

SUBCONTRACTING POLICY & STRATEGY

Responsible for Implementation: Access Further Education - Quality, Curriculum and Operations Senior Leadership Team (AFE-QCO-SLT)

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About Us

Access Further Education Ltd ('The College') has subsidiary companies, trading names and trading partnerships through which it operates. The trading names and partnerships might have their own names or brands, but the legal entity for the purpose of this policy is Access Further Education Ltd. Trading subsidiaries, trading names and trading partnerships include Access Creative College ('ACC'), Access Industry ('AI') and Access Sport College ('ASC'). The dBs Institute (DBS Music UK Holdings and its subsidiaries), whilst a separate legal entity, shares common Directorships with the College.

Strategy

ACC is a national provider of education, skills, apprenticeship and employability provision across the creative industries. We operate through a network of college centres in London, Birmingham, Norwich, Bristol, Lincoln, Manchester and Plymouth, supporting over 3,000 learners annually.

Alongside direct delivery, ACC works with a select number of subcontracted partners to provide specialist provision aligned to our strategic priorities, sector expertise and regional demand.

Our strategy is to deliver high-quality, demand-led provision in growth sectors through:

- Direct delivery via our expanding campus network; and
- Carefully selected subcontracted partnerships where specialist expertise, local delivery or learner accessibility supports improved outcomes.

Policy

This policy applies to all subcontracted provision funded by the Department for Education (“DfE”) or successor bodies and managed by ACC.

The policy has been developed in accordance with:

- DfE subcontracting funding rules;
- DfE funding regulations;
- Relevant audit and compliance requirements; and
- ACC’s internal quality assurance and governance processes.

The policy will be published on the ACC website and made available on request.

The policy is reviewed annually to ensure ongoing compliance with legislative, regulatory and sector best practice requirements.

Responsibility for review sits with the Chief Finance Officer.

This policy complements ACC’s strategic priorities to grow national provision through a combination of direct delivery and carefully selected subcontracted partnerships. Our aim is to establish effective relationships with providers that strengthen and complement our offer, meet local and regional needs, and support national skills priorities.

ACC will ensure that:

- Subcontracting arrangements align with DfE funding rules, sector best practice and ACC quality standards;
- Procurement and partner selection processes are fair, transparent and subject to robust due diligence;
- Funding retained by ACC reflects the actual cost of oversight, support and compliance activity provided;
- All subcontracting relationships operate in good faith and in accordance with agreed contractual obligations; and
- Learner outcomes, quality and compliance remain central to all subcontracting activity.

Purpose of Subcontracting

ACC uses subcontracting arrangements to:

- Deliver specialist education and training aligned to employer and sector demand;
- Expand provision into new geographic markets and learner communities;
- Support learners unable to access ACC provision directly due to location, specialist need or social mobility barriers;
- Increase flexibility of delivery through accessible venues and employer-based provision;

- Support progression into employment, apprenticeships and higher education; and
- Access specialist facilities, expertise and industry resources that enhance learner outcomes.

Due Diligence

ACC operates a robust due diligence process when selecting and approving subcontracting partners.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Financial checks;
- Quality assurance reviews;
- Legal and compliance checks;
- Reference checks;
- Declarations of conflicts of interest; and
- Assessment of organisational capacity and capability.

All subcontractors must hold a valid UKPRN and, where required, be listed on the UK Register of Training Organisations (UKRTO).

Fees & Support

Management fees retained by ACC will typically not exceed 20% and will reflect the actual cost of oversight, quality assurance, compliance, systems access and support services provided.

Fees are agreed transparently and proportionately, ensuring value for money for both parties and alignment to the services delivered.

In return for management fees, ACC may provide:

- Access to staff development and training;
- Quality assurance and compliance support;
- Dedicated subcontractor management support;
- Access to learner monitoring and reporting systems;
- Audit and funding compliance guidance;
- Teaching, learning and assessment observations;
- Data monitoring and ILR support;
- Monitoring visits and performance reviews; and
- Business development and collaborative opportunities.

Quality Assurance & Improvement

ACC is committed to continuous improvement in teaching, learning and learner outcomes across both direct and subcontracted provision.

Subcontractors are subject to ongoing quality assurance processes, including:

- Quarterly Learner Experience Quality Reviews (LEQRs);
- Performance monitoring meetings;
- Annual reviews and target setting;
- Teaching, learning and assessment observations; and
- Staff development and best practice sharing activities.

These arrangements are designed to ensure compliance, maintain high standards and support continuous improvement.

Payment Terms

Payment terms will be agreed within individual subcontracting agreements and will reflect the type, volume and duration of provision being delivered.

Intervention

Where a subcontractor fails to meet contractual, quality, compliance or financial requirements, ACC may implement formal intervention measures, including:

- Mandatory improvement action plans;
- Enhanced monitoring and support arrangements;
- Financial holdback or clawback;
- Formal notices to improve; or
- Termination of subcontracting arrangements.

In the event of contract termination, ACC will ensure continuity of learner provision through direct delivery or alternative arrangements where appropriate.

Prevent & Safeguarding

ACC will work collaboratively with subcontractors to promote and uphold safeguarding and Prevent responsibilities.

Subcontractors are required to:

- Nominate a designated safeguarding representative;
- Participate in ACC safeguarding and Prevent arrangements; and
- Provide regular safeguarding and Prevent-related data returns as required.

All subcontractors must comply with relevant safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance.