



# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **Initial Teacher Training (Further Education)**

**University of Central Lancashire**

**A 2004/05 Inspection**

**Managing Inspector: J Bennett HMI**

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## BACKGROUND

1. This inspection was carried out in accordance with the Framework for the inspection of initial training of further education teachers and the guidance in the Handbook for the Inspection of initial training of further education teachers, both published in September 2004.

2. The University of Central Lancashire works with 16 further education (FE) colleges across the North–West of England to provide initial teacher training (ITT) courses for teachers and trainers in post-compulsory education and training (PCET). There are 1400 trainees on the courses across the centres. Part-time trainees on the in-service postgraduate certificate of education (PGCE) and certificate in education (Cert. Ed.) courses attend for a minimum of three hours per week at one of the colleges. Six colleges also offer a full-time pre-service course and trainees attend college for three days per week. In addition to the PGCE and Cert. Ed. courses, some colleges also offer degrees in education validated by the university.

3. The courses are based on a modular structure governed by the university's credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) scheme. The Cert. Ed. course leads to a total of 120 credits and the PGCE course to a total of 140 credits (of which 40 are at masters level). The partnership also offers a Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO)-endorsed stage one award, *Introduction to Learning Skills (ILS)* and a FENTO-endorsed stage two award, *Certificate in Foundation Studies (CFS)*. Students on the ILS and CFS courses are often taught together with Cert. Ed. and PGCE students. College staff teach and assess the large majority of the modules but university staff deliver one of the masters level modules. The City and Guilds 7407 qualification is also run in a number of colleges, including in two out of the four colleges in the inspection sample.

## THE INSPECTION

4. The inspection was carried out in two phases by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), supported by a full-time inspector from the Adult Learning Inspectorate and specialist additional inspectors. In-service provision at four colleges was evaluated as part of the inspection. Pre-service provision at two of the colleges was also evaluated. There is no pre-service provision at the other two colleges. Inspectors focussed on the quality of training and management and quality assurance procedures during the first phase, which took place in November 2004. During the second phase, inspectors concentrated on evaluating the achievements of FE trainees through observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress during the course. Phase 2 of the inspection was completed in June 2005.

## A EFFECTIVENESS OF PROVISION

5. The overall quality of provision is good (**grade 2**). All trainees have high expectations of their students and they plan their lessons well using a good range of appropriate teaching strategies. With very few exceptions, the trainees make good progress and become more confident, skilled and competent teachers. They

develop the ability to reflect on their own teaching and evaluate its effectiveness in order to improve. There is a wide range of flexible provision giving trainees the opportunity to tailor their professional development to meet individual needs. Trainers act as helpful role models for the trainees and provide good personal and academic support. Subject mentoring for pre-service trainees is good but there is insufficient purposeful subject specialist support for a limited number of in-service trainees, particularly those on the CFS course. The majority of trainers provide detailed and constructive written feedback to trainees but this is not the case for a small minority. The leadership and management of the partnership are very strong. Quality assurance is very good and the partnership is continuously improving its provision.

## **KEY STRENGTHS**

6. Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- wide range of flexible courses
- good teaching and learning
- effective subject mentoring for full-time trainees
- good support for all trainees
- very rigorous quality assurance systems and moderation procedures
- very good leadership and management of the partnership
- high standard of trainees' work and their good achievements.

## **AREAS FOR ATTENTION**

7. The partnership should address:

- the shortage of subject-specific observations and mentoring for some part-time trainees
- the need for further development of the links between the initial teacher training teams and the human resources departments in most colleges
- the small amount of poor assessment feedback.

Further information on strengths and areas for attention is contained in the substantial sections of the report that follow.

## **B ACHIEVEMENTS OF TRAINEES**

8. Retention and achievement rates on both the pre-service and in-service PGCE and Cert. Ed. courses are high. Most trainees make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. For example, the portfolios of those in-service trainees who joined the course with the minimum academic qualifications show good progressive development of writing and analytical skills; and PGCE trainees undertake challenging research projects at masters level with many achieving high marks.

9. Trainees have high expectations of their students and a strong commitment to raising students' achievements. They demonstrate positive values in support of learning and treat students with consideration and respect. Pre-service trainees are based in a college and are able to participate fully in the work of their department and the wider corporate life of the institution. Many in-service trainees also take on a wide range of professional responsibilities such as tutoring and course development. Trainees on the CFS course who are often employed part-time, do not always have the same breadth of opportunity.

10. Trainees develop their skills of critical awareness throughout the course. After each teaching observation, they complete a detailed self-evaluation form. All trainees are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and know the areas for further development. They value the feedback provided and use it to improve their teaching. Trainees interviewed near the end of their course were aware of the need to continue to develop as teachers through reflective practice.

11. Most trainees demonstrate good subject knowledge and many are able to use their previous vocational experience to enliven their teaching by linking learning to practical applications. Trainees keep up-to-date with developments in their specialist areas and make good use of staff training opportunities. A small number of trainees do not have sufficient subject knowledge. One, although a graduate, did not have adequate specialist knowledge to enable her to teach students with learning difficulties effectively. Another had completed a basic English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) qualification but her limited knowledge of ESOL pedagogy restricted the range of courses that she could teach.

12. Trainees plan detailed and coherent lessons that are well matched to the schemes of work. They use a suitable variety of activities and teaching strategies and an appropriate balance of teacher directed activity and individual or group work. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is demonstrated confidently. For example, one trainee employed an electronic whiteboard most appropriately to display graphical information in a Spanish lesson and a trainee working with students with learning difficulties exploited their keen interest in football to motivate them to work with computer-generated graphs. The most skilled trainees plan differentiated tasks that are matched to the individual needs of their learners.

13. Most trainees have good classroom management skills and their lessons are well organised. For example, in an outdoor pursuits lesson, a trainee created a safe working environment by establishing clear routines. Trainees' behaviour management skills are good, as in one lesson where the trainee used skilful questioning to involve a potentially disruptive student in class discussion. Most

trainees employ support assistants well but a small number fail to manage them effectively. In one lesson, the support assistant interrupted students' learning by arriving late and rearranging furniture.

14. Trainees have a good understanding of the principles of assessment and apply these principles to good effect. One trainee used skilful assessment to pinpoint the particular aspect of a topic which was posing problems for students and then devised appropriate remedial work. Trainees know how their students are progressing and undertake very effective monitoring of their work during lessons. The quality of the written feedback is more variable. Most trainees correct errors accurately and provide constructive guidance but a small number of trainees fail to give students sufficient advice on how to improve.

15. All trainees promote equal opportunities through their approach to teaching and learning. They encourage students to work towards their own personal goals and foster respect and support between students. For example, a trainee working with students with learning disabilities designed a simple but effective handout enabling students unable to communicate orally their rising frustration, to indicate their level of anxiety by pointing to statements on the handout. Most give appropriate support to their students enabling them to make good progress.

## **C QUALITY OF TRAINING**

16. University validated provision allows trainees to progress from stage 1 to Cert. Ed. and on to degree or masters programmes at the university. The stage 1 course offers a short introduction for those new to teaching and is a progression route to stage 2. It also provides an accredited exit qualification if trainees do not continue or wish to take time out.

17. Modules in all university-validated provision have been through the university's rigorous validation process. ITT courses meet the FENTO standards and the course handbooks identify clearly how the FENTO requirements are covered. These courses encourage the progressive development of skills. The first module, focusing on planning and delivery, is designed to enable trainees to plan lessons effectively and to prepare learning materials whereas later modules focus on theory and reflective practice.

18. Training sessions are repeated at different times during the week so trainees can go to alternative sessions if they are unable to attend at the usual time. The different elements of training combine well to provide a coherent experience; in particular, trainers seek to draw links between the taught sessions and trainees' classroom practice.

19. The university runs two Saturday conferences each year on current developments and concerns such as the 14-19 curriculum and behaviour management. Speakers with a national reputation are invited and trainees from all the courses in the partnership are encouraged to attend. Trainees judge this provision to be very good.

20. The university provides detailed schedules indicating the order in which modules should be taught, assignment deadlines and the dates of accreditation events. Individual colleges design their own schemes of work and lesson plans. Some schemes of work lack detail but sessions are very well taught and planned. Trainees are encouraged to discuss their own individual experiences and develop their ability to be self-critical. Trainees enjoy micro- and mini-teaching sessions and find them very valuable learning experiences. They learn how to receive and utilise negative feedback from others in their group. The quality of centre-based training across the partnership is good. Trainers demonstrate a wide range of teaching and learning strategies and model effective practice. They are well qualified. Within training teams, there is a very good blend of experience. Trainers have a very active commitment to their own continued professional development and members of the partnership have collaborated to produce a published text for use with new teachers in training.

21. Applicants who do not possess a GCSE in English undergo an assessment of literacy skills. Support is offered where appropriate. From 2005-06, the same will apply to applicants without a GCSE in mathematics. These trainees will be required to pass a stage two test and progress towards this will be monitored closely. The training courses include significant ICT content and trainees have access to ICT courses in their college or the university.

22. The university provides all trainees with a combined programme handbook and a portfolio of professional achievement (POPA) which contains a very comprehensive range of information about the course. The POPA is also used very effectively to log detailed evidence of learning. Individual learning plans (ILPs) are employed but are of more variable quality and do not capture much of the informal target setting and monitoring undertaken by tutors. A more comprehensive system has been developed and is being introduced at induction this year. This is part of a partnership project designed to strengthen selection procedures, improve target setting and monitoring, and link ITT to longer term professional development.

23. Personal tutors know their trainees well and provide very valuable support. They give very freely of their time and are accessible to trainees via email, telephone and an 'open door' policy. Pre-service trainees benefit from weekly meetings with their subject mentors. They find this support invaluable in adapting generic learning to their subject. Mentors of both pre-service and in-service trainees are trained by the university and benefit from a very comprehensive and useful mentor handbook. They have a good understanding of their role and responsibilities. While a minority of in-service trainees do not have a subject mentor, many of those working in colleges benefit from informal subject support from members of their course team.

24. Pre-service trainees have access to the full range of FE teaching and are encouraged to observe outside their curriculum area to increase their awareness of a broad spectrum of teaching and learning experiences. A small minority of in-service trainees, mainly from the CFS course, do not have the opportunity to teach across a sufficiently wide range of levels and courses within their subject area. For example, a trainee employed to give one-to-one music tuition has little experience of managing large groups. However, all trainees have to be observed teaching a group of more than ten students in at least two of the observed sessions.

25. Procedures for assessing written assignments and teaching observations are comprehensive and well documented. Work-based assessors, who carry out teaching observations, are trained by the university and supported by a very useful work-based assessors' handbook which outlines their roles and responsibilities. All trainees are observed regularly and given detailed and constructive feedback which identifies areas of practice where further development is needed. One trainee, experimenting with different teaching strategies, valued the observation feedback on the effectiveness of the different approaches. All trainees reflect on the feedback that they have received and improve their practice as a consequence. Subject mentors also provide excellent, formative feedback after lesson observations and personal tutors liaise closely with them.

26. The quality of written feedback on assignments is generally good with most trainers providing detailed comments. However, on a small number of assignments, there is either insufficient constructive feedback or poor spelling and grammar have not been corrected

#### **D MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF PROVISION**

27. Trainee recruitment and selection procedures follow university guidelines closely, with regard to entry qualifications and the accreditation of prior learning and prior experiential learning. Weaknesses identified in the selection procedures at the first visit have been addressed. For example, standard interview questions have been introduced in order to ensure consistency of practice.

28. The partnership monitors recruitment, retention and achievement data by ethnicity, disability and gender. The university has carried out a thorough analysis of the data and colleges also include an analysis of their own data in course evaluations. At colleges where a high proportion of the local population is from minority ethnic backgrounds, a range of initiatives is being used to attract more trainees from these groups.

29. Initial teacher training and human resources teams work together closely at some, though not all, partnership colleges. Where there is close liaison, teacher training and human resources teams plan programmes of professional development for new teachers that balance the need to gain a teaching qualification against other pressing development needs such as further vocational training. Members of human resource and teacher training teams from all the colleges have met with university tutors to look at ways to strengthen the links between the teams and a pilot project is underway.

30. Leadership of the 16-college university partnership is very strong. The partnership is well established and the colleges and university work together productively to develop and improve provision. Good use of central guidance and specifications ensures consistency of standards whilst allowing appropriate flexibility for local circumstances.



31. There is close and frequent contact between the programme director and the colleges. The college and university representatives meet formally as a scheme management committee at least once per term, and often more frequently. Attendance at meetings is excellent. The programme director visits the colleges regularly to deliver training and to teach on the level 4 modules. The programme director and her deputy each have responsibility for linking with two clusters of four colleges. These responsibilities are switched regularly. Each college has a programme leader who also acts as a college moderator for another college within their cluster to ensure consistency and to share expertise. Support is available if a college has staffing or other difficulties, either from the university or from another college in the cluster, whichever is the most appropriate.

32. The detailed partnership agreement sets out clearly the allocation of funding between the university and the colleges. The institutional agreement covers strategic matters, including management responsibilities and quality assurance procedures. The memorandum of co-operation is more detailed and includes clearly stated funding arrangements. Members of the partnership benefit from training opportunities assisted by reduced fees on degree courses at the university, funding for special projects and additional funding for subject mentors.

33. Management support for trainer development is very good. A key feature of this support is the induction of new trainers and work-based assessors in each partner college by the programme director. Continuing professional development provision is extensive, including conferences, mentor training and on-site support to address particular challenges.

34. The quality assurance framework for the teacher training programmes complies with the very high standards of the university's quality systems. From validation, through programme monitoring, to periodic revalidation review, the quality assurance process is comprehensive and rigorous. A significant strength is the annual monitoring visit by the programme director or deputy together with a programme leader from another college. This process helps to reinforce collective responsibility for maintaining quality and extends peer group learning

35. Procedures to ensure consistency, accuracy and rigour in the assessment of trainees are well established. Moderation practices, such as joint observation and the second marking of assignments, are effective. External examiners undertake their duties perceptively. They produce thorough and pertinent reports which confirm the efficiency and precision of assessment arrangements.

36. Opportunities for trainees to feedback on their satisfaction with programmes are good. They include module and year-end questionnaires, trainee representatives' attendance at courses team meetings, an annual review meeting with all trainees and external examiner visits. The results of these exercises are reported extensively in the programme director's annual report, together with appropriate action points. Trainee satisfaction with programmes is high. They judge that the programmes provide very effective preparation for teaching in further education and highlight the high level of trainers' commitment, support and responsiveness.

37. Progress on actions identified in evaluative reviews is monitored systematically and reported in subsequent reviews. Significant examples of changes in response to trainee feedback are the streamlining of course documentation and increased resources for improving specialist subject mentoring support for trainees.