

University of Sussex

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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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 Sussex offers a range of initial teacher education programmes. This inspection covers only the provision for those training to teach in further education and training.
4. The university works in partnership with Central Sussex College to provide initial teacher training to in-service trainees. The college is responsible for the training. The programmes are overseen by the Collaborative Provision Committee at the university, through the Partnership Office. The college offers both a Certificate in Education and a Professional Graduate Certificate in Education. Both awards are validated by the university, lead to the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector, and meet the statutory requirements for teaching in the further education sector.
5. At the time of the inspection, there were around 70 trainees undertaking the programmes. Around a third of these were on the graduate route.

Approximately two thirds of the trainees are employed by Central Sussex College; the remainder are employed by a range of external public, private and voluntary sector organisations. The courses last two years, and trainees may start in either September or January.

Initial teacher education for the further education system

Key strengths

6. The key strengths are:
 - the very significant improvement in subject specialist support and mentoring, which are now effective in supporting trainees to improve their practice
 - the very good communication between staff and trainees that ensures trainees are particularly well supported to complete the training and succeed
 - the highly effective investment of significant resources since the last inspection to improve provision and to provide a sound basis for sustained improvement in the future
 - the good strategic support from senior leaders in the partnership to develop and improve the provision, leading to better outcomes for trainees.

Required actions

7. In order to improve the consistency of provision in securing improved trainee outcomes, the partnership must:
 - review and refine the systems for monitoring all aspects of trainees' progress, and ensure that all staff follow meticulously the agreed systems for recording trainees' progress
 - ensure that quality assurance procedures are fully effective, and pay appropriate attention to detail, to improve the rigour and consistency with which each trainee's progress is monitored.
8. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership must:
 - raise expectations and standards for all trainees, particularly the most able, by setting more demanding targets and engaging trainees in discussions and reading that will stretch and challenge them in all aspects of their work

- urgently implement plans for teacher trainers to benefit from a wider range of contacts with other providers.
9. In order to ensure that the provision meets the requirements for training teachers who are qualified to work in the lifelong learning sector, the partnership must:
- ensure that all candidates enrolled on the programme have a sufficiently broad range of teaching experience to be eligible for the award.

Recommendations

10. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:
- explore further ways in which the expertise of the university should be used to benefit trainees in particular, but also trainers and mentors
 - review the arrangements for assessing the extent to which trainees display in their practice an understanding of the challenges of teaching in a diverse, multicultural society.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 3

11. The overall effectiveness of the partnership in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is satisfactory. Most trainees complete the course successfully, and reasons for the small number of withdrawals are well documented. Trainees' attainment is satisfactory overall, and inspection evidence shows that most trainees make sound progress taking into account their starting points. The partnership has developed mechanisms to judge trainees' attainment and progress, and makes secure judgements on the quality of trainees' lessons. However, the assessment of trainees' progress across all aspects of the programme is fragmented and unsystematic, and lacks rigour. The partnership recognises the need to improve the process for making judgements both on individual trainees and cohorts to inform self-evaluation. Clear grading criteria have now been introduced to measure and record trainees' progress on all the key aspects of their programme, but these are not yet being implemented systematically by all staff involved.
12. Most trainees display satisfactory or good teaching skills. They use a variety of teaching strategies effectively, and some make good use of new technology to strengthen their teaching. Trainees show a sound grasp of the mechanics of teaching, such as planning, checking on learning and other forms of assessment, and awareness of learners' different needs. Most trainees teach vocational subjects, and in practical lessons make very good use of their industrial expertise to enthuse and motivate students. A minority is less adept at teaching theory in classroom-based lessons. The extent to which trainees use their theoretical training to inform both their lessons and their reflections on their practice is variable. Inspectors found that a significant minority of

trainees, particularly those who were more academically able, was not making sufficiently rapid progress. For these trainees, standards of written work and the intellectual depth of their self-reflection were disappointing features.

13. The standard of work in trainees' portfolios is satisfactory. Most academic work is competently structured and reasonably well referenced, but very little shows real flair. A minority of written work is weak, although this mainly reflects the weak academic background of a significant number of trainees.
14. Recruitment and selection arrangements are satisfactory. The approach to recruiting trainees is highly inclusive, and meets the needs both of college-based staff and a range of external private, public and voluntary organisations. Marketing is good; publicity materials are effective in promoting teaching as a career to potential trainees from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Application, enrolment and induction procedures are good. Trainees value highly the personal interview they receive following application. Arrangements for initial assessment, although in place, lack rigour. Trainees who need further support with literacy, numeracy or information technology skills do not always receive such support sufficiently swiftly. Individual learning plans completed by trainees and tutors following the induction process too often contain banal targets, setting a weak precedent for future planning. The partnership is beginning to gather more comprehensive baseline data at the start of the course to enable more rigorous tracking of trainees' progress, but recognises there is further work to do on this.
15. A very small number of trainees have a narrow range of teaching experiences and these are not sufficiently extended by the partnership to ensure that they fulfil the requirements of the full teaching role.
16. Training and assessment are satisfactory. Trainees are very positive about the quality of most of the training, although a significant minority report that they would like more opportunities within training sessions to share their teaching experiences with others and link their own practice with the conceptual or theoretical content of the programme. Trainees are highly complimentary about the quality and frequency of communications between themselves and their trainers, and the frequent formal and informal support they receive. Inspection evidence supports trainees' views, and these factors contribute significantly to ensuring most trainees succeed.
17. Assessment is satisfactory overall, with practice ranging from exemplary to weak. The assessment of written work is sound but on occasion lacks detailed suggestions for improvement, including guidance on deepening the academic rigour of the work. This is particularly the case for the more able trainees. Lesson observation assessments are also variable; some observers write perceptive critiques and include practical, helpful guidance; others are over-descriptive and more mundane in their analysis. Observers are prompted to evaluate lessons against a range of criteria. Although this is useful, on occasion it results in a lack of clarity about overall judgements. Assessment of inclusion and equal opportunity issues is often weak because observers focus exclusively

- on the extent to which the lesson meets individual learning needs and rarely report on wider notions of the promotion of equality and diversity.
18. The effectiveness of individual learning plans and of target setting is inconsistent, although improved since the previous inspection. There is a lack of clarity about the precise roles and responsibilities of all of those involved in the training, and as a consequence trainees do not always benefit from a systematic approach to action planning that identifies clearly and precisely what they need to do to improve. Quality monitoring of the arrangements for tracking trainees' progress is not fully effective. Targets set for, and by, trainees are often appropriate and sharply focused, but they are sometimes too generic to be valuable.
 19. Subject specialist support for trainees has improved significantly and is now good for the majority of trainees. All trainees have mentors, the vast majority of whom are specialists in the trainee's subject. Most mentors are well equipped for the role, with many having specific responsibilities for improving teaching and learning within the college. For a small number of trainees, mainly those external to the college, mentoring is less secure. The partnership has introduced appropriate systems to raise both the profile and effectiveness of mentoring. For example, trainees are not accepted on the programme without a mentor; mentors must attend training; a useful handbook for mentors has been developed; and mentors have termly three-way meetings with their trainee and a teacher trainer.
 20. The partnership's use of available resources is good. Both human and physical resources have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Staffing has been strengthened in several ways: the university link tutor devotes more time to liaison; the college has appointed a course coordinator to support the curriculum team leader; the faculty director overseeing the team has devoted considerable time to the course; and, senior managers at the college, including the Principal, have invested time in overseeing progress. Additionally, significant resources have been allocated to improving mentoring. Library resources have improved and most trainees report that they have little, if any, difficulty in accessing appropriate texts. The virtual learning environment has developed and is now a useful repository for most of the key documents needed by trainees. However, it is not as fully developed as it could be, for example, it does not yet consistently include teaching materials for each session or provide a fully diverse range of materials and links to resources that could contribute to raising standards by extending more able trainees. It remains the case that both the human and physical resources of the university are not used as well as they might be to benefit trainees.
 21. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Issues of inclusion, equality and diversity are firmly embedded in the training programme, and trainees demonstrate a sound understanding of the relevant concepts. There are no significant differences in the achievements of identifiable groups of trainees. The partnership's arrangements for assessing the impact of the training on equality and diversity on trainees' practice are not fully secure. Most observers are astute in assessing the extent to which trainees pay attention to

individual learning needs and are cognisant of learners' diverse abilities. However, there is little evidence that trainees are assessed, or assess themselves, on their understanding of the implications of teaching socially, culturally and ethnically diverse groups, other than in those subjects, such as English for speakers of other languages, where such topics are intrinsic to the course.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality **Grade: 2**

22. Leadership and management at all levels have good capacity to secure further improvements. Since the previous inspection in May 2010, progress to improve provision has been rapid. The explicit commitment of senior leaders, at both the university and the college, to the growth and development of the programme, and to ensuring appropriate resources are allocated, provides a secure basis for future improvements. Trainees' progress and attainment have improved significantly.
23. Self-evaluation has improved significantly. A wider range of sources is drawn upon to make judgements that are more secure than those found at the previous inspection. Management of the programme has improved significantly. Integration of initial teacher training into the college's overall quality assurance and self-assessment processes has taken place and is beneficial. New overarching leadership has played a significant role in ensuring that quality systems are applied more rigorously, although there remain some weaknesses in this respect. Quality assurance procedures are now applied to all the key aspects of the programme and much more information is gathered than previously. The quality improvement plan articulates clearly the key areas for development and sets appropriate priorities to improve trainees' outcomes; it is being monitored carefully at senior levels of the college and the university. However, the desired outcomes of planned actions are not always sufficiently clear or precise. The quality assurance of mentoring is not yet sufficiently refined to ensure that occasional shortcomings in mentors meeting their obligations are both reduced and noticed earlier.
24. The university's role in quality monitoring has been enhanced since the previous inspection. The university's link tutor is closely involved in most aspects of quality assurance, and chairs the course boards. He meets frequently with key staff at the college, and regular reports on progress are submitted to the Collaborative Provision Committee, through the Partnership Office. Through course boards and other channels, trainees' views are listened to carefully, and responded to appropriately. Second-year trainees report significant improvements in the programme, and feel that their views have been fully taken into account.
25. Despite this rapid progress, there is much still to do to improve the provision further. Inspection evidence shows that quality assurance procedures have developed in a piecemeal way in response to the myriad of initiatives

implemented to secure better outcomes for trainees. The partnership is developing a strategy to rationalise and simplify the complex range of paperwork designed to monitor trainees' progress. Record keeping is too often characterised by a degree of carelessness that has yet to be tackled by effective quality assurance.

26. The partnership's anticipation of change, and its response to national and local initiatives, are good. The partnership remains rather insular, but has put in place plans both to extend the partnership and to ensure that the initial teacher education team benefit more from sharing good practice with other providers. The partnership is highly responsive to local need, and provides good progression routes for those wishing to embark on a teaching career through the Preparation to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector route. Leaders and managers are adept at keeping in touch with developments in the sector, and are well prepared to respond swiftly to government initiatives as they arise.
27. The partnership's track record on planning and taking action for improvement is good. Data show that the proportion of trainees who complete their training is improving. Actions to improve the provision, following a disappointing inspection outcome in May 2010, have gathered pace, and in particular over the six months preceding this inspection the partnership has made significant progress in tackling most of the weaknesses.

Annex: Partnership colleges

The partnership includes the following college:

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

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?		2
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		2
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?		2

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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