

Handbook for student educational oversight inspections of private further education colleges and language schools

Effective from September 2026

ISI is a Home Office designated educational oversight body for private providers including English language schools as laid out in the guidance document: [Applying for a Student sponsor licence](#) (updated May 2025).

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Introduction

1. Private further education colleges and English language schools which hold student sponsor licences must meet the requirements set out in Home Office guidance for Educational Oversight¹, as well as relevant legislation regarding safeguarding and safer recruitment of staff. Collectively, these, and any other requirements that are applicable to the colleges inspected by ISI, are referred to throughout the document as ‘the requirements.’
2. Part of this oversight includes checks on financial sustainability. These checks will be completed as part of the inspection. College leaders are required to complete ISI’s financial sustainability inventory. This must be submitted to ISI by uploading to the inspection team room following notification of the inspection and before the inspection begins.
3. The requirements inspected by ISI are outlined in the Framework for student educational oversight inspections of private further education colleges and language schools.
4. For the sake of clarity within this document the term ‘college’ will be used throughout to refer to both private further education colleges and language schools.
5. It is the ultimate responsibility of the proprietor (to include those with governance responsibility) to ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at any college:
 - demonstrate the skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the requirements are met
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the requirements are met
 - comply with requirements relevant to education oversight of Student sponsorship duties.

ISI inspections evaluate and report publicly on the extent to which each college meets the requirements.

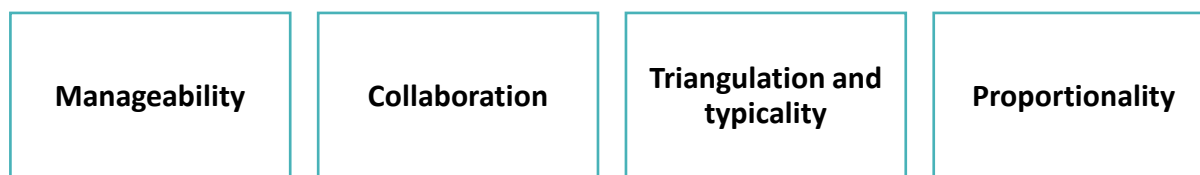
6. The Home Office publishes advice to colleges to help proprietors and leaders understand the requirements of educational oversight. It is not the intention of ISI to tell college leaders how to govern or manage colleges.
7. ISI echoes this approach on inspection. There is no preferred method by which ISI expects colleges to meet any of the requirements. ISI does not consider there to be a best way of doing things in colleges.
8. The Home Office issues student sponsor guidance which also includes information on educational oversight¹. Ultimately, failure to meet the requirements outlined in ISI’s inspection framework and handbook can lead to removal of student sponsor status.
9. This handbook lays out for inspectors the methodology of inspections carried out by ISI. It provides guidance to inspectors in conducting inspections under the Framework for student

¹ [Student sponsor guidance - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/student-sponsor-guidance)

educational oversight inspections of private further education colleges and language schools from September 2026. This handbook is freely available to college leaders, staff and other stakeholders. This is to aid understanding of ISI's approach to quality assurance and inspection.

10. This handbook is a working document and will be updated regularly. The handbook should be read in conjunction with the ISI Framework for student educational oversight inspections of private further education colleges and language schools.
11. Each inspection is unique to the context of the college. This handbook does not provide a blueprint for inspection. It should be used flexibly by inspectors, depending on the context of the college being inspected. However, inspectors will adhere to the principles of inspection outlined in the ISI framework and follow the inspection methodology set out in this handbook.
12. ISI inspection methodology outlined in this handbook applies to all ISI inspections for Private Further Education educational oversight.

ISI inspection methodology



13. The ISI Framework lays out the overarching principles of ISI's approach to inspection. In applying these principles, inspectors pay due regard to the foundations of inspection methodology:

Manageability of the inspection

Collaborative working with college leaders and staff

Triangulation and typicality of evidence

Proportionality in reaching judgements.

The manageability of inspection

14. Inspectors must be mindful of the impact of inspections on the workload of leaders and staff in colleges. Inspectors must be sensitive to this at all stages of the inspection. The work of inspectors should not unduly disrupt the usual day-to-day running of the college.
15. Inspectors will act with professionalism and sensitivity at all times in line with the inspector code of conduct. If the lead inspector becomes aware of staff undergoing exceptional stress during an inspection they should call a member of the central ISI team for advice.
16. If a member of college staff is concerned about the impact of inspection on their wellbeing or the wellbeing of colleagues, they should let the lead inspector know as quickly as possible. The lead inspector will seek and act on advice from a senior member of ISI staff. If college staff do not feel able to speak to the lead inspector, they should telephone ISI on 020 7600 0100, explain that their college is currently being inspected and ask to speak to a senior member of ISI staff directly. The senior member of staff at ISI will listen carefully. Having discussed internally, ISI will advise on the most appropriate way forward. If possible, college staff should let someone at the college know about their concern, including the proprietor.
17. College leaders must submit to ISI the financial sustainability inventory as part of the inspection process. Inspectors will not expect or request leaders or staff to produce any other new documentation specifically for inspection, prior to, or during the inspection. Inspectors will review information that leaders and staff already use in the college's chosen format.
18. Inspectors will not usually expect college staff to collate samples of students' work in advance of inspection. However, college staff may wish to share examples of students' work to demonstrate the impact of the college's provision. Inspectors will view students' current work with them and with members of staff, where appropriate and where available.

19. Inspectors may request to see and/or discuss examples of files or records to evaluate typical day-to-day practice at the college. Inspectors will evaluate how the examples demonstrate that the requirements are being met. Inspectors will make clear to leaders that they should not prepare, or have prepared, written case studies specifically for the inspection. Any such preparation does not align with the principle of manageability of inspection and is therefore unlikely to be seen by inspectors as typical of the college's provision.
20. College leaders may suggest suitable times for inspection discussions with, for example, staff, the proprietor(s)/those responsible for governance, and students. Inspectors will endeavour to accommodate these suggestions to minimise disruption to the college day.

Collaboration with the college

21. Inspectors will, wherever possible and appropriate, work collaboratively with the proprietors, college leaders and staff to ensure the smooth running of the inspection and effective evidence gathering.
22. The lead inspector will liaise regularly throughout the inspection with the principal, or their designated senior leader, keeping them informed of emerging evidence and to amend the inspection plan, as required. Lead inspectors will provide college leaders with the opportunity to signpost any additional evidence that may be relevant to emerging judgements. These regular keeping-in-touch meetings will also provide opportunities for the principal to raise any concerns, including about the conduct of the inspection. The lead inspector will raise with the principal at the earliest opportunity, any emerging issues which indicate one or more of the requirements may be unmet. However, the lead inspector will make clear to the principal that final judgements can only be reached when all the inspection evidence has been reviewed. This judgement is provisional until report publication.
23. Lead inspectors will offer college leaders the opportunity to be involved in some inspection activities. These include reviewing students' work, joint lesson observations, discussion of examples of existing records and evidence, and tours of the college premises to consider requirements related to the college premises.
24. Joint inspection activities are helpful to inspectors when college leaders can provide context for the evidence that inspectors are recording and evaluating. These activities may also be helpful to college leaders in enabling them to understand how inspectors evaluate evidence and reach judgements.
25. The role of the college leader is to provide context for the evidence and not to influence inspectors' evaluation of the evidence.

Triangulation and typicality of evidence

26. Triangulation is the process inspectors use to contextualise and test inspection evidence. Inspectors will look for connected sources of evidence, wherever this is available, to reach valid and reliable judgements.

27. Inspectors gather evidence from a wide range of sources. These include discussions with college leaders, staff and students; information from the inspection surveys for students and staff; first-hand observations; and scrutiny of documentation and college records. Where students have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or are vulnerable, colleges should ensure that prior to discussions with the students concerned, inspectors are aware of the nature of their needs and appropriate steps are taken to ensure that the students are prepared for the discussion.
28. Inspectors will consider what they are seeing, reading and hearing; why it is important and how it relates to the requirements; how it relates to other evidence; and what further evidence inspectors need to gather.



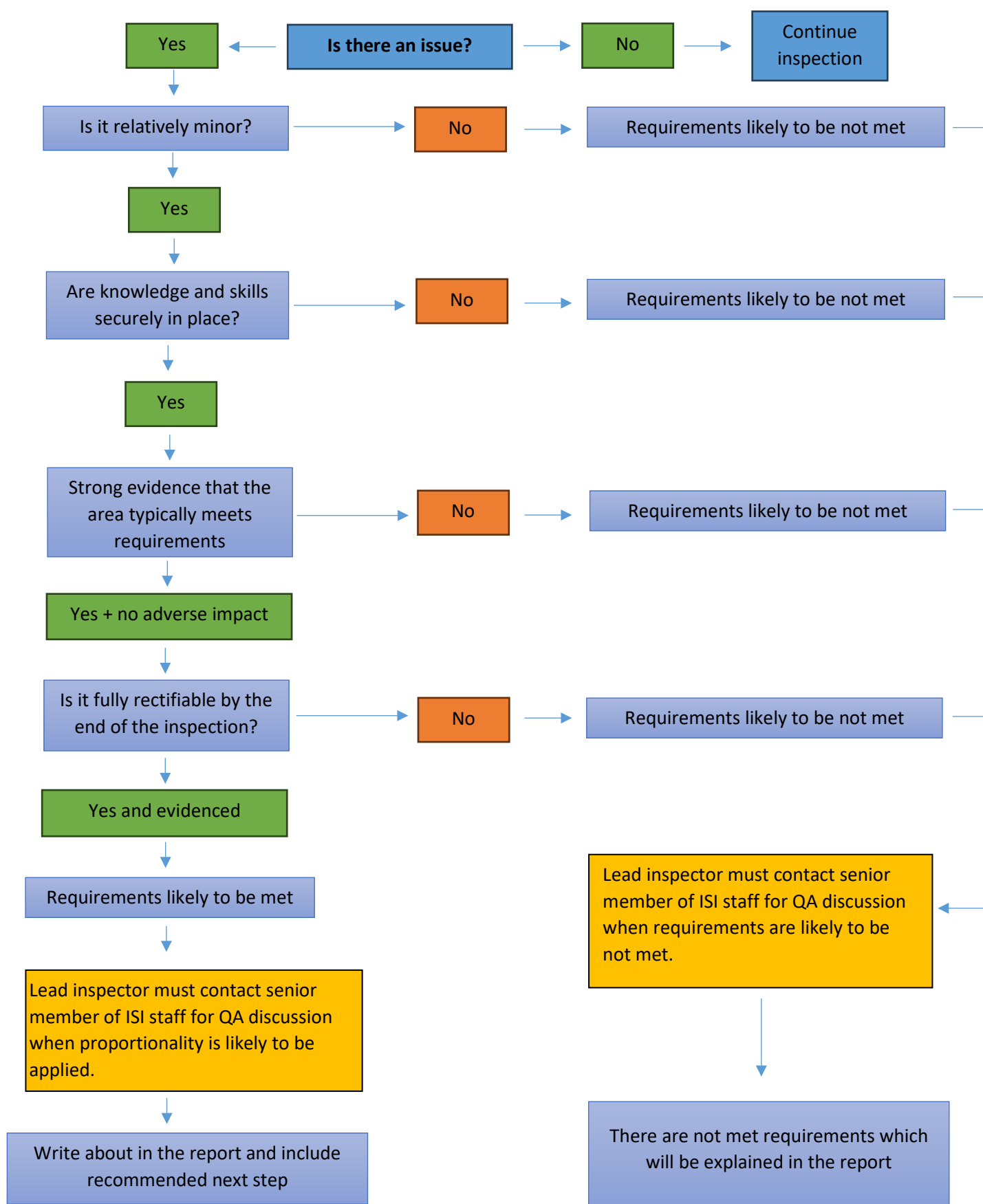
29. Inspectors will want to see the college operating as it usually does, to evaluate what is typically experienced by students. This is particularly important when reporting on the requirements relating to the academic provision and the welfare of students.
30. Inspectors will confirm the typicality of what they are seeing, hearing and reading by considering connected evidence (triangulation) including through:
 - discussions with leaders, staff and students
 - review of college records
 - review of students' work
 - observations around the college site.
31. Inspectors will not expect, request or encourage college leaders to reorganise the curriculum timetable for students during inspections. Lessons and activities for students should go ahead as planned, including any off-site visits or pre-arranged visitors. Inspectors will adapt their inspection plans to ensure they gather the necessary evidence. Where inspectors are not able to see teaching in any area of provision, they will seek evidence of

teaching and learning from other sources, for example by speaking with students and staff and by reviewing students' work.

Proportionality

32. When judging the extent to which a college meets the requirements, inspectors will exercise their professional judgement. They will consider the reasonableness of leaders' decision-making and the impact of those decisions on students' learning, experience and safety.
33. Where there is a relative weakness or minor error, inspectors will consider whether that weakness amounts to a failure to meet one or more of the requirements. The scale and impact of any weaknesses or errors will be taken into consideration by inspectors.
34. If inspectors find that the relative weakness does not indicate a systemic failure and the relative weakness can easily be rectified in a college's processes and/ or provision, inspectors will take a proportionate approach. This will be reflected in the text of the inspection report and will lead to a 'recommended next step' in the inspection report.
35. Where college leaders make amendments to the college's policies, processes or provision during inspections, inspectors will consider the scale and impact of such amendments and consider their impact on inspection judgements. Inspectors may conclude that changes in a policy document made by college leaders during the course of an inspection are unlikely to be able to be considered to be effectively implemented by leaders.
36. Weaknesses or errors which are indicative of systemic failings in the college's processes and/or provision will lead to a judgement that the relevant requirements are not met. Systemic failings include decision-making by leaders based on a lack of understanding of what is required to meet the requirements, or an inability or reluctance to do what is required.

Applying Proportionality



Conducting inspections

The timing of inspections

37. Colleges will have a student educational oversight inspection at least once every two years. The Home Office may instruct ISI to conduct an inspection at their discretion that is brought forward in this cycle. ISI may recommend to the Home Office that a student educational oversight inspection is required if, for example, ISI receives information that gives rise to concerns about the provision for students.
38. ISI will also conduct an inspection if a college has failed to meet all requirements at the time of the previous inspection. This inspection will typically take place within six months of the previous inspection where requirements were not met.
39. College leaders must notify ISI within 28 days of a material change of its circumstances as laid out in [Student Sponsor Guidance Document 2: Sponsorship duties](#).

The duration of inspections and the inspection team

40. Student educational oversight inspections are typically scheduled for two and a half days. The first of these days is held remotely. Following the first remote inspection day, the inspection team will use the following day to review the information provided by the college. Further remote meetings with college leaders and staff will also take place on this second day. The on-site inspections day(s) will then follow. The length of the inspection may be adjusted if the context and size of the college necessitate this.
41. The inspection is led by a lead inspector and, in most cases, a minimum of one team inspector.
42. The size of the inspection team will depend on the size of the college (the number of students) and the context of the college. Where there is split-site provision, additional inspectors may be added to the team. Where colleges teach students who are under the age of 18 and/or vulnerable adults, this may necessitate additional inspectors in order to evaluate the college's safeguarding arrangements. Where student accommodation is a consideration, the on-site inspection days may be extended.
43. The on-site component of the inspection will usually begin at 09:00. Inspectors will not arrive at the college earlier than 08:15. Inspectors will usually leave the college by 18:00. However, in some instances inspectors may be on site for longer than this, such as, for example, to observe elements of residential provision or evening activities. In accordance with the principle of manageability, the lead inspector will consult with college leaders and consider the usual timings of the college in planning the inspection and adjust timings as necessary.

44. On the final day of the inspection, the inspection plan will allow sufficient time for the final team meeting, when inspectors reach the provisional inspection judgements and provide the provisional judgements to college leaders, proprietors and/or governors.
45. ISI may request that a shadow inspector joins the inspection team. The shadow role is to observe the inspection. The shadow will not contribute to the evaluation of the evidence or the judgements made by the inspection team. The shadow may attend meetings and take notes as part of their professional development.
46. Inspections may be monitored for quality assurance purposes. The role of the inspection monitor is to ensure that the inspection team adheres to ISI's inspection methodology and inspection principles. The monitor may ask questions for clarification during meetings with leaders and staff to assure themselves that appropriate evidence is considered by the inspection team. The monitor will support and challenge the inspection team to ensure that the evidence base is robust and supports the provisional judgements reached by the team.
47. ISI may schedule aligned inspections of linked colleges or college groups, particularly when colleges share the same senior leadership team and/or proprietors. Where linked colleges are inspected at the same time, lead inspectors will liaise with senior leaders to manage the inspection to minimise disruption and to align inspection activities where appropriate.
48. Prior to the inspection, the lead inspector will conduct an initial meeting with the principal of the college to determine details of the inspection visit, as well as considering any early emerging themes.

Declarations of conflicts of interest

49. All inspectors must regularly update on ISI's inspector portal any declarations of close personal or business relationships with, or financial interest in, any colleges, including groups of colleges in common ownership, inspected by ISI which might give rise to a conflict, or perceived conflict, of interest.
50. By accepting an invitation to inspect a college for ISI, inspectors warrant that, in the period of six years before the date of the inspection, they have not governed, worked at (including as a consultant), sought employment or engagement at, or given advice to the college which they are invited to inspect.
51. If a conflict of interest becomes apparent at any stage prior to, or during an inspection, inspectors must contact the ISI office immediately.

The code of conduct for inspectors and guidance for colleges

52. Inspectors must adhere to the code of conduct. Inspectors are required to uphold the highest professional requirements in relation to all who are involved in the process of inspection, before during and after the inspection. If any member of an inspection team wishes to raise a concern about an aspect of inspection, they should speak to the lead inspector in the first instance. If this is not possible or if the inspector would prefer to speak to a senior member of staff at ISI, they should telephone ISI on 020 7600 0100.
53. Inspectors will:
 - act in the best interests of the students at the inspected college and prioritise the safeguarding and welfare of students at all times
 - uphold ISI's values at all times and evaluate objectively in line with ISI's frameworks and regulatory requirements
 - refrain at all times from any behaviour which might bring ISI into disrepute
 - use their ISI inspector designation only in relation to their inspection work for ISI, unless previously agreed with ISI senior staff
 - maintain up-to-date knowledge of ISI's inspection frameworks, handbook, policies and practice and associated regulatory requirements and guidance
 - maintain strict confidentiality about the identity of the college to be inspected, the timing and scheduling of inspections and not divulge any information about the inspection (including but not limited to the region, the type of college or any identifying features) other than the fact they are going to be deployed at that time
 - declare all actual and perceived conflicts of interest and have no real or perceived connection with the inspected college prior to or following inspection, which could undermine the integrity of the inspection
 - act promptly and in line with ISI guidance on any safeguarding or health and safety issues that may arise on inspection
 - work with professionalism, sensitivity and integrity, treating all with respect and courtesy
 - liaise immediately with senior staff at ISI if inspectors become aware that college staff are experiencing exceptional stress
 - follow requirements and good practice in relation to the secure management of information
 - be mindful of the additional workload that inspection can create, be sensitive to the needs of college staff and take reasonable steps to prevent undue anxiety and stress
 - avoid any requests or suggestions that may cause undue disruption to business as usual for the college
 - evaluate the work of the college objectively and impartially supported by clear and secure evidence

- report fairly and without favour ensuring that judgements are reliable
 - respect the confidentiality of inspection evidence and judgements
 - wear their ISI inspector identification badge at all times when on college premises.
54. ISI sets out guidance for colleges to facilitate a professional working relationship. Inspectors must be familiar with the guidance. Lead inspectors should refer college leaders to the guidance during the first telephone call following notification.
55. ISI expects that college leaders and staff will:
- treat inspectors with professionalism, respect, courtesy and candour
 - engage in an open and honest way with inspectors and work with them to facilitate the inspection process
 - ensure any inspection surveys, or other communications with parents, staff and students requested by the lead inspector, are sent out promptly
 - provide access to evidence that will enable inspectors to evaluate the work of the college fairly and reliably
 - facilitate necessary meetings with the proprietors, leaders, staff and students
 - work with inspectors to minimise disruption to the normal working college day
 - work with inspectors to minimise anxiety, stress or additional workload for staff
 - ensure the health and safety of inspectors while on college premises
 - maintain regular and productive communication with inspectors
 - raise any concerns promptly with the lead inspector
 - respect the confidentiality of information about the inspection and inspectors.

Managing safeguarding concerns that arise on inspection

56. If inspectors observe, hear or receive information which causes them concern about the safety or wellbeing of a student, they should act immediately to ensure the safety of the student, in line with [ISI's policy](#). Inspectors will follow the college's safeguarding and/or child protection policy. Concerns will normally be reported to the appropriate person within the college for child protection procedures to be implemented according to the disclosure, concern or allegation made, and external agencies will be informed directly if required.
57. If a student raises safeguarding concerns, inspectors should listen to what they are being told, take notes, and avoid promising confidentiality or asking leading questions. They must not communicate with the person who is the subject of the allegation or suspicion or investigate the matter themselves.

Managing sensitive or personal information

58. All information relating to inspection is highly confidential and may not be shared beyond those directly involved in the inspection or the quality assurance and complaints processes. Inspectors must ensure that the information relating to the timing of an inspection is held in strict confidence. Inspectors must also ensure that the provisional outcome of an inspection, prior to report publication, is held in strict confidence.
59. Inspectors view and record sensitive information provided by colleges. Colleges are not required to anonymise information for inspectors. Inspectors will record the information they need to gather and evaluate evidence to make judgements. Inspectors must not record the names or initials of any individual including students or members of college staff. Inspectors will record the title or role of individuals involved in inspection activities. There may be, by exception only, occasions when names must be recorded as directed by Senior Staff at ISI.

60. During the inspection, inspectors must take care to preserve confidentiality and to protect the privacy of the students and staff including by:
 - ensuring that confidential discussions cannot be overheard
 - keeping confidential information safe and refraining from removing confidential information from the college
 - locking laptops with password protection and avoiding using data storage devices (any devices used must be password protected)
 - being aware that some students may not want to be involved in the inspection and making clear that students' participation in discussions is voluntary
 - explaining to students that inspectors will not share any comments that may identify them unless individuals are at risk of harm.
61. All information must be managed securely and uploaded to ISI secure systems immediately following the inspection. Once the evidence has been uploaded to ISI systems, inspectors are not permitted to hold inspection information on their personal devices under any circumstances. Inspection information must be removed from inspectors' personal devices no later than four days following the end of the on-site inspection.
62. Inspectors use the inspection virtual team room on ISI's portal to communicate with other members of the inspection team and to transfer any documentation. The lead inspector will provide and receive information to and from the college via the virtual team room. Inspectors must do all they can to reduce the use of email for inspection matters and must never use email to communicate sensitive or confidential information.
63. Inspectors must be familiar with ISI's data protection policy and ISI's personal data breach policy and refer to these policies if they suspect a security or data breach has occurred.

The inspection process

Timescale	Activity	Phase
Three weeks ahead of the start of the inspection.	Pre-inspection preparation by the lead inspector Notification of the date of inspection Pre-inspection planning call with college leader(s) and lead inspector is arranged for within one week of the notification call Links to the pre-inspection student and staff survey shared with college leader(s) Document collation and uploads by college begins	Pre inspection
Within one week of the inspection	Pre-inspection planning call with lead inspector and college leaders. Share draft inspection plan and discuss inspection arrangements	
Five days before the inspection	The pre-inspection student and staff surveys close	
Day one of the inspection	Evidence collection and triangulation - Remote meeting between college leaders/staff and inspector(s)	Off site
Second day of inspection	Lead inspector (and team inspectors where appropriate) review emerging evidence and meet to discuss further triangulation activities The lead inspector meets with the principal or nominated senior leader to update the draft inspection plan. There may also be follow-up remote meetings with college staff.	Off site
On-site inspection day(s)	Evidence collection and analysis focusing on first-hand evidence gathering Provisional judgements made and communicated to college leader(s)	On site
Day five following the inspection	Draft report submitted uploaded to ISI portal by lead inspector for quality assurance	Post-inspection quality assurance
Day twenty following the inspection	Draft inspection report sent to the college for factual accuracy check	
Day 30 following the inspection	The final report is issued to the college along with the lead inspector's response to any factual accuracy comments	Final report issue and publication
Day 35 following the inspection	The final report is published to the ISI website and copied to the Home Office	

Pre-inspection

Inspection notification and deferral requests

64. Inspections are usually announced to the principal three weeks before the inspection begins.
65. A member of the ISI delivery team will make the notification call to the principal of the college. In the absence of the principal, the most senior member of staff at the college will be notified.
66. The notification call will confirm the dates of the inspection and which dates are on site and which are held remotely.
67. ISI will provide the names of the inspectors on the team. The college will be informed if the inspection will be quality assured on site and/or if a shadow inspector is to be attached to the inspection.
68. A member of the delivery team will inform the lead inspector when the notification call has been completed usually within 24 hours of the notification call.
69. Following the notification call, the delivery team will email the principal with confirmation of the inspection, including the dates of the inspection, the names of the inspection team members and the links to the online student and staff surveys. The college will be asked to distribute the links to the surveys as soon as possible following the notification call.
70. The principal will be informed that the lead inspector will contact them to arrange a preliminary call at a mutually convenient time usually within one week of the notification call.
71. Any decision to defer an inspection after the scheduled inspection date has been determined will be taken by ISI. If the college wishes to request deferral of the inspection, the principal, or their delegated senior leader, must email ISI explaining the circumstances and the reasons for the request. ISI will decide if the inspection should go ahead. While awaiting the decision, inspection planning will continue.
72. All inspectors must have deep knowledge and understanding of:
 - The ISI Framework
 - The ISI inspection handbook
 - [Home Office Educational Student Sponsor and Educational Oversight guidance](#)
 - Safeguarding guidance including [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) and [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)
73. The lead inspector will review pre-inspection information, prior to the inspection notification to the college, including information held by ISI and information available on the college's public website and in the public domain.

74. The lead inspector must consider the following information when planning the on-site inspection:
 - previous inspection reports
 - information about the context of the college held on ISI's portal
 - any concerns or complaints recorded held by ISI
 - information including the name of the proprietor(s) and other contextual information. This information must be checked during the pre-inspection call with the principal
 - college policies and other information for students and parents available on the college's website
 - other information in the public domain, including from the results of internet searches
 - any relevant safeguarding information.
75. The lead inspector will use the analysis of the pre-inspection information to shape the inspection and to draw up the inspection plan to share with college leaders and the inspection team. Importantly, inspectors will want to evaluate the evidence of compliance with the requirements and the impact of leaders' decision-making for students in all areas of the ISI Framework.

The pre-inspection call

76. The lead inspector will make a pre-inspection call to the principal which takes place in the week following the notification call. This is important in establishing a positive professional relationship and sets the tone for the inspection process. The lead inspector will usually offer the principal the opportunity to have another senior leader present for the pre-inspection call.
77. The pre-inspection call will focus first on practical arrangements and will include a discussion to understand the context of the college. The lead inspector will also clarify the information that inspectors will find helpful to see before the start of the inspection and the information that may be made available at the start of the inspection. Lead inspectors will provide opportunities in the pre-inspection call for the principal to ask any questions.
78. During the initial pre-inspection call, the lead inspector will clearly outline the process for raising any issues during the on-site inspection. This will confirm that raising any issues will not adversely affect any inspection outcome. On inspection, the lead inspector will provide the principal with the phone number for ISI's head office (020 7600 0100). The principal or senior leader may phone this number to request a call back from a senior member of ISI staff during the on-site inspection. This number is provided so that the principal or senior leader can let ISI know if they have serious concerns that they feel unable to raise directly with the lead inspector.
79. The content of the initial lead inspector call will also include:
 - explanation that the virtual inspection team room will be the means of communication with the college and will enable the exchange of any documents as required

- sharing the phone number of ISI's head office, to be called should any serious issues or concerns arise on inspection which the principal feels they cannot raise with the lead inspector
- confirmation that there are no conflicts of interest with any members of the inspection team from the college's perspective
- confirmation of the identity of the proprietor/s of the college
- confirmation that the student and staff surveys will be distributed
- explanation of the financial sustainability, management and governance inventory
- explanation of the student inspection notices, which will be sent to the college following the notification call and how these should be displayed in several prominent areas of the college where students are likely to see them
- the details of any additional provision in the college since the previous inspection
- confirmation that the proprietor/s, and parents in the case of students under the age of 18, are informed of the inspection
- arrangement of a suitable time to talk to the proprietor/s (as many as can be available); this discussion may take place remotely if it is not possible for the proprietor/s to visit the college
- details of the times of the college day and any extraordinary events that may be taking place during the inspection
- an explanation that the lead inspector will hold regular keeping-in-touch (KIT) meetings with the principal throughout the inspection
- an indicative time for the final feedback meeting on the final day of the on-site inspection
- information about how inspectors will work with the leaders in the college, including through the regular keeping-in-touch meetings with the principal, as well as invitations to any inspection activities to be undertaken alongside leaders from the college
- clarification that it may not be possible for inspectors to observe every teacher at the college. The lead inspector will explain that inspectors do not require staff to prepare lesson plans for inspectors but should make available any existing curricular or lesson planning documents that are routinely used by teachers
- the opportunity for the principal to point out any staff sensitivities which may need to be considered by the inspection team
- explanation of arrangements for student discussions with inspectors, and that students are always chosen by inspectors
- explanation of how students' work will be reviewed, including where it is held online. The lead inspector should explain that inspectors will, wherever possible, talk to students in lessons about their work as well as review students' work with members of staff and with students
- identification of suitable times to talk to college leaders, members of staff and students

- explanation that any draft timetable shared with the college is flexible and that amendments may be made in the light of emerging findings
- practical arrangements, including for access to secure Wi-Fi and parking arrangements
- the lead inspector will ask the college to provide a space for inspectors to use as an inspection base, where they can hold confidential discussions and work on their laptops
- the lead inspector will keep requirements for the inspection base to the minimum required. For example, there is no requirement for the college to provide a printer or any stationery products.

80. During the pre-inspection call with the college, the lead inspector will request that the college upload the following information to the inspection virtual team room in advance of the start of the inspection:

- details of the aims, characteristics and context of the college
- the completed financial sustainability, management and governance inventory
- confirmation of the name of all proprietors of the college
- teaching timetables that teachers use and have available
- a list of staff roles at the college
- details of any relevant staff absence
- details of students at the college, including the number of any students under the age of 18, to include:
 - the number of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and the nature of their needs
 - the number of students who speak English as an additional language and their level of English acquisition
 - any other notable groups such as vulnerable adults, Looked After Children etc
- plans of the college premises if readily available
- curriculum plans and schemes of work
- college policies and information that the college provides for students
- the college's analysis of the progress and attainment of students, course completion information and the results of student examinations and/or accreditations
- current self-evaluation and college development planning information; there is no requirement for college leaders to present this information in a prescribed format
- any reports from external evaluation of the college
- records and analysis of any behavioural logs
- the college's record of complaints.

The inspection

81. The first day and a half of the inspection is held remotely. The purpose of these days is to hold meetings with college leaders and staff to gather and evaluate evidence relating to the college's policies and processes, the curriculum for students and the college's self-evaluation. Meetings with students may not take place in this way, but will be held during the on-site inspection day.
82. The second remote inspection day is for the lead inspector and any team members to analyse and evaluate the evidence gathered in remote meetings. The lead inspector will also prepare the inspection briefing for the team inspectors. Inspectors will meet with college leaders to finalise the draft inspection plan. There may be other follow-up meetings with college staff.
83. Prior to the on-site inspection days, the lead inspector will share with the inspection team a summary inspection briefing document and hold a virtual team meeting.

The virtual team meeting

84. During the virtual team meeting the lead inspector will:
 - brief the inspection team, sharing inspection information and evidence gathered during the first day of the inspection (held remotely)
 - draw on the expertise and experience of the inspection team to allocate areas of inspection focus for each team inspector
 - provide guidance about how to use the virtual team room on ISI's portal and explain that all communication should be made through the virtual team room and not by email
 - provide guidance about how to use and complete the inspection activity forms and evaluative summaries, which must be completed following each inspection activity
 - explain that the prompts provided in the inspection activity forms are provided for guidance and that all inspectors must be familiar with the contents of the inspection framework and the inspection handbook, Home Office Educational Student Sponsor and Educational Oversight guidance as well as Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working together to safeguard children, if the college is conducting regulated activity
 - share practical information, including for travel
 - make clear their expectations of the team and provide guidance on team deployment, reminding the inspection team of the code of conduct and other essential information.

The on-site inspection day(s)

85. The purpose of the on-site inspection day(s) is to further triangulate the evidence presented to inspectors during the remote inspection day. Inspectors will evaluate evidence, reach provisional judgements and feed these back to college leaders.
86. The on-site inspection will focus on first hand observations of teaching and learning and discussions with as many students as possible. Inspectors will also consider the suitability of the premises and health and safety arrangements.

Gathering the views of students and staff

87. Inspectors will consider the views of students and staff.
88. ISI invites students and staff to complete confidential pre-inspection surveys online. At the time of notification, colleges are asked to circulate the unique code by email wherever possible. This allows students, parents and staff to access the surveys for the specific inspection. The survey templates are shared with the college after the initial notification call and must be completed five days prior to the start of the inspection.
89. Hearing the views of students and staff is an important aspect of inspection methodology and is triangulated with other inspection evidence. Inspectors will consider the views of students and staff as expressed in the survey responses, as well as through discussions. Inspectors will speak with students in lessons, around the college building(s) and in arranged student discussion groups.

Reaching judgements

90. The inspection team will meet during the inspection to discuss the emerging evidence and to consider connected evidence that needs to be gathered and evaluated. All members of the inspection team must take a full part in team meetings. Inspectors must discuss the evidence fully and provide professional challenge, where appropriate.
91. The provisional judgements are the corporate responsibility of the inspection team. Inspectors will carefully consider the evidence and evaluate it against the requirements and guidance. Inspectors will weigh the evidence, using their professional judgement.
92. Inspectors will reach a judgement about whether requirements are met in each section of the framework. Inspectors will consider the judgement for section one (leadership and management, and governance) after reaching judgements for sections two, three and four.
93. Judgements made at the end of the inspection are subject to ISI's quality assurance processes and are provisional until the publication of the final inspection report.
94. Inspectors' judgements must be based on their professional evaluation of the evidence and must not be influenced by the potential impact on the college, for instance when the requirements are found to be not met

Provisional feedback meeting at conclusion of on-site visit

95. At an agreed time on the final day of inspection, the lead inspector will chair the provisional feedback meeting. The agenda for this meeting will be:
 - thanking the college for their engagement in the inspection process
 - sharing provisional inspection judgements and, where requirements are provisionally unmet, a brief overview of the evidence
 - sharing recommended next steps, and where requirements are not met, areas for action
 - outlining the post-inspection next steps, including:
 - the processes and indicative timelines for quality assurance and report publication
 - the factual accuracy stage
 - the availability of the complaints policy
 - the processes following inspection where one or more of the requirements are judged to be unmet
 - thanking the college for their hospitality
 - inviting any questions, at the end of the feedback.
96. At the start of the meeting, the lead inspector will explain that:
 - provisional judgements can be shared with close family, the college staff, the college's governors and proprietor and mental health professionals, with the understanding that they must remain confidential until the inspection report is published
 - provisional judgements should not be shared more widely at this point because they are still subject to the quality assurance process
 - all further communication must be to the ISI office and not to inspectors.
97. Attendance at the feedback meeting is at the invitation of the lead inspector. The lead inspector will chair the meeting and will invite college leaders and proprietors.
98. The feedback meeting will focus on the provisional judgements about whether the requirements are met or unmet. Where requirements are unmet, the lead inspector will outline the evidence that supports this judgement. Detailed reporting in each section of the framework will be provided in the draft inspection report, which will be issued to the college following the quality assurance process.

Quality assurance

99. All inspections are subject to quality assurance which includes a review of inspection evidence and the draft inspection report. Some inspections are subject to enhanced quality assurance. This can include on-site or remote quality assurance by a monitor.

100. It is the responsibility of the inspection team to reach the provisional judgements at the end of the on-site inspection. ISI's staff are on duty to provide quality assurance support to inspectors. The lead inspector will contact ISI on 020 7600 0100 if either of the following apply:
 - the emerging evaluation of the inspection team is that one or more of the requirements is likely to be not met. A senior staff member will probe the evidence and provide constructive support and challenge to the evaluation process.
 - the emerging evaluation of the inspection team is that there is a relative weakness in one or more of the requirements, but the requirements are met and the criteria for proportionality applies.
101. Following the inspection, the lead inspector is responsible for writing the inspection report in accordance with ISI's requirements regarding quality and clarity, and submitting the inspection evidence to ISI, within five days of the end of the inspection.
102. The inspection report and inspection evidence are quality assured by an editor. The editor provides feedback to the lead inspector along with any suggested amendments to the report. The lead inspector is responsible for responding to the editor's comments and suggestions promptly and making any necessary amendments to the inspection report in a timely manner.
103. If the editor has serious concerns about the quality of the inspection report, the inspection judgements or the inspection evidence, the editor will refer the matter to the Senior Director for National Inspections who will consider appropriate next steps, which could include a change of judgements (if supported by the evidence) or deeming the inspection incomplete if there is a lack of sufficient evidence to support the provisional judgements.
104. Following quality assurance of the inspection report and inspection evidence, a draft version of the inspection report is sent to the college for factual accuracy comments. The college has five working days to respond to the factual accuracy stage. The lead inspector is responsible for considering and responding to the college's comments; making amendments to the report, where appropriate or explaining why suggested amendments are not appropriate.
105. Following the inspection, the lead inspector provides developmental feedback for the team inspectors about the quality of their work and their conduct. The team inspectors provide feedback on the process of the inspection and the leadership of the inspection.
106. ISI invites all colleges to comment about their experiences of the inspection. ISI welcomes all feedback to inform training and or development of processes.
107. ISI has a complaints process. As outlined in ISI's complaints policy, college leaders should raise their concerns informally during the inspection with the lead inspector or contact ISI within four term-time working days after the end of the on-site inspection to request a phone call with a member of ISI staff who was not part of the inspection team.

Where a college fails to meet one or more of the requirements

108. Where a college has failed to meet one or more of the requirements, it is required to prepare an action plan within one month of the inspection setting out how issues identified in the report will be addressed.
109. The action plan should contain the significant actions that leaders will take to respond to the areas for action and recommended next steps within the report and should clearly state: the action to be taken; the person responsible for the actions; specific deadlines and the intended outcomes for each of the actions.
110. The action plan should indicate the dates when the actions will be completed so that the requirements are met in full. This information will be considered by ISI in scheduling the next inspection of the college. This must be no later than six months after the inspection where requirements were not met.
111. ISI will review the action plan and provide feedback to college leaders on the suitability of the action plan in ensuring that previously not met requirements are likely to be met.
112. ISI will contact the college with the evaluation of the action plan, and any next steps required.
113. If ISI feel the action plan is sufficient to address the not met requirements, an inspection will be scheduled.

Evaluation and reporting

114. Inspectors will evaluate and report on the extent to which the colleges meet the requirements outlined in the inspection framework.
115. In considering the extent to which colleges meet the requirements, inspectors will focus on evaluating evidence against the ISI Framework.
116. Inspectors will evaluate the evidence of leaders' decision-making and the impact of that decision-making in all areas of the ISI Framework. They will consider how leaders' decisions have impacted the processes and provision in colleges. Inspectors will consider the impact of the college's processes and provision on the outcomes for students and their wellbeing.
117. Inspectors will identify and report on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the college's work and its impact on students in each of the sections of the ISI Framework.
118. Inspectors will:
 - report whether requirements are met or are not met
 - identify recommended next steps for all inspections

- where requirements are not met, identify and report areas for action which must be addressed in order for the requirements to be met
- report on progress since the previous inspection
- report on each section of the framework
- report contextual information including the names of the proprietor(s) and the principal, student numbers and contact details of the college.

Evaluating section one of the framework: Requirements relating to leadership and management

119. Inspectors will pay due regard to Section one of the ISI Framework, which details the areas of provision that are relevant to this section.

Section one: sources of evidence

120. Inspectors will consider a range of sources of evidence, including evidence of how proprietors assure themselves that leaders and managers are fulfilling their responsibilities to ensure that all the requirements are met.
121. ISI will consider the information provided by the college (in the inventory) relating to the college's financial sustainability, management and governance.
122. Inspectors will consider the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels.
123. Other sources of evidence include, but are not limited to:
- evidence from all sections of the framework that demonstrates to what extent the college is meeting the requirements
 - discussions with the proprietors to consider:
 - how they ensure that leaders have the necessary knowledge and skills to understand the requirements
 - how they assure themselves that leaders fulfil their responsibilities to meet the requirements
 - meetings with leaders to discuss their views of the college's strengths and weaknesses (self-evaluation) and the progress and impact of their plans for improvement and enhancement of provision
 - details of the recruitment and enrolment of students to the college to ensure that courses are suitable for the needs and aspirations of students and that the proprietor has ensured that they have followed UKVI guidance with regard to students' English language proficiency
 - documentary evidence, including of any self-evaluation and improvement planning to enhance the provision for students

- review of the college's website and other sources of information, including college policies, to ensure that the necessary information is provided or made available to students
- responses to ISI's inspection surveys for students and staff that relate to leadership and management and to any related requirements.

Evaluating section two of the framework: Requirements relating to the quality of education

124. Inspectors will pay due regard to section two of the ISI Framework, which details the areas of provision that are relevant to this section.

Section two: sources of evidence

125. Inspectors will consider a range of sources of evidence, including evidence of how proprietors assure themselves that leaders and managers are fulfilling their responsibilities to ensure that the requirements relating to students' education, training and recreation are met.
126. Other sources of evidence include, but are not limited to:
- discussions with leaders and documentary evidence of the college's evaluation of students' progress and attainment over the previous three years, including course completion information; inspectors will consider the achievement of the various groups of students represented at the college
 - leaders' evaluation of students' progress in the college and consideration of any benchmarks that the college uses; inspectors will want to understand the action leaders are taking to address underperformance of any students
 - discussions with leaders and documentary evidence to understand and evaluate the college's curriculum provision, including any reasonable adjustments made for any vulnerable adults or those who have special educational needs/and or disabilities (SEND).
 - discussion with leaders and staff and documentary evidence of the effectiveness of the college's approach to assessment
 - direct observations of teaching and learning across the range of courses and student groups
 - inspectors will consider:
 - how effectively lessons are planned
 - how teaching:
 - demonstrates secure knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught with understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of students, gained from regular and thorough assessment of students' work

so that all students:

- acquire new knowledge, increase their understanding, and develop their skills (make good progress) in the subjects taught
- inspectors will not make a judgement about individual lessons but consider the typicality of their evaluations across a range of lesson visits; inspectors will evaluate and draw conclusions about what is typical in particular courses across student groups and throughout the college
- discussions with teachers including any subject leaders to explore curriculum provision and assessment processes
- discussions with students in their lessons, to consider the context of the lesson observation and to review students' progress in their work
- discussions with students about their work
- discussions to understand how the college supports students who have SEND and how it measures the impact of any support on the progress of students
- discussions with staff who oversee and teach students who speak English as an additional language or any other significant groups of students in the college
- any evidence that teaching undermines fundamental British values or discriminates against students contrary to Part 6 of the Equality Act 2010
- information from the college's website and other sources of information including that which relates to the curriculum and students' achievement
- responses to ISI's inspection surveys for students and staff.

Evaluating section three of the framework: Requirements relating to student wellbeing

127. Inspectors will pay due regard to Section three of the ISI Framework, which details the areas of provision that are relevant to this section.

Section three: sources of evidence

128. Inspectors will consider a range of sources of evidence, including evidence of how proprietors assure themselves that leaders and managers are fulfilling their responsibilities to ensure that the requirements relating to students' wellbeing are met.
129. Other sources of evidence include, but are not limited to:
- records and processes aligned to any statutory guidance (including that relating to safeguarding procedures for students under 18 years of age and vulnerable students)
 - discussions with students, when inspectors will look for evidence that students have access to appropriate pastoral care and support

- observations of students in lessons and around the college, and in residences, to consider if appropriate care is in place
- a tour of the premises, scrutiny of relevant policies, discussions with leaders and documentary evidence to ensure effective implementation of policies to ensure compliance with relevant health and safety legislation and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, and that safe evacuation systems are in place
- scrutiny of the college's admission and attendance registers and any reports to UKVI
- scrutiny of information relating to student retention and any information relating to non-completion of courses
- evidence of the college's processes to promote the regular attendance and punctuality of students and evidence of their impact
- evidence of appropriate first aid training and administration
- discussions with leaders and staff involved with residential accommodation and with residential students to consider arrangements and management of accommodation through homestay, halls of residence or otherwise
- responses to ISI's inspection surveys for students and staff.

Evaluating safeguarding

130. Evidence relating to safeguarding can arise across any of the four sections of the framework and will be reported under section three of the framework. Inspectors must be alert to any safeguarding issues throughout the inspection.
131. With regard to safeguarding for students under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults, inspectors will evaluate whether the college is meeting the requirements, which incorporate the guidance in [Keeping children safe in education](#), [Working together to safeguard children](#), [The Prevent duty guidance](#) and other related guidance by considering the college's culture of safeguarding which is underpinned by:
 - effective training for those responsible for safeguarding (safeguarding leaders and any deputies)
 - effective training for all adults to recognise and report safeguarding concerns
 - identification and sharing of contextual safeguarding risks and mitigations
 - systems and processes that work to protect students and that exercise urgency in referring to appropriate agencies where there are concerns
 - persistence in gaining help to protect students, including for early help and for those who are at risk of harm or who have been harmed
 - working productively with all agencies involved in safeguarding
 - attitudes that are alert to the possibility that 'it could happen here' and 'to think the unthinkable' as well as a determination to put the needs of students first
 - clear and effective record-keeping in accordance with statutory guidance.

132. Other sources of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- review of the safeguarding policies of the college (including for child protection and extremism) and their implementation
- discussions with senior leaders and those responsible for safeguarding to determine the effectiveness of the implementation of appropriate safeguarding policies; inspectors will want to understand how the college's policies ensure that all members of the college community can contribute to the effective safeguarding of students
- discussions with members of staff to evaluate their understanding of how to act if they have concerns about students and if they have concerns about the behaviour of adults and/or other students
- review of records and documentary evidence, including examples chosen by inspectors on site, to ensure that safeguarding concerns, including for child protection, concerns about staff and any concerns linked to radicalisation are managed appropriately
- discussions with students to consider their understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including online, and their understanding of how they can seek help
- discussions with proprietors to evaluate their understanding of their responsibilities and how they ensure that colleges follow statutory guidance including in Keeping Children Safe in Education
- responses to ISI's inspection surveys for students and staff
- discussions with residential students and adults involved in the management and provision of residential accommodation to consider compliance with relevant statutory guidance for requirements related to safeguarding, private fostering, lodgings and host families
- scrutiny of the single central record to check the effectiveness of the system to ensure safer recruitment checks are completed for adults, including staff, volunteers and proprietors; inspectors will review the single central record on site and sample checks, focusing particularly on adults who have been recruited since the previous inspection.

Evaluating section four of the framework: Requirements relating to advice and guidance

133. Inspectors will pay due regard to Section four of the ISI Framework, which details the areas of provision that are relevant to this section.

Section four: sources of evidence

134. Inspectors will consider a range of sources of evidence, including evidence of how proprietors assure themselves that leaders and managers are fulfilling their responsibilities to ensure that the requirements relating to students' advice and guidance are met.
135. Other sources of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- discussions with students and leaders and scrutiny of records and documents to consider the impact of leaders' decision-making
- responses to ISI's inspection surveys for students and staff
- inspectors will consider the college's arrangements to provide support and guidance to students in ensuring that their courses are suitable to their needs and aspirations
- inspectors will consider the support and guidance provided to students to help them make informed choices about their next steps including about relevant careers.

Framework at a glance: The requirements

Section One: Leadership and management

The proprietor must:

1.1	ensure that those with leadership and management responsibility have the knowledge and skills required to ensure that all requirements are met, and that they fulfil those responsibilities effectively so that all the college's sites meet acceptable educational quality standards.
1.2	demonstrate that the college meets the Home Office's requirements for financial sustainability, management and governance.
1.3	ensure that the recruitment of international students follows UKVI guidance regarding students' English language proficiency and that all students are recruited to appropriate courses to meet their needs and aspirations.
1.4	maintain effective quality assurance arrangements to enhance the quality of students' learning experience including by ensuring that: - accurate self-evaluation informs improvement in the quality of provision for students or maintenance of high standards - leaders draw on the views of students and other stakeholders to inform their self-evaluation and any plans for improvement.

Section Two: Requirements relating to the quality of education

The proprietor, leaders and managers must:

2.1	set and/or maintain academic standards including by ensuring that: - all courses on offer are valid and suitable for the needs and aptitudes of students - all courses on offer to international students lead to qualifications or outcomes which meet the definition of an approved qualification for UKVI purposes - the curriculum for each course is well planned and supported by appropriate schemes of work - teaching enable students to learn and make progress.
2.2	provide appropriate learning opportunities including by ensuring that: students who are not primarily studying English language courses, but who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are supported in

	their English language acquisition so that they can access the curriculum • teaching is informed by regular and accurate assessment of students' knowledge, skills and understanding • students are given feedback about their progress so that they understand their strengths, where they need to improve and the likelihood of successfully completing their course(s) • teaching is underpinned by secure subject knowledge, effective pedagogy and positive relationships • resources are well chosen and appropriate • teaching does not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs • teaching does not discriminate against students, in line with Part 3 of the Equality Act 2010 and encourages respect for people including those with the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
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Section Three: Requirements relating to students' wellbeing

The proprietor, leaders and managers must:

3.1	verify the suitability of teaching staff, including by carrying out pre-appointment safeguarding checks on staff where they will be teaching students under the age of 18 or any vulnerable adults including by ensuring that: • secure procedures are followed to recruit appropriate teaching staff, including by seeking and verifying professional references and carrying out identity, qualifications, investigation of employment gaps and right to work checks • where the college provides for students under the age of 18 or vulnerable adults, safer recruitment processes are diligently followed in full, on all adults, as outlined in statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
3.2	ensure the suitability of the premises for teaching, having regard to the number, age and needs (including any special educational needs/and or disabilities) of students including by ensuring that: • buildings and any residential accommodation and facilities are suitably maintained and are fit for purpose.

3.3	promote and protect students' health, safety and welfare including by the drawing up and effective implementation of a health and safety and risk assessment policy and must take appropriate action to reduce risks that are identified including by ensuring that: • leaders and staff identify any contextual risks to students and take action to mitigate those risks • leaders' approach to welfare, health and safety is diligent and effective • all necessary action is taken to reduce risks from fire and other hazards • appropriate first aid provision is in place • evacuation and lockdown procedures are appropriate, well understood and rehearsed • any arrangements for accommodation, through homestay, halls of residence or otherwise, are appropriately managed and registered in accordance with national requirements • if a student under 16 is living with a host family (private fostering arrangement) for 28 days or more, the local authority is notified within timescales specified by the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.
3.4	ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of students, and such arrangements have regard to any guidance for educational settings issued by the Secretary of State for pupils under the age of 18 and vulnerable students including by ensuring that: • leaders promote a safeguarding culture which puts the needs of students first • staff are trained effectively to understand their duties and the college's procedures regarding safeguarding • attendance, punctuality and course completion are monitored carefully and action is taken when students are absent or persistently late, including the necessary reports to UKVI when required • when a student fails to enrol or otherwise discontinues study and does not fulfil Home Office requirements for attendance, leaders ensure the required report is made to UKVI • where the college includes students under the age of 18, statutory safeguarding guidance is understood, embedded in policy and practice and consistently followed.

Section Four: Requirements relating to advice and guidance for students

The proprietor, leaders and managers must:

4.1	provide accurate and up-to-date information to students including by ensuring that: • prior to their enrolment, students have the information they need to make well-informed decisions about the suitability of the courses to meet their needs and aspirations • a suitable programme of induction is in place for all students • students are provided with details of the college's complaints policy.
4.2	provide up-to-date, relevant and informed advice and guidance including, where appropriate, on relevant careers and or further education opportunities that are appropriate for students on completion of the course(s) studied including by ensuring that: • students are provided with the advice and support that they need to make informed choices about their next steps including about relevant careers.

Change Log

Version date	Page and paragraph	Change
1.01	Initial draft	