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Ms Diane Dimond  
Acting Principal  
PETROC  
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Dear Ms Dimond

### **Short inspection of PETROC**

Following the short inspection on 4–5 November 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since inspectors judged the college to be good in March 2012.

#### **This college continues to be good.**

Learners continue to receive good education and training. Outcomes for learners have remained high and learners continue to make good progress on most courses. Outcomes for apprentices have improved since the previous inspection and are good in most areas. Managers have successfully implemented study programmes and, as a result, learners have valuable opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills to enable them to progress to further study, higher education or employment.

Leaders ensure that the college continues to provide good education and training opportunities for the widespread rural community that it serves. People in the community find the college welcoming and the programmes of the college meet their educational and social needs well.

Managers accurately identify the majority of areas for improvement and take prompt action to deal with them. Campuses are well resourced. Recent and ongoing refurbishment and building projects, for example the new engineering block and technology centre, have helped to improve the quality of accommodation and resources around the campuses, enhancing the quality of the learning environment and helping staff to improve the overall quality of provision.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Learners and staff indicate that they feel safe around the college. Leaders and managers oversee health and safety processes and procedures effectively. Leaders carry out suitable pre-employment checks on staff. They maintain effective links with external organisations and professionals where required, such as the local authority designated officer for safeguarding. Suitable training is in place for governors and staff to help them understand their responsibilities around safeguarding, the promotion of British values, and the prevention of radicalisation and extremism. The college has made good steps to address the government's priorities in these areas.

## **Inspection findings**

Governors and the leadership team have successfully ensured that the college responds appropriately to regional and national initiatives, for example the successful introduction of study programmes. The curriculum continues to address the requirements of learners, employers and the local community well.

Leaders and managers ensure that quality assurance processes and procedures are thorough. They have taken effective action to remedy weaknesses identified by inspectors at the previous inspection, and by managers as part of the college's own self-assessment processes. As a result, leaders have maintained the overall quality of provision across the college.

During this short inspection, the team of inspectors focused in particular on the following key themes:

- The previous inspection report identified that standards were not high enough in hospitality and catering workplace learning provision. Since the inspection, managers have strengthened the links between the college and employers, thereby ensuring that the provision addresses more effectively the training needs of the industry. They have also improved recruitment procedures to ensure that they recruit learners who have a more genuine interest in the subject, as well as suitable potential to succeed. Learners are now developing better skills in this area and successfully achieving their apprenticeships in greater numbers.
- At the previous inspection, a significant minority of learners on level 2 courses were not successfully achieving their qualifications. Since the inspection, leaders have redefined more clearly the entry criteria, particularly for level 2 courses, and ensured that managers and teachers adhere to them closely. Staff have received additional training to provide more detailed pre-entry and on-programme information, advice and guidance. This has increased the proportion of learners recruited onto courses that align better with their needs, interests and academic ability. They now make better progress and a higher proportion successfully achieve their qualifications. Staff monitor

particularly closely the progress of late applicants as they are at a higher risk of dropping out. Managers have accurately identified the need to bring about further improvements, in particular to the new assessment strategies on level 2 BTEC programmes where a minority of learners in information technology did not achieve their full potential in 2015.

- At the time of the previous inspection, adults did not achieve as well as learners aged 16 to 18. As a result of well-considered actions by managers, adults, particularly those on distance-learning courses, are now making much better progress. However, outcomes for adults on access and GCSE English courses still require further improvement.
- The previous inspection identified that the quality of provision for apprentices in hospitality and catering was not good enough. Since the inspection, leaders have made several decisive improvements that have resulted in a greater number of apprentices across all the provision gaining their apprenticeships within their planned timescales. Assessors now monitor and support apprentices better and have improved the teaching of functional skills. Assessors monitor more closely the performance of apprentices and intervene to provide suitable support where required. Overall apprenticeship success rates are good and above the national average. However, they still require further improvement for a minority of learners aged 24 and over, males and those on electrical installation courses.
- Managers have successfully implemented study programmes, and have ensured that the breadth of the curriculum suitably meets learners' needs and interests. Learners have good opportunities to undertake a variety of work placements, and receive informed advice and guidance about progressing to further study or employment, or moving on to university. In 2015, managers accurately identified that English and mathematics GCSE and functional skills results were still too low. They have analysed why too few learners succeeded and have put in place a variety of improvement initiatives, including changing the management and timetabling for these subjects. Managers are also aware of the need to increase the level of challenge for learners aged 16 to 18 in order to improve the progress they make relative to their qualifications on entry.
- Recent interim senior leadership arrangements have been effective. They have enabled the college to draw up a new strategic plan while also exploring longer-term strategic options for the college. Leaders and governors have considered these options and are now moving forwards with the task of appointing a permanent Principal.

### **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- All teachers fully implement the updated target-setting, assessment and review procedures. This will help enable learners to make good or better progress relative to their starting points and qualifications on entry to their course.

- All teachers and support staff continue the focus on raising standards in English and mathematics GCSE and functional skills, and on helping learners understand the strategies they need to gain high grades in examinations and tests.

This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Nelson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, three of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted Inspectors were assisted by the college's deputy principal as nominee. We met with you, members of your leadership team, managers, teachers, governors and learners. We carried out lesson observations and visited apprentices and employers in the workplace. We scrutinised key strategic and policy documents, including those relating to quality assurance, safeguarding, performance, curriculum design and management. We also analysed data on learners' achievements and learners' progress relative to their starting points. We also analysed feedback from learners and employers.