



The Royal Academy  
of Engineering

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Atif Rafique  
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills  
1 Victoria Street  
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*Dear Mr Rafique*

**Re: Skills for Sustainable Growth Consultation**

The Royal Academy of Engineering has led the recent FE STEM Data Project commissioned by BIS. We are grateful to the Department for the opportunity to identify the important contribution to the provision of STEM skills provided by the FE & Skills sector in England. A detailed analysis of the data will be published in due course. However, preliminary results show that at present:

- Only 1% of enrolments for STEM qualifications in the FE & Skills sector in England are at level 4 or above. This equates to some 14,000 enrolments across STEM in 2009/10 on 280 Level 4+ courses.
- By comparison 71% of STEM enrolments are at level 2 or below.

There were 130 Level 4+ engineering courses offered in the FE & Skills sector in England in 2009/10 and some 3,000 enrolments; a significant proportion of which were workplace based. This provision is nearly one order of magnitude smaller than the engineering provision in the HE sector.

With significant pressure on provision in HE, we must assess the capacity of the FE & Skills sector to deliver Level 4+ courses. It is clear to us that the FE & Skills sector does not currently have significant capacity for delivering STEM HE courses, particularly in engineering. Although there are some notable exceptions (Loughborough College for example), the FE & Skills sector cannot be expected to provide a significant proportion of engineering Higher Education for some time to come as most FE institutions will lack the workforce, subject knowledge and infrastructure required to deliver the high quality Level 4+ provision needed by employers, needed for the regeneration of our high value engineering economy and needed for the overall UK economic recovery.

The current focus in the FE & Skills sector on STEM qualifications at Level 2 or below does little for the formation of engineers and technicians unless those enrolled progress to Level 3 qualifications. With engineering being central to rebalancing the economy in favour of productive industries, the FE & Skills sector needs to focus more on progression to Level 3 than it does currently.

Yours sincerely

Professor Matthew Harrison (Secretariat)  
On behalf of the Standing Committee for Education and Training

