

Tower College of Further and Higher Education Limited

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

Unique reference number: 1236911

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Tower College of Further and Higher Education was last inspected in February 2018. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in addressing the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Themes

How accurately do leaders and managers identify strengths and weaknesses in the quality of provision and put in place effective improvement plans? Insufficient progress

Leaders and managers do not have an accurate understanding of the quality of the provision. As a result, they have not been successful enough in bringing about improvements since the previous inspection.

Leaders and managers have put in place a self-assessment process but they do not critically review the key strengths and weaknesses of the organisation sufficiently and do not understand what they need to do to improve. They have not established a self-critical culture and they fail to focus sufficiently on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the judgements that they make. The resulting quality improvement plan outlines actions for improvement, but too many of these are not specific enough to rectify weaknesses quickly. Leaders and managers do not regularly review the progress they make with implementing their action plan and do not set themselves clear or measurable milestones or targets for improvement. As a result, they do not know the progress that they are making and so do not put further interventions in place.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have strengthened the senior leadership team with an additional post to improve quality. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this action. Leaders and managers have retained a strong focus on ensuring that learners achieve their qualifications. On the large majority of courses, most learners achieve their qualifications.

How well do leaders and managers evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that they can provide the necessary training for teachers to improve their teaching?

Insufficient progress

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have reviewed their policy for observing lessons. However, managers do not apply the policy thoroughly. For example, they do not have an accurate knowledge of who the weaker teachers are and, as a result, are not able to support these tutors swiftly enough to improve their practice.

Managers have not put plans in place to standardise the quality of lesson observations. The observation team, which includes the majority of tutors and assessors, does not work together effectively to ensure a shared understanding of high-quality teaching. Managers do not train staff sufficiently well to ensure that they develop the necessary skills to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They do not check that observers make consistent judgements on the quality of teaching and learning.

Managers do not ensure that the arrangements to manage the performance of staff lead to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. In written accounts of observations, observers do not focus enough on the quality of learning taking place or the progress that learners make. Records of lesson observations too often describe what has happened, are not sufficiently evaluative and are overly generous. Observers do not set clear improvement actions for teachers as a result of observations and do not direct tutors to specific training or activities in order to improve their practice.

Managers carry out annual appraisals but do not review the quality of teaching or link appraisal to lesson observations. Tutors do not receive targets to improve the quality of their teaching and are not challenged or supported to improve their practice.

Tutors participate in high-quality continuing professional development to maintain their competence in their vocational subjects. The staff development that managers provide for teachers and assessors does not help them to develop their teaching skills well enough and is not specific to their individual needs.

How well do teachers meet the needs of individual learners to ensure that all learners make good or better progress and gain a broad understanding of the sector in which they plan to work?

Insufficient progress

Tutors do not have a good enough understanding of learners' starting points to plan lessons effectively and provide for the needs of individual learners. Although managers assess learners' starting points at the beginning of their course, they do

not share this information consistently with tutors to enable them to plan and teach lessons effectively.

Tutors do not use teaching methods or resources that enable all learners to make good progress and they do not check learning effectively. Too frequently, learners do not respond to questions or take part in discussions to demonstrate their understanding of topics. Tutors do not provide learners with enough time to practise and develop their skills before moving on to the next activity and, consequently, learners are not able to consolidate their knowledge.

Too often, tutors do not prepare lessons well enough for those students who need to learn at a slower pace and, as a result, these learners do not make the progress of which they are capable. Too many learners arrive at lessons late or leave early and, as a consequence, they do not benefit from the learning provided. Tutors fail to ensure that learners can refer back to previous learning so that they can use it effectively in future learning or in the workplace.

In health and social care, tutors explain key concepts and revise prior learning well, so that learners are able to recall what they have learned in the previous session. For example, learners have a good understanding of forms of abuse within the care sector, based on their prior learning. Tutors use technology well to enhance learning and provide visual prompts, which helps learners to understand complex topics. Tutors make sure that learners are familiar with the technical language related to care work.

Learners are able to discuss confidently what they have learned and apply it to their workplace practice. For example, learners talk accurately about the most important aspects of taking care of elderly clients and demonstrate their understanding of how to keep themselves and their clients safe in the workplace. In their reviews with learners, assessors make sure that learners understand how their learning applies to their job roles.

How well do teachers develop learners' English and mathematics skills well from their starting points?

Insufficient progress

Since the previous inspection, managers have purchased and started to use new resources to identify learners' skills in English and mathematics. However, tutors do not use the information gained from these assessments well enough to teach those learners who need to improve their skills. They do not accurately confirm or record learners' starting points in their learning plans or share them with other teaching staff. As a result, tutors do not ensure that learners make good or better progress in developing their English and mathematics skills.

Managers enrol learners on vocational courses when they do not have the necessary minimum standard in English or mathematics. Too many learners do not have good

enough mathematical skills to make good progress in their lessons. For example, learners do not have sufficient prior skills to understand mode, median and mean, and are not able to grasp concepts quickly. As a result, the pace of learning is slow.

A few learners, particularly those who speak English as an additional language, require further support to understand key terms and concepts and, as a result, do not make rapid progress in lessons. Assessors do not routinely correct errors in learners' use of English or extend their understanding of subject-specific vocabulary.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have provided additional online resources so that learners can practise and develop their English and mathematics skills independently. However, tutors and managers do not yet monitor whether learners use the materials or evaluate their effectiveness in improving learners' skills.

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