Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG) Policy

Item	Details
Policy owner	Kirsty Noble
Position	Quality Director
Version	Version 2
Applies to	Learners and Staff
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1. Policy Statement

Skills-UK, Education & Training Limited is committed to providing high-quality, impartial, accessible and learner-centred Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG).

IAG is embedded throughout the learner journey to help prospective learners and learners make informed decisions about education, training, employment and progression.

Skills-UK will ensure that individuals receive accurate information about the opportunities available to them and are not enrolled onto provision that is unsuitable for their needs, circumstances or intended progression.

Where Skills-UK provision is not appropriate, learners will be provided with impartial information and, where appropriate, signposted or referred to alternative provision or support.

This policy supports Skills-UK's approach to the Matrix Standard and the continuous improvement of its IAG services.

2. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that IAG is delivered consistently, appropriately and effectively across Skills-UK.

The policy applies to all staff and associates involved in learner recruitment, engagement, enrolment, teaching, support and progression.

IAG may include:

- information about Skills-UK programmes and qualifications;
- eligibility and funding information;
- pre-course screening and suitability discussions;
- course and progression guidance;
- careers and employment information;
- labour market information;
- advice relating to further education or training opportunities;
- employability support;

- information about financial or learner support;
- identification of additional learning or accessibility needs;
- signposting or referral to specialist services; and
- progression support following programme completion.

3. Principles of IAG

Skills-UK's IAG provision will be based on the following principles:

- **Impartiality** – information and guidance will support the individual to make an informed choice rather than directing them towards Skills-UK provision where another option would be more appropriate.
- **Accuracy** – information will be clear, current and factually accurate.
- **Accessibility** – IAG will be delivered in ways that recognise individual communication, learning and accessibility needs.
- **Individualisation** – guidance will take account of the learner's circumstances, previous experience, goals and support needs.
- **Equality and Inclusion** – individuals will be treated fairly and will not be disadvantaged because of a protected characteristic or additional need.
- **Confidentiality** – personal information will be handled appropriately and in accordance with data protection requirements.
- **Timeliness** – individuals will receive relevant IAG at appropriate stages of their learner journey.
- **Progression-Focused** – IAG will support meaningful progression into further learning, employment or other appropriate outcomes.
- **Continuous Improvement** – the effectiveness and impact of IAG will be monitored and used to improve the service.

4. The IAG Learner Journey

IAG will not be treated as a single activity undertaken at enrolment.

It will be embedded at appropriate stages throughout the learner journey, including:

1. initial enquiry and engagement;
2. learner pre-screening;
3. initial interview and suitability assessment;
4. enrolment and initial assessment;
5. induction;
6. learning and progress reviews;
7. preparation for progression;
8. course completion and exit; and
9. post-course progression support and tracking where applicable.

The level and type of IAG provided will reflect the individual's needs and the programme being undertaken.

5. Learner Pre-Screening

Where appropriate, prospective learners will complete a **Learner Pre-Screening Form** before their formal interview or enrolment.

The purpose of pre-screening is to gather sufficient initial information to support an early assessment of:

- potential funding and programme eligibility;
- suitability for the intended programme;
- previous qualifications, learning or relevant experience;
- employment status where relevant;
- career and progression goals;
- potential barriers to participation;
- additional learning or support needs;
- accessibility or reasonable adjustment requirements; and
- any other information necessary to determine the appropriate next stage of the learner journey.

Information obtained through pre-screening will be used to inform the subsequent learner interview and IAG discussion.

Pre-screening is an initial assessment only. It does not replace:

- formal funding eligibility checks;
- evidence requirements;
- initial or diagnostic assessment;
- the individual learner interview; or
- any programme-specific assessment or suitability requirements.

Where pre-screening identifies a potential support requirement, this should be explored sensitively with the learner and appropriate arrangements considered.

Where a potential safeguarding concern is identified, staff must follow the Skills-UK Safeguarding Policy and reporting procedures.

6. Initial Interview and Suitability

Following pre-screening, learners will normally receive an individual interview or IAG discussion appropriate to the programme.

The interview will be used to confirm and explore relevant information identified during pre-screening and to determine whether the programme is appropriate.

The discussion should consider, where applicable:

- the learner's reasons for applying;
- previous education, qualifications and experience;
- existing skills and starting point;
- career and progression aspirations;
- programme content and requirements;
- attendance and participation expectations;
- assessment requirements;
- potential barriers to successful participation;
- support or reasonable adjustment requirements; and
- intended progression following completion.

The learner must be given sufficient information to understand what the programme involves before deciding to enrol.

Where the programme is not considered suitable, staff must explain this appropriately and provide impartial IAG about alternative options.

This may include another Skills-UK programme or signposting to another provider, careers service, employment service or specialist organisation.

7. Eligibility and Funding Information

Learners must receive clear and accurate information about any eligibility and funding requirements that apply to their programme.

Eligibility will be assessed against the current requirements of the relevant funding body, commissioner or contract.

Staff must not guarantee that a learner is eligible for funded provision until the required checks and evidence have been completed.

Where eligibility criteria cannot be met, the learner should be informed promptly and provided with appropriate IAG about alternative opportunities where possible.

Information about fees, learner contributions or other costs must be made clear before enrolment where applicable.

8. IAG During Learning

IAG will continue throughout the learner's programme and should form part of normal teaching, support and review activity.

Learners should have opportunities to discuss:

- their progress;
- learning goals;
- emerging support needs;
- employment and career aspirations;
- further learning opportunities;
- barriers to progression; and
- their intended next steps.

Tutors should use their knowledge of the learner and their progress to provide appropriate guidance and identify where more specialist advice or support is required.

Where staff do not have the expertise to provide particular advice, they should signpost or refer the learner to an appropriate service rather than providing information outside their competence.

9. Careers and Labour Market Information

Where relevant to the programme, learners will have access to appropriate careers and labour market information to support informed progression decisions.

Information may include:

- employment opportunities;

- occupational roles;
- skills requirements;
- qualification or training pathways;
- local and regional labour market information;
- employer expectations;
- salary information where appropriately sourced;
- progression routes; and
- opportunities for further education or training.

Information should be obtained from appropriate and reliable sources and reviewed to ensure that it remains current.

IAG should help learners understand the range of options available rather than promoting a single progression route.

10. Progression and Post-Course IAG

Before completing their programme, learners should be supported to identify appropriate next steps.

Depending on the programme and learner need, this may include:

- progression to a higher-level qualification;
- further education or training;
- employment;
- apprenticeships;
- work experience;
- volunteering;
- employer interviews;
- job-search activity; or
- referral to another organisation or support service.

Where applicable, Skills-UK will maintain appropriate contact with learners following completion to monitor progression and provide further IAG or support for up to 6 months.

Progression information will be recorded and used to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of Skills-UK's provision.

11. Learner Entitlements

Learners and prospective learners accessing Skills-UK IAG can expect:

- to be treated fairly and respectfully;
- clear, accurate and current information;
- information about programme content and expectations;
- an appropriate assessment of their needs and suitability;
- impartial guidance about available options;
- information about funding and eligibility where applicable;
- support to identify realistic learning and career goals;
- consideration of additional support and accessibility requirements;
- confidentiality and appropriate handling of personal information;
- opportunities to discuss their progression;

- signposting to specialist services where Skills-UK cannot provide the required support; and
- an opportunity to provide feedback or raise concerns about the IAG received.

12. Equality, Accessibility and Additional Support

Skills-UK will take reasonable steps to ensure that IAG services are accessible to all learners and prospective learners.

IAG will be provided without unlawful discrimination and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Where a disability or additional need is identified, staff will consider appropriate reasonable adjustments to enable the individual to access the IAG and enrolment process.

The identification of a disability, learning difficulty or support need will not in itself be treated as a reason for refusing access to a programme.

Where a programme has genuine entry, competence, funding or other eligibility requirements, these will be considered separately from the learner's disability or support needs.

13. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Information obtained during pre-screening, IAG, enrolment and progression activity will be handled in accordance with the UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 and Skills-UK Data Protection Policy.

Only information that is relevant and necessary for the purpose should be collected.

Learners will be provided with appropriate privacy information explaining how their personal information will be used.

Information relating to health, disability or other sensitive personal circumstances will be handled with particular care and only shared with staff or organisations where there is an appropriate reason and lawful basis for doing so.

IAG records must be stored securely within approved Skills-UK systems.

14. Roles and Responsibilities

The **Quality Director** is responsible for:

- overseeing the quality and effectiveness of IAG provision;
- ensuring the IAG approach supports relevant quality standards;
- monitoring IAG through quality assurance activity;
- reviewing learner feedback and outcomes; and
- overseeing the review of this policy.

The **Operations Manager** is responsible for:

- ensuring IAG processes are implemented consistently;
- ensuring staff understand their responsibilities;
- monitoring operational delivery of pre-screening, enrolment and progression processes;
- identifying staff development needs; and
- addressing operational issues affecting the quality of IAG.

Engagement Officers are responsible for:

- providing accurate initial course and eligibility information;
- coordinating learner pre-screening;
- undertaking or supporting initial interviews;
- assessing initial suitability;
- providing impartial pre-entry IAG;
- identifying potential support needs and barriers;
- signposting unsuitable learners to appropriate alternatives; and
- maintaining accurate records.

Tutors and Assessors are responsible for:

- reinforcing IAG throughout the learner journey;
- supporting learners to understand their starting points and progress;
- discussing progression opportunities;
- identifying emerging support requirements;
- providing programme and occupational information within their area of competence; and
- referring learners for additional or specialist IAG where required.

All staff involved in IAG are responsible for:

- providing accurate and impartial information;
- remaining within the limits of their knowledge and competence;
- maintaining confidentiality;
- keeping appropriate records;
- identifying and reporting safeguarding concerns; and
- keeping their knowledge relevant to their role up to date.

15. Staff Competence and Development

Staff involved in IAG must have the knowledge, skills and information required to undertake their role effectively.

Skills-UK will support staff through appropriate:

- induction;
- training and development;
- standardisation;
- updates on programme and funding requirements;
- labour market and sector information;
- safeguarding and equality training; and
- sharing of effective practice.

Staff are expected to recognise the limits of their own expertise and refer individuals to appropriately qualified or specialist services where necessary.

16. Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Impact

Skills-UK will monitor the quality and effectiveness of IAG through appropriate quality assurance arrangements.

This may include:

- learner feedback;
- learner voice activity;

- staff feedback;
- observations and quality reviews;
- review of pre-screening and IAG records;
- enrolment and conversion information;
- retention and achievement data;
- destination and progression information;
- referral and signposting outcomes;
- complaints and compliments;
- staff training and development; and
- external quality assurance or contractual monitoring.

Skills-UK will consider not only whether IAG has been delivered, but the impact it has had on learners and the organisation.

Findings will be used to identify strengths, areas for development and actions for continuous improvement.

17. Complaints and Feedback

Skills-UK welcomes feedback about the quality of its IAG provision.

Learners and prospective learners who are dissatisfied with the information, advice or guidance they have received may raise the matter with a member of staff or use the Skills-UK Complaints Policy.

Learners will not be disadvantaged for raising a genuine concern or complaint.

Feedback and complaints relating to IAG will be reviewed to identify themes and opportunities for improvement.

18. Monitoring and Review

The Quality Director is responsible for the formal review of this policy.

The policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier where required due to changes in legislation, funding or contractual requirements, the Matrix Standard, Skills-UK provision or organisational arrangements.

19. Related Policies and Procedures

This policy should be read alongside, where applicable:

- Enrolment Days Procedure
- Learner Pre-Screening Form
- Access to Fair Assessment Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration Policy/Procedure
- Safeguarding Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Learner Privacy Notice
- Complaints Policy
- Initial Assessment Procedure
- Learner Induction Procedure