



Further Education Teacher Training

University of Sussex

Partnership Office
(Validated Provision)
Sussex House
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Inspection report
2005/06

Managing Inspector:
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The inspection

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. It was conducted 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 the partner college was evaluated. Inspectors focused on the quality of training and management and quality assurance procedures during the first phase, which took place in January 2006. During the second phase, inspectors concentrated upon evaluating the achievements of FE trainees through observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress during the course. Phase two of the inspection was completed in July 2006.

Background

3. The university of Sussex works in partnership with one college which provides initial teacher training (ITT) courses for further education (FE) teachers and other trainers from the post-compulsory sector. The validated course leads to the university's certificate of education, an endorsed qualification which satisfies the Secretary of State's requirements for FE teachers. The training route is part-time and in-service. Some 48 trainees are enrolled at the partner college which has responsibility for providing training and for assessing trainees. The certificate course is modular and governed by the university's credit accumulation (CAT) scheme. There is, at present, no post-graduate qualification.

4. Slightly over half the trainees on the course are based in the partner college, and the remainder come from a range of public (and some private) sector employment such as the health service, the police, social care organisations, airports and other state-funded and independent educational establishments.

Effectiveness of provision

5. The overall quality of provision is good (grade 2). Trainees are well-qualified in their subjects, reflective about their teaching and make good progress. They generally have high expectations of their students, whom they treat with appropriate respect and consideration. Trainees are confident about assessing their students and capably manage examination requirements. The course is very-well designed, led and managed; the quality of the central training sessions is outstanding. However, subject mentor support is underdeveloped and depends too much on the goodwill of experienced staff. The partnership is very effective, with a rigorous process

of revalidation, and there are comprehensive procedures for developing and assuring the quality of training.

Key strengths

Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- high quality trainees, well qualified in their subjects, who make good progress
- a very well-structured course with all its elements well integrated
- strong emphasis on the self-evaluation of trainees' practice
- training which is very effectively led and managed at course level
- outstanding central training, providing trainees consistently with models of good practice
- the good account taken of trainees' prior experience and learning
- strong and effective partnership arrangements
- rigorous process of revalidation and quality assurance

Areas for attention

The partnership should address:

- underdeveloped systems for providing subject mentor support
- underdeveloped approaches to widening the participation of under-represented groups in FE teacher training
- insufficient rigor in the monitoring of trainees' workplace support

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

Achievement of trainees

6. Trainees are committed to their students, have a good knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses. They work hard to raise standards of achievement by matching work and materials to the needs of their classes. They play a full part in the departments in which they teach, often developing extended courses and schemes of work. Some are engaged with external projects and these add value to their teaching. For example, one trainee is involved in a local citizenship project and is preparing materials for the adult education service. Trainees are aware of students' diverse backgrounds and value the knowledge and experience they bring to lessons. Those teaching adult evening classes are good at recognising that students have been at work; one trainee began by giving students the opportunity to reflect on their day in the context of the lesson. Generally, trainees have high expectations and set challenging targets for students.

7. Trainees reflect carefully on their teaching and welcome criticism which helps them to improve. By the second year of the course trainees make significant progress in self-evaluation, and are much more critical of their own teaching. At this stage, they are able to identify clearly where practice can be improved and link this specifically to their students' learning outcomes. Trainees produce thoughtful and full assignments in which they explore key educational issues in the context of their specialist area. For example, one trainee working in a children's hospice produced an annotated scheme of work for her role in training nursing and care staff. They are professional in all aspects of their teaching and their relationships with students and with other teachers are good.

8. Trainees are experienced in their fields and have very good knowledge of their subjects. They plan their lessons well, and in great detail, with clear teaching objectives and learning targets. Some trainees take good account of previous assessments and evaluations in their planning, but this good practice is not universal. Too many trainees pay insufficient attention to the literacy needs of their students and do not make effective use of opportunities for extended argument, both written and spoken.

9. In lessons, most trainees are confident teachers who manage their groups very well. Appropriate attention is paid to health and safety, absences are checked and registers completed. They make good use of a variety of well-prepared resources and employ a range of different activities to stimulate and sustain interest. They are good at explaining issues and adopt a lively and interesting approach to teaching their subjects. Where appropriate, they encourage independent learning. While some use information and learning technology (ILT) very well, for others the use of ILT is underdeveloped. This deficit is exacerbated when trainees do not have access to suitable equipment. A few trainees do not have sufficiently well-developed strategies for addressing the needs of lower-attaining students in their groups.

10. Trainees are generally confident about assessing their students and capably manage examination requirements and verification systems. They mark students' work assiduously. Oral feedback to students is well-focused and helpful. In lessons they know how to use questions to assess a group's general understanding, although they do not always target them sufficiently to probe weaknesses in individual students. Informally, and through tutorials, trainees give students strong guidance and support and they know what services are available to provide additional support when needed.

11. The best trainees use a number of challenging activities to monitor and assess students' progress. For example, in one lesson, a group of mature students working in early years' settings were required to reflect on what they had learned about behaviour management and explain how they would explain it to parents and staff. Some trainees use individual learning plans very effectively to help students assess their own strengths and weaknesses and plan their own learning.

Quality of training

12. The certificate course is well established with clearly structured progression over three stages. It has been developed carefully over a considerable period of time and all sessions are fully documented and supported by a range of stimulating materials. There are two routes: trainees may enrol for the two years of the certificate course or complete the City & Guilds teaching certificate (7407 stages 1 and 2) as a substitute for the first year of the course. The content and layout of the modules encourages trainees progressively to develop their teaching skills; suitable attention is paid to the minimum core of language, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Trainees who are employed by the provider college are given three hours remission from teaching each week to undertake the training.

13. The quality of central training is outstanding. Sessions are led by a very experienced teacher-trainer and a small team of specialist colleagues. Teacher trainers are experienced and knowledgeable and their planning and delivery are excellent. They are adept at modelling good practice for their trainees and at drawing on trainees' own experience to drive points home. All trainees benefit from the wide range of employment represented in groups and teacher trainers draw skilfully upon the diverse expertise of the trainees, whom they know very well. In the training sessions observed trainees made tangible progress, clearly deepening their understanding of language and learning. Teacher trainers delivering single sessions demonstrate a very good understanding of course requirements, show sensitivity to the diversity of vocational areas represented and plan carefully to ensure that trainees work in a range of different groupings and contexts in the course of a session.

14. Assignments are well-designed to consolidate learning at different stages of the course. They are used very well by trainees to develop their

knowledge and understanding of key areas of teaching theory and practice. Trainees are taught how to use citations, with clear guidance in their handbooks, and additional targeted help on marker feedback sheets.

15. Although assignments allow trainees to explore effectively aspects of FE in the context of their own subjects, too little formal attention is paid to the systematic development of subject-specific teaching approaches. Trainees are visited and observed teaching by one of a number of assigned observers but, because observers do not necessarily share a trainee's specialism, they are also observed at least once in each stage, by a subject specialist, usually a senior member of their teaching department. However, the roles and responsibilities of observers are not clear to all trainees and some receive more support from subject specialists than others. The quality and consistency of the feedback trainees receive from observers is variable. There is no requirement to set or review targets for improvement and the extent to which trainees' individual needs are addressed in their departments varies considerably.

16. Trainees' access to appropriate resources is good. They are provided with up-to-date reading lists. Key texts are easily accessible in the college's learning resource centre. Articles, linked to training sessions, are provided and most trainees use the internet widely for research. The training base in the college is well equipped but trainees employed outside the provider college do not have access to the full range of teaching resources, particularly ICT resources.

17. There is a strong emphasis on trainees' self-evaluation of their teaching practice. All trainees complete a reflective log which is assessed regularly. They often try out strategies they have experienced in their central training sessions and evaluate the outcomes in these logs. Trainees find the requirement to evaluate 60 hours' teaching quite challenging. Overall, they place insufficient emphasis on the analysis of learning outcomes, particularly in the first year of their training.

18. Assessment procedures are good and effectively applied by the course leader. Assignments are produced in accordance with clear regulations for style and to strict deadlines. Trainees receive full and useful feedback on their assignments from the course leader. Feedback highlights strengths and general areas for development. Marking of trainees' coursework is rigorous but errors in punctuation and grammar are not always corrected.

Management and quality assurance of provision

19. The quality of the initial advice and guidance given to potential trainees is good. Clear information about training courses is available in the prospectus, on the college web site and in information sheets. Every month

there is a week's induction for new staff during which the routes to required qualifications are clearly explained.

20. Prospective trainees must satisfy the requirements of 60 teaching hours a year. They must also complete an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills. The small numbers who are identified as having skills development needs receive appropriate additional support from the college. All prospective trainees are interviewed by the course leader who helps them to identify the most appropriate route to their qualification. Trainees find this process helpful and supportive. Arrangements for the accreditation of prior learning are very effective.

21. College roles and responsibilities are made clear in the college staff handbook which is given to trainees employed by the college. Trainees who are employed by other organisations receive a concise but comprehensive student handbook. Handbooks and associated course documentation are well-designed and fit for purpose.

22. There is a commitment to equality of opportunity and the promotion of good race relations across the partnership. The university checks on the college's equality and diversity policies and procedures as part of the institutional re-recognition process and detailed data on recruitment and success are available. In the college there has been no recorded discussion or judgement about the small number of minority ethnic trainees on the course. The college acknowledges in its self assessment report that progress needs to be made on the use of equality and diversity impact measures

23. The provision is led very ably indeed by the course leader who has been responsible for teacher training courses and university links for many years. The course is very well planned and managed and operational arrangements are very effective. Recent re-organisation at the college has created a new management structure for teacher training which is newly established but effective.

24. Attempts are being made to develop a more coherent system of mentoring. Five designated observers, all advanced professional practitioners or experienced teachers, have eight or nine hours a year on their timetables to observe and report on internal trainees' teaching. The observers are given brief training by the course leader; some are also trained as part of the whole-college lesson observation programme. The course leader holds formal meetings of the teacher training team each term. Internal trainees have allocated subject support within departments, but this is not monitored and relies on the goodwill of subject leaders. The college does not gather information systematically about the support offered to trainees who are not their own employees.

25. The partnership functions very effectively. The university validates the qualification, recognises the college as a legitimate provider, moderates the

assessment of trainees and monitors the overall quality of the provision. Partnership arrangements are clearly laid out in the partner handbook and comprehensive contracts are drawn up. Roles and responsibilities are well-defined.

26. The certificate course was revalidated for 2005/06. The revalidation process, covering admissions, resources, assessment, student support and quality assurance, is very rigorous. This process helps to establish a strong and coherent framework for the course. The university partnership office administers quality assurance through a number of committees and boards. There is a comprehensive process of course evaluation, action planning and review.

27. Moderation is thorough and effective. A sample of assignments is second-marked to ensure consistency and a further sample is scrutinised by an external examiner in accordance with the university's regulations. The external examiner, recommended by the college, is appointed after scrutiny by the university.

28. The partner college has a comprehensive quality assurance system based on a system of self assessment and action plans at all levels. The quality of training is assured through the college's internal system of lesson observation and evaluation includes the responses from the trainees about their experiences. Most of the issues raised early in the inspection are addressed in plans for 2006/07.

Appendix list of colleges

The following colleges were members of the HEI Partnership at the time of the inspection;

- Central Sussex College