

RE-INSPECTION OF BURY COLLEGE

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Outcome of Re-Inspection

The overall provision in work-based learning in Business is now **good**.

Background

Bury College was inspected in May 2003. 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 or better in all areas inspected, except in work-based learning in business which was found to be less than satisfactory.

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 where leadership and management are unsatisfactory or very weak. Where a college has been judged to have less than satisfactory leadership and management, or less than satisfactory provision in solely WBL, inspectors from Ofsted or the ALI will visit the college to carry out monitoring inspections of the less than satisfactory areas. As a result of the re-inspection monitoring visits, inspectors may judge that previously less than satisfactory areas of provision, or leadership and management, are now satisfactory and that no further visits are required. Where leadership and management are satisfactory, but there is curriculum provision that is less than satisfactory, there will be no monitoring visits. All less than satisfactory provision will be re-inspected, normally during one week, within two years of the original inspection.

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 business took place on 11 and 12 February 2004, 14 and 15 September 2004 and 18 and 19 January 2005.

Business

In the May 2003 inspection, the quality of work-based learning 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

- much good and very good teaching
- high pass rates for many courses
- high retention rates for many courses
- effective management of college-based courses
- good support and monitoring of students' progress
- good progression within college and to HE
- good personal and vocational skills demonstrated by modern apprentices.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates for some courses
- poor standard of students' written work on AVCE business
- insufficient employer involvement to broaden student experience
- low retention and pass rates for work-based learning
- slow progress on modern apprenticeships.

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

At the previous inspection, framework achievement was low at 22%. There have been significant changes to the management of work-based learning, including the appointment of staff to strengthen support activity for students. In some instances programmes have been restructured to enable earlier student success. Effective measures have been put in place to ensure that there is systematic monitoring of student progress, that students at risk of leaving a programme are identified, and that there is more effective communication between tutors and co-ordinators. Key skills are integrated within the off-the-job training and are commenced earlier in the programme. Framework achievement has shown a year-on-year improvement with an overall framework achievement of 57% in 2002/03. Early indications are that achievement rates for the 2003/4 cohort will be maintained or improved further. Retention has also shown a year-on-year improvement from 33% at the previous inspection, with 71% of the 2003/04 cohort and 98% of the 2004/05 cohort still in learning. Of the students currently in learning all are making at least satisfactory progress.

At the previous inspection some employers lacked detailed knowledge of off-the-job training and were unable to effectively contribute to the co-ordination of training. Employers are now more actively involved in the training process. They are regularly and formally involved in the student reviews and have detailed discussions with students and staff about learning opportunities. All new employers receive a pack detailing the training programme. More recently, workplace mentor handbooks have been developed giving details of the training process and mentors' role within it. The early indications are that the mentors receiving them have found them useful. Employers are required to sign a witness statement for each NVQ unit achieved and to support the completion of the employer rights and responsibilities (ERR) booklet. In response to employer demand the college has introduced a January intake to the AAT programme. All day release students and their employers are provided with a scheme of work showing the sequencing of units and, in the case of business administration, the arrangements for workplace observations.

At the previous inspection many apprentices spent between 5 and 12 months in training before achieving their first NVQ unit. A new student progress tracking system has been implemented which enables any potential slow progress to be quickly identified. Monthly meetings are held to discuss the progress of all students and determine corrective action if necessary. Students on administration programmes maintain a visual tracking chart which is displayed on the walls of the administration workshop. At the start of each session each student group completes an action plan setting small, manageable targets for that session. Progress reviews are copied to all training staff who are then able to focus on the targets set and pick up any targets in danger of not being met. Of the students currently in learning all are making at least satisfactory progress.

At the previous inspection target-setting was weak in reviews. Targets were insufficiently specific and many lacked timescales. The introduction of new review procedures and documentation has led to improved communication between teams. Review documentation originates with tutors who provide an update on student progress and clearly identify areas for development, enabling co-ordinators to be fully prepared to undertake an effective progress review. The new procedures and documentation have also led to more employers being actively involved in the review process. Specific and measurable targets are set during the review and agreed by the student, co-ordinator and employer, and used by all training staff. The frequency of reviews is varied according to the needs of the individual student.

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

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