

Hull College (Workstep)

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1 Outstanding

Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Satisfactory

Grade 4 Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on participants and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Preparation for life and work

Description of the provider

1. Hull College is one of the largest general further education colleges in the country. It offers provision in four locations in the city centre and at Goole. Hull College offers courses in all 15 sector subject areas leading to qualifications ranging from pre-entry level to higher education. In 2006/07 the college enrolled approximately 26,000 learners. The college has a contract with Jobcentre plus to provide a Workstep programme for 18 participants from Hull and the East Riding area. A further 19 participants are involved in supported learning on jobsearch activities. Participants also access other programmes such as **learndirect** and the college's 'forward into learning' courses. The Workstep programme is part of the college's school for foundation studies and learner support. The Workstep co-ordinator and two support officers, who are also Workstep participants, support the participants. These staff are supported by managers and other staff within the college. Participants have access to the wider support services of the college.
2. Hull College's immediate catchment area is Kingston upon Hull which contains a number of deprived areas. Unemployment rates are 8.2% compared to 5.5% nationally. In 2006, the percentage of pupils gaining five GCSEs at grades A*-C, including mathematics and English, was 25.9%, which is significantly below the national average of 45.8%.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
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Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Equality of opportunity	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Sector subject area

Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

3. The overall effectiveness of Hull College's Workstep provision is satisfactory. Leadership and management including equality of opportunity and the quality of the Workstep provision are satisfactory. Achievement and standards are also satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

4. Hull College's capacity to improve is outstanding. The college has effectively realigned its strategy and management structure to embed quality assurance across all aspects of its work including the Workstep provision. Actions to improve the quality of provision have recently been implemented but it is too early to assess the effectiveness of these changes. Participants, particularly those on jobsearch, benefit from the improved facilities, resources and increases in staffing levels. The quality assurance framework is particularly effective in driving up success rates and the quality of the participants' experience. Staff are continuously involved in activities which improve the service to participants, but monitoring of the quality improvement plan is inconsistent.
5. Self-assessment is accurate and supported by exceptionally good management information. Participant and employer evaluations are used well. Action plans are very clear in identifying how high standards will be maintained and areas for improvement will be resolved. Management and staff have a good understanding and awareness of the challenges identified at inspection. Governors are very effective in monitoring the college's performance and supporting the strategic vision of the principal.

Key strengths

- Good development of workplace skills
- Flexible programme to meet participants' needs

- Good support for participants
- Particularly good onsite resources

Key areas for improvement

- Poor progression to sustainable employment
- Ineffective development planning for participants
- Slow progress to bring about improvement

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. Participants work with a wide range of employers including graphic design, customer service, cleaning and accountancy and gain a range of skills to enable them to contribute effectively in the workplace. Workplace staff effectively support participants while they develop good personal, social and employability skills such as attendance and punctuality. Confidence and self-esteem improve rapidly together with their timekeeping. Many participants achieve work related qualifications such as first aid, manual handling, basic food hygiene, and computer skills. This is identified in the provider's self-assessment report. Participants on jobsearch grow in confidence and are prepared well to apply for work.

7. The rate of progression into unsupported employment is low. Using the Department for Work and Pensions measure the provider achieved a progression rate of 10.5%. However, the progression rate is 18% if those participants for whom progression into unsupported employment is appropriate are considered. All the participants are in supported employment, but are making slow progress into sustainable employment. This was identified in the self-assessment report. However, three participants are expected to progress within the next three months, and a further three within the following three months.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. The quality of provision is satisfactory. The programme meets the needs and interests of participants very well. Participants are matched carefully to jobs and employers. Employment opportunities meet the diverse needs of the participants very well. Many job opportunities provide a good challenge and require high-order skills, such as design and job coaching. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Employers provide participants with good induction and on-the-job training. Participants attend nationally accredited, job-specific external training such as health and safety and food hygiene. Workstep staff have a good understanding of participants' employment aims and experience, often gained through supporting participants through the jobsearch programme.

9. Individual support for participants is good, as identified in the self-assessment report. They liaise well with a range of partners and external agencies providing training, mentoring and specialist

support. Staff have a very good understanding of participants' levels of ability and the effect of their disability. Staff take these into account when planning and delivering in-work support and training. The co-ordinator carries out regular reviews of participants' progress and supports them in the workplace more frequently. The participant, the employer and Workstep staff are actively involved in reviews. Soft skills such as attendance, personal appearance and the ability to accept feedback are assessed and any differences in judgement are openly discussed during in-work reviews. Individual support helps participants to cope with stressful situations at work and to avoid potential conflict with colleagues. However, participants are insufficiently challenged to encourage and enable them make good progress towards independence in the workplace. Employers understand the individual needs of their employees and ensure that reasonable adjustments are made in the workplace.

10. Accommodation and resources for jobsearch and other activities at the college are particularly good. However, Jobsearch activities at the college are only satisfactory. Participants' attend workshops at the college or access individual support at the college, at their homes or other mutually convenient locations. Participants' are well supported in the workshop by the Workstep co-ordinator and two support officers. They have good access to the internet and other resources and good support in the preparation of their curriculum vitae and application letters. The workshop sessions include presentations about other programmes and activities at the college which may interest and benefit participants including progress into other learning and **learnirect**.

11. The use of personal development plans is ineffective. Initial assessment of literacy and numeracy is carried out systematically during induction, but no formal strategy exists for the support of literacy and language needs. The assessment of other support needs is good. Targets in some participants' development plans are insufficiently specific, measurable or time bound. Targets are often too general and insufficiently detailed or broken down into small achievable steps. Many targets do not have completion dates although some are identified as short, medium or long-term. Some targets continue over too long a period and do not adequately enable participants or Hull College staff to monitor progress and the development of skills. Reviews of progress are frequent and usually include the employer. Reviews are sometimes ineffective and not used to plan progress. Staff have not received training on setting, recording and monitoring targets and have identified this as an ongoing area for improvement. However, training is scheduled to take place.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

12. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Following restructuring, the programme is now managed within the school of Foundation Studies and Learner Support. A quality improvement and student support manager has recently been appointed to the programme. Many recent changes have been implemented; participant files have been audited and quality assurance is more thorough. However, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of these recent actions.

13. Links with employers are effective. Marketing to employers is a current priority; colourful and attractive posters and booklets have been distributed. Employers are given a good practice handbook which deals with issues relating to employees with disabilities. All employers take an active part in the development of participants' skills and regularly attend reviews. However, some employers are still unclear about the requirements of Workstep.

14. Staff development is satisfactory. All staff receive appropriate appraisals which are linked to training needs and have access to development activities. Staff have access to the wider staff development programme of the college. Recent and current training includes differentiation; teacher training, awareness raising of a range of disabilities and target-setting for participants.

15. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The college policy on equality and diversity applies to Workstep provision and participants. Participants' are provided with a college support guide to equality and diversity that is very clear and specific. Staff and participants have access to significant expertise in the provision and support for participants with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Active promotion of equality and diversity on the programme takes place during induction and in conjunction with employers. However, little evidence is available of up-to-date training for participants in the workplace. Equality of opportunity is discussed at reviews but participants' rights are not always reinforced sufficiently and their understanding is superficial. All participants now have access to online equality and diversity materials via the college virtual learning environment. However, few participants, particularly those in the workplace, make use of this information.

16. Arrangements to ensure the health and safety of participants are satisfactory. Regular workplace reviews and risk assessments are carried out. Employers have a good understanding of the health and safety needs of participants. Participants take personal responsibility for their own health and safety inside and outside the workplace. They understand the importance of wearing protective clothing and are aware of the appropriate steps to take when working alone. The procedures for safeguarding participants meet current government requirements. The procedures for safeguarding vulnerable adults have been reviewed and staff training in the new arrangements and updating staff is programmed to take place.

17. The college has made slow progress to rectify the key challenges identified at the previous inspection or to improve progression rates to sustained employment. The programme is included in the college quality systems. However, it is too soon to measure the impact of the actions taken. Some key aspects of the programme, such as workplace reviews, are not included in the quality assurance process. Monitoring of the quality improvement plan is insufficiently thorough.

What participants like:

- The relaxed and friendly nature of the support
- Friendly atmosphere
- The modern and up-to-date offices and facilities at the college
- 'The very good support which got me a job quickly'

What participants think could improve:

- 'I would like to move into employment'