rapidly changing skills and experience, particularly in STEM areas, crucial for the UK's engineering and manufacturing sectors.

Rapid advancements in technology and the growing demand for skilled professionals underscore the need for a workforce that is both theoretically knowledgeable and practically capable.

The FELR initiative offers a sustainable solution to bridge the academia-industry gap, providing students with access to up-to-date industry practices, fostering a skilled workforce capable of driving innovation and maintaining high standards of quality and safety, and addressing niche capability shortages in the delivery sectors.

Opportunities

The initiative has won the support of key stakeholders, including the UCU, the Association of Colleges, providers, industry and combined authorities, marking a significant step towards addressing the challenges faced by the FE sector.

FELR can provide a sustainable approach to addressing provider capability needs using a structure that embodies protection for all parties involved, effective training, and recognition for engagement.

Recommendations

Endorsement and Policy Integration: Formal endorsement of the FELR initiative, integrating it into national education and skills policy to ensure its success and sustainability.

Funding and Support: Allocate funding to support the implementation of the FELR scheme, including incentives for industry professionals to participate as reservist lecturers and for educational institutions to facilitate their involvement.

Pilot and Expansion: Support the interested parties who are piloting the scheme, with a view to evaluating its effectiveness and potential for broader national rollout. Commitment to pilot has been made by 10 FE institutions and industry partners in the West Midlands Region. WMCA has committed to funding an 8-week training package for industry professionals to enable them to deliver effectively.

Conclusion

The FELR initiative borrows from existing successful government frameworks, with significant potential benefits for students, educational institutions, and the wider industry. By endorsing and supporting this initiative, the government can play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of technical education and training, ultimately contributing to the UK's economic growth and technological advancement.

Action Required

Approval to endorse the FELR initiative and integrate it into relevant policy areas.

Allocation of funding and resources to support the pilot and potential expansion of the scheme.

Engagement with key stakeholders to facilitate the successful implementation of the initiative.

Analysis of need

The FE sector in the UK comprises 271 Colleges, the majority of which are classed as general further education colleges, employing around 120,000 FTE equivalent staff, and operating with a turnover of £6.7 billion in the last accounting period.

During the academic year 2022/23, colleges in England educated and trained c.1.6 million people, the majority of which were adult learners (c913,000). C611,000 learners attended courses funded under 16-18 learning and addition c46,000 undertook apprenticeships. Approximately 90% of all 16-18 learners undertook a STEM courses during this period¹.

The importance of the FE sector in delivering STEM capability in the UK, especially in engineering, cannot be understated. Research undertaken into emerging technology manufacturing, use, service, repair, and decommissioning suggests that around 80% of roles required to ensure that the UK can take full advantage of emerging technologies require capability and competencies that are best placed to be delivered by FE Colleges.

A significant majority of these are required for adult learners to re-skill and up-skill those already in work between now and 2035². Concerns have been raised about the ability of the FE sector to respond to these needs given the challenges faced in the recruitment and retention of teaching staff with the required skills and experience.

FE lecturers typically see wages around £10,000pa lower than schoolteachers and there is evidence to suggest that FE staffing levels have fallen by around 1/3 in the past 10 years³. Vacancies for FE staff in key STEM areas have more than doubled since the COVID pandemic and these roles are not being filled. There is further evidence that wages in the FE sector are lagging behind industry for specialist capabilities with electrical engineers able to earn around £30,000pa more in the private sector than as FE lecturers.

As a result, the Association of Colleges noted that 62% of colleges have shortages in engineering and three quarters of colleges report that the main cause of shortages is that qualified staff have been offered better pay elsewhere⁴. Whilst there has been some success in supporting industry professionals to train and FE lecturers the scheme is not fill gaps in the most critical STEM areas.

There is a need to create opportunities to provide specialist teaching capability in colleges in a way that is sustainable and that will be impacted upon less by shifting trends in employment and technology.

Many colleges have reported challenges in ensuring that they are able to train their existing staff in emerging technologies and that, often, the gaps are in niche and highly specialist areas where industry contacts could have a significant input to delivery⁵.

The FE Reservist Lecturer scheme would represent a method of creating hugely valuable FE/industry links, enabling colleges to deliver effectively in a rapidly changing capability environment, providing protection for industry and enabling personal and professional growth for those, working in industry, who are interested in teaching alongside their main employment.

This scheme would enable rapid response to changing capability requirements and allow FE colleges to remain at the forefront of delivery by leveraging the most up-to-date industry capability.

¹ Data and figures derived from Association of Colleges www.aoc.co.uk

² National Electrification Skills Framework

³ Lifelong Education Commission and Chartered Institute for Further Education
<https://feweek.co.uk/expert-teacher-sweeteners-needed-to-tackle-growing-fe-recruitment-crisis-report-says/>

⁴ AoC survey data reported in Financial Times
<https://www.ft.com/content/cd5e8335-bc51-493d-928e-52e8e9b6df3c>

⁵ Electrification Skills Development Group Strategy - WMCA

Rights and responsibilities

The existing opportunity for supporting national needs exists not only with the Armed Forces, but also the Coast Guard, and the Fire Service. This section uses existing legislation to illustrate the protections that the FELR would enjoy.

Note: financial figures used in this example are taken from existing legislation for Armed Forces Reservists and are for illustration only. They do not represent recommendations for FELR itself.

Introduction

Members of the Further Education Reservist Lecturers (FELRs) and their employers have certain rights and responsibilities when an FELR:

- Chooses to become a Further Education Reservist Lecturer
- Undertakes periods of teaching
- Undertakes their substantive role or returns to it after a period of time

Financial support is available for both employers and FELRs during periods of delivery

Agreement between the employer and provider

In order for an FELR to engage in delivery for a provider there must be an agreement in place between the employer and the provider. This agreement must include the following:

- The type of support that the employer can provide
- The nature of the subjects for which support is needed
- The type of engagement sought e.g. block delivery, periods of time each week etc.

Time of for development

FELRs will, over a period of time, be offered training that aligns to, and will ultimately lead to the award of the Teacher (L6) apprenticeship. Employers do not have to allow time off for this development activity, but may choose to.

Training for FELRs is usually made up of:

- An initial period of training to effectively deliver in the classroom (an 8 week programme will be used as part of the pilot)
- Continuation training to further pedagogical capabilities
- Training usually expected of a provider's employees

Redundancy

FELRs cannot be made redundant due to training or periods of delivery. They must be treated the same as other employees if there are redundancies because of closure or business problems.

How the employer is notified

An agreement should be reached between the FELRs, the employer and the provider being supported. It is better if the employer and provider have an overarching agreement for delivery to be supported prior to the FELR engaging in any discussion around how they may engage.

Where possible identification of where the support of an FELR in delivery would be required during curriculum planning phases. This would provide the employer with the maximum possible notice of the scope of engagement. Where this is not possible a minimum of 6 weeks' notice should be given.

When an existing FELR changes jobs

The FELR should inform their new employer and engage with arrangements they have in place to support providers. Where no arrangements are in place the new employer and provider, must agree to partner to enable the FELR to undertake delivery.

Engagement in delivery

The period of notice has already been established and will be agreed between the employer, provider and FELR.

Financial assistance for both the FELR and the employer is available.

Employers can be fined in court and made to pay compensation if they end an FELRs employment as a result of an agreed delivery activity

After the delivery period, regardless of its type, the FELR has the right to return to the same job

Financial support for FELRs

During periods of delivery an FELR can claim financial support to cover:

- The difference between their substantive salary and the rate paid by the provider
- The cost of any benefits in kind that the employer stops.
- The total amount that can be claimed is £400 per day.

Company benefits

The FELR can claim for benefits normally provided by their employer including, where relevant:

- Health insurance
- Life insurance
- Education fees for dependent children
- Accommodation

Pension contributions

Whilst undertaking periods of delivery the FELR can either

- As for periods of delivery to count towards the pension scheme used by the provider
- Keep contributing to a personal work pension with the provider contributing to employers contributions

Self employed

If the FELR is self employed, a partner or company director, they can claim for:

- The difference between the providers pay and earnings from the business if this is affected
- Up to £2000 business costs from stopping trading if this is absolutely required to carry out periods of delivery replacement.
- Agency fees an advertising for finding and training replacement.

Expenses that cannot be claimed

FELRs cannot claim for expenses that were already being paid before undertaking periods of delivery for example:

- Care of a dependent child or relative
- Care of a pet
- House insurance
- Maintenance to a home

How to claim

[TBC]

Financial support for employers

Employers may claim financial support for periods of time where their employees are undertaking delivery. There is no need to continue paying the FELRs salary or pension contributions for the period of the delivery. How this is applied will vary depending on the nature of the delivery structure.

Available support

Where necessary the following can be claimed

- Cost of temporary replacement if it is more than the FELRs salary (up to £110 per day)
- Advertising costs and agency fees for finding a replacement if absolutely necessary
- A period of handover where required. This is only relevant where the FELR will be away from their substantive role for more than half of their existing contracted hours
- 75% of the cost of specialist clothing for the replacement (up to £300)
- Training costs if required (up to £2000)
- Overtime costs where work is covered by existing employees
- Any costs associated with the FELR returning to their substantive role

Additional support for SMEs

Up to £500 per month in additional costs can be claimed by SMEs where an FELR is undertaking delivery activity. The following exclusions apply:

- The annual turnover of the business was more than £25.9 million in the 12 months before the period of delivery
- The business has more than 250 employees

What you cannot claim for

You cannot claim for

- Loss of profits, turnover or goodwill
- FELR salary or pension contributions if they are paid by the employer during the period of delivery

How to claim

[TBC]

Returning to work

FELRs have the right to continue their substantive post during and after periods of delivery. Where periods of delivery are not a full time commitment they will continue to work in their existing post for the remainder of the time. Once the period of delivery is complete then arrangements should return to the state prior to the delivery period.

Supporting organisations

Birmingham Metropolitan College

Coventry College

City of Wolverhampton College

Dudley College of Technology

Halesowen College

Heart of Worcester College

Kidderminster/NCG

North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College

Solihull College and University Centre

South and City College Birmingham (inc Bournville)

South Staffordshire College

Telford College

Walsall College

West Midlands Combined Authority

Bosch

Denso

Muller

Chargy

Autotech Academy

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