

PETROC

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130646

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Last day of inspection: 23 March 2012

Type of provider: General Further Education College

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Information about the provider

1. PETROC is a large general further education college that was formed in August 2008 when North Devon College and East Devon College merged. This is the first inspection of the merged college. The two former tertiary colleges presented contrasting pictures. North Devon College, with its main campus in Barnstaple, was a large and successful college. East Devon College was much smaller, had its main campus in Tiverton and was usually judged to be satisfactory when inspected. PETROC now serves a very large swathe of Devon from the south-east coast, through mid Devon and along the northern area of the county into north Cornwall and Somerset. This presents the college with a range of challenges, including ensuring access to its provision in an area where transport links are often poor, and serving the many areas of rural deprivation within its catchment area.
2. The college offers provision across all the subject areas, although it has only very small provision in agriculture. It has a large cohort of full time 16- to 18-year-olds studying on vocational and GCE AS- and A-level courses at both main campuses. It has sites on a business park in Barnstaple and operates a Skills Centre in Holsworthy. Approximately equal numbers of male and female students study at the college. Few students come from a minority ethnic heritage, which reflects the local communities.
3. PETROC works with many schools across the counties that it serves, some with sixth forms. In Tiverton, the college shares a campus with Tiverton High School. Generally, in mid and east Devon, many more schools have sixth forms and students also have the option to travel to other colleges in Exeter and Taunton.
4. The college works with many employers across the area. The overwhelming majority of these are micro or small businesses. Programmes are taught at both main college campuses and on employers' premises and include apprenticeships, workplace learning and bespoke vocational training.
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
 - The Academy of Music & Sound (music)
 - Budehaven School (GCE A and AS psychology)
 - CTA Ltd (plant operations)
 - Rutherfords Training Consultants (NVQ programmes in spectator safety)
 - Strands Hair Academy (hairdressing)
 - Torridge Training Services (Princes Trust Awards)
 - Ultimate Hair Academy (hairdressing and beauty therapy).

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	378 part-time learners
Further education (16 to 18)	3,513 full-time learners and 550 part-time learners
Foundation Learning	573 full time learners and 128 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	318 full-time learners and 2,766 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	4,864 learners 634 apprentices
Adult and community learning	589 learners

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 2
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	1
Equality and diversity	2

Subject Areas	
Health and social care	2
Science	1
Construction	2
Hospitality and catering	3
Visual arts	2

Overall effectiveness

6. PETROC is a good college with several outstanding features, including its provision in science. It makes an important contribution to the economic and cultural life of the communities it serves. Leaders and managers have raised standards well over the last four years while also merging the two former colleges effectively. The college provides good value for money. Students who attend college and apprentices in the workplace make good progress and success rates are around or above national averages for similar colleges. Success rates for GCE A- and AS-level subjects generally match those for sixth form colleges. In a few apprenticeship programmes and a few intermediate level courses, success rates have declined and are now below national averages. Students feel safe and safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. Students make strong contributions to local charities and voluntary organisations. Teaching and learning are good and in some subjects, such as science, they are outstanding. Students are generally kept well informed about

their progress, although some of their progress reviews do not contain enough specific targets to help them to improve their work. The college is an outstanding partner and works well with schools, community groups and employers. Governors and senior managers set a clear direction for the college. Quality assurance is comprehensive and the self-assessment report accurately identified the strengths and areas for improvement; however, it was overgenerous in its grading. Equality and diversity are promoted well across the college, but not always consistently well in lessons.

Main findings

- Students generally make good progress and complete their courses successfully. Success rates have improved well over the last three years, both on college-based courses and on apprenticeship programmes. They are now at or above national averages for similar colleges. A few intermediate level courses and a few apprenticeships have lower success rates. The large cohort of students studying GCE A and AS subjects achieves results that are comparable to the high national averages seen in sixth form colleges.
- Students' work is generally of a good standard. Many of the students have good written and number skills and where these are weaker they improve well with the additional support students receive at the college. Many achieve good results in their functional skills examinations. A high percentage of students progress into further study or employment.
- Students contribute a great deal to the life of the local community. They learn effectively about economic and social aspects of working life through work experience. Their organisational and leadership skills are well developed through these programmes. They have good support to help them to develop healthy lifestyles and they respond to these well. Students feel safe and have high regard for college staff, who they see as friendly and supportive.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons combine enjoyment and structured learning very effectively, with teachers and students working well together to achieve course aims. Technology is regularly used to enhance learning. In a minority of instances lessons are only satisfactory, often with too little variety in student activities.
- Good assessment helps students to know how they are progressing in their course, and in the majority of cases to know what they need to do to improve. In a few areas, some students are not sufficiently challenged to raise their performance to fulfil their full potential, nor are they set clear targets in their progress reviews.
- Additional learning support in classes effectively aids students' success. Initial assessment identifies those needing additional support and tutors and learning support assistants generally work well together to help these students to make good progress.
- The provision meets the needs and interests of learners well. The college offers courses and qualifications from entry to higher levels and in subjects that meet

learners' and employers' needs. It provides a wide range of additional courses and activities to enhance students' learning and experience and prepares them for life beyond college. However, in some areas, employers are not sufficiently involved in helping to review the progress of their apprentices.

- The college is an outstanding partner and brings great benefit to its learners and the wider community. It is well established as a significant provider and business in the region. It works particularly productively with a wide range of employers, schools, community and voluntary groups and public sector organisations to raise ambition and promote economic regeneration in the region.
- Care, guidance and support for students are good. Students are well cared for by their tutors. Tutorial provision successfully develops students' personal, academic and employability skills. However, some tutors do not set sufficiently challenging or specific targets for learners to enable them to make best progress.
- Leadership and management are good. The Principal, senior staff and governors managed the merger of the two former colleges successfully to create a unified college to which staff are committed. They provide clear strategic direction and make a strong contribution to the local community through their inclusive policies. Value for money is good.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are outstanding. The comprehensive single central register records Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and other relevant information well. All staff and governors receive relevant training and the awareness of safeguarding issues is high. Learners feel very safe in the college.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. No gap in achievement exists for any group of learners. Very good work is carried out to widen participation of the local community in education and training, particularly for vulnerable groups of learners. However, equality and diversity are not promoted consistently in teaching sessions.
- Staff treat the views of students, parents and employers very seriously and respond to their feedback quickly. Courses have elected student representatives to present their views, but sometimes they do not meet frequently enough with the staff responsible for their course.
- Quality assurance procedures are robust and have led to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and students' outcomes. The self-assessment process broadly identifies strengths and areas for improvement accurately.

What does PETROC need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates on some intermediate-level courses and apprenticeship programmes by spreading the good practice to improve retention and progress observed in other areas of the college.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teachers promote equality and diversity issues more consistently in lessons.

- Ensure all students attain the highest possible standards through the use of more challenging targets, both in the classroom and in individual progress reviews, and by involving employers more closely in work-based learners' progress reviews.

Summary of the views of students as confirmed by inspectors

What students like:

- approachable and friendly teachers who treat them with respect
- the additional help and support provided by their tutors and assessors to enable them to progress
- the additional learning support that they have received
- the extra-curricular courses and additional activities that they can take part in
- enjoyable lessons and practical work
- the opportunity to gain a qualification at work
- making friends at the college and settling in to new courses quickly
- the good, up-to-date industrial experience of tutors on vocational courses
- the good help that they receive with their applications for further or higher study, or for employment.

What students would like to see improved:

- more off-the-job learning sessions for work-based learners
- the number of students on some courses, where some classes are too small
- better action to tackle inappropriate behaviour in a few classes.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the responsiveness of the college to their individual needs and demands
- the helpful adaptations the college makes to programmes to meet their employees' needs
- the good support that the college provides for their employees
- the regular and effective communication with the college.

What employers would like to see improved:

- more practical skills development for some learners
- more flexible start times on some apprenticeship programmes.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

7. The college was formed in August 2008 through a merger of two colleges. This merger was managed very well and the college today is unified and cohesive, with many staff working across both campuses. Quality assurance procedures are rigorous and have led to improvements. Subject areas judged previously to be inadequate are now better and the quality of teaching and learning is now generally high across the college. Areas for improvement identified at the previous inspections of the former colleges are no longer an issue and many of the strengths have been maintained. The college has improved learners' outcomes, with a strong trend of improvement in the overall success rates for the past three years. These are now generally above those in similar colleges. The Principal, senior managers and governors work well together and monitor performance and standards rigorously. They have a clear strategic vision and plan. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and the self-assessment report is broadly accurate in highlighting strengths and areas for improvement, although over generous in many of the grades awarded. The college faces challenging financial circumstances, but its financial health is sound.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

8. Outcomes for learners are good which matches the college's self assessment grade. The college's performance has improved well over the last three years. Overall success rates for both long and short courses have risen steadily by six percentage points. At 82% they are now three percentage points above the latest national average.
9. Success rates for the large GCE A- and AS-level cohort have improved for both age groups over the last three years, and are now around the high national averages for sixth form colleges. There is some variation in the success rates in different GCE A and AS subjects in this area; but the majority of subjects perform better than the national average. Success rates for long qualifications for 16- to 18-year-olds have improved steadily over the last three years and are now around or above the national average for foundation and advanced courses, but remain below average for students studying on intermediate level qualifications. Success rates for older students have improved well at foundation level from well below to above the national average. Less improvement is evident at intermediate and advanced levels where success rates are around the national average.
10. For the majority of apprenticeship programmes success rates have improved significantly since 2009, and in three quarters of the programmes, including construction, retail and commercial and business administration, they are well above national averages with particularly good completion within the planned time. However, success rates in engineering apprenticeships declined from a

good position in 2009/10 to below average in 2010/11. Overall success rates within the planned time for the large Train to Gain provision, which continues as workplace learning, improved in each of the last four years to a good level.

11. The college has a successful programme for around 300 pupils aged 14 to 16 from 16 local schools. Success rates have improved over the last three years and are now high at 82%. Many of these learners progress on to college courses when they leave school.
12. Students make good progress into further study and employment. Around two thirds of GCE A-level students go on to higher education to a wide range of universities. The vast majority of students who complete their foundation level programme carry on with their studies at the college or find employment. Some 80% of students who complete an intermediate level qualification move on to advanced study or to employment. In 2011, two thirds of students from the Entry to Employment programme either stayed at the college for further study or found employment.
13. Students' work is generally good and students make good progress. Their written and number skills are often well developed and students often make good progress in the lessons that they have to help them to develop these skills further. Success rates for functional skills qualifications are high at around 17 percentage points above the national average.
14. Male and female students are equally successful on their courses. The college monitors the performance of different ethnic groups, but the numbers of students from a minority ethnic heritage is too small to identify any consistent patterns in the performance of these groups of students.
15. Students feel very safe. They know who to contact if they are worried about any aspect of their safety. They and their teachers adopt safe working practices both in the college and when they are on employers' premises. Students have good access to support from the college nurse and there is a good healthy living programme. Students, often via the students' union, make a very strong contribution to the life of the community across the catchment area. They are involved in a wide range of charitable and voluntary events and programmes which help them to develop their organisational and leadership skills.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

16. Teaching, training and assessment are good, which matches the college's self-assessment grade. The large majority of lessons successfully engage students and improve their skills and knowledge. The better lessons have a pleasing mix of enjoyment and purposeful study, with a very good rapport between tutors and students. A variety of well-planned activities get students interested in their lessons. For instance, the use of popular songs and a review of celebrity marriages helped them to examine facets of psychology. Illustrated quizzes on food encouraged hospitality students to think about their forthcoming overseas

trips. Students are routinely encouraged to develop independent learning skills, for instance by critically evaluating each others' presentations. Teachers have relevant vocational experience and, where appropriate, neatly link the world of employment to work in college. Interactive whiteboards, along with imaginative use of more basic resources, are used to add some sparkle to learning.

17. Assessment is generally good, with prompt marking of work, helpful comments and effective internal verification. In the vast majority of cases students are well aware of how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve. In a few areas students are not sufficiently encouraged to achieve standards higher than the basic requirements of a qualification. In work-based learning the frequency of reviews is sometimes not monitored closely enough and employers are not sufficiently involved in students' progress reviews. Initial assessment properly aids planning of most students' work. Literacy and numeracy skills are appropriately developed. Additional learning support in classes is mainly good, with some effective joint working between teachers and learning support assistants.
18. The college's virtual learning environment is used well by a significant proportion of students, both to reinforce work done in class and extend their knowledge of a subject. The learning resource centres provide an effective resource. They encourage a growing use of electronic books and provide a good range of fiction to promote more general reading among students. Despite schemes such as the loan of laptop computers, there are insufficient computers at the Barnstaple campus for individual study at busier times. The college is making the best use it can of accommodation that ranges from good to poor, although in a few instances the environment does detract from learning.
19. Improvements in the quality of teaching and learning reflect the college's emphasis on the importance of this aspect. As well as the formal lesson observation process, staff benefit from a good, well-managed range of other activities such as developmental observations, peer observations, 'open door' drop-in sessions, the work of the teaching and learning coaches and an innovative and effective programme of professional development.
20. A minority of teaching and learning remains only satisfactory. Weaknesses in those sessions include too much talking by the teacher, long periods of doing the same thing such as working through paper-based exercises, poorly-phrased questions by teachers that are only answered by a few students, and using expensive technology to show just basic script. With the exception of a few sensitively managed instances, teachers did not plan for, or use, naturally occurring opportunities to develop students' understanding of equality and diversity.
21. The college meets the needs and interests of its users well. It offers a wide range of subjects and courses, from entry to higher level, which provide coherent progression routes. The college works well with the geographically

widespread community that it serves, to identify local training and skills needs. For example, it is active in developing provision for sustainability and the use of new technologies to meet the needs of local industry. It is flexible and responsive to employers' needs and involves them effectively in developing courses that prepare students for employment or further study. It places particular emphasis on developing learners' employability skills and in helping them to progress to further or higher education. For example, an increasing proportion of learners on GCE A-level courses gain places at university and the college's 'Arts on Prescription' programme has been successful in encouraging local people to participate in further learning at the college. Programmes such as the Learning and Employment Access (LEAP) and Jobs and Employment Training (JET) effectively help disengaged young people to achieve qualifications and move into further study or employment.

22. A wide range of additional courses and activities are provided to enhance students' learning and experience and prepare them for life beyond college. Students take part in a variety of opportunities for personal and social development, including visits, competitions, charitable work and sports activities. Many students, from a wide range of courses, are involved in volunteering activities in their local communities. The college makes particularly good use of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) initiative to broaden students' understanding of these subjects. It takes good action to sustain these activities by responding to learners' demand and involving them in their development. It uses its collaboration with partners very effectively to enrich the curriculum with work placements, visits, assessments and training.
23. The college's approach to partnership working is outstanding. The college works particularly productively with a wide range of employers, schools, community and voluntary groups, and public sector organisations to raise ambition and promote economic regeneration in the region. The college makes good use of these links to enhance learning and employment opportunities for students. The development of partnership working for sustainability is a key feature of the college's work. The college makes very good use of its links with local schools, including special and primary schools, to encourage young learners to aspire to further education and to help older learners make a successful transition from school to college. It responds quickly and effectively to adapt courses to employers' needs, to contribute to partners' workforce development teams and to meet local skills demands. It has a mutually supportive relationship with its local community and is held in high regard by its partners. The college uses its partnerships particularly well to encourage participation by learners who do not routinely participate in learning or who live in isolated communities. It collaborates very successfully with other local providers and organisations to make use of externally-funded projects to improve participation and employability among young people and adults. Several of these projects exceeded their targets for participation or progression to employment.

24. Care, guidance and support for learners are good and help learners across all the college's sites to achieve their learning goals. Good information is available to students before they join their course that prepares them well for life at the college and helps them to settle in quickly. Systems for the initial assessment of students and the diagnosis of any additional needs are reliable and effective. The provision of additional practical or learning support is good and provided promptly. Learning support assistants give beneficial support to students in lessons. Students who receive this support generally do well on their courses.
25. Tutorial provision is good. Teaching in group tutorials is generally of a high quality and is stimulating and motivating for students. The programme is well managed and effective in developing students' personal, academic and employability skills. The college has well-designed career planning tools (career maps) that help students to identify steps for progression to work toward their career goals. Most students receive clear advice and guidance on employment and their higher education applications. Individual tutorials are used to monitor learners' progress and set targets for improvement. However, in some subjects, tutors set insufficiently challenging or specific targets for learners. Students are not always sufficiently involved in reviewing their own progress.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

26. The Principal, senior managers and governors have led the college well through a number of difficult challenges. The merger of two former colleges was managed with understanding and skill and has resulted in a unified college to which staff feel fully committed. The curriculum is well managed. The college has a friendly and inclusive atmosphere which students enjoy. Staff work hard and successfully raise the expectations of students and encourage many individuals to return to education and training. The ambitious accommodation strategy includes plans for major refurbishment. Finances are well managed.
27. Governors have a wide range of expertise and experience and are highly committed to the success of the college. They work well with senior managers to develop a clear vision for the future direction of the college. The performance and standards of the college's work are monitored rigorously. All corporation and committee meetings are well attended and governors benefit from very effective clerking. Training for governors takes place regularly, covering safeguarding, equality and diversity, and other relevant issues.
28. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are outstanding. Staff have a high regard for the well-being of students and take rigorous action to safeguard them. The overwhelming majority of students feel safe in the college. A comprehensive single central database is maintained which includes details of Criminal Records Bureau and other essential checks related to safer recruitment and relevant staff training. The safeguarding team has a broad range of relevant skills and experience and ensures safeguarding activities have a high profile. It has strong links with appropriate local organisations, referring students and staff to them where necessary. Specific policies covering anti-

bullying, anti-harassment and e-safety are introduced to students during induction and reinforced constantly through tutorials. Governors and staff undergo relevant safeguarding training and have a clear understanding of safeguarding issues. Health and safety processes across the college are very rigorous.

29. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff are highly committed to widening social and educational inclusion for the local community. Successful programmes increase the participation of disaffected young people not currently in education, employment or training, and local school pupils aged 14 to 16. Strong partnerships with local organisations encourage specific groups of students to engage with education. The Respect campaign supports gay, bi-sexual, transsexual and transgender students to gain confidence and attend the college without fear of discrimination. The college meets its statutory requirements for promoting race relations. Learners' outcomes are analysed thoroughly by age, gender, ethnicity and disability and no group of students underperform significantly. The enthusiastic coordinating committee for equality, diversity and inclusion has raised awareness of these issues, with activities such as Culture Shock, introducing students to a broad range of cultural experiences through well-planned activities. However, the promotion of these issues within teaching sessions is insufficient in some curriculum areas.
30. Staff engagement with learners, employers and other stakeholders is good. The views of learners are collected in a number of ways, including regular questionnaires and meetings with learner representatives for each course. They are taken seriously by staff and changes have taken place to accommodate issues raised by them. For example, additional quiet study areas are now available in the library at the Barnstaple campus. Learner representative meetings cover a broad range of issues and detailed notes are recorded for actions to be taken by staff. However, many students only have one such meeting during the year and feedback is not always made available promptly. Questionnaires demonstrate that students are very satisfied with their college experience, but the number of responses is relatively low this year. Staff gather the views of students well through face-to-face meetings and the Principal meets with a large number of tutor groups throughout the year. Elected Student Union representatives also contribute to gathering feedback between staff and students. The views of parents and carers are collected well at parents' evenings and they express very high levels of satisfaction with the college. Similarly, feedback about the work of the college from employers is extremely positive.
31. Comprehensive quality assurance procedures have led to improvements. Quality improvement plans are detailed, closely monitored and contain specific and measurable targets. The self-assessment process involves most staff who produce evaluative reports. The college identifies accurately key strengths and areas for improvement. A broad range of relevant staff training events take place regularly. The college's system for observing and grading teaching and learning is well established. Grades awarded to lessons in 2010/11 were too

high, but a revised approach in 2011/12 has produced grades that more closely match inspection findings.

32. The financial health of the college is sound. Financial control measures are stringent. Managers are supplied with clear information about budgets through on-line financial monitoring information. The college has diversified its sources of income well through projects, higher education and other work. Specialist resources are good. However, some teaching areas at the Barnstaple campus requiring modernising. Staff are well qualified. The college provides good value for money.

Subject areas

Health and social care

Grade 2

Context

33. Full-time courses in health and social care with over 310 students are provided in Barnstaple and Tiverton. Some 132 part-time students and 27 students are on apprenticeships. There are 13 students aged 14 to 16 studying on health and social care courses. The large majority of students are female.

Key findings

- Success rates are high on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes and on the National Award in Health and Social Care. National Diploma success rates are generally above the national average for similar colleges. However, in 2010/11 one small group of National Diploma students had very low success rates with very poor retention. Progression between levels of study or to employment is high and students make good progress. They develop good personal and workplace skills and participate actively in community settings and in charitable fundraising activities.
- The standard of students' work is good. Portfolios are well organised and students are confident in using professional language including medical terms and concepts. Those based in college and in care settings enjoy their learning and are enthusiastic about the opportunities offered.
- Teaching and learning are good. In most lessons, good lesson planning and classroom management, effective use of ILT and clear direction from teachers provide tasks and activities that stretch students of different abilities well. Students explore potentially distressing topics such as child abuse and the impact of the Aids virus. Effective questioning strategies ensure progress is monitored and students are challenged to consider the implications of different choices such as those faced by social workers in child abuse cases. In the few less effective lessons, teachers talk for long periods and do not check how well students have remembered their learning.
- Assessment feedback is mostly effective in helping students to improve their performance. Assessors are effective and visit the workplace frequently, although some of their reviews focus on the acquisition of the basic care skills rather than the wider development of learners' skills and knowledge.
- Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. The availability of resources on the intranet is valued by students and supports learning effectively. The integrated use of technology in lessons is under developed and limited access to computers in classrooms inhibits its use in lessons.
- Information, advice and guidance are well planned and encourage progression into a wide range of opportunities including nursing, teaching assistants or caring for older people. Students' aspirations are raised well through careful guidance. Students gain valuable work experience in specialised settings such

as special needs schools, mental health community support and day centres for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities.

- The college has highly effective partnerships and works well with schools, local health and care providers, a children's hospice, special schools and employers. These opportunities enrich the curriculum and are valued by partners and students. Communication with employers supporting work-based students is sometimes less effective and some theory lessons are not always closely linked to workplace practice.
- Students' progress is generally well monitored by their teachers and assessors. In a minority of progress reviews targets are too general or simply focus on meeting deadlines for assignments.
- Pastoral support is good. Students value the highly supportive approach of teachers and assessors that builds their confidence and self-esteem and helps them to resolve personal concerns. Students receiving additional learning support contribute confidently in lessons and make good progress.
- Leadership and management are good. Frequent staff meetings to discuss the progress of individual learners are used effectively to ensure appropriate intervention and support and thus to raise retention and aspiration. Staff are clear about the targets for their courses and the college's strategic direction. Management action is leading to improved attendance and retention on the few weaker courses.
- Learners feel safe. Arrangements for safeguarding are good and are widely understood by students and staff. Equality and diversity are generally promoted effectively through the curriculum, community activities and in the respectful and supportive relationships that exist within the diverse group of care learners.
- The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Actions taken to improve teaching and learning are having a positive effect on the learners' experience. Some course and programme reviews lack sufficient detail to ensure their effective implementation.

What does PETROC need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that students are set clearer and more specific targets in their individual learning plans and in their work-based learning reviews.
- Improve accessibility to computers in classrooms to support learning.
- Improve the standard of some course and programme reviews by setting detailed targets and monitoring their achievement closely.

Science

Grade 1

Context

34. Some 626 students are on science courses, of whom 600 are full time. Most students study GCE A/AS-level programmes in biology, chemistry, environmental studies, physics and psychology at either Tiverton or Barnstaple. About 56 students study a national diploma in medical and forensic science. The vast majority of students are aged 16 to 18, and 45% are female. Around 90% of the provision is at Barnstaple.

Key findings

- Many students start science courses with relatively low prior attainment and they make outstanding progress on nearly all courses. Success rates have risen significantly and are high on nearly all courses. Students achieve pass rates above national averages and sometimes well above. Achievement in chemistry is consistently outstanding, and a large proportion of students achieve high grades. Pass rates in psychology are very high. Success rates have improved significantly for both male and female students, and both now achieve equally well.
- Attendance rates are high and punctuality is good. Students enjoy their learning and are happy in the college. They develop excellent social learning skills, and their work often exceeds the standard expected for the level of the course.
- Students feel safe. They demonstrate sound working practices in laboratories, and they follow health and safety procedures rigorously.
- Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers use a variety of learning and practical activities to motivate and involve students. Games and interactive technology help bring theory to life and reinforce prior learning. Enthusiastic and experienced teachers inspire and engage students. They use questioning techniques skillfully to check understanding and promote thinking skills. A significant number of teachers are examiners, and they use this expertise well to focus learning towards examination requirements.
- Students participate enthusiastically in lessons. They collaborate well in groups, and they support and challenge each other's learning. Through problem solving, they develop scientific methods of enquiry. For example, in a biology lesson, groups of students analysed and peer-taught each other the function of different hormones using a test tube of urine.
- Learning resources are good. Teachers and students use interactive whiteboards effectively to enhance learning. Mini whiteboards feature frequently in starter and plenary activities to check and reinforce learning. Students use in-house unit workbooks well to structure learning and consolidate progress. Electronic learning resources are well developed and valued by students and these help them to become independent learners.

- Students receive regular and constructive feedback on their work, and effective use is made of peer and self-assessment to encourage students to improve their skills.
- Students benefit from a range of enrichment activities, work experience, links with schools and universities, national organisations and employers. The college is the LSIS South West Regional STEM Centre, and hosts many local and national events. Participation amongst students is high. More than 120 students act as STEM ambassadors. Students take part in numerous conferences, competitions, visits, trips and schemes. College staff and students have run workshops and assisted at conferences at the college and in Exeter and Bristol. A group of chemistry students won the South West Young Analysts of the Year competition, and a STEM team won the best rookie prize at the national Formula 1 (F1) in schools competition.
- Provision for students with high levels of prior attainment is good. Academic academies provide opportunities for stretch and challenge through additional qualifications such as the extended project, scientific Olympiads, mentor schemes, links with medical schools and residential weekends at Oxford University.
- Support for students is outstanding. Students appreciate the support offered by teachers in and outside lessons. They benefit from regular one-to-one progress reviews. Tutors know their students well, and help them to achieve their learning goals and progression aspirations.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Managers have led a culture of continuous improvement that has resulted in improved standards which are now high. Staff feel well supported and morale is very good. Honest and detailed self-assessment, informed by accurate lesson observation, identifies strengths and areas for improvement.
- Action planning at course level is largely effective but some priorities for improvement have not yet been addressed. Course level targets are insufficiently specific.
- Laboratories and classrooms are well equipped, and technician support is good at both campuses. Resources are well managed to secure value for money, but class sizes at Tiverton remain small.

What does PETROC need to do to improve further?

- Secure further improvements in student outcomes by setting and meeting aspirational subject-specific success rate targets for each course.

Construction

Grade 2

Context

35. The college offers a range of programmes from entry level to advanced level including construction and the built environment, decorative occupations, plumbing and mechanical engineering services, trowel and plastering occupations and wood occupations. Some 311 students study full time of whom 283 are aged 16- to 19-years-of-age. In addition, there are 104 apprentices studying at intermediate and advanced levels.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good on the majority of courses. They are outstanding on foundation bricklaying, painting and decorating courses, and on advanced apprenticeship programmes. Success rates are satisfactory on intermediate plumbing and advanced site carpentry courses. Most students who complete their courses achieve well. Apprentices achieve within their agreed timescales.
- Standards of student work, particularly in practical lessons and in the workplace, are good. In bricklaying, students were able to accurately set out and construct half brick walling that was level, plumb, to gauge and finished to a high standard. In the workplace, plastering apprentices were able to skilfully match new plaster to old as part of repair work.
- Students enjoy their learning and make good progress. Highly effective development of employability skills, particularly in the workplace, fosters a positive attitude to work. Students feel safe both at college and within the workplace and take responsibility for their own health and safety by maintaining standards set by industry.
- Teaching and learning are good. In all lessons students are engaged and interested in the subject being taught. In most lessons, enthusiastic teachers provide good leadership and direction using a range of teaching techniques, including interactive learning technologies, to involve and motivate students. Sometimes they do not sufficiently encourage the development of students' independent learning and thinking skills. In a minority of lessons they do not set sufficiently challenging tasks and activities to stretch the more able students.
- Assessments are fair, rigorous and accurate and enable students to understand what they have achieved and what they need to do to succeed. Robust progress monitoring by teachers and managers supports student achievement. Feedback is generally constructive and informative allowing learners to build on prior knowledge and understanding.
- Care, guidance and support for students are effective in helping them to complete their courses. Tutorials help students to focus very well on preparing for work through curriculum vitae and interview preparation. Within the workplace regular reviews and professional discussions are thorough and

support students very well. Progress monitoring is highly effective in identifying and supporting students to achieve. Extra time is provided for those students at risk of falling behind in their studies. Personal development plans are satisfactory, but some lack clear, measurable targets and actions to help students to improve.

- The breadth of opportunity to study a wide range of trades within the construction industry is good and progression routes to continue on to higher level construction courses are available. The department has taken a proactive approach to develop the curriculum further into environmental and sustainable technologies and has developed a foundation degree with a local university.
- Partnerships are good. The department has developed extensive opportunities for students through partnership working with schools, employers, manufacturers and a local university. For example, an additional 43 small construction companies have taken on apprentices for the first time with the college. In the last year, 20 of the 37 students who completed their full-time basic plumbing course have now progressed to be apprentices with local employers.
- Leadership and management are good. Managers are very focused on improving students' outcomes and ensuring resources are used well. Course teams share a common ethos and are clearly focused on continuous improvement. Sometimes they fail to raise aspirations and student attainment to ensure that all students reach their full potential.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Despite active encouragement to increase the participation of under-represented groups, the proportion of female students remains low. Teachers do not readily promote equality and diversity in lessons and these topics are not routinely discussed in progress reviews with apprentices.

What does PETROC need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers set challenging tasks for all the students in their groups that help them to develop as independent learners and to meet their full potential.
- Ensure that managers set challenging targets for success rates and the achievement of high grades on all their courses.
- Ensure that teachers promote equality and diversity both in lessons and when reviewing students' progress.

Hospitality and catering

Grade 3

Context

36. Employer-responsive provision was inspected. Learners are based in a wide range of hospitality and catering establishments in Devon, Somerset and Cornwall. Apprenticeships and NVQs are available at intermediate and advanced levels. Some 111 learners are on employer-responsive provision. There are 47 apprentices and 64 are on NVQ programmes. Around two thirds of learners are female.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates for intermediate hospitality apprentices are outstanding at 87% and are 17 percentage points above the national average. Of the 15 intermediate apprentices who left in 2010/11, 13 achieved their framework. Success rates within the planned time are significantly above the national average at 87%.
- Success rates for learners on Train to Gain programmes are satisfactory. Success rates within the planned time for these programmes at intermediate and advanced level were just above the national average. Success rates within the planned time for the very small number of Foundation Learning tier students were inadequate at nine percentage points below the national average.
- Students develop satisfactory practical cookery, housekeeping and food and beverage service skills in the workplace. They enjoy their programmes and some have been promoted since starting the programme. They all feel safe at work. Some of them make slow progress towards achieving all aspects of their programme.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better theory and practical sessions good use is made of brief discussions to extend learning and questions to check learning. Workbooks and video clips are used well. Teachers are good at demonstrating their own high levels of vocational skills to their students. In the weaker sessions, students' prior learning and experience is not taken into account and too few questions are asked to check learning and understanding.
- In theory lessons, teachers talk too much and often the pace is too slow for some students. Schemes of work and most session plans are well organised, but often they do not identify opportunities for embedding equality and diversity or for addressing any literacy and numeracy needs.
- Assessment is satisfactory. Staff work well with smaller employers to plan their visits. However, the quality of assessment planning varies and some is inadequate. Some progress reviews do not contain sufficient detail and some targets are too general. Some individual learning plans are brief and do not contain information about how or where each component of the programme will be taught and assessed.

- Engagement with employers to support business is good. Hospitality staff work well with small and larger regional employers to raise awareness of career opportunities in the industry. For example, staff have worked well with a large regional hotel chain to successfully improve the skills of the workforce which has helped to reduce the hotel's staff turnover.
- Support for learners with additional learning needs is satisfactory. Most learners are supported by their assessors and tutors to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Where appropriate, learners are supported by literacy and numeracy specialists. There is insufficient detailed tracking of students' progress towards gaining confidence and competence in these skills.
- Management is satisfactory. Communications are good and there is good access to staff development. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. They are positive, motivated and enthusiastically support their learners to achieve.
- The self-assessment report is largely accurate, but it is insufficiently self-critical and has too many component parts from different departments in the college. Staff, learners and employers were involved in its writing, but not consistently so. Records of teaching observations focus mainly on teaching rather than how well students learn. Some actions in the quality improvement plans are insufficiently challenging.

What does PETROC need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by making better use of a wider range of teaching and learning strategies, especially in theory lessons.
- Ensure that learning is effectively planned for individual students by making better use of initial assessment and linking this to detailed individual learning plans.
- Improve learners' progress by setting them clearer and more specific targets and monitoring their progress towards these more closely.
- Produce a single comprehensive quality improvement plan and self-assessment report in order to provide a rounded view of the subject sector area across the whole college.

Visual arts

Grade 2

Context

37. Some 784 students study art and design on a range of full-time and part-time courses including GCE AS- and A-level and vocational courses. Of these, approximately 670 are aged 16 to 18 and 681 attend full-time courses. Courses are run in college centres and community venues.

Key findings

- Success rates are high on most courses. They are around the national averages on GCE AS- and A-level photography and are low on BTEC foundation studies in art and design and some short courses. Significant improvements have been secured on many courses, but progress in improving standards in GCE AS- and A-level photography has been slow. The progress students make compared with their prior attainment is generally good and high on some courses. Students' progression to higher education and to other courses in the college is good.
- The quality of students' work is good. Students carry out thorough research using a range of materials and methods. The best sketchbooks demonstrate wide-ranging experimentation and a mature understanding of colour. Drawing work is generally strong. BTEC foundation diploma students confidently use a variety of media and challenge their ideas to produce new and innovative solutions to problems.
- Textile and fashion students demonstrate a sensitive appreciation of colour, materials and media. Students studying graphic design undertook a very successful project to produce stamps for Lundy Island. The final pieces were based on thorough research of the area and many displayed vibrant drawing and sensitive use of media.
- Students feel very safe and use safe practices in their practical work. The promotion of safe working practices in all practical and workshop sessions is good.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are committed to students and give extensively of their time. Students enjoy their studies and speak highly about the professionalism of their teachers. A culture of mutual respect and social inclusion underpins practice across the area. In the best lessons students and teachers work together to discuss ideas effectively, challenge thinking and stretch their ideas. In these cases student aspirations are raised and outcomes are innovative and exciting. Less successful lessons do not sufficiently engage students in practical activities and students do not demonstrate the same high aspirations.
- In some large classes students with particular learning needs do not always receive sufficient support in class. In these classes teachers spend significant time helping these students to recall information and order their work, and in

ensuring they meet deadlines, sometimes to the detriment of other students in the group.

- Assessment is good. Students are very familiar with the criteria for achievement. Feedback to students about their progress is detailed and helpful and students are well informed about what they need to do to improve. They are encouraged to plan their work in order to meet deadlines. Progress against action plans is regularly monitored.
- Partnership working is outstanding. The college provides bespoke opportunities to rural communities by operating an arts bus to support learning for adults. The college also runs a successful 'arts-on-prescription' course in conjunction with doctors and health centres. The course has won national awards and has been the subject of good practice conferences and events. A significant number of students from this course progress to other courses. Students work with local schools, with a number of prestigious galleries and with local and national arts groups. Students are encouraged to enter national competitions and are often successful in these.
- Resources and specialist facilities are generally satisfactory. Some classes are large and students have too little space to spread their work out. On some courses access to industry standard ILT is limited and teachers do not make sufficient use of this in their teaching. In general, ILT is not sufficiently integrated into student work or used as a medium for experimentation to reflect industry practice.
- Leadership and management are good. The head of school has set a clear direction focused on raising standards and solving critical issues facing the area. As a result there is a clear plan for improvement which all teachers have subscribed to and which is beginning to show progress. The self-assessment report is mainly accurate; however, not all judgements are supported by sufficient evidence.
- The student experience is inconsistent across sites and not all students enjoy regular access to a range of specialist teachers and media. There is insufficient sharing of good practice by teachers; however, actions to remedy this have recently been put in place and teachers now work in teams and across sites. Equality and diversity are insufficiently promoted in lessons or integrated into student work, and examples of good practice in the arts are not routinely displayed in working areas.

What does PETROC need to do to improve further?

- Improve student access to ILT equipment and integrate it into teaching and learning activities to reflect current practice in the arts and design industries.
- Ensure that teachers actively promote equality and diversity in their teaching, in assignment briefs and workshop activities.
- Improve the consistency of the student experience across college sites by ensuring that students have the same opportunities to access resources and to benefit from specialist teachers' expertise.

Information about the inspection

38. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and nine additional inspectors, assisted by the college's deputy principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
39. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the college. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in all of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

PETROC

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners					
Full-time learners	3,393	-	3,053	340	-
Part-time learners	5,320	299	701	2,091	2,229
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2				
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2				
How well do learners progress?	2				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1				
How safe do learners feel?	1				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	1				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	1				
Quality of provision	2	2	2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	2	2	2	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	1				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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