

Re-inspection of Leeds College of Building

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Outcome of Re-Inspection

The overall provision in work-based learning in Construction (service craft studies - plumbing) is now **satisfactory**.

Background

Leeds College of Building was inspected in February 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 satisfactory in all areas inspected, except in work-based learning in plumbing, which was 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 work-based learning in plumbing took place on 29 and 30 October 2002, 17 and 18 February 2003 and 22 to 24 September

2003.

Construction (service craft studies - plumbing)

In the February 2002 inspection, the quality of overall provision in this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The following strengths and weaknesses were identified in the inspection report:

Strengths

- good retention rates on all courses
- good pass rates in heating and ventilating at all levels
- good opportunities for work-based learning
- good quality learning materials
- additional qualifications gained by most students

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates in plumbing at all levels
- weak internal verification in plumbing
- unsatisfactory initial assessment strategy
- ineffective reviews for work-based students

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

Poor Pass rates in Plumbing at all levels

Effective measures have been put in place to ensure students receive appropriate guidance and commence an appropriate framework. There is more systematic monitoring of student progress and more effective communication between tutors and training advisors. Key skills tutorials are integrated within the off-the-job training for the NVQ. The result of these actions is an increase in achievement from 25% in 2000-01 to 75% in 2001-02 for Foundation Modern Apprenticeship's and an increase from 17% in 2000-01 to 50% in 2001-02 for Advanced Modern Apprenticeship's. Early indications indicate maintained or increased achievement rates for the 2002-03 cohort. However, there is consistently slow achievement based around the college timetable. Programmes are scheduled to run for at least 24 months and frequently 28 months. This, together with inflexibility of course delivery prevents many students completing in a timely manner or at a faster pace. All assessment currently takes place in college and little use is made of some of the excellent work the learners undertake in their workplaces.

Weak Internal Verification in Plumbing

There has been a recent appointment of a lead internal verifier into the building services division. This appointment is to establish college wide systems and procedures. There are more systematic and rigorous practices in place, new updated paperwork, regular standardisation meetings and a greater commitment by all staff to the processes. Assessments are regularly reviewed, there is a comprehensive sampling plan and qualitative feedback is given to assessors.

Unsatisfactory initial assessment practices

The college now has effective initial assessment strategies. It uses a basic skills test and an occupational numeracy test to determine the level of support students' need to improve their literacy and numeracy and to assess their course entry level. These results are effectively communicated to all appropriate teaching staff, at this early stage of the year this was achieved by placing information in the temporary registers. However, many students learning plans did not contain this information, including those from 2002, and separate plans are held in different parts of the college leading to unnecessary duplication of records and paperwork. The numbers of support staff has increased and they now provide additional support in classrooms, in vocational workshops and in specially arranged support workshops. Records suggest that those requiring support do receive it. Students interviewed expressed high levels of satisfaction for the support they receive.

Ineffective reviews of work-based students

The college has improved the reviews of work-based students' progress. There is more comprehensive review documentation and increased communication between the tutors, training advisors and employers. However, the reviews could be further improved to increase their effectiveness. Learners follow a prescribed teaching programme of practical and job knowledge linked to their NVQ programme. This does not relate effectively to the competencies students gain on-site or meet their individual ability or specific needs. The reviews do not explore whether learners able to gain additional competencies at work can have these accredited and progress through their

programme more speedily. Nor do they challenge the learners with specific short-term targets aimed at progressing them in a logical manner through the requirements of their framework.

Additionally inspectors noted a further strength in plumbing WBL due, in part, to the increased activities resulting from the re-inspection process.

Increased employer engagement in the training process

Employers are more actively involved in the training process they are now regularly and formally involved in the learner reviews and have detailed discussions with the training advisors about learning opportunities. There is a new updated employer handbook giving details of the training process and their role in it. One employer interviewed complimented college training advisors on their openness and prompt response to queries. Another has increased the range and nature of the work he undertakes. This is as a direct response to having a greater knowledge of the assessment requirements of the NVQ and his desire to provide appropriate work and assessment opportunities for his trainee.

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