

RE-INSPECTION MONITORING OF TELFORD COLLEGE OF ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY

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Outcome of Re-Inspection Monitoring

The provision of work-based learning in engineering, business administration, management and professional and ICT is now **satisfactory**.

Background

Telford College of Arts and Technology was inspected in January 2002. Inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) carried out the inspection under Section 62 of the Learning and Skills Act. The quality of provision was found to be at least satisfactory in all areas inspected, except for work-based learning (WBL) in engineering, business administration, management and professional and ICT. These three areas were found to be unsatisfactory.

Ofsted and the ALI have particular duties in relation to colleges where their inspection report indicates that individual curriculum and/or work-based learning (WBL) areas are unsatisfactory or very weak or that leadership and management are unsatisfactory or very weak. Where a college has been judged to have less than satisfactory provision in any curriculum or WBL area, or less than satisfactory leadership and management, Ofsted or the ALI will visit the college to carry out monitoring inspections of the unsatisfactory areas.

As a result of the monitoring inspections, inspectors may judge that the curriculum or WBL areas, or leadership and management are satisfactory and that no further visits are required. If, after approximately 24 months, the college has not made sufficient progress to justify a judgement that the curriculum or WBL area or leadership and management are satisfactory, the original grade for the area that continues to be unsatisfactory will remain on the college's record until the next full inspection within the cycle. Ofsted will inform the local LSC that provision remains unsatisfactory and the reasons why.

Date of the Re-Inspection Monitoring Visits

In accordance with the above procedures, re-inspection monitoring visits of WBL in engineering, business administration, management and professional and ICT took place on 17 and 18 September 2002, 15 and 16 January 2003 and 10 and 11 November 2003.

Engineering (WBL)

In the January 2002 inspection, the quality of the WBL provision in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified for the whole curriculum

area in the inspection report:

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates for courses in college
- good teaching and training
- good resources
- extensive range of courses relevant to local needs
- well-planned and thorough assessments

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates for courses on employers' premises
- no qualified teachers of key skills for modern apprentices
- ineffective initial assessment arrangements

Following the re-inspection monitoring, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses and that overall provision in this area is now **satisfactory**.

Progress has been made in improving retention and achievement. On what is usually a four year programme, of the 12 advanced modern apprentices (AMA's) who started in 1999 and 2000, there are currently 2 framework completions and a further 3 learners are close to full framework completion. The remainder, who expect to finish in the summer of 2004, have completed sufficient of their NVQ and key skills to be judged to be making progress which is at least satisfactory. One learner has left, so the current retention rate is 83%. Of the 2001 cohort, the current retention rate is 88%. Key skills are now being taught very effectively to learners on an individual basis, within the work place, by the key skills assessor. Priority is being given to those learners who are due to complete their apprenticeship frameworks in 2004. However, some learners who started in 2002 have yet to begin their key skills programme. The college is seeking to address this issue by starting key skills much earlier in the programme. All engineering modern apprentices are now assessed for literacy and numeracy needs at the start of their course. None has needed additional support. Where assessment indicates a weakness, it is noted on the individual learning plan that the weakness

should be monitored. Since the first re-inspection monitoring visit, a system has been introduced to enable learners' progress to be monitored more effectively. A colour-coded spreadsheet shows the progress towards completion for each learner. Learners and employers are aware of the progress being made towards the completion of the NVQ. The management structure for work-based learning is now well established. There are clear line management arrangements and monthly meetings of the ITEC team are held. Engineering course team meetings review retention and achievement for work-based learning. The case load officer attends and is effective in addressing problems and coordinating the college and work-based provision. Employers value the college's responsiveness and the frequency of workplace visits and reviews.

Business administration, management and professional (WBL)

In the January 2002 inspection, the quality of the WBL provision in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified for the whole curriculum area in the inspection report:

Strengths

- good pass rates
- well-planned lessons
- good feedback to students
- wide and appropriate range of courses
- good accommodation and resources for learning in the workplace

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory modern apprenticeship provision
- poor NVQ assessment and verification process

Following the re-inspection monitoring visits, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses and that overall provision in this area is now **satisfactory**.

There has been some improvement in the retention and achievements of learners. Data provided by the college show that the general retention trend is improving. In 2002, the retention rate was 65% on foundation modern apprentice (FMA) programmes and 64% on AMA programmes. Framework

achievements have improved for the AMA programme over the past 3 years but they were low, at 33%, in 2002. The FMA programme showed a substantial improvement in 2001 to 53% but had fallen to 46% by the end of 2002. There are good progression routes from FMA to AMA where the job role supports this and, in the accountancy area, 9 learners have now progressed to technician level 4, beyond the requirement of the AMA framework. For individual learners, whilst the overall percentage of evidence collected to meet the performance criteria within the NVQ is often high, the rate of NVQ unit achievement remains slow. Good progress has been made in addressing the staffing issues relating to key skills identified at the last inspection. Pass rates in key skills tests at level 3, at 75%, were high in 2003. At levels 1 and 2 the pass rates were 56% and 85% respectively. In business administration, new strategies are now having an impact. All staff have undergone key skills training and there is integration of key skills with the NVQ's from an early stage. Significant progress has been made in addressing the lack of planned training identified at the full inspection. Employers now have a much greater involvement in the training process. Employers are familiar with the requirements of the framework and provide appropriate opportunities for training. For key skills, assessors are providing one-to-one training and guidance. Assessors are arranging visits at appropriate times so that employers can be present during the review process. Individual learning plans (ILP's) are now well used. The forms are kept up to date and stored within well organised learner files. Learners' progress is now monitored more effectively than at the time of the full inspection. A colour-coded spreadsheet shows the progress towards completion for each learner. The learners who are compiling a paper free portfolio of evidence are motivated by the immediate display of the percentage of the NVQ completed at each data input session. All new learners undertake an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills. A good range of evidence is used to assess learning. Portfolios of evidence for learners are now mainly paper free and contain video and audio evidence as well as witness testimonies and product evidence. Evidence produced is of a high quality. There are frequent and supportive visits to the workplace by assessors. Assessors visit learners every fortnight and additional support is available to learners by telephone or email contact. There is also a review visit every 8 weeks. Any potential difficulties experienced by learners are quickly identified. The management structure for WBL is now well established. The appointment of caseload officers is beginning to have an impact. There are monthly meetings of the WBL team and the internal verifiers meet to standardise the processes. Internal verification processes are well structured and rigorous and issues identified are addressed. Further work is needed to ensure that the targets for improving the rates of retention and achievement are realistic.

ICT (WBL)

In the January 2002 inspection, the quality of the WBL provision in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses for the whole curriculum area were identified in the inspection report:

Strengths

- high pass rates on full-time courses
- good teaching
- good training on employers' premises
- high level of support for students

Weaknesses

- poor standards of achievement on modern apprenticeship programmes
- some unsatisfactory teaching rooms

Following the re-inspection monitoring visits, inspectors judged that progress has been made in addressing the above weaknesses and that overall provision in this area is now **satisfactory**.

The overall number of AMA's and FMA's is low, at 4 and 13 respectively. The college has provided data that show there have been some framework completions, but the numbers are low. Most learners are making satisfactory progress towards completing the framework. Good progress has been made in addressing the staffing issues relating to key skills identified at the full inspection. Staff have undertaken appropriate training and there is integration of key skills with the NVQ's. Learners identified as requiring some help with their key skills are provided with appropriate support. All new learners undertake an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills and a diagnostic assessment for key skills. The results of these assessments are given to learners and employers. The number of work-based learners with identified additional learning needs is low. Individual learning plans are kept up to date and stored within well-organised files. There is good assessment practice. A wide range of assessment practices is used. Some learners have a 'paperless portfolio' where all the evidence collected is stored on a CD-ROM. Video film is used to record the learner whilst carrying out processes at work. Taped discussions are used for checking underpinning knowledge. A system is in place to enable learners' progress to be monitored. A colour-coded spreadsheet shows the percentage progress towards completion of the NVQ and achievement of individual key skills. It does not, however, identify completion of individual units and this may mask the true progress picture. Learners are well supported in the workplace by college staff and employers. Assessors visit fortnightly and provide support and guidance on evidence gathering, cross-referencing of evidence to the standards, and setting short-term action plans. Progress reviews occur every eight weeks. Additional courses are identified and arrangements made for the learner to enroll. Examples include "working safely" and time management and assertiveness. Employers are responsive to their learners' needs and provide time during the working day for learners to work on their portfolios. The management structure for work-based learning is now well established and there are clear line management arrangements. There are monthly meetings of the ITEC team. Work has been done to ensure that the targets for improving the rates of retention and achievement are more realistic.

Part A

Inspectors also considered actions taken by the college to address an area for improvement in Part A of the January 2002 report. The college has made good progress in addressing the ineffective management of work-based learning, and reasonable progress in relation to the quality assurance arrangements for modern apprentice programmes.

The college's quality assurance process has been revised since the last inspection. Following consultation with curriculum team leaders, the course review has been replaced by an annual programme review. This is designed to provide a clearer focus on the seven key questions in the CIF. Work-based learning is now a part of the annual programme review process whereas, previously, it had not been included in the course review system. The evidence base for the annual programme reviews for work-based learning is not as well developed as for the main curriculum areas. For example, the data on retention and achievement are not expressed in a clear and consistent format and it is difficult to evaluate performance. Although the lesson observation scheme has been extended to cover work-based learning, because of the way the judgements are recorded,

there are only 6 lesson observations which are exclusively concerned with this type of learning. The college has extended its employer and student evaluation systems to include work-based learning. This has proved helpful as a means of gathering employer' views, but it is not effective as a means of gathering learners' views. The questionnaire in use is not relevant for work-based learners. The response rate was low. The college intends to introduce a new questionnaire which will be of greater relevance to work-based learners. It is too soon to judge the effectiveness of the changes to the quality assurance system.

There will be no further monitoring visits to the college because there are no remaining unsatisfactory areas.

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