

University of Essex

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address Wivenhoe Park
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Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors supported by a team of specialist inspectors in accordance with the *Framework for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Education (2008-11)*.
2. The inspection draws upon evidence from all aspects of the provision to make judgements against all parts of the inspection evaluation schedule in the framework. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of the training in supporting high quality outcomes for trainees and the capacity of the partnership to bring about further improvements. A summary of the grades awarded is included at the end of this report.

Key to inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Explanation of terms used in this report

Attainment is defined as the standard reached by a trainee at the end of their training.

Progress is judged in terms of how well a trainee has developed professionally from their starting point to the standard reached at the time of the inspection or at a suitable review point.

Achievement is judged in terms of the progress made and the standard reached by a trainee at the time of the inspection or at a recent assessment review point.

The provider

3. The University of Essex partnership, established in 2007, comprises Colchester Institute and South Essex College. Staff at the two colleges deliver all the training; there is no provision at the university. Both colleges deliver certificate and professional graduate certificate awards for in-service teachers. In addition, Colchester Institute offers a one-year full-time pre-service route for those seeking entry to the profession. At each college, the programmes have different modules and course structures. They are both validated by the university, endorsed by Standards Verification UK (SVUK) and they satisfy the Secretary of State's requirements for Further Education (FE) teachers.
4. At the time of the inspection, there were 125 trainees at Colchester Institute, of whom 12 were enrolled on the pre-service course, and 174 at South Essex College. Around three quarters of the in-service trainees teach in FE colleges and the rest are employed in other settings, such as private training providers or adult and community learning.

Initial teacher education for the further education system

Key strengths

5. The key strengths are:
 - the good attainment and good progress made by most trainees, many of whom balance very effectively the demands of part-time study with full-time employment
 - the good lesson planning and teaching by trainees that takes full account of the needs and abilities of their students
 - the well-designed assignments that enable trainees to link educational theory to their own practice
 - the strong emphasis on critical reflection that encourages trainees to improve their practice
 - the flexible nature and wide range of initial teacher education courses enabling trainees to progress from one level to another in line with their experience, qualifications and professional ambitions
 - highly effective teacher training and mentoring on the pre-service course that make a significant contribution to the all-round development of trainees
 - the extensive pastoral support for trainees that plays a key role in their good professional development and personal well-being.

Required actions

6. In order to improve its capacity to improve, the partnership must:
 - systematically monitor trainees' attainment so that at each stage in their course trainees are fully aware of their progress and achievement and can be guided to reach their full potential
 - focus all quality and self-assessment activities sharply on the impact they have on trainees' outcomes in order to improve planning.

Recommendations

7. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:
 - build on best practice in observation feedback and target-setting to make clear to trainees the steps they need to take to improve further
 - improve the monitoring of the quality of subject mentoring so that all trainees benefit from the best practice, much of which is highly effective.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

8. The overall effectiveness of the provider in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is good. Inspection evidence confirms the partnership's judgement that trainees' overall attainment by the end of their course is good. The components of the different training programmes combine well, particularly on the pre-service course, to ensure that trainees make good progress and are able to complete their course successfully. With strong support from their tutors, trainees on in-service courses manage very effectively the competing demands on their time of part-time study, employment and family commitments.
9. By the time they progress into the second year of their course, in-service trainees are competent teachers who have grown significantly in confidence. This represents good or better progress for the high proportion of trainees that start the course with little teaching experience and/or concerns about their ability to achieve the academic standards required.
10. Trainees on all programmes demonstrate good lesson planning skills that take full account of the needs and abilities of their students. In their teaching, trainees give careful attention to creating an inclusive environment in their classrooms, workshops and training rooms and they have the skills and confidence to challenge discrimination and stereotypes. They use to good effect a wide range of activities, resources and assessment methods. Those teaching vocational subjects draw very effectively on their industrial or commercial knowledge and skills to make lessons relevant and enjoyable. Trainees reflect thoughtfully and critically on their own development and practice and, as a consequence, most are prepared to take risks with new approaches and ideas and learn from their mistakes.
11. Recruitment and selection arrangements are rigorous. Good advice is given to trainees, including both college employees and those who work elsewhere, as to which is the most appropriate training programme for them, given their experience and qualifications. Consequently, very few trainees have withdrawn over the last few years and, on most courses, success rates are high. Trainees benefit from the choice of a wide range of initial teacher education courses, offered at flexible times to meet varying needs. Many trainees complete one of the 'Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector' (PTLLS) courses offered at both colleges before embarking on a two-year part-time programme.
12. Initial assessment arrangements at each college ensure that those who are recruited have the requisite knowledge, skills and teaching hours to complete the course successfully. The initial assessment process identifies trainees' starting points in relation to their levels of literacy and numeracy, from which progress and achievement can be measured, but does not include any audit of subject knowledge and so cannot identify any gaps. For those who require it, study skills and literacy support are effective in enabling trainees to improve their academic writing skills and the standard of their assignments. The partnership recognises, though, that tighter tracking of this aspect of provision,

as well as numeracy support, is required to ensure that trainees make as much progress as possible, so that they can support their own students with the delivery and assessment of functional skills.

13. Almost all trainees benefit from mentors who are specialists in the same subject or vocational area, including those who are not college employees. Much good practice exists, whereby mentors provide very high quality subject support and guidance and make a significant contribution to trainees' all-round development, particularly on the pre-service course. However, as acknowledged by the partnership, the quality of mentoring remains inconsistent and more systematic monitoring of subject mentoring is planned.
14. Trainees are very positive about the high quality of training they receive, particularly on the pre-service course, and they all value highly the extensive support provided by tutors. As trainees progress through their programme, they become increasingly aware of how different elements of the course complement each other and how theory links to practice. Well-designed assignments enable all trainees, including those who work for private providers or in adult and community learning, to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills to their own employment context.
15. Feedback on written assignments by tutors is detailed and helpful and trainees respond well to both praise and constructive criticism. However, not all feedback on lesson observations is of a high standard. In the small minority of cases where feedback is over generous and/or does not give sufficient emphasis to subject specific development, tutors do not make clear to trainees precisely what steps they need to take to improve further. This in turn has an impact on trainees' target-setting which is not always sharply focused on improving practice.
16. The extent to which resources are deployed to secure the best possible outcomes for trainees is satisfactory. Almost all teacher trainers, the key resource for trainees, are expert practitioners and are highly committed to supporting trainees and to their own professional development. Recent mergers, reorganisations and staff changes have provided the college teams with challenges and delayed the implementation of some planned improvements. College facilities are good but access to teaching resources and technology varies, depending on the trainees' workplace or placement. The use of a virtual learning environment to extend opportunities for trainees to join and participate in 'communities of practice' is at a very early stage of development.
17. Both colleges are good at promoting equality of opportunity and valuing diversity and this is reflected in trainees' approach to their teaching. Each college has taken steps to meet local needs and attract different types of trainees. One college, for example, offers bespoke PTLLS courses for employers, anticipating that many of the trainees will then progress on to other initial teacher education programmes. The other college offers an accelerated entry route with a January start, in effect providing an eighteen-month version

of its two-year courses, in order to attract those who wish to study part-time but can complete in a shorter timescale. Trainees with disabilities are supported well to make good progress. The proportion of trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds is small but broadly in line with the communities from which they are recruited. There are no significant differences in the achievement of any identifiable groups of trainees.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 3

18. The partnership's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory, although it judges this aspect to be good. The university validates higher education provision in both colleges in a range of subject areas and so links between the three institutions are well established. Although the university does not have its own education studies or teacher training provision, it has been proactive in attempting to raise standards.
19. The nature of the partnership is such that the colleges have each developed their own provision and the university is supporting them to improve and to ensure consistent standards. For example, the university facilitates the rigorous moderation of written assignments. Consistency of standards is not so evident with teaching observations but, to address this, external examiners undertake joint lesson observations with tutors and the cross-moderation of trainees' practice, involving tutors from both colleges, is planned. Increasingly, the colleges are working together effectively to identify and share good practice.
20. The colleges routinely seek the views of trainees and take action to respond to suggestions and to address concerns, where appropriate. For example, assessment activities have been reviewed and amended to minimise overload. The most significant recent change to the provision is that, following an internal review, modules at Masters' level are no longer offered as the colleges consider them to be incompatible with SVUK requirements and the emphasis in the programmes on the development of professional practice.
21. Within each college and at the university, much time and effort is dedicated to evaluating provision. Quality assurance arrangements include annual monitoring, higher education boards of study, college self-assessment reports and self-evaluation documents. All of these draw on achievement data as well as feedback from trainees, thematic reviews, external examiners and the university acting as a 'critical friend'. Despite all this activity, progress has been slow in implementing a key area for development which was identified at the last inspection. Each college has only recently introduced its own systems to track trainees' attainment more systematically and, as acknowledged by the university, these need to be refined still further. Trainees attain well and make good progress and they benefit from a significant amount of informal support and guidance. However, without a robust tracking system in place, the partnership cannot be sure that all trainees achieve to their full potential.

22. Self-evaluation by the partnership confirms that the university and the two colleges are aware of the strengths and areas for development of the initial teacher education provision. However, evaluation of the provision focuses too much on processes and inputs by the course teams rather than on the impact of actions taken on trainees' performance. The partnership acknowledges that it is not yet able to base judgements securely on issues arising out of an analysis of trainees' progress and attainment. It analyses data in relation to the retention and achievement of different groups but is not yet in a position to measure the extent to which the proportion of satisfactory, good and outstanding teachers represents appropriate progress or improves each year.
23. In other respects, the partnership has been good at anticipating and responding to changes in national policy. University staff and college tutors have productive links with a wide range of local and national networks, helping them to keep up-to-date with developments. Many of the teacher trainers are involved in research projects and they make good use of their findings to inform provision and support trainees.

Annex: Partnership colleges

The partnership includes the following colleges:

Colchester Institute

South Essex College

Summary of inspection grades¹

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding; grade 2 is good; grade 3 is satisfactory; grade 4 is inadequate.

Overall effectiveness

		ITE for FE
How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?		2
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	2
Factors contributing to trainees' attainment	To what extent do recruitment/ selection arrangements support high quality outcomes?	2
	To what extent does the training and assessment ensure that all trainees progress to fulfil their potential given their ability and starting points?	2
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	3
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	2
Promoting equalities and diversity	To what extent does the provision promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination?	2

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

		ITE for FE
To what extent do the leadership and management at all levels have the capacity to secure further improvements and/or to sustain high quality outcomes?		3
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		3
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?		2
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?		3

¹ The criteria for making these graded judgements are in the *Grade criteria for the inspection of ITE 2008-11*; Ofsted November 2009; Reference no: 080128.

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