

Lancaster University

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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Inspection dates
Lead inspector

15-19 March 2010
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Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors supported by a specialist inspector 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. Lancaster University, in conjunction with Blackpool and The Fylde College, provides initial teacher education (ITE) for further education (FE) teachers and trainers which leads to the award of either a postgraduate certificate in education or the professional certificate in education. Both awards are endorsed by Standards Verification UK and incorporate the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector. The university validates the awards and has overall responsibility for the quality of provision. Provision at Blackpool and The Fylde College comprises a full-time pre-service course and a part-time in-service course. There are around 40 pre-service trainees and 80 in-service trainees enrolled at the college. The majority of trainees recruited to the pre-service course are graduates, whilst the majority of trainees on in-service courses are undergraduates. Around half of all trainees are aged over 39 years and around half are male.

4. The college also offers qualifications validated by a national awarding body which lead to Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector and Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector awards.

Initial teacher education for the further education system

Key strengths

5. The key strengths are:

- the attention to trainees' personal well-being which results in high rates of successful completion and progression
- the highly committed and experienced mentors who contribute significantly to the good progress made by most trainees
- trainees' good use of information and learning technology (ILT) to support their own learning and that of their learners
- the enthusiasm and commitment of trainees in making a contribution to raising standards and improving opportunities for their learners
- the vigorous improvement planning demonstrated by senior leaders which results in improvements in outcomes for trainees.

Required actions

6. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider must:

- ensure that targets set by teacher educators have the precision and challenge to enable trainees to attain the Standards at a good or outstanding level
- systematically evaluate the quality of provision in relation to its impact on different groups of trainees.

Recommendations

7. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider should:

- develop further the trainees' ability to promote their learners' understanding and appreciation of social and cultural diversity
- ensure that trainees systematically plan for the development of their learners' literacy and/or numeracy needs.

8. In order to improve the quality of provision, the provider should:

- monitor more rigorously the contribution made by mentors
- sharpen self-evaluation and external moderation.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

9. The overall effectiveness of the provider in securing high-quality outcomes for trainees is good. Given their ability and starting points, most trainees make good progress and their attainment by the end of the course is at least satisfactory. Systems for monitoring trainees' progress and grading their achievements are relatively new and are not yet accurate enough to provide a precise indication of how well trainees' attain in relation to the professional standards.

10. Trainees have a well developed understanding of *Every Child Matters* and how this relates both to their teaching practice and to their wider roles as teachers. Trainees' good lesson rationales and evaluations indicate that they develop well as reflective practitioners and draw appropriately on relevant theories to develop and improve their own practice. Trainees who are reaching the end of their course can demonstrate steady, and sometimes rapid, improvement in their teaching skills.

11. Trainees are highly enthusiastic and committed to raising standards and improving opportunities for their learners. A good example of this was seen in a catering lesson. An in-service trainee very expertly provided interesting tasks for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities that developed both their vocational competence and their skills in independent learning.

12. Trainees establish good working relationships with their learners that foster positive attitudes to learning. For example, in a lesson for a group of reluctant young learners, the teacher successfully used a range of techniques to enable her learners to grow in confidence and self-belief. Following a positive experience, they left the lesson with a 'can-do' attitude and the determination to return to school the next day.

13. Weaker trainees match their learning objectives and teaching activities to group needs but do not plan sufficiently to meet the needs of individual learners. The better trainees draw systematically on learners' initial and diagnostic assessments and provide well for individual learner's needs. Although trainees demonstrate a secure awareness of the minimum core curriculum, too many trainees fail to identify practical strategies in their own lessons that will develop their learners' proficiency in literacy and/or numeracy.

14. Thorough selection processes result in the recruitment of trainees with the personal qualities that enable them to aspire and achieve. Many trainees have progressed through further and higher education at the college and, consequently, they empathise well with their own learners' experiences. Courses meet local needs particularly well. Partnerships have been established with local schools and employers to enable trainees to develop their skills across different age phases. Most trainees benefit enormously from placements and work contexts that enable them to teach a diverse range of learners. For example, many trainees at the college teach across both FE and higher education (HE) provision. The college attracts a relatively high proportion of male applicants who thrive on the courses and make good progress. At around 4%, the proportion of trainees recruited from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than that of the local population.

15. Initial assessment is thorough and results in trainees having a clear understanding of where they need to improve their personal skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Individual training plans establish a strong platform for trainees to move forward from the start of their course and make good progress. The highly effective personal support and guidance provided to trainees by their mentors and teacher educators results in consistently high completion rates. On the pre-service courses completion rates are outstanding. The majority of pre-service trainees move directly into local teaching posts. Many in-service trainees progress into course management roles either during, or shortly after completing, their course.

16. Trainees benefit from clear and constructive feedback on their lesson observations and written work that helps them to improve. They appreciate the ways in which their teacher educators model different aspects of FE teaching techniques which they then adopt in their own lessons. The college has accurately identified the need to update the content of the training programme in order to provide trainees with a wider range of methods of assessment. The current programme relies heavily on written assignments which do not always focus sufficiently on developing trainees' professional practice. Similarly, a minority of trainees have only limited understanding and awareness of current developments and initiatives in the FE sector.

17. Since the last inspection the college has developed ways of monitoring and tracking the extent of trainees' progress. The systems in place require further refinement. In some cases judgements made in relation to trainees' achievement are too generous, particularly in relation to trainees on the grade 2/3 boundary. Although the content and detail on trainees' individual learning plans have also improved since the last inspection, the individual targets set for many trainees are too generic and are insufficiently focused on the specific steps trainees need to take in order to demonstrate the professional standards at the higher levels.

18. The use of ILT is a cornerstone of the centre-based training. As a consequence, trainees make excellent use of new technology to support both their own learning and that of their learners. For example, a pre-service trainee made very imaginative use of multimedia to prepare a topical quiz that turned a potentially dull revision session into an exciting and memorable lesson that resulted in high-quality learning. The college's virtual learning environment is used well by trainees to take advantage of online resources, activities and communication tools.

19. Trainees are overwhelmingly positive about the support, guidance and coaching they receive from their mentors. As a result of high-quality training for mentors, there is a shared understanding of their role and responsibilities. All trainees have mentors and for the vast majority there is a direct match between the mentors' subject specialism and that of the trainee. Mentors are highly committed to their trainees; this ensures that the vast majority of trainees make good progress in developing their subject-teaching skills.

20. Teacher educators are well qualified and a recent restructure has resulted in a wider range of expertise being brought into the teacher-education team. Trainees

benefit from the excellent learning and training resources that the college's new University Centre affords them. The college provides good additional learning support for trainees who need help in completing their assignments. Trainees with specific needs are well catered for. The college has identified that a high proportion of trainees with no previous experience of producing academic assignments sometimes struggle with their writing skills. In collaboration with staff at the university, college staff have developed a course in academic writing that is well-suited to the needs of trainees on the undergraduate route.

21. Internal systems and procedures are in place to monitor the consistency of judgements made about trainees' teaching practice and their written assignments. However, there is no external scrutiny of judgements made in relation to trainees' teaching practice or the level at which they attain the professional standards. Systems are in place to train and support mentors who are new to their role. The lead mentor undertakes an initial joint observation with a small sample of mentors when they undertake observations of trainee teachers for the first time. There is no ongoing monitoring of mentors' contributions to the training. Consequently, a small minority of trainees do not experience the same high-quality mentoring as their peers.

22. Trainees feel safe, valued and are confident that their concerns will be handled appropriately. Trainees themselves have a good understanding of processes and procedures to safeguard learners. Training ensures that trainees develop a satisfactory awareness of equality and diversity. However, too few trainees actively seek out opportunities to develop their learners' understanding of social and cultural diversity. Weaker trainees are unable to identify how they can promote community cohesion through their specialist curriculum and classroom practice.

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

23. The college, supported by the university, has good capacity to take the actions required to secure improvements in outcomes for trainees. The provision is influential in meeting the recruitment needs of FE employers, schools and training organisations in the locality. The college's senior managers provide a strong sense of purpose and direction. They are committed to developing high-quality teacher education as part of a wider strategy to deliver Higher Education (HE) to the local population. Managers, teacher educators, mentors and trainees are driven by a clear sense of purpose to drive up standards for FE and HE learners through the supply of high-quality trainees.

24. Self-evaluation is satisfactory overall. It provides the college and the university with a generally accurate view of key strengths and the areas that require improvement. The college has recognised the need to sharpen procedures for tracking and monitoring trainees' progress in order to inform areas for development for individuals and groups of trainees. The process of self-evaluation is inclusive and follows the university's requirements. There are several overlapping systems in place for self-evaluation which make the process cumbersome. The self-evaluation

document is overly descriptive and lacks succinct analysis of the college's performance against key performance indicators that relate to outcomes for trainees. There is no evaluation of the extent to which provision impacts on outcomes for different groups of trainees, for example by age, gender or graduate status.

25. Trainees' and mentors' views are gathered systematically in order to contribute to the evaluation of the work-based element of the training. This results in precise and targeted actions that are clearly focused on improving outcomes for trainees. Trainees' views on the quality of centre-based training are gathered following each module. The response rate is very low; consequently this does not provide a reliable and meaningful basis for self-evaluation.

26. Links between self-evaluation and improvement planning are, nevertheless, strong. College data indicate an improving trend in completion rates. Action plans are clear, incisive, monitored regularly and link to improving outcomes for trainees. The quality of specialist subject mentoring has improved significantly since the last inspection. The appointment of a lead mentor has been instrumental in ensuring that all trainees have mentors and that mentors themselves are trained and well-supported. ITE provision is also more outward looking. Links with external providers have added value to trainees' experience and have deepened their understanding of their learners' social context and their experiences before they start college. For example, a mentoring programme has been piloted with a local High School which enables pre-service trainees to mentor Year 11 pupils who are at risk of not progressing in full-time education.

27. Similarly, communication between curriculum areas providing placements and the ITE team have also improved. A particularly positive development has been the alignment of ITE to other key processes within the college, such as staff development and human resources. Curriculum managers are highly positive about their role and involvement in ITE. They make clear links between the investment of their time and energy to support trainees and the impact this has on teaching and learning and ultimately on raising standards in their departments.

28. Senior managers have demonstrated their strategic vision through their response to national and local priorities. For example, many trainees are provided with placements that enable them to contribute to HE provision or courses that target the specific needs of young people who are not in education, employment or training. The ITE team worked collaboratively with the college's human resources department to secure the smooth implementation of national workforce reforms. In addition, a project to ensure greater flexibility in meeting the staffing requirements for curriculum areas offers an excellent progression opportunity for pre-service trainees.

Summary of inspection grades¹

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

Overall effectiveness

		ITE for FE
How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?		2
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	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?	2
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	2
Promoting equalities and diversity	To what extent does the provision promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination?	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?		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?		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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