

# University of Central Lancashire

## Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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**Provider address**

Department of Education and Social Science  
Livesey House  
Heatley Street  
Preston  
Lancashire  
PR1 2HE

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**Inspection dates**

1 – 5 March 2010

**Lead inspector**

Vincent Ashworth HMI

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## Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors supported by a team of specialist inspectors in accordance with the *Framework for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Education (2008-11)*.
2. The inspection draws upon evidence from all aspects of the provision to make judgements against all parts of the inspection evaluation schedule in the framework. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of the training in supporting high quality outcomes for trainees and the capacity of the partnership to bring about further improvements. A summary of the grades awarded is included at the end of this report.

### Key to inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

### Explanation of terms used in this report

**Attainment** is defined as the standard reached by a trainee at the end of their training.

**Progress** is judged in terms of how well a trainee has developed professionally from their starting point to the standard reached at the time of the inspection or at a suitable review point.

**Achievement** is judged in terms of the progress made and the standard reached by a trainee at the time of the inspection or at a recent assessment review point.

## The provider

3. The University of Central Lancashire works in collaboration with 14 further education (FE) colleges across the North-West of England to deliver initial teacher education (ITE). Courses lead to a Certificate in Education or Postgraduate Certificate in Education, both of which incorporate the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS). In addition, the university validates an initial award that leads to preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector (PTLLS) as well as the certificate (CTLLS). An integrated subject specialist DTLLS in Skills for Life is offered at Blackburn College. Courses are endorsed by Standards Verification UK and satisfy the Secretary of State's requirements for FE teacher education.
4. Currently around 1,460 trainees are working towards a Certificate in Education or Postgraduate Certificate in Education. Of these, 114 are on full-time pre-service provision and 1,330 are on part-time provision. The partnership also allows trainees with advanced standing for Year 1 modules of the DTLLS to enter directly into Year 2 of the part-time course. Full-time courses are offered at six

colleges (Blackburn, Burnley, Kendal, Wigan and Leigh, Runshaw and Carlisle). In 2009 there were 238 trainees on PTLLS courses and 80 trainees on CTLLS courses validated by the university. Around 7% of all trainees are from minority ethnic backgrounds and around 41% of all trainees are male.

## **Initial teacher education for the further education system**

### **Key strengths**

5. The key strengths are:

- the outstanding completion rates for full-time pre-service trainees and for part-time trainees with advanced standing who complete Year 2 only
- the good progress made by trainees in developing and applying their skills in reflective practice and action research
- trainees' excellent awareness and application of the minimum core curriculum in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT)
- the good response to local and national initiatives which meets the recruitment needs of FE providers particularly well
- the support for trainees' well-being and its positive impact on their progress and self-esteem.

### **Required actions**

6. In order to improve the consistency of the quality of provision and completion rates for part-time trainees, the partnership must:

- ensure that all trainees benefit from high quality mentoring across the partnership, especially those trainees who are not employed in FE colleges
- analyse, interpret and use data more effectively to monitor trainees' progress, inform self-evaluation and target improvements in trainees' outcomes
- improve the rigour of self-evaluation at partnership level by assessing the impact of recruitment, training and assessment processes on different groups of trainees.

### **Recommendations**

7. In order to ensure trainees are given every opportunity to progress and attain at the highest level, the partnership should:

- ensure greater precision and challenge in the subject specific and generic targets set for individual trainees.

8. In order to improve the quality and consistency of provision, the partnership should:

- implement systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of contributions made by mentors to training programmes
- develop a policy for recruitment and selection that is understood and applied consistently by all partners
- identify strategies to increase the promotion of courses to groups under-represented in teaching or training in the FE system
- strengthen external evaluation.

## Overall effectiveness

## Grade: 3

9. The overall effectiveness of the partnership in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is satisfactory. Inspectors agree with the partnership's judgement that trainees' attainment is good. This is because trainees benefit from good individual support which boosts their self-esteem and allows them to aspire and flourish. Many trainees also benefit from the good practice that permeates the high performing FE colleges they are either employed by or placed in. Within this positive picture there is significant variation between individual providers and between cohorts of trainees. For example, outcomes for trainees on the full-time courses are outstanding. Completion rates for these trainees are very high; trainees achieve well and most progress into relevant employment. Outcomes for trainees with advanced standing who complete the one-year part-time course show a similar trend. However, the overall success rate on the part-time two-year course, which represents the largest proportion of trainees, was low in 2009 at around 72%. Part-time trainees who are not employed within partner colleges do not experience the same high quality learning and progress as those who are college-based. The work-based training element of the courses has been under-resourced since the last inspection; access to high quality mentor support in the workplace remains a lottery for a significant minority of trainees. As a consequence, these trainees are less likely to progress from Year 1 to Year 2 and retention rates in a minority of colleges are lower than they should be.

10. Trainees are enthusiastic and committed to improving both their academic study skills and their practical skills in the classroom. They demonstrate the positive values and attitudes needed for successful teaching in the learning and skills sector. They regularly draw on their own experience or specialist vocational backgrounds to help their learners make links between theory and practice. Trainees develop good skills for managing behaviour and learning and use feedback systematically from their teacher educators to improve their classroom practice. One exemplary feature that distinguishes this partnership is the extent to which trainees develop their skills in action research. This stems from an annual research journal, entitled 'Through the looking glass', which provides trainees with the opportunity to publish their research projects undertaken during the course. Not only does this document serve as a highly valuable learning resource for all trainees, it provides a very valuable link between academic research and teaching and learning in the FE system.

11. Trainees' skills in self-evaluation are particularly well-developed and consequently, the quality of their reflective practice is excellent. For example, one trainee observed during the inspection was particularly nervous about containing the behaviour of an exuberant group of BTEC national students. In preparing her lesson she had considered the feedback from her previous observation, evaluated ways in which she could improve in her next lesson and considered strategies to evaluate her own success in making constructive changes to her practice. As a consequence, she drew expertly on a repertoire of strategies, including question and answer technique, pace and variety of teaching activities. This conveyed her high expectations to her learners which resulted in good behaviour and high quality learning.

12. Recruitment and selection arrangements are satisfactory. Although there is an agreed policy for recruiting and selecting trainees, it is not applied consistently across the partnership. This results in a minority of part-time trainees being enrolled onto courses that are not well suited to their individual needs or work circumstances. Consequently, withdrawal rates are high in some colleges. The thorough selection of pre-service trainees results in consistently high retention and progression rates. Provision is flexible in terms of attendance options and progression between different qualifications within the ITE framework. This caters particularly well for trainees' differing needs. The initial assessment of trainees' skills and prior knowledge are reasonably thorough across most providers. Targets for trainees' individual development are dispersed across a range of documents within Personal Development Plans. This makes it difficult for some trainees to have a clear overview of their progress and the steps they need to take to improve. Although target setting has improved since the last inspection, too many targets are not sufficiently specific or measurable. As a result, not all trainees are challenged sufficiently to achieve the professional standards at the higher levels.

13. The majority of trainees make good progress as a result of the high quality centre-based training and the highly effective personal and academic support they receive from their teacher educators. Inspectors agreed with trainees that the programme of peer observations has a positive influence on deepening their awareness of teaching roles in FE. Trainees benefit from incisive feedback following lesson observations carried out by their teacher educators. However, feedback following subject specialist observations is sometimes too generic and fails to provide comments that help trainees to develop their subject specialist pedagogy. The quality of subject mentoring varies too much between providers. In a few colleges there are well developed models of mentoring that result from the excellent integration of ITE and continuing professional development. In others, there is over-reliance on goodwill which results in providers being unclear whether trainees actually receive mentor support or not. This is especially the case for part-time trainees who are not employed within an FE college and, as a consequence, their progress falters.

14. Trainees' application of the minimum core curriculum within the context of their specialist subject is good. Trainees are acutely aware of the barriers that many of their learners face because of weak numeracy or literacy skills. Trainees who met with inspectors described with zeal some of the innovative ways in which they use techniques in the classroom to develop their learners' skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Training ensures that trainees take account of diversity and promote equality and inclusion within their teaching. Inspectors saw some particularly good practice in the extent to which trainees develop specialist skills to support learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

15. The extent to which resources are used effectively and efficiently is satisfactory overall. Teacher educators are appropriately qualified and experienced. Trainees generally have access to a good range of learning resources in the colleges where they are based. Where trainees have good access to ICT resources they make particularly good use of technology to enhance the quality of learning in their lessons. In one college for example, mathematics trainees used specialist software

on interactive whiteboards to make their lessons more visual and stimulating. Engineering trainees used computer circuit simulation software to enhance their learners' understanding of concepts in electrical and electronic engineering. However, not all trainees have sufficient opportunity to use new technology as part of their teaching. The partnership has recently extended the range of methods used to assess trainees by introducing multi-media presentations. This has had a positive impact by requiring trainees to consider how they apply new technologies within their specialist subject pedagogy. Some colleges have made good use of national funding to establish a framework of mentor support within their colleges. In other colleges there is no tangible evidence of the impact of this funding on the quality of trainees' experience.

16. The overall quality of the provision across the partnership is satisfactory. Some groups of colleges collaborate very effectively to share good practice. Robust arrangements ensure that trainees' written coursework is rigorously monitored. The internal moderation of judgements made in relation to trainee's teaching practice does not extend to observations carried out by those mentors who support trainees outside the colleges. There is no external moderation of trainees' teaching practice and external examiner reports add little rigour to quality assurance arrangements.

17. Trainees feel valued and are confident that any concerns will be handled quickly and sensitively. They have a good understanding of safeguarding matters and how these relate to their wider role as a teacher. The proportion of trainees recruited from minority ethnic groups has increased and broadly reflects that of the regional workforce of FE teachers. Similarly the proportion of male trainees has grown incrementally in recent years. However, this recent change in the profile of trainees cannot be attributed to any deliberate action taken by the partnership. A few colleges have been particularly proactive in widening participation. For example, by making good use of PTLLS and CTLLS courses to stimulate an interest in teaching as a career for groups that are traditionally under-represented in the FE workforce. The monitoring of the recruitment, progress, attainment and progression of different groups of trainees across the partnership, as a whole, is underdeveloped.

## **The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality** **Grade: 3**

18. The partnership has satisfactory capacity to take the actions required to secure improvements. The majority of colleges within the partnership have well-established and rigorous arrangements for self-assessment. In most cases, this includes the systematic and detailed analysis of data relating to key outcomes for trainees. The links are underdeveloped between individual colleges' self-assessment reports and the process of self-evaluation for the partnership as a whole. Data and information provided to the university by colleges through the annual monitoring report system are often less reliable than the information and judgements that feed into the college's own system.

19. Data relating to part-time provision has not been collected in a format that allows for meaningful and incisive evaluation of outcomes for trainees, particularly in relation to their retention and success rates. As a consequence, judgements made



by the university in its own annual review and evaluation process are overly generous. Weaknesses in the collation and analysis of data impair the university's capacity to plan and monitor the effectiveness of strategies to improve. The university recognises that this is a key weakness and consideration is being given to how data can be extracted from the university's management information system that will provide an accurate reflection of the outcomes for cohorts of trainees as well as for different groups of trainees.

20. In spite of flaws in the self-evaluation process, the partnership manager has a clear understanding of where improvements need to be made. The partnership is especially responsive to the views of trainees; where weaknesses have been identified, action has been taken to improve provision. Since the last inspection, improvements have been made to ensure that trainees undertake activities to extend their breadth of teaching experience. Arrangements have been made to train and accredit mentors and a handbook is now available, although a high proportion of mentors remain untrained. Key weaknesses that have restricted the extent of trainees' progress have not been addressed fully: for example, the variable quality of action plans and target setting for individual trainees and the lack of subject specialist mentors for part-time trainees. These continuing weaknesses affect adversely the quality of the training and the progress made by a significant minority of trainees.

21. Procedures for tracking and monitoring the progress made by trainees are generally sound but are relatively new to the partnership. The partnership has not identified trends of improvement to inform areas for development for different cohorts and groups of trainees, either within individual colleges or across the partnership. Graded judgements made in relation to trainees' performance are accurate in those colleges that perform particularly well; there is some over-grading in colleges where the quality of provision is more variable.

22. The university is highly committed to partnership working. The leadership of the partnership has been highly successful in establishing a regional network of ITE providers. Roles and responsibilities are clear and communication within the partnership is very good. However, the partnership agreements that are in place are too generic and do not relate specifically to the delivery of ITE courses.

23. Day-to-day management of the programmes in most of the colleges is good. In the best colleges, innovation in ITE is nurtured and this has a highly beneficial impact more generally on teaching and learning in these institutions. Attendance at partnership meetings is excellent and partners speak highly of the opportunities for sharing best practice that such meetings afford.

24. The partnership's response to national and local initiatives is a strength. The range of provision is effective, particularly in meeting the needs of a wide range of employers in the North West. In the best colleges, the well-developed integration of ITE with human resource requirements means that recruitment strategies have been used to focus on local shortage subjects or to support growth in particular subject specialisms.

25. Action planning in relation to the promotion of equality and diversity across the partnership is not yet developed sufficiently. The improvement plan for the partnership as a whole lacks specific, timed and measurable targets that are clearly linked to outcomes for trainees.

### **Annex: Partnership colleges**

At the time of inspection the partnership included the following providers:

Blackburn College  
Burnley College  
Carlisle College  
Furness College  
Hugh Baird College  
Kendal College  
Lakes College, West Cumbria  
Lancaster and Morecambe College  
Myerscough College  
Runshaw College  
Skelmersdale and Ormskirk College  
Southport College  
Stockport College  
Wigan and Leigh College

## Summary of inspection grades<sup>1</sup>

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

### Overall effectiveness

		ITE for FE
<b>How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?</b>		<b>3</b>
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	2
Factors contributing to trainees' attainment	To what extent do recruitment / selection arrangements support high quality outcomes?	3
	To what extent does the training and assessment ensure that all trainees progress to fulfil their potential given their ability and starting points?	3
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	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
<b>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?</b>		<b>3</b>
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

<sup>1</sup> 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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