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Acting Principal and Chief Executive
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Dear Mr Duncan

Ofsted inspection of ITE provision leading to Awarding Body qualifications in the lifelong learning/further education sector

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave to us when we inspected your provision between 16 and 19 January 2012, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and to a published national overview report. This report will identify the overall quality of provision leading to Awarding Body qualifications and identify the overall strengths and areas for development. However, in line with previous practice, inspectors will not make graded judgements of the quality of the provision in each centre; they will evaluate and feed back identified strengths and any points for further development. These are outlined below for your centre.

The published overview report will list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text.

Outcomes for trainees

Success rates on the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) course declined in the period 2008-2011 from 93% to 69% to 58% in July 2011. According to the college, small numbers, restructuring and a loss of trainee teachers' teaching hours contributed to the decline in success rates. A number of measures have been put in place to address declining success rates, for example attendance is now monitored and recorded by college managers who ensure staff are not timetabled during course sessions.

These measures have had an impact and the cohort completing in December 2011 had an 85% success rate. 39% of DTLLS completers have already been awarded QTLS with the remainder scheduled to complete in a subsequent phase.

All trainees are on the most appropriate course. The college provides appropriate and timely information to potential trainees. Many follow the DTLLS course on completion of Preparation to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) course. Those in a classroom support role are directed to the Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CTLLS) programme. Those trainees who begin to move into more of a teaching role during the course of their programmes are supported to progress on to the DTLLS course. The interview process does not currently clearly identify trainees' initial strengths and areas for development. There is no clearly established starting point from which to judge trainees' progress and there is no individual learning plan which could be used to record and track trainees' progress.

Trainees are highly committed to the course and to their own professional development. They take advice willingly and act promptly to address areas for development. Trainees form positive relationships with learners. Most are able to link the more theoretical aspects of their training to their classroom or workshop practice. They use their assignments to inform their teaching. Trainees demonstrate good subject knowledge and are able to use their extensive and current knowledge of the work place to enhance their teaching. In the best lessons, trainees used effective questioning to challenge learners and assess learning. Trainees have a good understanding of equality and diversity issues and demonstrate this in their planning and teaching. In the less effective lessons, trainees do not plan thoroughly, learners are not fully engaged in ongoing assessment of their own learning and higher attaining learners do not receive sufficient challenge.

Training is flexible to enable tutors to discuss individual trainee needs with them. Trainees have the opportunity to gain breadth and depth of experience across different levels of learner and in different subjects. However, the taught element of the course does not always fully prepare them for the additional teaching roles which give them this breadth of experience. Feedback to trainees, through assignments and lesson observations, varies in quality. The best clearly identifies areas for development related to learning and challenges trainees' views and assumptions. There is no opportunity for best practice to be systematically shared across the team of tutors and

mentors. This applies particularly to external candidates, who are outside the college's internal quality assurance systems.

The college has strong links with its stakeholders and communication is good; this means any issues with trainees are resolved quickly. However these links are informal and rely on the college's long standing relationship with many of its stakeholders. There are no formal communication systems in place to ensure stakeholders are integral to the planning and quality assurance of the training at all levels.

The key strengths are:

- trainees' current knowledge of their specialist area which they use to gain the interest and respect of their learners
- well qualified and very committed managers and trainers who are determined to improve the quality of provision and the outcomes for their trainees
- trainees have a good understanding of issues around equality and diversity
- high-quality trainees are recruited to the appropriate courses
- the college is flexible in meeting the needs of individual trainees through the accreditation of prior certification, experience and learning
- the college is well regarded as a training partner by its stakeholders.

The key areas for development are:

- to develop an individual learning plan to record and track trainees' progress
- improve the rigour of information from selection to clearly establish trainee starting points from which to more effectively monitor and track trainee progress
- formalise opportunities for stakeholder engagement in the self-evaluation of provision and in the improvement planning process
- establish clear criteria to ensure consistency of judgements when assessing trainees' achievements at key points on the course
- formalise links between tutors and mentors across all settings to ensure areas for trainee development are clearly understood and acted upon effectively
- develop ways in which trainees' subject pedagogical skills are enhanced as part of the training programme.

As explained in the inspection guidance, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next inspection.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Armitage

Shaaron Sanderson

Additional Inspectors