ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

*DRAFT GUIDANCE FOR PROVIDERS
ON THE INSPECTION OF ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING*

*Interpreting the
Common Inspection Framework*

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INSPECTION OF ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING

Introduction

These guidelines aim to help interpret the questions in the *Common Inspection Framework* as they apply to inspections of adult and community learning. The *Common Inspection Framework*, these guidance notes and the suggested sources of evidence do not constitute a checklist. The *Common Inspection Framework* remains paramount in defining the standards against which inspection judgements are made. Inspectors consider the context of the work of each provider, and draw on evidence from an appropriate range of sources to substantiate their judgements.

Adult and community learning means courses, programmes or activities that enable adults to realise their learning goals. Usually, adult and community learning takes place at venues in the communities the provider serves. Provision may be designed specifically to widen participation by offering first steps back into learning and often is not accredited. Adults engage in adult and community learning for a variety of reasons. They may wish to:

- learn how to study after a period away from education
- acquire particular knowledge and skills
- obtain a specific qualification
- progress to further education or training
- improve their employment prospects
- learn how to play a more active role in their community
- explore issues of current concern in the community
- learn new skills or subjects in order to improve their lifestyle
- further their personal development
- take part in community projects
- develop a hobby or recreational interest
- develop their sporting skills and knowledge
- participate in a cultural activity, such as art, drama or music.

A range of different providers offer adult and community learning including:

- local education authorities
- voluntary and community organisations
- designated colleges of adult education
- further education colleges
- community schools and colleges
- regeneration partnerships.

Normally, adult and community learning is inspected and reported on in curriculum areas. Where appropriate, themes such as 'targeted work with disadvantaged groups' may be inspected and reported on. Inspectors give one grade for each curriculum area. They identify strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed in that particular curriculum area.

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Language of adult and community learning

Single term used in the *Common Inspection Framework*	Equivalent term in the context of adult and community learning	
Provider	**Provider**	Any organisation providing adult and community learning
Learner	**Learner**	Any person on an adult and community learning course or programme, or who is learning through participation in a community project
Teacher/trainer	**Trainer**	Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learin**g.**
	Mentor	Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them achieve their learning goals.
Learning goals	**Primary learning goals**	The goals learners wish to achieve, such as qualifications, particular knowledge and skills, and personal attributes such as the confidence and ability to help others. They may wish to apply their learning in a range of community, family, cultural, educational or employment contexts.
Personal and learning skills	**Personal and learning skills**	These include, for instance, study skills and the skills of working effectively on one's own, or in collaboration with others
Value-added	**Value-added**	This term relates to value added to learners' achievement. To calculate that value, it is necessary to identify the 'distance travelled' by learners on a programme or project. This can be done by comparing the extent of their knowledge and skills at the end of a programme or project, compared with the planned outcomes for them when they started. If learners have achieved more than originally anticipated, value has been added. If learners work towards an examination, the value

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		added to their achievements can be measured by comparing their final examination grades with those they obtained in examinations prior to joining the programme.

Other terms used in adult and community learning:

Community issues	Some programmes relate specifically to community issues. They respond to the aspirations, interests and concerns of particular groups in the community. For example, members of a Sikh Gurdwara want to explore relationships with people of other faiths in their town; parents wish to discuss the incidence of drug abuse in their locality and develop strategies for reducing it. Progress and achievement on these programmes are measured in terms of the participants' ability to explore issues, identify key problems and become more confident in finding solutions to them.
Outreach provision	Learning in a community venue away from the provider's main site. Learners who participate in outreach provision usually live near the venue.
Neighbourhood work	The provider's staff are based in a local community and aim to understand the concerns of the local residents and develop learning activities to meet local needs and interests.
Community intervention	A provider establishes a working relationship with a community group, identifies programmes or projects to meet its needs in order to improve the quality of life in the community.

The *Common Inspection Framework* is set out below. Guidance is provided on interpreting criteria in the framework in the context of adult and community learning.

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ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

1 How well do learners achieve?

To answer this key question, evaluate:

- **success in achieving challenging targets, including qualifications and learning goals**

- **the standards of learners' work in relation to their learning goals**

- **learners' progress relative to their prior attainment and potential**

- **the development of personal and learning skills.**

Common Inspection Framework	**In adult and community learning this means:**
• *results and retention rates compare well with local and national averages*	⇒ *also achievement of planned learning outcomes in non-accredited courses*
• *trends in performance over time show continuous improvement or the maintenance of very high standards*	⇒ *repeated evidence that a high proportion of learners progress significantly from their starting point and meet the challenges of their programmes of study*
• *analysis of added value indicates that learners make at least the progress expected of them*	⇒ *learners have enriched themselves by extending their range of knowledge and skills whilst on their course, programme or project; their learning is greater than anticipated at the start of the programme - additional learning outcomes are achieved*
• *standards are consistently high across the provider's work*	⇒ *learners achieve high standards appropriate to the different types of learning, for example learning informally through participation in community projects*
• *challenging learning goals and targets are achieved.*	⇒ *also learning goals are meaningful for the individual learner, for example learning to use a computer in order to help their grandchild learn IT skills*

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Common Inspection Framework Learners:	In adult and community learning this means:
• make significant progress towards fulfilling their goals and their potential	⇒ learners acquire knowledge and skills which are valuable to them and which will make a difference to their lives
• are prepared for effective participation in the workplace and in the community	⇒ learners acquire knowledge, skills and confidence which enable them to play an active role in the community, at work or at home
• progress to further or higher education or employment	⇒ learners progress to other training or education, paid or voluntary employment which enable them to use the knowledge and skills they have learned.
• reach appropriate levels in key skills consistent with their main programme of study or training	⇒ where applicable, learners develop the basic or key skills required to enable them to achieve their primary learning goals
• develop the skills of critical evaluation, research and analysis	⇒ learners are able to marshal information from a variety of sources and use it discerningly. They can form balanced judgements. They can evaluate options logically and exercise reason when arriving at decisions
• develop the attitudes and skills necessary to maintain lifelong learning, including the capacity to work independently and collaboratively	⇒ learners know how to organise their own learning programme and pursue their own objectives. They know how to identify further opportunities for learning.
• attend regularly and are punctual	⇒ learners do their best to keep to the pattern of study they have agreed with the provider

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Sources of evidence could include:

- observation of learners and their work during learning sessions, initial assessment; progress reviews
- discussions with learners, tutors, managers, workers in the local community
- documents relating to learners' progress and achievements, such as:

  - individual and/or collective learning agreements and learning plans
  - attendance registers and data on retention
  - example of learners' work, learning diaries, records of individual learners' achievements
  - records of the accreditation of learners' prior learning and experience
  - records of assessment and internal and external verification
  - analyses of learners' achievement, both accredited and non-accredited
  - records of assessment of learners
  - data on learners' progression and destinations

- exhibitions, displays or demonstrations of learners' work
- audio, video-recorded or photographic evidence of learners applying their acquired knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts, including the home, the community, the workplace
- community surveys demonstrating the impact learning has had on quality of life, local infrastructure, development of community groups etc.

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THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2 How effective are teaching, training and learning?

To answer this key question, evaluate:

- **how well teaching and training meet individuals' needs and course or programme requirements**

- **how well learners learn and make progress.**

Common Inspection Framework: Teachers:	In adult and community learning this means:
• *show knowledge, technical competence and up-to-date expertise, at a level consistent with effective teaching, training and assessment of the course or programme*	⇒ *tutors are suitably qualified, experienced in and knowledgeable about their subject area. They use appropriate methods for dealing with learners from a wide range of backgrounds and for the different types of provision eg community intervention and outreach*
• *plan effectively with clear objectives that all learners understand*	⇒ *tutors relate learning activities to objectives which have been discussed and agreed with learners as part of their learning plans*
• *use methods and styles of teaching and training consistent with the aims of their programmes and learners' personal objectives*	⇒ *tutors use a range of teaching methods to build on adults' existing experience and knowledge, helping them to extend their repertoire of learning styles*
• *challenge and inspire learners*	⇒ *tutors motivate learners by finding ways to help them look at themselves and the world afresh.*
• *set, use and mark assignments in a way that helps learners to progress*	⇒ *assignments and assessments reflect individuals' learning needs and primary learning goals. Feedback is fair and constructive*
• *with learners, develop individual learning plans, informed by initial assessment, that are reviewed and updated regularly*	⇒ *learning plans, reflect learners' identified learning needs, interests and aspirations, as well as their prior learning. These are reviewed and updated to take account of learners' progress. When learners participate in a programme that explores particular community issues, a learning plan devised for the whole group may be used for deriving*

	individual leaning plans
• *use materials and teaching methods that promote equality of opportunity*	⇒ *tutors encourage collaborative working relationships based on mutual respect, and sensitivity to the culture, and values of others*
• *present material in a way that is sensitive to issues of equal opportunity.*	⇒ *tutors ensure that the presentation and content of learning materials positively values peoples' different backgrounds and cultures*

Common Inspection Framework: **Learners:**	**In adult and community learning this means:**
• *acquire new knowledge and skills develop ideas and increase their understanding*	⇒ *learners develop their grasp of a particular subject, issue or skill; for some learners, learning will include the ability to operate effectively in their learning group or to undertake new roles in the wider community*
• *understand and are competent in what they are doing how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve*	⇒ *learners regularly review their progress with their tutor, can describe what progress they have made since the start of the programme and know what targets they aim to achieve next.*
• *apply effort to succeed with their work productively and make effective use of their time* • *are stimulated and show interest in their work*	⇒ *learners are absorbed in their studies. They are able to work unsupervised on agreed assignments. They organise their work carefully. They plan and carry out learning activities outside learning sessions.*

Sources of evidence could include:

- curricula vitae of staff
- staff development records
- observation of learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews
- interviews with learners, tutors, managers
- documents relating to learning programmes and learners' progress, including:
    - schemes of work and lesson plans
    - learning resources including learning materials
    - individual learning plans
    - records of learners' progress reviews
    - records of learners' work, including photographs, videos and journals
    - summaries and analyses of learners' responses to questionnaires about the quality of courses, programmes and projects

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THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

3 How are achievement and learning affected by resources?

To answer this key question, evaluate:

- **the adequacy and suitability of staff**

- **the adequacy, suitability and use of specialist equipment, learning resources and accommodation.**

Common Inspection Framework	**In adult and community learning this means:**
• *there are enough qualified and experienced teaching, training and support staff matching the demands of programmes and the range of learners*	⇒ *the tutor/learner ratio is appropriate and there are enough suitably experienced tutors and support staff. Staff understand and are able to meet the needs of learners of all abilities and from a wide range of backgrounds. They understand the anxieties that adults may have as a result of earlier schooling, or a lack of formal education*
• *the professional development of staff contributes to their effectiveness*	⇒ *staff development is available for all staff including part-time tutors and for volunteers*
• *specialist equipment and materials are used, including facilities which are relevant to the workplace and which meet current industrial standards*	⇒ *suitable up-to-date learning materials and equipment are available and are used at all venues*
• *accommodation provides a suitable setting for good teaching, training and learning and support for learners*	⇒ *venues used serve local communities well. Accommodation is conducive to learning, irrespective of whether the provider owns the buildings used. There are suitable childcare facilities*
• *learners have access to learning resources that are appropriate for effective independent study*	⇒ *there are effective arrangements with other organisations, eg the local library service, to help learners work on their own*
• *learners work in a safe and healthy environment*	⇒ *thorough health and safety checks and risk assessments are carried out in all learning venues, including those used on a part-time basis and those owned by other organisations*

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• *resources are used to best effect in promoting learning*	⇒ *furniture and equipment is appropriate to learners' adult status*
• *learning resources and accommodation allow all learners to participate fully.*	⇒ *All parts of the premises, including social areas and toilet facilities are accessible to learners with mobility difficulties, and additional or adapted learning and communications equipment is available to those who need it*

Sources of evidence could include:

- inspection computing and learning facilities, learning materials and accommodation, including adaptations made to assist people with learning difficulties or disabilities
- interviews with learners, staff
- documents relating to resources, such as:
    - learning resources, including learning materials
    - staffing records
    - the curricula vitae of staff
    - accommodation policies
    - accommodation maintenance programmes
    - health and safety policies and records of health and safety monitoring
    - records on use of accommodation

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THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**4 How effective are the assessment and monitoring of learners'
progress?**

To answer this key question, evaluate:

- **the suitability and rigour of assessment**

- **the uses of assessment in planning learning and monitoring progress.**

Common Inspection Framework	**In adult and community learning this means:**
• *forms of assessment and recording are suitable for the courses and programmes being followed*	⇒ *this applies to courses that are not accredited, as well as those leading to qualifications*
• *assessment is fair, accurate and carried out regularly*	⇒ *assessment methods are applied rigorously and sensitively, especially as many adults returning to study initially may be anxious about having their work assessed*
• *initial assessment provides an accurate basis on which to plan an appropriate programme of work*	⇒ *tutors are successful in identifying what skills and knowledge learners possess initially and are able to devise a learning plan that is suitable for them. Tutors display sensitivity in diagnosing learners' learning needs. They ensure that any form of initial assessment does not demoralise learners, particularly those who have had little successful experience of formal education*
• *assessment is used to monitor progress and inform individual learners about how they are performing and how they might develop further*	⇒ *this applies to courses that are not accredited, as well as those leading to qualifications*
• *achievements towards learning goals and qualifications are recorded and accredited*	⇒ *learners' achievements are recorded for all programmes, irrespective of whether they are accredited*
• *assessment information, including the analysis of the performance of different groups of learners, is used to guide course and programme development*	⇒ *programmes are modified and developed in the light of learners' achievements and progress*
• *assessment, verification and moderation procedures follow regulatory body requirements*	⇒ *this applies to accredited programmes*

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• *those with a legitimate interest, such as employers or parents, are clearly and regularly informed about learners' progress.*	⇒ *adult learners are consulted before information about them or their progress is given to any third party*

Sources of evidence could include:

- observation of assessments and progress reviews
- interviews with learners and tutors
- documents relating to assessment and recording learners' progress, such as:
  - policies and procedures for assessment of prior learning
  - assessment materials and resources
  - assessment records
  - learners' assessed work
  - internal and external verifiers' reports

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THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

5 How well do the programmes and courses meet the needs and interests of learners?

To answer this key question, evaluate:

- **the extent to which courses or programmes match learners' aspirations and potential, building on prior attainment and experience**

- **how far programmes or the curriculum meet external requirements, and are responsive to local circumstances.**

Common Inspection Framework	**In adult and community learning this means:**
• *learners have the opportunity to study an appropriate range of courses or programmes, and, where appropriate, achieve suitable qualifications*	⇒ *also, the timing of courses is designed to fit with adults' other commitments eg shift working, carer responsibilities*
• *the curriculum or an individual programme of work is planned and managed effectively to provide coherence and progression*	⇒ *learners can progress to other relevant courses and programmes, employment or more active involvement in the community*
• *the curriculum or programmes of work are socially inclusive, ensuring equality of access and opportunities for learners*	⇒ *the curriculum is designed bearing in mind demographic factors such as the ethnic/racial and age profile of the local community, incidence of poverty, unemployment rates and health statistics*
• *learners have the opportunity to broaden their experience through a suitable variety of enrichment activities*	⇒ *learners are able to enrich their lives by taking part in activities, recreational, cultural and communal, beyond the scope of their course, programme or project*
• *programmes of work take account of community and employer needs*	⇒ *the same*
• *multi-site provision and resources are effectively integrated to give a coherent programme of learning.*	⇒ *providers operating from more than one site ensure all venues are properly managed and resourced, and that opportunities for progression are available for all learners, including those who may need to study close to home*
• *legal requirements in relation to religious education and collective worship are fulfilled where they apply*	⇒ *not applicable*

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Sources of evidence could include:

- interviews with learners, tutors, support staff and programme managers
- documents relating to the organisation of learning programmes and projects, such as:
  - survey reports on the community
  - local market research/labour market information
  - demographic data
  - minutes of meetings with other local agencies about needs identification
  - community regeneration plans
  - learning programme and project plans, including list of planned learning activities
  - strategic and operating plans, for example local education authorities' lifelong learning plans
  - learners' individual learning programmes
  - programme and project reports
  - analyses of learners' views on provision

THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

6 How well are learners guided and supported?

To answer this question, evaluate:

- **the quality of information, advice and guidance to learners in relation to the courses and programmes they are following and their career progression**

- **the diagnosis of, and provision for, individual learning needs**

- **the access learners have to relevant, effective support on personal issues.**

In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which:

Common Inspection Framework	**In adult and community learning this means:**
• *support arrangements are planned and managed coherently*	⇒ *all learners, regardless of their place of learning, have access to an appropriate range of support services, including those provided by external agencies*
• *impartial guidance enables learners to choose the course or programme which is right for them*	⇒ *potential learners have the opportunity to discuss their requirements with someone who is able to give informed, impartial advice on learning opportunities in the area*
• *careers education and guidance are effective in guiding learners towards opportunities available to them when they have completed their studies or training*	⇒ *learners receive all the guidance they need at every stage of their course, programme or project*
• *procedures are in place for recognising poor punctuality, non-attendance and poor performance early and for taking appropriate action*	⇒ *providers monitor learners' attendance and check that they are progressing satisfactorily. They counsel those learners where there are concerns and try to help them resolve any problems they may have*
• *induction programmes enable learners to settle into their programmes quickly, to understand their rights and responsibilities and the demands of the course or programme*	⇒ *learners are given enough information to understand what their learning programme involves and to be able to use the resources available to them*
• *individual learning needs are accurately diagnosed and learners receive effective additional support*	⇒ *the needs learners have for additional learning support are identified and met*

throughout their studies or training	
• *learners have effective personal support to help them to complete their course or programme, including access to specialist support services.*	⇒ *all learners are given enough help and support to help them complete their course, programme or project successfully. The level and nature of support is appropriate for learners on different lengths and types of courses*
• *guidance and support are sensitive to equality of opportunity*	⇒ *the same*
• *partnership with other providers and relevant agencies involved in advice and guidance are effective*	⇒ *the same*

Sources of evidence could include:

- observation of induction, learning support sessions, advisory sessions for monitoring learners' progress and setting new goals, career and progression advisory sessions
- interviews with learners, tutors, mentors or counsellors, guidance workers, managers
- documents relating to learners' support, such as:
  - induction programmes and materials
  - learning agreements
  - materials for initial assessment
  - initial assessment results
  - timetables for and organisation of additional learning support
  - additional support learning materials
  - curricula vitae of staff providing additional support
  - questionnaires asking for learners' opinions on the quality of support
  - analyses of learners' responses to questionnaires
  - policies relating to adults with learning difficulties or disabilities

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LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

7 How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

To answer this question, evaluate:

- **how well leaders and managers set a clear direction leading to high quality education and training**

- **how effectively, through quality assurance and self assessment, performance is monitored and evaluated and steps taken to secure improvement**

- **how well equality of opportunity is promoted so that all learners achieve their potential**

- **where relevant, the extent to which governors or other supervisory boards meet their responsibilities**

- **how effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money.**

Common Inspection Framework	**In adult and community learning this means:**
• *clear direction is given through strategic objectives, targets and values that are fully understood by staff, including subcontractors and work placement providers*	⇒ *staff understand the rationale for their work and know what they have to do to help learners fulfil their aspirations and be successful in their learning. Learners' views inform developments in provision*
• *demanding targets for retention, achievement, progression and employment are set and met*	⇒ *the same*
• *the quality assurance arrangements are systematic and informed by the views of all interested parties*	⇒ *quality assurance arrangements are rigorous but designed to suit the size and scope of the provider. Learners and the local community have a voice in evaluating the quality of provision*
• *rigorous self-assessment leads to identified priorities and challenging targets for improvement*	⇒ *the same*
• *priorities are supported through responsible financial management*	⇒ *the same*
• *staff understand and are fully involved in the organisation's quality assurance arrangements*	⇒ *all staff, including full-time and part-time tutors, voluntary and support-staff understand and participate in the provider's quality assurance*

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	procedures
• *the information needs of managers and other staff are met and management information is used effectively to the benefit of learners*	⇒ *the same*
• *performance management, staff appraisal and review are effective in improving the quality of provision*	⇒ *appraisal and performance management arrangements are appropriate to the size and scale of the organisation and enable staff to identify their training needs and improve their performance. A good range of staff development is available*
• *there are explicit aims and values promoting equality for all that are reflected in the provider's work*	⇒ *equality of opportunity is promoted through all aspects of learning and the provider's work eg in fee structures, the participation of learners from different backgrounds, achievements and progress are analysed according to learners' backgrounds*
• *there are effective measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour, including all forms of harassment*	⇒ *the provider has policies and codes of practice to counter any harassment of persons because of their gender, ethnicity, age disabilities and sexual orientation, and staff are provided with training to help them deal with such harassment*
• *there are effective procedures for dealing with appeals and complaints*	⇒ *the provider responds to complaints and grievances promptly and effectively, using procedures that are understood by staff and learners*
• *governors or other supervisory boards effectively oversee the provider's strategic direction, and regularly monitor the quality of provision and their own performance*	⇒ *as appropriate, elected members in local authorities, governing bodies, management committees or partnership boards oversee the provider's strategic direction, monitor quality and review their own performance regularly*
• *efficient and effective use is made of resources*	⇒ *the provider subjects its running costs to regular scrutiny. It balances fee income with commitments to widening participation. Working in partnership with other organisations helps secure the cost-effective use of resources for adult learners*

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• *the 'best value' principles of comparison, challenge, consultation and competition are applied in securing resources and services*	⇒ *staff make effective use of 'best value' information to secure resources and services at competitive rates*

Suggested sources of evidence:

- interviews with tutors, managers, learners, members of management groups, elected members and other local organisations
- documents relating to the management of the provision, such as:
    - mission statements, policy statements, strategic and operating plans
    - agenda and minutes of meetings, annual reports
    - data from management information systems
- documents relating to quality assurance, such as:
    - quality assurance procedures and policy
    - procedures for monitoring the quality of training and assessment
    - data on the effectiveness and efficiency of the programmes
    - action plans for the improvement of provision
    - statistics relating to the achievement of performance targets
    - questionnaires, surveys and analysis of responses
    - self-assessment reports
- documents relating to the promotion of equality of opportunity, such as:
    - publicity and marketing materials
    - equal opportunities policies and procedures
    - monitoring and evaluation of equal opportunities data
    - details of staff development activities related to equal opportunities
    - statistics on recruitment, retention rates, achievements and destinations of learners, disaggregated according to learners' gender, ethnicity and disabilities
    - records of complaints and remedies
    - data on the proportion of persons from minority groups in the local population
- documents relating to financial management and the evaluation of the
    - efficiency of use of resources, such as:
    - the partnership's financial policies
    - annual financial reports
    - analysis of the cost of learning
    - market information on 'best value'