

University Campus Suffolk

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. University Campus Suffolk (UCS) was established in 2007 as a joint venture between the Universities of East Anglia and Essex, with the aim of providing a higher education presence in Suffolk. UCS has a main campus in Ipswich, and five learning network centres based in further education colleges in the region. UCS provides training for initial teacher education (ITE) in the lifelong learning sector in each of the five learning network centres; no training takes place at the main campus. Courses lead to certificates in education (Cert Ed.) and professional graduate certificates in education (PGCE) awarded jointly by the University of Essex and the University of East Anglia. Around 230 trainees were on the courses at the time of the inspection, of whom 30 were following a full-time, one-year pre-service course, with the remainder on a two-year, part-time in-service programme. The provision was last inspected in December 2010, when all aspects of the training were judged to be satisfactory. UCS is also involved in ITE provision for schools through local school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) arrangements in collaboration with the local authority.

Initial teacher education for the further education system

Key strengths

4. The key strengths are:
 - the improved partnership working between teacher training teams at the five network centres, leading to a stronger focus on collective actions to improve trainees' outcomes
 - the effective recruitment of a broad range of trainees, many of high calibre, to both in-service and pre-service routes, meeting the needs of both college and non-college employers
 - the very good support that teacher trainers provide for trainees, making a significant contribution in helping most to become adept practitioners with a clear understanding of good practice
 - flexible and responsive training routes that take full account of trainees' prior experiences and their current circumstances.

Required actions

5. In order to accelerate the progress made in improving the quality of provision across the partnership, the partnership must:
 - review the leadership roles within the partnership, to ensure that responsibilities are clear and actions to improve the provision are swifter and more decisive.
6. To ensure that all full-time trainees are prepared to commence their teaching placements on time, the partnership must:
 - ensure that all pre-service trainees are offered places earlier than is currently the case, and that there is sufficient time to complete Criminal Records Bureau checks on trainees before they begin the programme.

Recommendations

7. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:
 - rapidly establish and standardise robust procedures across the partnership for measuring the progress that trainees make throughout their training
 - further improve the impact of mentoring on trainees' outcomes by ensuring that mentors are trained more fully to recognise the breadth of their role in developing trainees' subject-specific expertise both inside and outside the classroom
 - raise academic standards, particularly for more able trainees, by ensuring that UCS and the network centres work together to keep teacher trainers alive to contemporary debates about post-16 teaching and training
 - raise trainees' awareness of current good practice around the promotion of equality and diversity, so that trainees are prepared fully for teaching in multicultural, diverse settings.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 3

8. The overall effectiveness of the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is satisfactory. Good progress has been made in many respects in the short time since the last inspection, although there is much yet to be done to ensure that the quality and consistency of provision across the partnership are sufficiently good to ensure that all trainees fulfil their potential. Most trainees complete the course successfully, and reasons for withdrawals are well documented. The proportion of successful completions fluctuates between network centres. Work has started on interpreting and explaining these variations, but this analysis currently lacks sophistication.
9. Most trainees display satisfactory or good teaching skills and make good progress. They demonstrate a sound grasp of the mechanics of teaching; they think carefully about how to improve their practice, and show good awareness of the constituents of good classroom practice. Trainees pay good attention to individual students' varying aptitudes in their lessons, although they are less secure when asked to discuss the impact of broader notions of equality and diversity in their teaching. The depth of self-reflection varies, with a minority of trainees adopting an uncritical approach to ideas and concepts that are contested within the wider educational community. There was a good level of agreement between inspectors and partnership staff about trainees' teaching capabilities. In a minority of cases, neither trainees nor their mentors or trainers are sufficiently clear about what steps need to be taken to improve the trainee's quality of teaching.
10. Trainees' written work is satisfactory. Most in-service trainees from vocational areas make good progress to reach a stage where they can write competent assignments. More-able trainees produce good work and have a fluent grasp of some educational debates, although the depth of their knowledge of contemporary academic research shows that they are not always challenged by the training, or directed towards suitable resources.
11. Recruitment and selection arrangements are good. Most pre-service trainees are selected carefully and both they and many in-service trainees are of high calibre. Efforts have been made to attract trainees for shortage subjects, although these have met with limited success. The provision meets a regional demand from trainees based in and around Ipswich, and the other network centres, for local training, and provides a good service for colleges and a wide range of other public and voluntary providers. The partnership caters well for a diverse range of in-service trainees, and is highly responsive both to their prior experiences and their current circumstances. Arrangements for initial assessment and providing support for trainees who need additional literacy or numeracy qualifications are generally good. For a small minority of trainees, difficulties in securing a suitable workplace placement can lead to a risk that they receive insufficient breadth of teaching and other experiences. Some pre-service trainees experience unsatisfactory delays in receiving notification that they have a place on the course and that their placement has been secured.

12. Training and assessment are good. Trainees are very positive about the quality of most of the training, and on the whole trainers model good practice. Some trainees commented 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. Teacher trainers provide particularly good personal support to trainees across the partnership, and this is valued highly. The content of the training programme is devised well and meets all the requirements for the lifelong learning sector. However, in some instances the academic content of the training does not challenge the most able trainees to engage in higher-level academic thought and discussion.
13. Most trainers provide detailed and helpful commentaries on trainees' assignments that help them to identify how to improve. The assessment of trainees' progress is charted through their professional development records. Trainees are encouraged to evaluate their own progress and develop action plans for future development, although this self-evaluation is not always sharply focused. Many trainees find the professional development records particularly cumbersome and therefore less helpful in charting progress than they could be, a view shared by inspectors.
14. Subject-specific mentoring has improved and is now good for many trainees. Significant efforts have been made to secure suitable mentors for all trainees and these have been mostly successful. Most, but not all, mentors have a clear understanding of their role; a small minority have not attended training. The best mentors recognise that their role is to help trainees shape and develop their subject expertise both inside and outside the classroom; however, a significant minority of mentors do not focus sufficiently on the subject-specific element of their role. In many cases, mentors are also trainees' line managers. Although this may be unavoidable in some cases, the potential pitfalls of this are not articulated sufficiently clearly in course documentation. The incentives for staff to agree to be mentors are not consistent across the partnership. A minority of mentors struggle to find sufficient time to devote to their mentees.
15. The partnership's use of available resources is satisfactory. Given the geographical spread of the provision, the partnership has rightly focused attention on ensuring that all trainees can access electronic resources. Increasingly, UCS's virtual learning environment is a valuable repository of course materials that benefit trainees. It is being developed to include wider sources of educational content that will encourage trainees to strengthen further the range of academic materials that they can use to support their studies, and thereby raise standards further. However, a small minority of trainees in some locations reported difficulties in accessing the virtual learning environment. Staffing resources are satisfactory; most teacher training teams in the network centres are appropriately qualified. Each network centre is responsible under the collaborative agreement for providing appropriate resources, and all trainees have access to the central library at UCS's main campus; although other than the trainees at the neighbouring network centre, few trainees visit the main campus. Academic leadership is the responsibility of the operational group, although there

is no single identifiable link tutor between UCS and the network centres to provide leadership specifically for the initial teacher education programmes.

16. The quality of provision across the partnership is satisfactory. As the partnership recognises, inconsistencies remain between network centres. Progress has been made since the last inspection in tackling this inconsistency and in sharing good practice, but this has been relatively slow. Although the partnership does not lack ambition or a desire for rapid change, the structures in place to support improvement are not always effective in promoting rapid, decisive action. As a consequence, aspects of the provision that do not need to be subject to formal university procedures improve more slowly than could be the case.
17. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Issues of inclusion, equality and diversity are firmly embedded in the training programme, and many trainees demonstrate a sound understanding of the relevant concepts. While trainees are well aware of the need to meet their students' varying individual needs, they are less secure about the implications for their practice of teaching in diverse, multicultural settings. The partnership has begun recently to analyse data relating to the outcomes of different groups of trainees. This work is at an early stage.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 3

18. The partnership has satisfactory capacity to sustain high quality outcomes for trainees and to take the actions required to secure improvements where needed. As found in previous inspections, all partners are strongly committed to the scheme and to improving outcomes for trainees. At the time of the last inspection insufficient information was gathered to evaluate fully all aspects of provision, in part because of the relative newness of the partnership. The partnership is now producing and analysing more data to assess performance. The extent and types of data currently collected provide a minimum foundation for evaluation of progress towards the partnership's targets. Further collection and analysis will be required, however, to arrive at comprehensive and secure judgements of trainees' progress, and to make comparisons across the partnership. Draft self-evaluation documents from each of the network centres for 2010/11, although varying in quality, provide sound evidence of an effort to be more analytical and evaluative, and less descriptive, than their predecessors. The range of evidence used to evaluate the quality of provision has improved. Delays in implementation of some of the partnership's 2009/10 priority plans, especially the introduction of plans for making explicit judgements on trainees' progress, mean that measurement of the value being added to trainees' progress by the partnership is still in its infancy.
19. The partnership has begun to introduce a grading system that will enable judgements of individual trainees' progress and attainment, and in due course provide data that will allow analysis of achievement trends, at both learning network centre and whole partnership level. These mechanisms will enable the

partnership to assess the value that the training is adding to trainees' teaching abilities, particularly for in-service trainees. Arrangements for grading trainees' lessons are underpinned by an excessively detailed set of grading criteria that are better suited to evaluating trainees' progress and competence over a period of time, rather than in an individual lesson. As a consequence, observers do not always capture the most important features of lessons to feed back to trainees.

20. The partnership has a good capacity to anticipate change and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives. UCS was established mainly in response to the absence of any discrete higher education provision in Suffolk. In this capacity, UCS, including the learning network centres, anticipates and meets local demand for teachers and trainers in the lifelong learning sector particularly well. Leaders have a sound awareness of current national workforce challenges and trends, and appropriate involvement with regional and national bodies. Within the network centres, a variety of initiatives have been promoted to ensure provision is responsive to local need. For example, at one centre, placements have been made available by private providers who work with young people not in education, employment or training. Other initiatives include some innovative use of new technologies at one centre, and at another centre the development of a module to meet demand for teachers who wish to teach on the increasing number of higher education programmes in further education settings.
21. The effectiveness of the partnership in planning and taking action for improvement is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, there has been a restructuring of management and quality processes with some beneficial effect. The central leadership team is laudably clear as to the roles of its members, and both strategic oversight and operational matters are properly overseen by appropriate committees. The structure now in place has the potential to bring about greater rigour and consistency to planning for, and taking action to bring about, improvements. However, a lack of clarity exists in some instances as to the division of responsibilities. In particular, it is not always clear where responsibility lies for making decisions and taking action, and then for checking that the action has been carried out satisfactorily. For example, an audit recommendation that all pre-service trainees must undergo completed Criminal Records Bureau checks before commencing their placements was acted upon by the appropriate postholders, but it remained unclear whose responsibility it was to ascertain that the action had been completed successfully. As a consequence, the partnership ran the risk of trainees commencing placements without full checks being completed. More mundanely, the implementation of relatively straightforward decisions to improve consistency and quality across the partnership is often slow and characterised by excessive deliberation. College teams participate keenly in organised, collective, cross-partnership sharing of practice, in discussion of issues and in the generation of sound targets for improvement. However, significant improvements in the learning experiences and teaching of trainees would follow if ways were found to ensure that the energy expended in these valuable processes translated more fully and swiftly into action.

Annex: Partnership colleges

The partnership includes UCS learning network centres based at the following colleges:

West Suffolk College

Suffolk New College

Otley College

Lowestoft College

Great Yarmouth 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?	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?	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?		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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