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A Snapshot of Further Education

What exactly is it?



Essentially, Further Education could be summarised as preparing young adults for:

- work they are doing (apprenticeships)
- the work they will do (vocational training)
- university (currently 30% of all entrants)

Further Education includes any study after secondary school that is not part of higher education. The nature of this provision is a rich mix of academic and vocational education and can vary from basic skills training to technical qualifications to applied general qualifications, such as higher vocational qualifications, e.g. NVQ, BTEC or Foundation Degrees. As autonomous institutions incorporated by Act of Parliament they have the freedom to innovate and respond flexibly to the needs of individuals, business and communities.

Further Education is primarily available at colleges. Colleges that are regarded as part of the FE sector include:

- General FE and Tertiary Colleges
- Sixth Form Colleges
- Specialist Colleges (mainly Colleges of Agriculture and Horticulture, Art and Design or Drama and Dance)

In addition, FE courses may be offered in the school sector, both in sixth form (16–19) schools, or, more commonly, sixth forms within secondary schools.



It is worth noting that there is a distinction between Further Education and Higher Education, the latter of which is university level education. Do bear in mind that although Higher Education is normally provided at universities, many Further Education Colleges now run Higher Education courses and are linked to local universities for verification.

The Facts

Statistics are useful to give some idea of how many people are in Further Education at any one time. Although the exact figures vary from year to year, a 2014 study found that:

- In England alone **3.1 million people in total** are educated at FE colleges each year.
- **64% of 16–18 year olds** are in Further Education, with **834,000 in Colleges** and **438,000 in maintained school and academy sixth forms**.
- In 2014 there were **384 colleges in the UK**; **336 in England**, **16 in Wales**, **26 in Scotland** and **6 in Northern Ireland**.
- **Everyone has a local college** – in rural areas the site might be a distance away.

If you know little or nothing about Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges, you can get an overview of information from the website of the Association of Colleges (England), Colegau Cymru, Scotland's Colleges and Colleges Northern Ireland. 'College Key Facts' produced by the Association of Colleges gives a good overview.



WARNING:

Colleges can change very quickly – even their names and size (mergers and de-mergers!) so to have the most up to date information, check back regularly!



Faith Learning Provision

Unlike school sixth forms where Corporate Worship and RE are still legally compulsory (statutory provision) colleges have no such requirement placed upon them. This means that very few colleges offer Religious Education as a subject for study. With no RE department, faith provision generally reverts to Student Services as a matter of Equality and Diversity. Some colleges have chaplains, either paid or voluntary. Almost all chaplains are from a Christian denomination working as a 'multi-faith chaplain'. Where there are no chaplains, the college leadership often doesn't know how to respond in a number of situations. Examples include:

- A college may find itself with a request from Christian students to run a CU group when there is no alternative provision for other faiths – should it say yes or no?
- Muslim students may ask for specific requirements for prayer that would require significant alterations to an area of the college.
- Knowing how best to prepare students to understand how religious beliefs and faith may affect the service that they offer in their professional life.
- Colleges want to promote diversity during a special event but have little expertise for doing this for religion and belief.

Although we are talking about working in a multi faith context, Christians can offer real help and service in all of these matters, providing they are willing to do so professionally, recognising what the college needs and is trying to achieve. There need be no compromise on matters of personal faith – a Christian working as a multi-faith chaplain is no different from a Christian lecturer who needs to work with the syllabuses of the 21st century. A Christian cannot speak as a member of another faith but can serve those of all faiths and none – not seeking special favour for their own standpoint.



Need Help?

Festive has a huge heart for the world of FE. We have many years experience of ministering in FE Colleges and Sixth Forms and our Initiative started from an awareness of the lack of support available to Christian students, staff and Chaplains.

We aim to support those working and studying within the FE sector in effectively fulfilling their role as 'God's Ambassadors'.

To do this we offer: **Prayer | Advice | Resources | Training**

Whether you hope to see a Chaplaincy started near you or would like prayer or support in your current situation, we would love to hear from you!

To find out about some of the other organisations that work with FE chaplains, [check out this resource](#)

Useful links:

Association of Colleges: www.aoc.co.uk

Colegau Cymru: www.colegacymru.ac.uk (www.collegeswales.ac.uk)

Scotland's Colleges: www.scotlandscolleges.ac.uk

Colleges Northern Ireland: www.anic.ac.uk