

Clerking in the new era: implications for college governance

Annex A

Clerk characteristics



Contributions

Grateful thanks to Roger Morris, Chair of the AoC's Governors Council, the Steering Group and LSIS staff for their unfailing support, guidance and professionalism throughout this project:

Steering group

Peter Munday, Head of Governance and Strategic Development, LSIS

Selina Stewart, Programme Development Manager, Leadership Skills for Governance, LSIS

David Jackson, Chair, National Clerks' Network (NCN)

Gerry Swift, Standards and Qualifications, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)

Kevin McGladdery, Governance Manager, Association of Colleges (AoC)

Particular thanks to David Jackson, Chair NCN, for his valuable time and contribution throughout, and Sheila Selwood, Vice Chair NCN, and Joanne Dean, AoC, for their recent involvement and review of the report.

LSIS Staff

Peter Munday, Head of Governance and Strategic Development

Selina Stewart, Programme Development Manager, Leadership Skills for Governance

Nathan Hawkins, Programme Support Officer, Leadership Skills for Governance

Elaine McNamee, Senior Programme Support Officer, Leadership Skills for Governance

Assistance with pilot and survey distribution

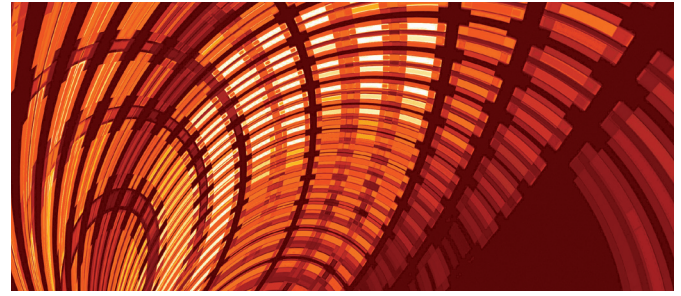
NCN Members; Joanne Dean, Assistant Governance Manager and Helpline Adviser AoC; Landex; SFCA; Linda Barrett FE Clerks Mailbase; and six pilot clerks.

Participants in the study

A special thank you to all clerks who responded to the online survey, took part in focus groups and confidential interviews. Without your full participation, and willingness to contribute, this project would not have been possible. Particular thanks to those experienced clerks for their advice and support throughout, and for providing an unfailing example to me.

Catherine Brumwell, independent researcher and author of report

All sections of the report including the annexes can be downloaded from www.lsis.org.uk or www.fegovernance.org



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1. Introduction

This annex is one of a series of reports as part of the research into the role of the clerk. The annex focuses on the characteristics of clerks.

The survey asked clerks a range of questions covering age, gender, ethnicity, general qualifications and previous experience. Clerks were also asked a number of questions around their clerking experience, including length of time in clerking, how many colleges individuals clerked, employment status, salary and administrative support. This evidence will help to provide the sector with a profile of clerks' characteristics and any emerging issues.

The full report includes a chapter on the research methodology upon which the findings are based. The research included an anonymous online survey, telephone and face-to-face interviews and focus groups. The charts and tables are based on the online survey responses from 184 clerks. As some clerks clerk more than one college, this represents approximately 220 colleges, approximately 65% of all colleges. These 184 clerks form the 'base' of the survey. Where the base is different, for instance with a filtered question, or if the base is a subgroup of a variable, this is shown in the footnotes. Percentages are rounded to the nearest percentage point.

Comments and opinions have been gathered either through the survey, interviews or focus groups. The confidentiality of clerks has been respected throughout this ethical piece of research. The report is written so that individual clerks or colleges cannot be identified.

Challenges and priorities for effective clerking in FE colleges arising from the survey are included in the Summary Report.

2. Gender, age and ethnicity

There is no official national database of clerks from which to gauge the population profile. However, there was a feeling that the gender profile of clerks has been shifting from men to women over recent years, and that women now form the majority. The survey confirms this, showing almost two thirds of clerks are women (63%) and just over a third of clerks are men (37%).

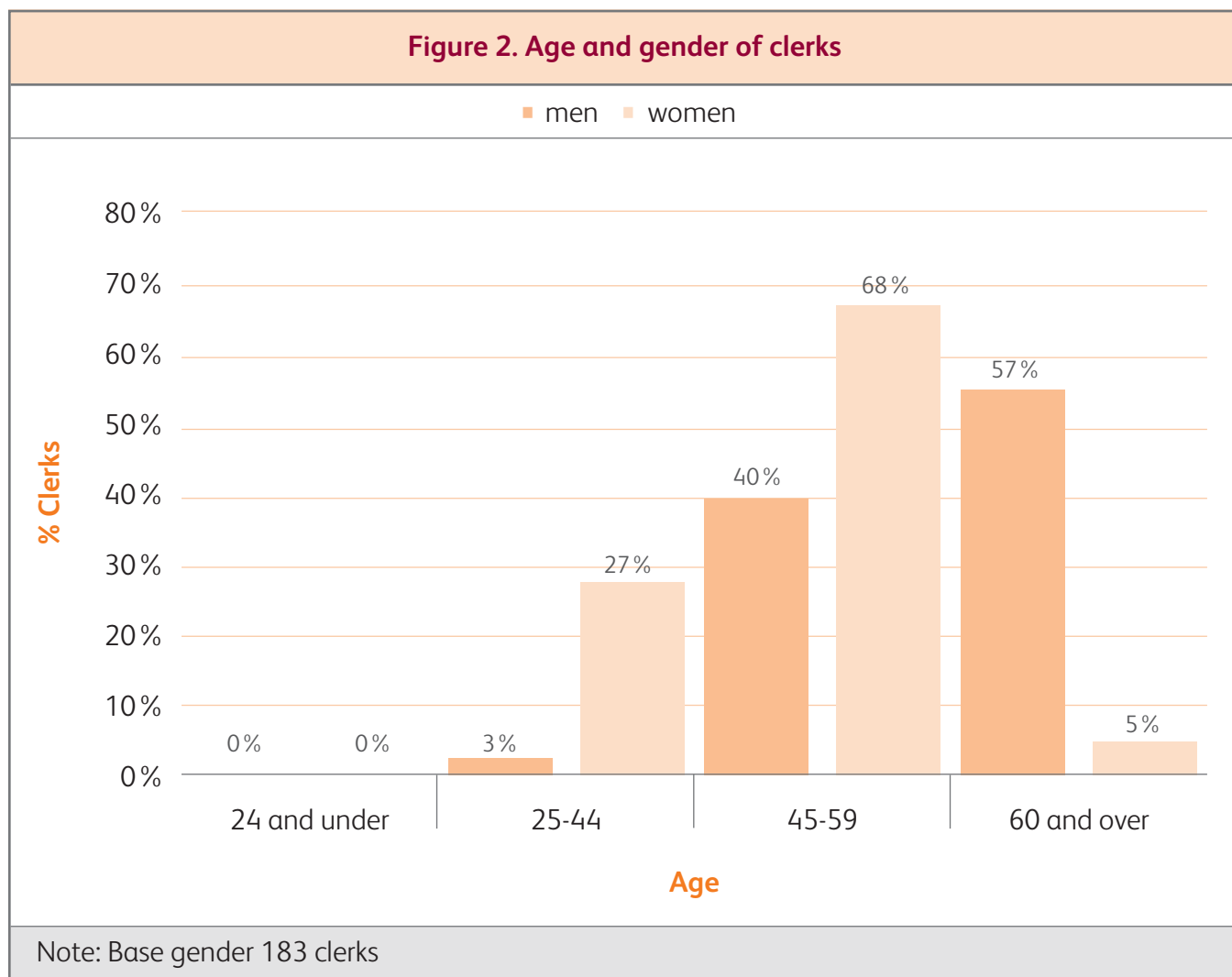
Figure 1. Age, gender and ethnic group of clerks		
Gender		
Men	67	37%
Women	116	63%
Age		
24 or under	0	0%
25 to 44	33	18%
45 to 59	107	58%
60 and over	44	24%
Ethnicity		
White	176	98%
Mixed ethnic group	2	1%
Asian or Asian British	1	1%
Black or Black British	0	0%
Other ethnic group	0	0%
Note: Base gender 183 clerks; age 184; ethnic group 179		

Figure 1 also shows the age profile, with almost six in ten clerks aged between 45 and 59. By ethnic group, nearly all clerks are white.

In order to verify if the trend towards women is continuing, age can be split by gender as shown in figure 2. This clearly shows men employed as clerks are disproportionately older. Almost six in ten men are aged 60 or over. By contrast, almost three in ten women are aged under 44.

The absence of a national database of clerks makes it difficult to ascertain the age, gender, ethnicity, qualifications, training and development and emerging issues, without undertaking specially commissioned surveys of this nature. The sector may consider the benefits of such a database, held by the National Clerks' Network (NCN), to alert the sector to future requirements on an on-going basis. In the absence of such a database, this 2013 clerk survey should form the baseline for monitoring, and the survey repeated on a three year cycle.

The ethnic profile of clerks may require consideration by the sector in terms of equality and diversity. The high proportion of women may be linked to the high proportion of part-time roles in colleges. This includes part-time and in some cases term-time contracts. It could be argued this has not helped the status and seniority of the clerking role.



The loss of long experienced clerks should be considered very carefully by the sector. Longevity is discussed in more depth in chapter 4. Clerks at interview highlighted the importance of seeking advice from clerks with extensive experience. As the figures show, traditionally these have been men. Clerks at interview discussed the importance of ‘mentoring’ when they first entered clerking, and relatively new clerks still currently sought advice from their ‘informal mentor’. When asked if they would have welcomed a formal mentoring scheme, clerks felt this would be beneficial, especially to clerks who were not engaged in the AoC regional clerks’ networks. They felt this could be optional as some clerks may prefer to find their own mentor. There was a general acknowledgment that something more formal could be introduced for new clerks. It was suggested that a formal mentoring role, could be recognised through the payment of an allowance.

“I shadowed the previous clerk before I started the role proper. I seek advice from three local experienced clerks, one acts as an informal mentor. I found my own mentors, but yes if there was a formal system in place for mentoring, or a list of clerks to draw on, I would have used it.”
Clerk 18 months into the role

“Mentoring – yes I probably would have made use of a formal mentoring scheme if it was available. You don’t know what you don’t know! There could be something beyond your awareness, and missing something big or important.”

Clerk in their first year of clerking

“I’m still intrigued as to what the role of clerk is! When I started I thought it was mainly admin. The role is not known outside the sector. The first college set me up with a mentor which has been very useful.”

Clerk nine months into clerking two colleges

“Yes we think a formal mentoring scheme in Year 1 for new clerks would be useful, even in Year 2 or 3. We have found our local mentors and the four of us meet informally monthly. A formal mentor doesn’t have to be local, but in rural remote areas it is doubly essential.”

Two clerks at interview, one 18 months into clerking, one 14 months into clerking

“As an experienced clerk I would like to be able to provide a service to help mentor and coach clerks new into the post and I think this service will be especially needed with the demise (hopefully only for now) of the clerk’s qualifications for the sector.”

Experienced clerk

“Clerks are an untapped resource! The sector should use experienced clerks. Yes, a formal mentoring scheme could be introduced. I think mentors should be paid an allowance for such a scheme.”

Long experienced clerk

“As a clerk with no legal background and no formal grounding in clerking (other than one day induction training!), and as the role becomes more complex, so the need for support and training intensifies.”

Clerk with 1 to 5 years’ experience

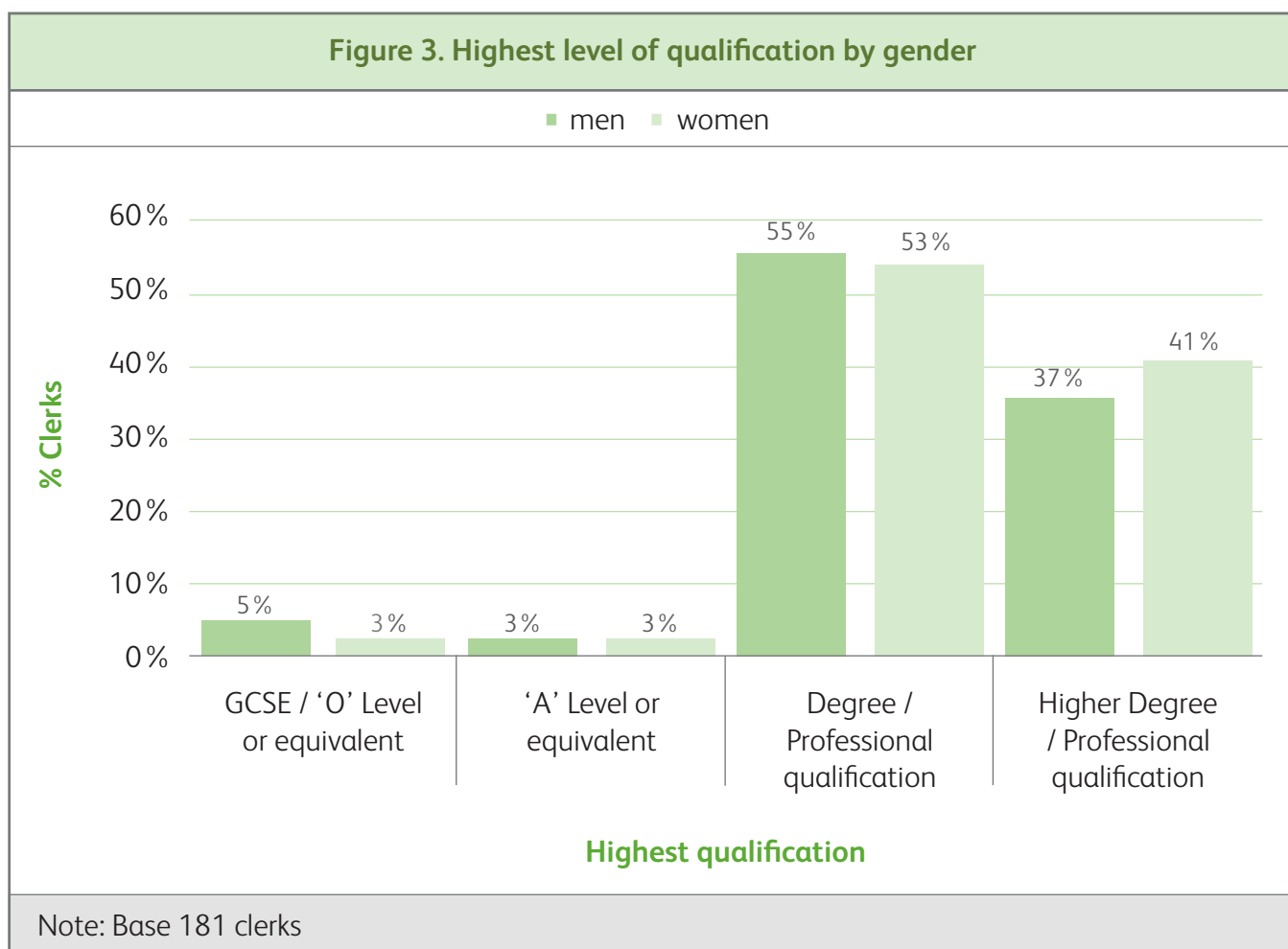
“Having previously been a senior manager in an FE college I am conscious that I have absorbed a lot of FE related information simply from that sort of role that newly appointed clerks will not have had the opportunity to do. Understanding the issues that have to be dealt with by the current SMT members does enable me to act as a sounding board for ideas and to share past practice that may be of assistance to them.”

Clerk with over 20 years’ experience

3. General qualifications and previous experience

Clerks were asked to indicate their highest level of qualification. The survey has revealed a phenomenally highly qualified workforce. A very high proportion (93 %) of all clerks in the survey are degree level educated or higher. Further, 40 % hold a higher degree level qualification.

Figure 3 shows the highest level of qualification by gender. There is little variation in the highest qualifications for men and women. The number of clerks whose highest level of qualification is GCSE / 'O' level or 'A' level is minimal; these are generally in the older age bands, some coming in to clerking from other sectors later in life offering previous, relevant experience.



Many degree or higher degree qualifications held by clerks are directly useful and relevant to the clerking role, as seen in figure 4 overleaf. Relevant degree or higher level qualifications include law degrees. Many are qualified solicitors, or chartered secretaries and administrators who are fully ICSA qualified. Equally backgrounds in, accountancy, finance, business management, human resources management and corporate governance are common.

This extremely highly skilled workforce, coupled with relevant previous experience, suggests most clerks are very well equipped to carry out their clerking role, and perhaps confirms the assumption made in the recent LSIS publication 'Challenges for FE governance' :

“Clerks as undervalued change agents – LSIS has encountered many examples where clerks, with support of the chair and principal, have been a powerful force in stimulating and facilitating good governance. Clerks, especially when networked to regional and local peers, are a powerful resource available to boards.”

Figure 4a. degree and higher qualifications held by clerks

B.Ed (Hons), ICSA Certificate in FE Governance, Post grad diploma in Educational Management
 BA – Education; DMA and MBE; BA (hons) and PGCE
 BA (Hons) Business Studies; BA (Hons) Economics ICSA FE Clerks qualification
 BA (Hons) Human Resource Management
 BA (Hons) Music; BA (Hons), ACIS
 BA (Hons); Cert Ed; MEd; MBA; Certificate in Governance
 BA Business Studies; BA Honours Degree in Business
 BA Hons and ACIS - Associate Member of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries
 BA Hons Company Secretary, Business Management
 BA Hons English, ICSA Cert in Governance MIOJ - Institute of Journalists
 BA in Law and Classics Post Graduate diploma in Management
 BA Joint Hons Degree Economics and Economic History, Post Grad Dip in Management Studies
 BA/MA, MSc
 BSc (Economics); CSA Certificate in FE Governance
 BSc (Hons) Social Sciences ; BSc Hons
 BSc Hons Agricultural Economics, PGCE
 BSc Hons Social Sciences (Human Geography)
 BSc in Banking and Finance, Associate of the Chartered Institute of Bankers
 BSc, Cert Ed, Certificate in FE Governance; Degree in English
 Degree in English History (PGCE) Certification in Management Studies
 Degree in Hotel & Catering Management; Degree is BA Hons in History
 BA Honours degree and ICSA Certificate in FE Governance
 BSc (Hons) Psychology and ICSA Certificate in FE Governance
 BA and Certificate in Education; Degree in History
 Degree is in Business Studies B.A. Hons. and ICSA Certificate in FE Governance
 Graduate Membership of ICSA; BA Hons French; PGCE; ICSA Graduate Membership ICSA Level 5 FE
 Certificate in Governance – distinction
 BSc Information Science degree
 Home Office & AFRC, MIIA (Member Of the Institute Of Internal Auditor)
 Honours degree, ICSA Company Secretary
 MA Chartered Accountant - ICAEW ICSA certificate in FE Governance
 Degree in English Studies, post grad diploma in Business Administration

Full ICSA qualification
 BA Hons, ICSA certificate
 BA (Hons) Business Management and Administration; FCIS
 BA Hons [languages]; Cert Ed; BA Degree
 Cert. Professional Management MSc in Corporate Governance ICSA Group Company Secretary and Corporate Services
 Chartered Accountant (ACCA) Previously College Accountant
 Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries and Administrators
 ACIS (Chartered Secretary) ; Degree BSc Hons Chemistry, PGCE
 Higher degree is a MSc in public sector management
 HNC Business Studies and ICSA Clerks Qualification
 B.Ed (Hons); ICSA Certificate in FE Governance

Figure 4b. degree and higher qualifications held by clerks

Solicitor
 Solicitor in private practice specialising in employment, company, commercial law
 Qualified Solicitor since 1992 with LLB (Hons) Law Degree and Law Society Professional Solicitor's Finals exams
 In-house solicitor and company secretary
 Law degree LLB. Worked as a solicitor for 10 years before retraining as a clerk
 Law LLB (Hons) and Chartered Accountant Finance, corporate administration and governance experience, including 7 years as a company secretary for a plc
 LLB (Hons), ICSA cert in FE governance. Professional background in local authority committee services
 LLB Post Graduate Certificate in Corporate Law ICSA Fellow - Company Secretary with 15 years' experience
 LLB(Hons) and DMS
 LLB, Grad. ICSA, Associate Member ICSA
 BSc Business Administration Solicitor Parts I and II LLB (London) ICSA Cert in FE Governance
 BSc Econ in Law & Politics. I am also a qualified Solicitor
 MA - English Literature
 MA, Diploma in Management Studies, Chartered Management Consultant
 BA Hons Business & Finance CIM Marketing ICSA Certificate in FE Governance
 Master in Law (LLM)
 Master's in Business Administration Diploma in Management
 Master's in Management
 MBA

MSc Care, Policy and Management
 Master of Arts Degree in Human Resource Management
 MA, MBA, PGCE, NPQH
 PhD & MSc Management
 PhD in Environmental Biochemistry
 Post Grad Dip in Management Studies
 Post Grad. Cert. in Financial Management for the HE/FE Sectors
 Postgraduate Dip in Man Studies Distinction ICSA Clerks Qualification
 MA; Med
 BA Hons English, MSc Interactive Computer Systems and a Cert Ed (FE)
 M.A. Classics, RIBA architect
 BA Hons in History of Art, Design and Film, MA Film Studies, Corporate Governance module of ICSA, currently studying for Level 5 LSIS Clerks qualification
 Ph.D in geology
 BA Philosophy and Literature MA Literature, Culture and Modernity MPA (Masters in Public Administration)
 BA and MA
 Masters In Corporate Governance and am an associate member of ICSA
 BA (hons) Politics ICSA Clerks qualification, CIPD
 Human Resources, Post Graduate CIPD
 MA Philosophy, Politics & Economics; Grad IPD; ICSA Cert in FE Governance
 Certified Diploma in Accounting and Finance MBA Chartered Institute of Marketing Diploma
 Certificate in Education ICSA Certificate in Corporate Governance in FE

Clerks were also asked to give a brief description of any relevant previous experience. Clerks brought a wide range of relevant and valuable experience from other sectors, as shown in figure 5 overleaf. These include senior management roles in local government, civil service, higher education, further education, human resources and finance. There is evidence from the survey of men entering the clerking profession as part-time employees in their 50s and 60s with extensive previous experience often at a senior level. Many clerks are ICSA qualified chartered secretaries or have been company secretaries in previous roles:

“I arrived as clerk to the corporation by way of 38 years working in local government, in the democratic environment similar to governance in colleges, finishing at chief officer level. My qualification related to obtaining the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators ie a qualified chartered secretary.”

“Local government education administration. Senior postholder in a College of FE. Qualifications: Diploma in Municipal Administration (Degree equivalent); CNAAPost-Graduate Diploma - Management in Education; Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CFCIPD).”

“Post Grad. Cert. in Financial Management for the HE/FE sectors previously employed in the HE sector for 20+ years in various admin roles latterly as a senior administrator in the Committee Secretariat Department deputising for the clerk to the university’s governing body.”

“I am a qualified chartered secretary; I have worked in the private sector and in the following public sectors – civil service, local government, secondary education, HE – currently as well as working in the FE sector I manage a charity.”

“Local Government education administration from 1964 to 1989 involved working with college governing bodies, governors of adult education centres and management committees of youth & community centres in addition to reporting to and attending local authority committee meetings. Became a senior post holder in a college of FE in 1989, responsibilities included acting as clerk to the governing body.”

“My general experience of over 25 years outside the FE sector has enabled me to look at the role objectively and bring fresh ideas and run with new initiatives that have been welcomed by the board members.”

It is evident that clerks bring to their role a wealth of experience, particularly as many clerks come into clerking later in life. This combination of extremely highly qualified individuals, and a diverse and frequently relevant previous work experience, provides the FE sector with a foundation of highly skilled clerks to stimulate governance, as described by two clerks in the research:

“Surely clerks are an ‘untapped resource’?”

“I think that generally the clerk’s role is under resourced and underutilised.”

Figure 5. Previous experience brought to clerking

Assistant Education Officer with local authority
Association of Chartered Certified Accountants Certificate. Commercial accountant
Moved to clerking from Financial Controller role in an FE College
Admin posts in LEA & HE ; Bursar with local authority. Clerk to local schools & parish council
Career in FE and HE administration to senior management/SPH level
Civil Service, Local Government Committee Clerk, Clerk to School Governing Body
Clerking in a local authority prior to becoming a Corporation Clerk
College Vice Principal including responsibility for Clerking
Company Secretary; committee/administrative secretary local authority
Education/finance/procurement posts
Educational management
Finance Secretary - primary school Business Manager - secondary school
Higher Education administration/management
Managed College service departments ie Student Services and Admissions
PA to Principal and Secretary to the Corporation until appointed Clerk

Local government, in the democratic environment similar to governance in colleges, Chief Officer level. Qualified Chartered Secretary.

Senior manager in an FE college before setting up in business as an independent clerk/governance consultant

Administrator at the college for 20 years before becoming clerk. L7 Executive Diploma in Management Studies and the ICOSA cert in FE Governance

Local government education administration. SPH in a College of FE.

Local government, mainly in central services eg Chief Executive's Department.

Manager in a high tech company with quality auditing experience

Member of the Chartered Institute of Housing. Previous experience includes Housing Manager

Business Administration ILM Introductory Management

Senior Secretarial/Administration

Officer in Charge HM Revenue & Customs

Personnel Management. Administrative role in College. Qualification is the Cert ICOSA in Fe Governance

Company secretary in business sector

Teacher, lecturer, HoD, Vice Principal of a large college

Administrator and college manager prior to clerking

Senior college manager; local authority education officer

Senior manager Civil Service

Senior position in Higher Education

SMT at an FE College for 20 years

Chartered Secretary in the private sector

Trust Secretary in NHS

Vice Principal of Further Education College DMS.CMA

Wide-ranging administrative role led to trial role as the College's Clerk

Insurance company in a Senior Management position

Education department of local council; roles included the delivery of governance

ICOSA Clerking Qualification. Studying for ICOSA Company Secretary qualification. Prior roles at senior officer/manager level

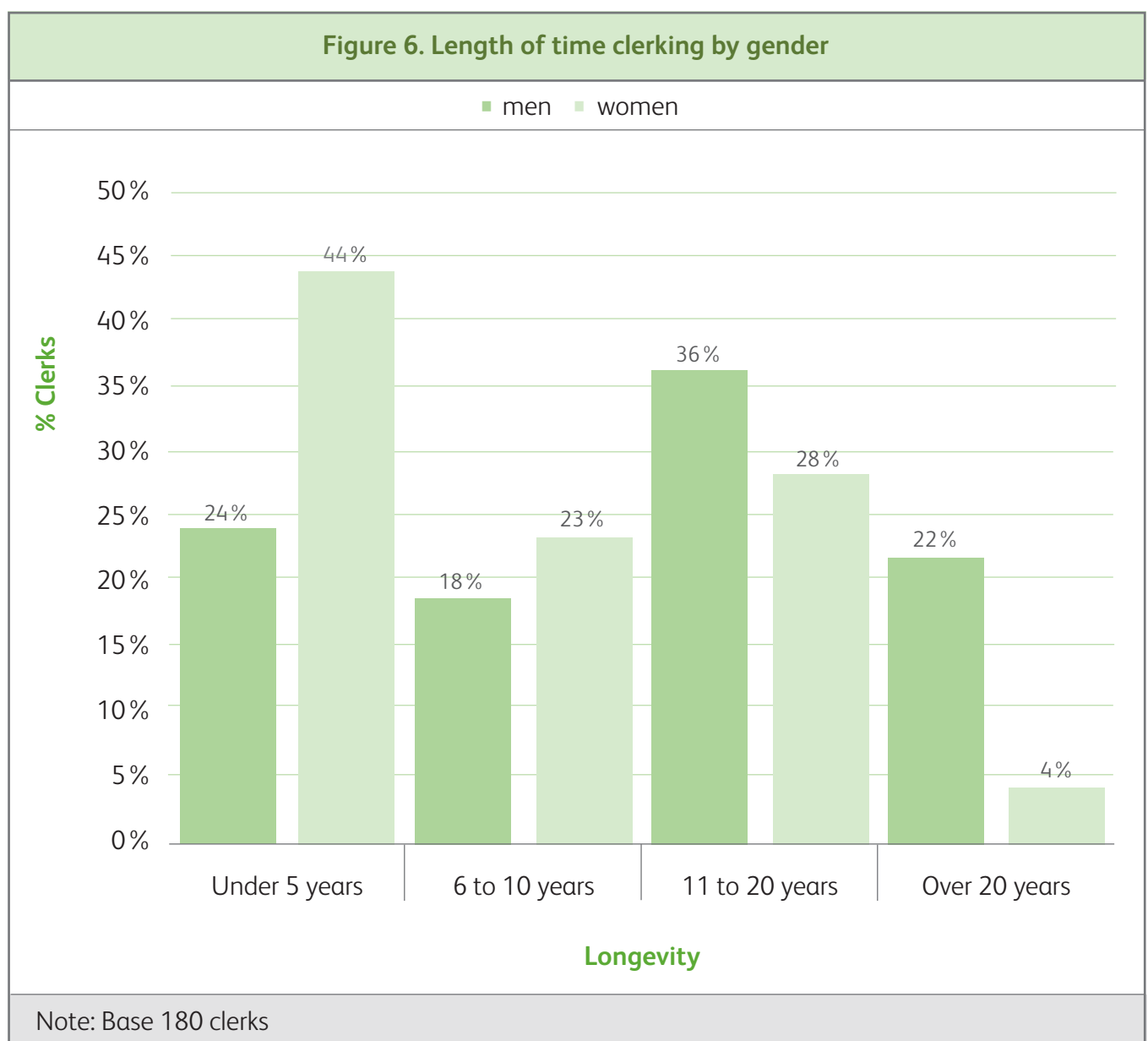
ICOSA Company Secretarial Background

4. Longevity in clerking

Clerks were asked how many years they have been a clerk. Nearly a third (32%) have been clerking for one to five years, a fifth (21%) for six to ten years, and almost a third (31%) eleven to twenty years. Around one in ten clerks (8%) has been clerking for between twenty-one and thirty years.

A small percentage (5%) of clerks are new to the sector having clerked for less than a year, whilst an even smaller percentage (3%) have been clerking for over thirty years.

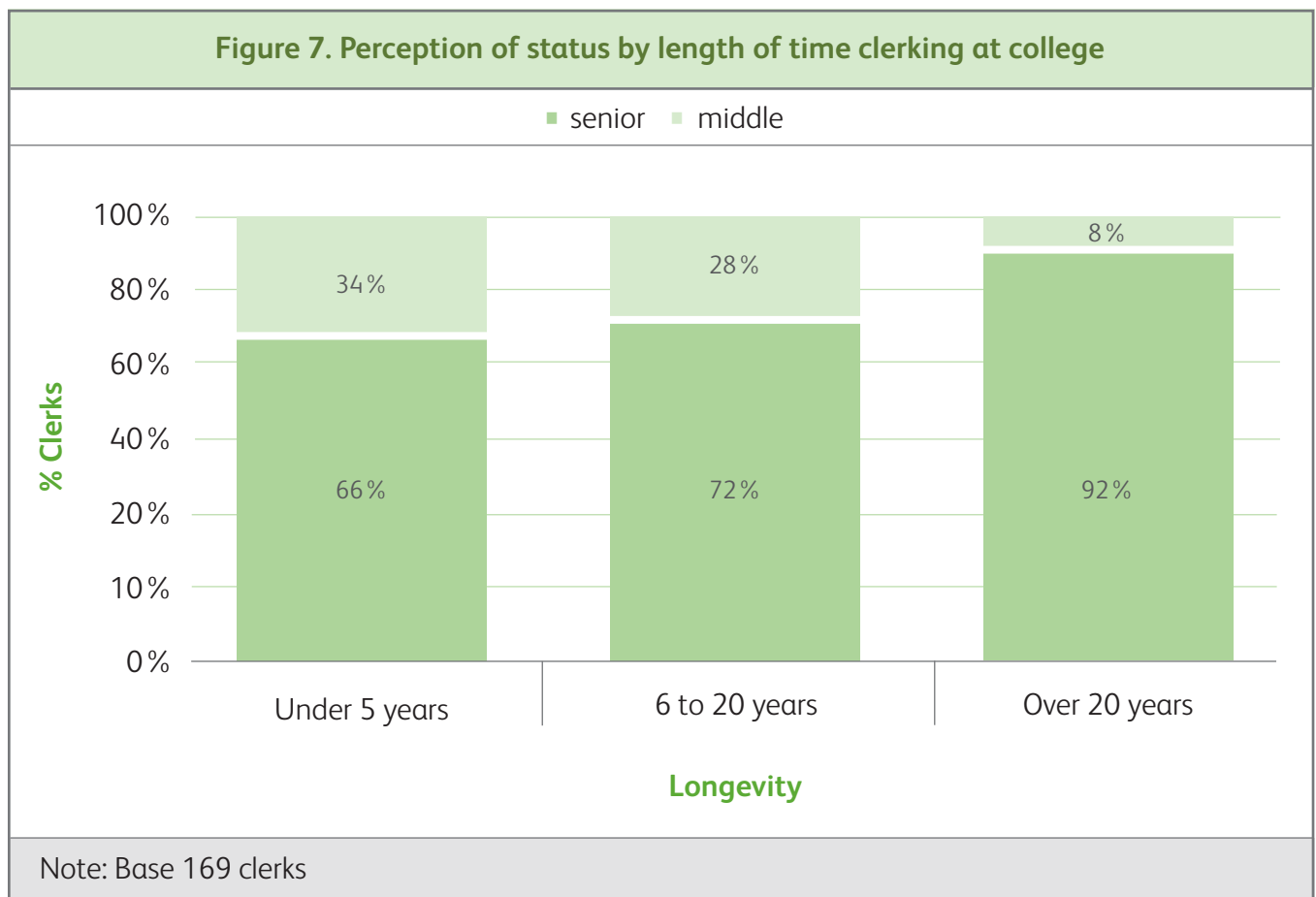
Figure 6 provides a picture by gender. This confirms the emerging trend showing the long experience of men in the sector, over a fifth (22%) more than twenty years' experience. Note the high proportion of women (44%) who have been clerking for less than five years.



Clerks were also asked how many years they have been a clerk at their current college. Around four in ten (42%) have been clerking for one to five years, a fifth (20%) for six to ten years, and almost a quarter (23%) eleven to twenty years.

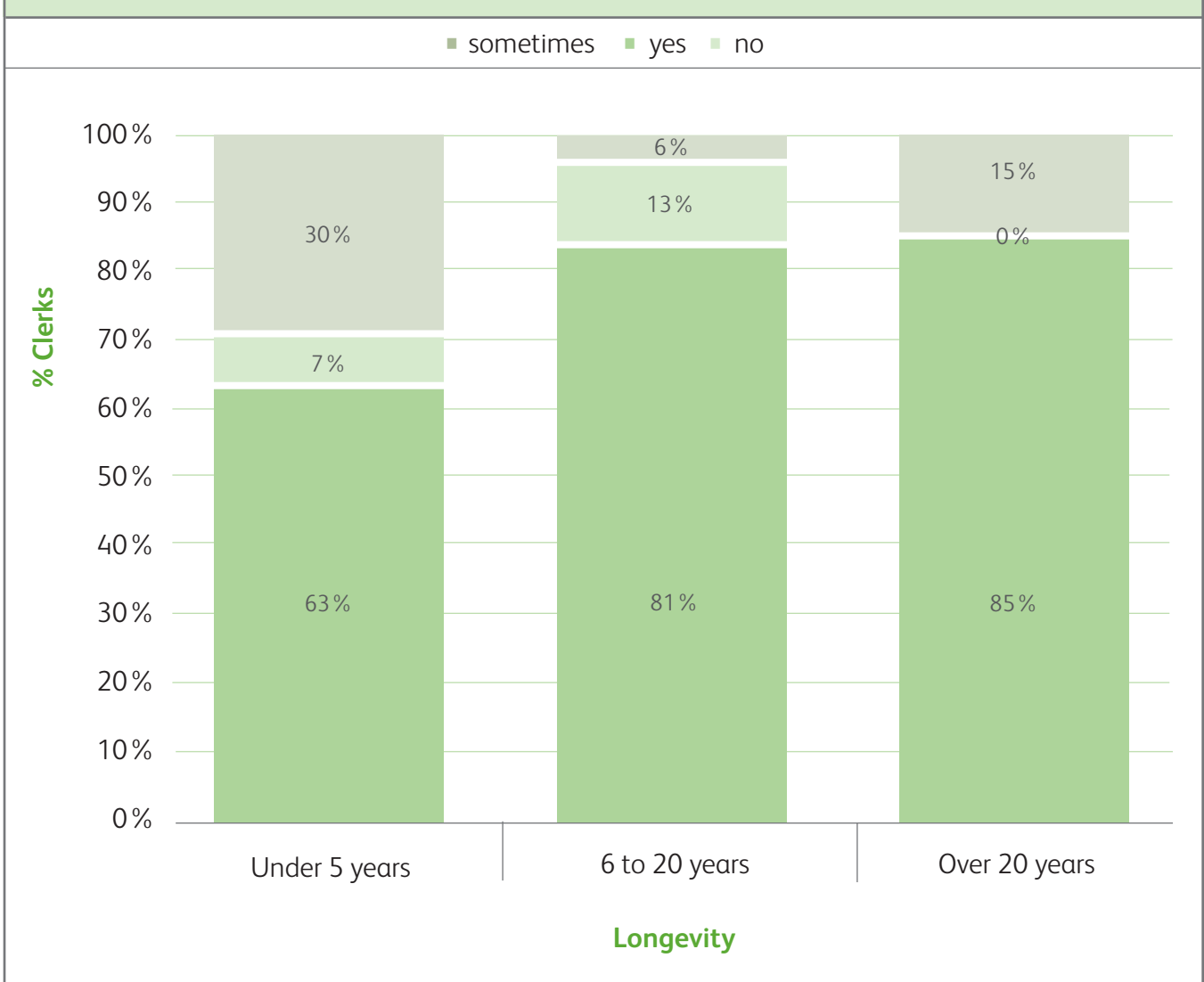
Nearly one in ten (8%) of clerks have been a clerk at their current college for under a year, suggesting flux in terms of recruitment. A similar percentage (7%) has been clerking at their current college for over twenty years.

Although samples become small, patterns do exist between longevity and senior status in college, and value as a clerk. Figure 7 shows the vast majority (92%) of clerks with over twenty years' experience at their current college perceive their status within college to be senior. In contrast, only 66% of clerks with five years or less experience at their current college perceive their status in college as senior.



Similarly, as figure 8 reveals, the vast majority (85%) of clerks with over twenty years' experience in their college feel valued as a clerk compared to only 63% of clerks who have clerked for less than five years in their college. Further, three in ten (30%) of clerks with less than five years' only felt valued 'sometimes', and 7% 'never'.

Figure 8. Perception of value as a clerk by length of time clerking at college

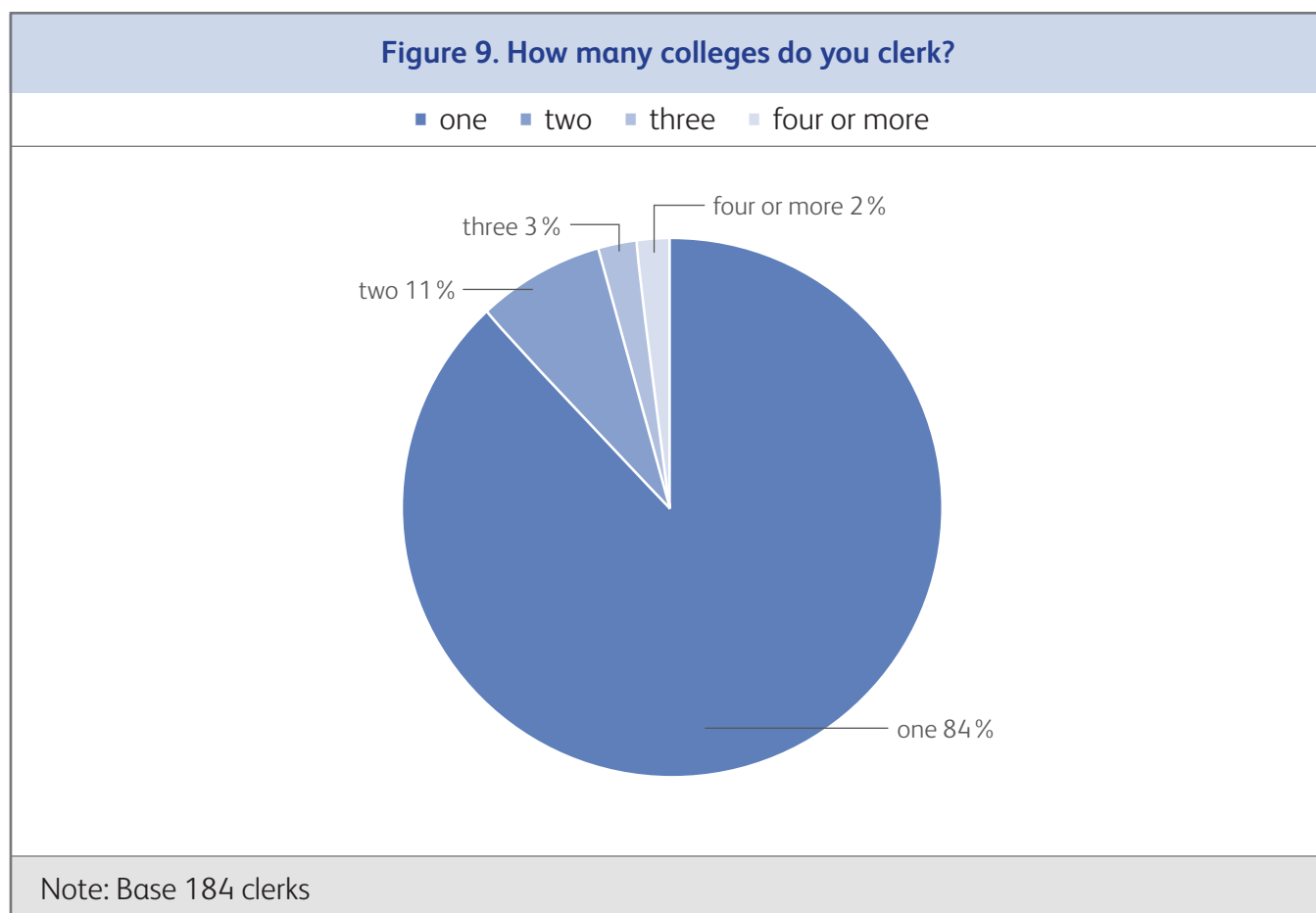


Note: Base 178 clerks

5. Number of colleges clerked, contract and hours

The survey asked clerks who clerk more than one college to choose one (unnamed) college only for the survey, and to relate all answers to their chosen college. This ensured the survey replies were consistent and the baseline referred to clerks.

The majority of clerks (84 %) clerk one college only. Around one in ten (11 %) clerk two colleges. A small proportion clerk three colleges (3 %) or four or more (2 %).



Clerks who clerk more than one college did not confine themselves to one type of provider in general, as shown in figure 10. For some, this may entail two colleges, including a mixture of GFE, sixth form, specialist and land based. In addition to colleges, it is evident clerks are clerking other educational institutions including academies, studio schools and university technical colleges (UTCs). This is discussed further in Annex D.

Contract as clerk

Almost nine in ten clerks are employees of their college (88 %). The remainder are self-employed (9 %) or engaged through a third party (3 %). Clerks who clerk more than one college indicated they may have a different type of contract :

“I deliver clerking services to two general FE colleges but my business also holds a contract for clerking services with a sixth form college, the delivery of which is sub-contracted out.”

“I am employed on a ‘contract for services’ but paid via PAYE to comply with the 1988 Income Tax Act. Contracted for 600 hours per year but usually do more than this.”

Figure 10. Sample of clerks who clerk more than one college

Two general FE, one specialist designated institution

2 colleges presently, both General FE

One large F & HE College; one Sixth Form and two Academies

Two general further education colleges

1 college; 3 academies

Five colleges : 4 GFE and one sixth form

College 1 - full-time clerk; College 2 - Audit, Finance and Corporation Board meetings as Assistant Clerk; College 3 - Corporation Board meetings

4 - 2 General FE, 1 land-based, and 1 6th Form

2 Colleges both General F.E

2 sixth form colleges

I also undertake interim clerking assignments

2 GFE's

Two General FE Colleges but my business also holds a contract for clerking services with a Sixth Form College, the delivery of which is sub-contracted out.

Also clerk to a University Technical College

1 x GFE 1x 6th Form College

2 colleges under one Board.

Two GFE

2 GFE colleges

1 GFE 1 Land based

Two colleges, both General FE plus the Academy which the college sponsors

I clerk for 3 colleges, 5 subsidiary Ltd companies, 1 Academy, 2 Studio Schools, 1 primary school and 1 independent Boarding school

Only one college, but I also clerk the Academy that the college sponsors

I clerk two colleges. One a specialist college and one a GFE college.

I also clerk for an academy that the College sponsors

1 x GFE and 1 x SFC

SFC and GFE

Views on clerking more than one college

The interviews and focus groups revealed a mixture of views around clerking more than one college. For clerks who clerk one college only, there was a feeling that it must be difficult for clerks who clerk more than one college to fully understand the issues without being 'in college' frequently, other than attending meetings.

Some clerks had reservations, for instance, about deputy clerks writing minutes on behalf of the clerk, feeling it was the preserve of the clerk, an important component of the role and a task that should not be delegated:

“Taking minutes is an under-estimated skill and a challenging one.”

“Clerking is a ‘craft’ and should ensure minutes include appropriate information and content – not just ‘minute taking’ – but show appropriate challenge.”

For clerks who clerk more than one college, they believed that this was not only possible but beneficial due to economies of scale and being able to share good practice between the two or more colleges. These clerks also stated that they could still maintain a regular presence on site at both colleges, although this might be assisted by appropriate administrative support and a deputy clerk. Those clerks who previously had a dual role in a college, felt they could focus completely on governance, and share this expertise between two colleges.

Another form of clerking more than one college includes contracting services, from sole trader or a limited company for clerking services. These clerks stated that they felt more able to be independent in these circumstances:

“I am managed by the Chair. There can be conflict and politics if the clerk is an employee of the college, particularly if there is a dual role such as finance director and clerk. I can go in as clerk, remain completely independent, and share good practice between the colleges I clerk.”

Those who were contracted also felt that the new freedoms increased the requirement for college boards to receive independent advice from clerks with the appropriate skills and knowledge. A view was expressed that there might be a skills shortage of experienced clerks, and this may result in an increase in colleges seeking external services.

It should be noted that clerks in the focus groups who are college employees felt equally able to offer independent advice, although at interview and in the focus groups clerks stressed this very much depended on the 'triumvirate' relationship between the chair, principal and clerk working well. At interview in particular, examples where the 'triumvirate' relationship was not working well placed clerks employed by the college in a very difficult position in terms of their independent advice being received and adhered to, as discussed further in Annex B.

Term-time only

Clerks were also asked if their contract was term-time only or all year round. Nearly all are all year round contracts (89%). The remaining 11% are employed on term-time only contracts.

Since the sample becomes small, cross tabulation is limited, but there do appear to be some patterns. All clerks with term-time only contracts are women, and the majority had been a clerk at their current

college for less than five years, suggesting term-time contracts are the practice in relatively recent college recruitment.

“My contract is 15 hours a week, term-time only. ie 570 hours.”

“Average 20 hours a week 40 weeks a year (slightly over term-time) flexible to college needs, contactable during holidays.”

Most term-time only clerks worked 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) or less. The hours for those interviewed tended to be 0.4 contracts, 2 days a week term-time only. Although samples are small, their FTE salary range is less than clerks who work all year round. It should be remembered this is a ‘like for like’ comparison, not pro rata. Term-time only clerks are also more likely than clerks who worked all year round to perceive their status as middle rather than senior.

Almost a third of sixth form college clerks who responded have term-time only contracts. Whilst this may reflect the nature of sixth form colleges, some clerks, both in the response to the survey and in interviews, stated that this presented them with problems. For some sixth form college clerks, the issue was not that the contract was term-time only, but that there were insufficient hours within the term-time only contract.

Clerks who work term-time were asked if they work additional hours beyond their contract. Again, samples are small but some clerks worked additional hours:

“Use the holidays to ‘catch up’, but take the time out of my contracted hours – basically my contract states 600 hours and it is up to me as to how I manage my time as long as all requirements of the role are met.”

“I work term-time only but with a very flexible attitude as to putting in the hours as and when needed so closer to an annual hours contract.”

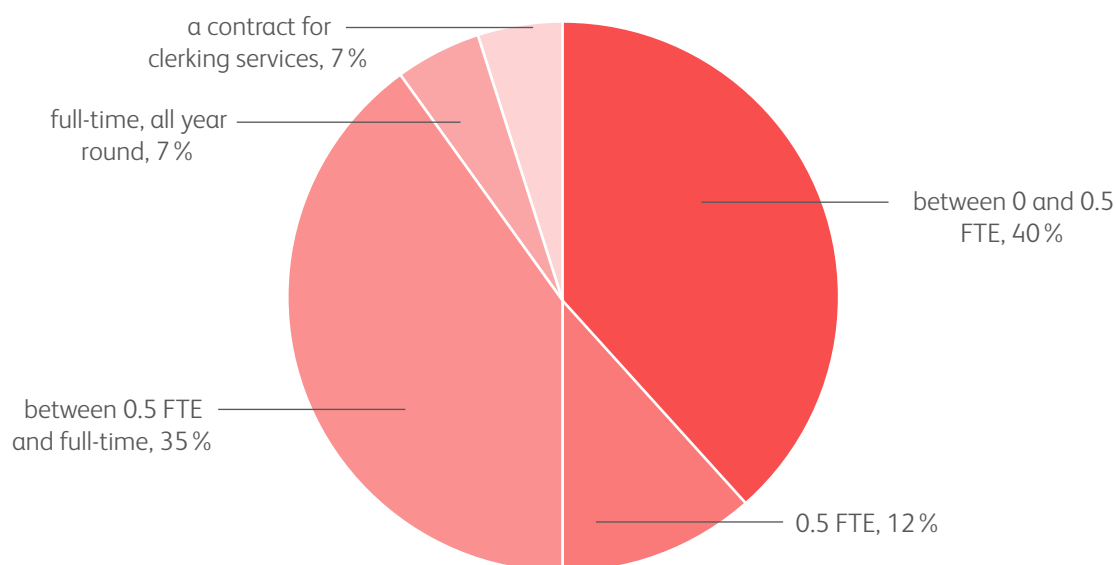
“I am contracted to work 20 hours per week term-time only plus three weeks (total 42 weeks). But inevitably come in during holidays to work additional hours.”

“I have a basic contract of term-time only, 25 hours per week. I am currently paid for a small number of additional hours, sometimes including work during vacation periods.”

Hours per year

Clerks were asked to indicate the number of hours they work per year. As figure 11 reveals, over half (52%) of all clerks work 0.5 or less full-time equivalent (FTE). Over a third (35%) work between 0.5 and full-time. A small percentage (7%) work full-time, all year round. Likewise, a small proportion of clerks (7%) are employed on a contract for clerking service.

Figure 11. Hours worked per year



Note: Base 183 clerks

Working part-time created problems for some clerks as described at interview:

“I spend more time on admin rather than advisory. You can get absorbed by ‘minutes and stuffing envelopes’. There is not enough time, it is frustrating. This seems to be more of a problem with sixth form colleges, and they can be parochial. I have some limited administrative support, but I am pulled in all directions.”

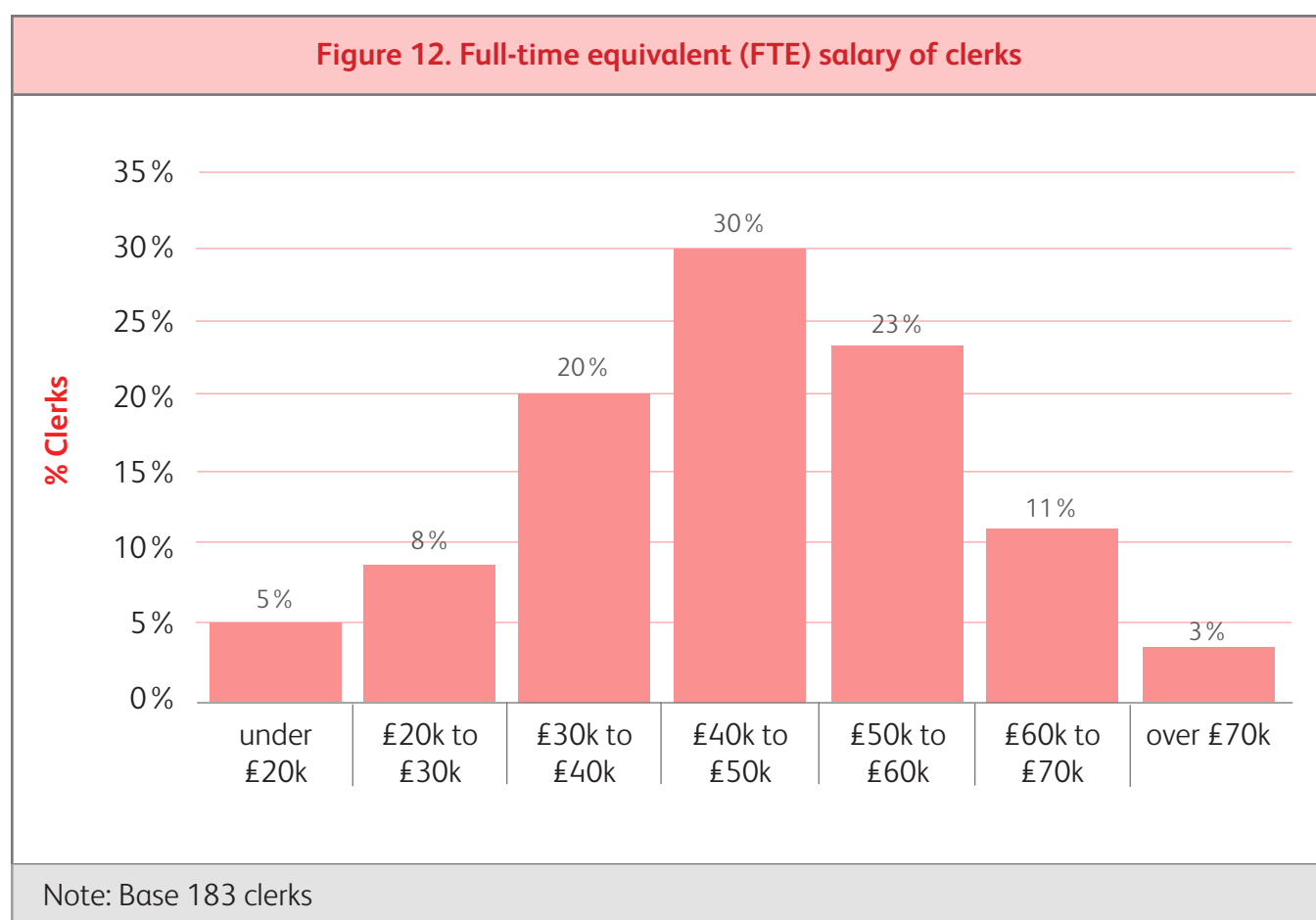
There was evidence in the interviews of many clerks who felt they were unable to concentrate on their clerking functions due to insufficient hours, compounded by too much administration to the detriment of their governance advisory role. This confirms the assumption in the recent LSIS publication ‘Challenges for FE governance’:

“It is important to consider the time allocated to the role, as this is likely to be an indicator of how seriously the college and the board perceive the role, and even how seriously the college values the input of governors.”

In contrast, there is evidence from the interviews where clerks have increased their hours largely as a result of recognition by the college that they are a useful resource.

6. Salary

Figure 12 shows the wide range of salaries paid for clerking. Around a third (30%) of all clerks earn between £40,000 to £50,000 full-time equivalent (FTE). Salaries are clustered around the £30,000 to £60,000 FTE range, representing around three quarters (73%) of all clerks. However, 13% are paid less than £30,000 FTE, including a small percentage (5%) being paid less than £20,000 FTE. By contrast, 14% of all clerks are earning more than £60,000 FTE.



The variation in salary may be explained to some extent by the range of college income. The 'Annual Survey of Remuneration of Management Staff and Senior Postholders' (AoC)¹, which is confidential restricted data and not generally accessible beyond the chair, principal and senior human resources of participating colleges, is used by some colleges as benchmarking data. This includes remuneration of senior postholders by college income and region.

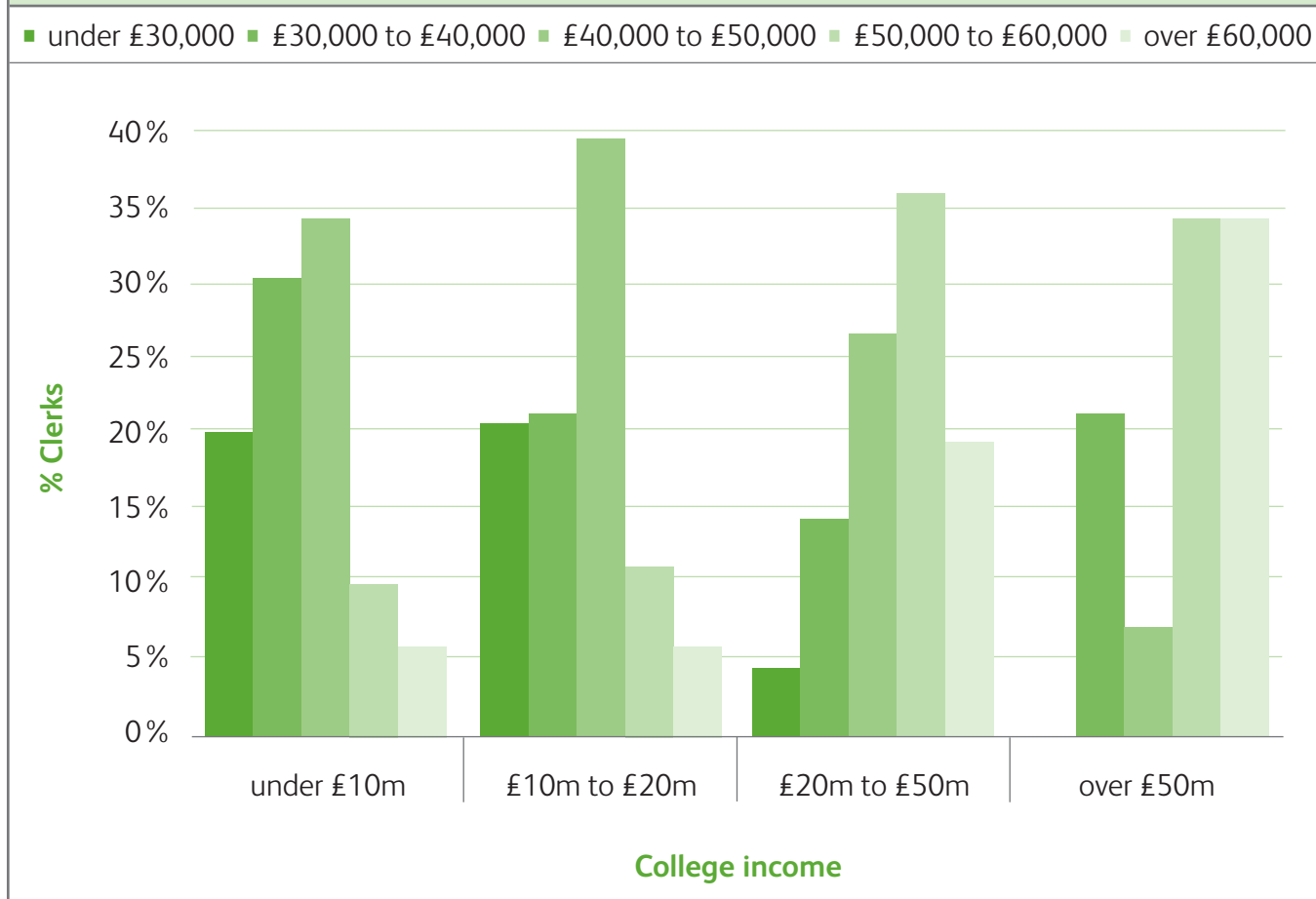
Figure 13 reveals the variety of FTE salary by college income. College income is clearly a factor in salary ranges. For instance, half (50%) of colleges with an income of under £10m employ clerks with a FTE salary range of £40,000 or under compared to only a fifth (21%) of colleges with an income of over £50m. Colleges with smaller incomes appear to pay much lower salaries. In interviews, some clerks questioned why salary was based on college income when the role was very similar:

¹ The 'Annual Survey of Remuneration of Management Staff and Senior Postholders' (AoC)
<http://www.payskills.com/case.php>

“In AoC salary benchmarking, why is the salary related to college income/size of the budget? The tasks are the same.”

“I work for many hours beyond those contracted for and am paid in lower quartile of clerks as per AoC survey.”

Figure 13. Clerks’ FTE salary by college income



Note: Base 177 clerks

Full-time equivalent (FTE) salary is a useful benchmark to gauge the salary ranges of clerks. However, this does not reflect the actual ‘pro rata’ salary which takes into account part-time work. The very wide range of FTE salary paid becomes more apparent when salaries are analysed ‘pro rata’, ie to take account of part-time. As shown earlier in figure 11, only 7% of all clerks work full-time, and over half of all clerks work 0.5 FTE or less.

Figure 14 overleaf provides an estimate of the range of salaries. This is based on clerks’ survey responses to hours worked per year. For instance, a clerk working full-time on a £30,000 salary will earn £30,000 per annum, whereas a clerk working 0.5 FTE will earn only £15,000 per annum.

The table does not take into account term-time only contracts which reduce the salary even further. For example the same £30,000 salary at 0.5 FTE, on a term-time only contract of 40 weeks, equates to only £11,500 pro rata.

Term-time contracts are more prevalent in sixth form colleges. Colleges with smaller incomes appear to pay much lower salaries, as figure 13 revealed. Sixth form college clerks at interview specifically mentioned term-time only contracts and the need for benchmarking data specifically for salary and hours at sixth form colleges.

Recruitment issues

Clerks in the survey felt there had been a trend in recent years towards lower rates of pay and lower expectations of skills required compared to current post holders:

“The role still appears to be undervalued and, from discussions with other clerks, often underutilised or not understood. For example there was a recent advert for a clerk role asking for L2 qualifications and offering a low (admin) salary.”

Figure 14. Estimated actual annual salary of clerks

Between 0 and 0.5 FTE (estimate 0.4 FTE)	% All clerks	0.5 FTE	% All clerks
under £8,000	4%	under £10,000	1%
£8,000 to £12,000	4%	£10,000 to £15,000	1%
£12,000 to £16,000	11%	£15,000 to £20,000	2%
£16,000 to £20,000	12%	£20,000 to £25,000	5%
£20,000 to £24,000	7%	£25,000 to £30,000	4%
£24,000 to £28,000	5%	£30,000 to £35,000	1%
over £28,000	2%	over £35,000	0%
	43%		12%
Between 0.5 FTE and full-time (estimate 0.75 FTE)	% All clerks	Full-time, all year round	% All clerks
under £15,000	1%	under £20,000	0%
£15,000 to £22,500	3%	£20,000 to £30,000	0%
£22,500 to £30,000	8%	£30,000 to £40,000	1%
£30,000 to £37,500	13%	£40,000 to £50,000	1%
£37,500 to £45,000	9%	£50,000 to £60,000	4%
£45,000 to £52,500	4%	£60,000 to £70,000	2%
over £52,500	1%	over £70,000	1%
	37%		8%

Note: applied hours per annum to FTE salary range. Estimated 0.4 (15 hours per week) for between 0 and 0.5. Estimate 0.75 (28 hours per week) for between 0.5 and full-time.
Base: all clerks excluding contract clerks = 171 clerks.

In order to verify if the unease felt by clerks is a response to current recruitment practice, an analysis of a selection of job advertisements for clerks has been undertaken, shown in figure 15 overleaf. The table considers a selection of advertisements from 2008 to 2013 and reveals a substantial variation in clerks' hours, all year round or term-time only contracts, minimum qualifications expected, full-time equivalent salary and actual salary.

Figure 15 suggests that this concern is a reaction to current practice as shown with the variety of minimum qualifications and low salary. Whilst sixth form colleges have more commonly employed clerks on term-time only contracts, interviews reveal this seems to be emerging as a practice in general FE colleges, with a correspondingly proportionately reduced pro rata salary. If this is an emerging trend then it could lead to a corresponding deskilling of the role of the clerk. This is a grave concern at a time when new freedoms often require clerks to increase their capacity, not only in terms of time, but also skills to understand the complexities of the role and to advise their board accordingly.

It is, however, very difficult to make 'like for like' salary comparisons of this nature, not least because the role of the clerk, the hours and salary, clearly vary enormously from college to college. The variation in salaries, as indicated in Figure 13 earlier, also appears to relate in part to the income of the college – the larger income, the higher the salary of the clerk and vice versa.

In terms of the regional variation of clerk salaries, neither the survey nor the analysis of advertisements show a clear pattern - ie high salaries are not confined to London or the South East, and vice versa. Disparity is very sporadic which suggests the variation relates to individual colleges, possibly in terms of income of college or size, but as we will see college income may not be the sole factor.

The final two columns of figure 15 show the actual salary of the clerk and the college income, within broad income bands. As a proportion of income, larger colleges may be in a position to pay higher salaries, and in turn attract and retain highly skilled and highly qualified clerks.

Figure 15 Analysis of advertisements for the role of clerk in FE colleges 2008 to 2013

College type	Year	Hours per week	AYR or TTO*	Minimum Qualification**	FTE Salary	Actual Clerk Salary	College Accounts - Income 2010/11***
GFE	2008	37.5	AYR	Degree	£65,000	£65,000	Over £50m
Other	2009	17.5	AYR	n/a	£42,000	£19,000	Under £10m
Other	2009	18.5	AYR	n/a	£40,000	£19,700	£20m to £50m
GFE	2009	22.5	AYR	Level 4/ICSA FE	£40,000	£24,000	£10m to £20m
GFE	2009	17.5	AYR	n/a	£40,000	£20,000	£20m to £50m
GFE	2009	22.5	AYR	n/a	£63,000	£38,000	£20m to £50m
GFE	2010	15	AYR	Relevant Level 4	£48,000	£19,000	£20m to £50m
GFE	2010	27	AYR	Prevexp/ICSA FE	£64,000	£47,000	£20m to £50m
SFC	2010	18	AYR	n/a	£39,200	£18,800	Under £10m
Other	2010	30	AYR	A Level/Level 3	£30,000	£24,000	Under £10m
GFE	2011	7	AYR	n/a	£75,000	£15,000	£20m to £50m
SFC	2011	15	TTO	Degree	£29,000	£8,500	£10m to £20m
GFE	2012	15	AYR	Degree/ICSA FE	£45,000	£18,300	£20m to £50m
SFC	2012	20	TTO	Degree	£27,200	£14,500	£10m to £20m
SFC	2012	15	TTO	Degree	£31,400	£10,500	£10m to £20m
GFE	2012	37.5	AYR	n/a	£65,000	£65,000	Over £50m
GFE	2013	12	AYR	n/a	£65,000	£20,000	£10m to £20m
GFE	2013	22.5	AYR	Level 4	£55,000	£33,000	£20m to £50m
GFE	2013	22.5	AYR	n/a	£52,000	£31,000	£20m to £50m
SFC	2013	15	AYR	Degree	£53,000	£21,000	Under £10m
SFC	2013	20	TTO	n/a	£33,000	£13,000	Under £10m
GFE	2013	15	TTO	Level 2	£27,000	£10,800	£10m to £20m

*Note: AYR – All year round; TTO – Term-time only; where salary range was advertised, the highest salary band was used.

**Source: Ofqual Office for Qualifications and Examinations Regulations ; n/a – not available

<http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/help-and-advice/comparing-qualifications/>

***Source: *College Accounts 2010/11 or relevant year Skills Funding Agency / EFA or equivalent; 2011/12 not yet published

<http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/providers/finance/financialmanagement/financialmanagement/collegeaccounts/>

Source Adverts : TES, Recruitment Agencies and JISC FE Clerks Mailbase

Whilst colleges with smaller incomes generally pay smaller salaries, figure 15 also reveals this is not always the case; some small colleges pay higher salaries and some large colleges pay small salaries. This suggests the salary of the clerk may be influenced by other factors as well as college income, perhaps reflecting the value placed on the role of the clerk by the college. This may in turn reflect the value placed by the college on governance itself.

Regardless of the size of college income, it is difficult to see a justification for full-time equivalent (FTE) salaries as low as £27,000 to £30,000 per annum, pro rata actual equivalent salary of between £8,000 and £11,000 per annum. It is also difficult to justify minimum qualification requirements as low as Level 2 for a highly skilled senior post.

Appendix 1 provides the Ofqual comparison chart for levels of qualification as a reminder. This shows that Level 2 is equivalent to five GCSEs graded A* to C. The vast majority of clerks (93%) are degree level educated or higher as shown in chapter 7, and those who are not are generally in the older age bands, some coming into clerking later in life and bringing with them a wealth of previous, often relevant, experience. Newly advertised clerk posts, requiring only Level 2, or even Level 3 qualifications, is questionable, particularly given the complexities of the role if the new freedoms are used by a governing body.

The existence of person specifications for clerking roles which only require Level 2 or 3 qualifications leads to challenge 3 in the Full Report and is a message for boards and colleges, including human resources departments. The sector needs to consider the low qualification requirements found in some job descriptions carefully and the resulting and possibly adverse effect on FE governance:

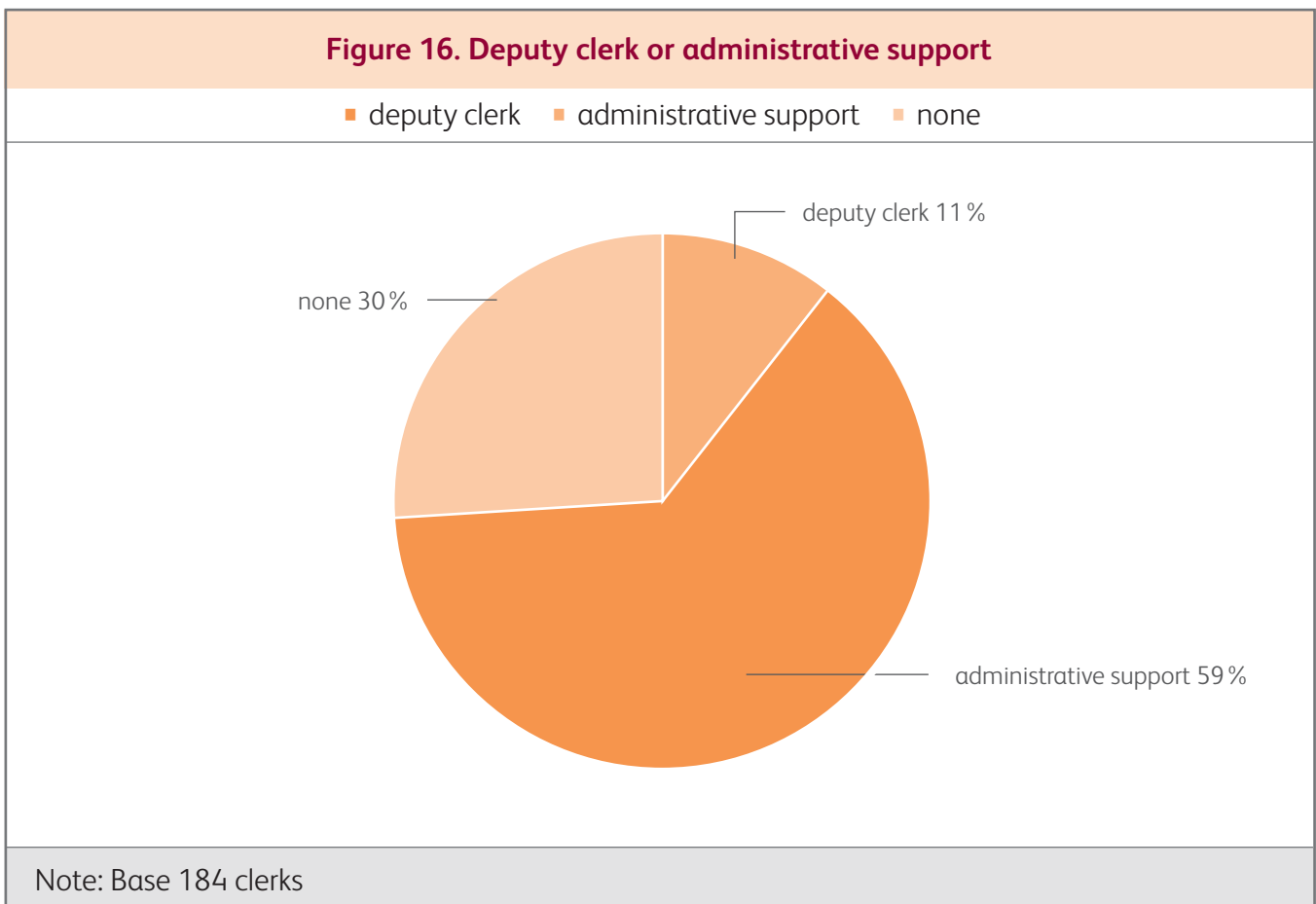
“Clerks should be seen locally and nationally as a key part of each college, worthy of investment, but also in need of clear performance management and appraisal. It is important to consider the time allocated to the role, as this is likely to be an indicator of how seriously the college and the board perceive the role, and even how seriously the college values the input of governors.”

Source: LSIS Challenges for FE college governance and priorities for development: An LSIS perspective (November 2012)

7. Administrative support

The whole area of administrative support is a very significant concern for clerks, and their ability to carry out effective clerking. Similarly to salary ranges, there is a huge variation in the level of administrative support clerks receive. The extent to which administrative tasks detract from the advisory role of clerking is an important barrier to effective clerking.

As figure 16 reveals, around six in ten (59 %) clerks have administrative support. This ranges from intensive to very limited administrative support. A further one in ten (11 %) have a deputy clerk, who is assumed to be skilled. However, this leaves around a third of all clerks (30 %) without any administrative support at all.



Interviews revealed a wide range of support, and the extent to which clerks are embroiled in routine tasks, very often to the detriment of their clerking role. Administrative tasks involved photocopying papers for the board, booking trains for board members, booking car parking spaces for members, arranging catering and refreshments, making tea, ringing around for meetings, arranging diaries and 'stuffing envelopes'. As one clerk, who came into clerking from a senior role where administrative support was provided, aptly described:

"Being a clerk is a curious job. On the one hand the clerk is a super administrator, on the other an almost quasi legal company secretary on speed! The challenge on the clerking side is the amount of admin to do, eg booking trains... do you know how long it takes to book a train? ...ringing around for meetings etc. This takes time away from the functions of clerking."

This interview quote reflects the variety of clerking roles across the sector, and the extremes of the job. The level of administrative support was a topic for discussion at the focus groups and revealed a wide variety of expectations in colleges in terms of clerks carrying out routine tasks. In discussions with clerks at interview and focus groups the administrative role was estimated as occupying a range between 10%, 30%, 40% or 50% of a clerk's time if they received no administrative support at all in college. This inefficient use of the clerk's skills has an impact on the clerk's ability to focus on their primary role of clerking rather than administration and routine tasks.

The issue of administrative support must raise issues around value for money, and the cost effectiveness of senior postholders carrying out routine tasks. More importantly, clerks would be freed to carry out their role and clerking functions efficiently and effectively, as demonstrated by the following comment:

“The college certainly values the expertise I bring but because I sit outside the formal structure there can be a degree of frustration in getting support. The job covers such a wide range of duties that along with very significant responsibilities there is also a requirement to do much low level work including collating papers and refreshments. I have asked for the college to review this since I am an expensive resource to wash up and that with financial constraints there may be better ways to do this.”

There is an emerging issue as a result of the new freedoms. Clerks who have been exposed to the new freedoms are finding time and resources are becoming stretched, especially if they are expected to clerk for sponsored academies or other educational institutions. At interview, one clerk's role expanded as a result of the new freedoms, including clerking a sponsored academy. As a result the college secured a deputy clerk.

To demonstrate the wide variety of administrative support, an analysis of the survey comments reveals the divergence. It should be noted the question asked clerks who do have support to describe their level of support. So for completeness figure 17 includes those 30% of clerks who have no administrative support. The evidence speaks for itself as shown in figure 17 overleaf. The high proportion of time many clerks are forced to spend on administration prevents them being able to concentrate on their primary role of clerk as governance advisor to the board.

Figure 17. Administrative support – a tale of two clerks

High level of administrative support:

“A Governance Liaison Administrator provides administrative support to me (+/-75 % of FT post) eg collating and sending out meeting papers, organising governor induction meetings etc.”

“A full-time deputy clerk. This is a new post from November 2012.”

“Co-ordination and arrangement of all venues for meetings, domestic arrangements, note taking at meetings and initial minute drafting, collation and distribution of all GB and committee papers, governor letters of appointment, assistance with development of governor portal, maintenance of governor files and training records.”

“Full-time deputy for both roles.”

“Full day to day support and deputising for clerk, as necessary.”

“I have an administrator to the governors who attends to all the paperwork including drafting the minutes.”

“Am assisted by a minutes secretary who takes minutes at meetings and writes them up for my perusal.”

“Governance Assistant – generally supporting the clerk and acting as minutes secretary.”

“Printing copying and mailing by the college. I work from home except when at meetings.”

Low level or no administrative support :

“None.” (approximately 30 % of all clerks)

“Sporadic.” “No additional support.” One hour a week.”

“Very basic perhaps three hours’ maximum a week.”

“Help with copying and collating agendas only – approximately one hour per week.”

“Very limited – share one of the SLT PAs who in practice does not have much time for corporation work.”

“The admin support I receive is minimal and is focused on agenda/paper despatch.”

“Not currently, but have made an application for support since currently required to do a significant amount of both paid and unpaid extra hours.”

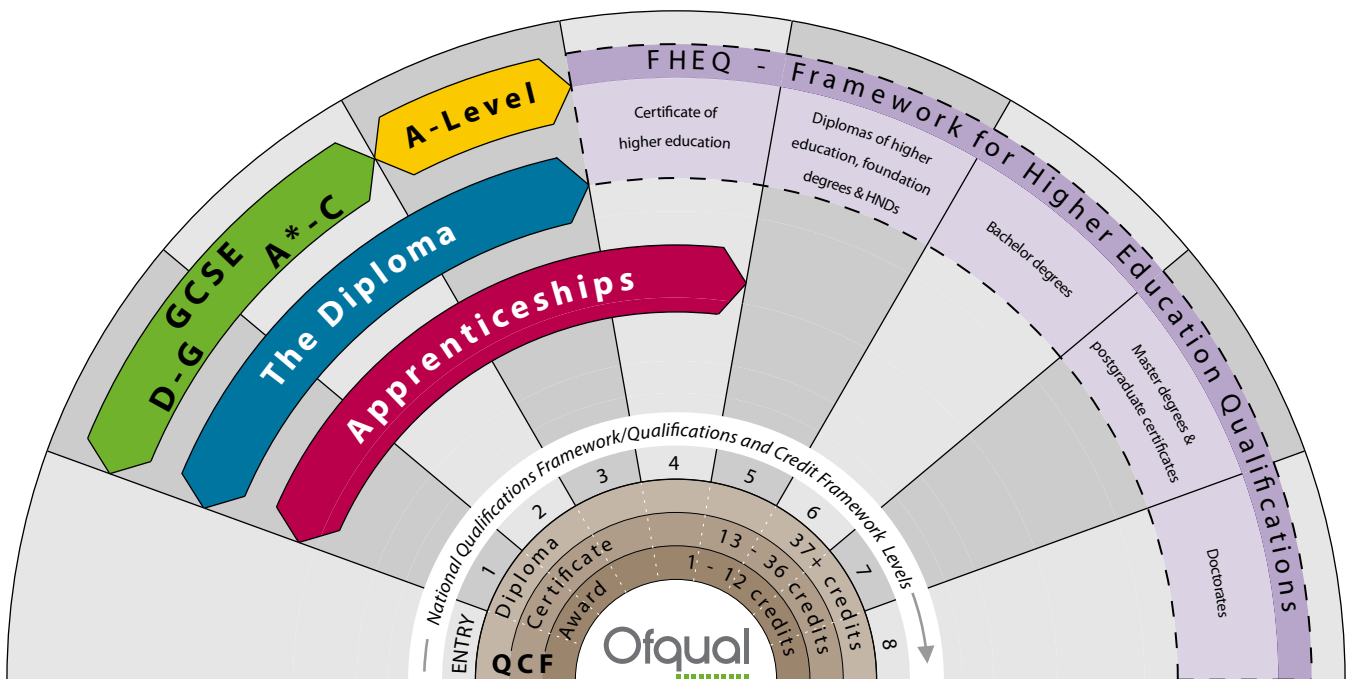
8. List of acronyms

AGC	LSIS Annual Governance Conference
AoC	Association of Colleges
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation & Skills
CPD	Continuing professional development
DfE	Department for Education
EFA	Education Funding Agency
FE	Further Education
FHEA	Further and Higher Education Act 1992
GFE	General Further Education (college)
I&As	Instruments and Articles of Government
LSIS	The Learning and Skills Improvement Service
LEPs	Local Enterprise Partnerships
NCN	National Clerks' Network
NCNC	New Challenges, New Chances
SMT	Senior Management Team
SFC	Sixth Form Colleges
SFCA	Sixth Form College Association

9. Appendix 1

Ofqual Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulations

Comparing levels of qualifications



Source: <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/help-and-advice/comparing-qualifications/>

Learning and Skills Improvement Service
Friars House, Manor House Drive
Coventry CV1 2TE

t 024 7662 7900
e enquiries@lsis.org.uk
www.lsis.org.uk

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Registered in England and Wales Company no 06454450 Registered charity No 1123636
Registered office Friars House, Manor House Drive, Coventry CV1 2TE