

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045  
F 020 7421 6855  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



15 December 2006

Mr D Lawson  
Principal  
Peterborough Regional College  
Park Crescent  
Peterborough  
Cambridgeshire  
PE1 4DZ

Dear Mr Lawson

Ofsted Subject and Survey Inspection Programme 2006-07

Sector Subject Area 15: Business, Administration and Law

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 13 and 14 December 2006. I am particularly grateful to your staff for all their hard work in preparing the programme and background documentation and giving up a great deal of their time during the visit. Please pass on my thanks to them and to the learners who gave up their time to talk to me.

The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice survey in business and administration and law. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but should we wish to cite specific aspects of practice we will contact the college first.

The evidence used to inform judgements included: interviews with employers, staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of learners' work and observation of five lessons.

I agreed to provide a summary of my observations of good practice seen in business and to suggest some areas for development.

Good practice observed

- The actions to improve success rates on long courses at levels 1 and 2 for learners aged 16 to 18 and for adults at level 1 have been effective in raising the success rates which are now above the national averages.
- There are good framework success rates for apprentices in business administration.

- Lessons are well planned. Most plans make provision for meeting the needs of groups of learners with a range of abilities, and teachers have appropriate resources to ensure that this happens.
- Teachers make good use of a range of activities designed to engage the interest of learners. These include the use of games to enliven the lesson. Teachers have adapted some of the Standards Unit's materials and there is scope for further development of these approaches.
- Support for learners, particularly those attending full-time courses, is good. In addition to good support provided within lessons by teachers, the arrangements for supporting learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very effective. Attendance at lessons is good. There are good arrangements to promote inclusion. For example, a group of business administration learners has produced wall displays about bullying.
- The introduction of the Young Enterprise scheme for all full-time vocational business students enables a significant number of learners to gain practical business skills.
- A particularly effective partnership with a local employer enables over fifty full-time learners to gain very useful skills associated with obtaining employment.
- The roll out of 'Train to Gain' is presenting a good opportunity for most staff in the business and administration areas to gain a better understanding of modern business activity by teaching on employers' premises. However, there is no systematic arrangement for updating the commercial and industrial experience of staff.
- The college acts as both employer and provider in work-based learning. This contributes to a good understanding of the need to ensure that there is coherence between on- and off-the-job training.
- The college's active participation in a CoVE in management (with two other colleges in the region) has led to good developments in resources. Most of the management classrooms have interactive whiteboards which are well used following staff training. Two part-time staff have gained useful industrial updating. Also, the CoVE is encouraging minority ethnic learners to undertake management qualifications.
- The college has strengthened its arrangements for assessing the quality of teaching and learning. Although it correctly identified key strengths and weaknesses, the overall grade profile was not easily reconcilable with the overall level of achievements. External moderation has been introduced. It is too early to judge the impact of this.

#### Areas for development included:

- improve the success rates of adults on level 2 and 3 business courses
- improve the success rates of learners aged 16 to 18 on level 3 business courses, particularly the low pass rates in GCE A level Law and Business Studies

- on AS and A level courses improve the progress of learners in relation to their qualifications on entry
- ensure that the setting of minimum target grades within the new computerised individual learning plans is done in a timely manner
- increase the availability and use of interactive whiteboards in the business and administration sections.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop business courses in the college.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your LLSC and will be published on the Ofsted website in due course. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Bernard McDonald  
Adult Learning Inspectorate