



Further Education Teacher Training  
Buckingham Chilterns University College

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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 2004.
2. It was conducted in two phases by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), an inspector from the Adult Learning Inspectorate and three specialist additional inspectors. Inspectors focussed on the quality of training and management and quality assurance procedures during the first phase, which took place in November 2005. During the second phase, inspectors concentrated upon evaluating the achievements of trainee teachers through observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress during the course. Phase two of the inspection was completed in June 2006

## Background

3. The Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College (BCUC) has established a partnership with four local colleges for the delivery of in-service initial teacher training for teachers in further education. All colleges in the partnership offer the City and Guilds 7407 Level 4 course. Successful completion of the City and Guilds course provides automatic entry onto the second year of the certificate in education (Cert. Ed)/ post-graduate certificate in education (PGCE) course. The Cert. Ed / PGCE courses offered at the colleges are one year in-service courses. They are designed to develop further the knowledge and skills that trainees have acquired on the City and Guilds 7407 course as well as to ensure that trainees meet all the relevant Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) teaching standards.
4. College staff teach all the modules on the Cert Ed and PGCE courses, with the exception of the action research module, which is taught by the university course leader and a team of academic staff. There are 93 trainees on courses in the partnership during the current year.

## Effectiveness of provision

5. The overall quality of the provision is adequate (grade 3). Most trainees achieve good standards overall in their classroom teaching, but their assessment practice is only satisfactory. They have a strong commitment to the care of their students, establish a good rapport with them and provide helpful personal support and guidance. By the end of their course, trainees have often improved the variety and range of teaching strategies they deploy considerably, drawing on what they have learnt during the training.
6. Teacher trainers are well-qualified, with appropriate experience and the quality of the taught aspects of the programme are good. The assessment of trainees' assignments is generally helpful, but not always rigorous. There

are some examples of mentors providing good guidance and support, but this is not a common feature. The assessment of practical teaching is variable in quality and only adequate overall.

7. Training courses are managed well at individual college level. The university has made considerable progress during the year in involving colleges in course development and encouraging collaboration. The procedures for the internal and external moderation of assignments are clear and appropriate. Arrangements for the moderation of practical teaching are less secure.

## Key strengths

Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- good progress by most trainees in developing their classroom practice
- strong commitment of trainees to the care and success of their students
- good personal support provided for trainees by teacher trainers in colleges
- good management of training programmes in colleges

## Areas for attention

The partnership should address:

- ineffective use of assessment by trainees' to monitor students' progress
- variable quality of guidance and support provided by specialist subject mentors
- insufficient monitoring and assessment of trainees' practical teaching
- lack of rigour in the assessment of trainees' written work
- insufficient monitoring of the quality of trainees' reflective journals

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

## Achievement of trainees

8. Trainees are strongly committed to the success of their students and they have high expectations of them. They are conscientious in their planning of lessons and usually evaluate their teaching carefully and thoughtfully in order to improve it. Many also make a broader contribution through work on course development or wider aspects of college provision. The great majority of trainees approach their training with the same purposeful diligence that they demonstrate in their teaching, but a small minority are less willing to take advantage of the valuable opportunities for professional development that the course offers.

9. Trainees have a very sound knowledge of the courses that they teach and sometimes this is excellent. They are aware of their students' individual learning needs, but are not always sure about the best way to address them. Trainees are generally least confident in identifying opportunities to develop their students' literacy and numeracy skills within the subject content of their lessons.

10. Trainees devise clear teaching and learning objectives for their students and appropriate activities and tasks to achieve these objectives. They normally use an appropriate range of teaching methods in lessons and involve students in a variety of activities. They frequently draw on work they have done on learning style preferences in devising these activities. A minority are unadventurous and over-reliant upon a limited range of strategies.

11. Often, trainees are successful in adapting and using teaching methods that trainers have used during training sessions. A feature of many trainees' teaching is the extent to which they have broadened the range of strategies that they draw on by the end of the course. Where it is available, most trainees use information learning technology (ILT) appropriately to support their students' learning, especially for those with learning difficulties and / or disabilities, but the effective use of these resources remains an area for development for some trainees.

12. Lessons are generally well organised and managed, so that the pace of learning is maintained, even where some lessons involve several changes of activity. Explanations to students are usually clear and a number of trainees use questioning effectively to monitor understanding, explore issues and encourage creative thinking. Relationships with students are nearly always good and sometimes excellent.

13. Trainees' skills in assessing their students' work are often less well-developed than other aspects of their teaching. Most use questions appropriately to assess learning in lessons and are conscientious in using assessment to gauge student progress. Feedback on marked work is often personally encouraging. The formal assessment of students' work against awarding body criteria is generally good. Conversely, weaknesses are

apparent in the use of diagnostic assessment to agree individual targets with students and in monitoring and supporting their progress more generally. Individual learning plans are not universally used well by trainees.

14. The personal support that trainees provide for their students is nearly always good and sometimes excellent, reflecting their strong commitment to their success.

## Quality of training

15. The training programme builds effectively on trainees' prior knowledge and experience from the City and Guilds 7407 qualification. Courses are well structured to develop general pedagogical and professional expertise. Good opportunities are provided for trainees to share their experiences and learn from each other. The role of mentors in improving trainees' specialist teaching expertise is not fully established. The overall development of trainees' specialist skills is not planned systematically across the partnership.

16. Trainers are well-qualified, experienced and very capable teachers. They make effective use of a broad range of teaching strategies. They organise and manage often complex teaching sessions with a wide range of activities very well, so that the pace of learning and interest of trainees is sustained. Competent use of ILT supports teaching and learning. Explanations are authoritative and questioning is used skilfully to test understanding and explore issues. In many respects trainers provide models of good practice for trainees to emulate. They provide helpful personal support and guidance that is much appreciated by trainees.

17. The reflective journals that trainees are required to keep aim to provide valuable evidence about their progress and issues that concern them. Some trainers monitor these closely, but others do not and there are significant inconsistencies in the quality and frequency of entries. Tutorials similarly provide good opportunities to review progress and identify directions for future progress. They are not compulsory, however, and tend only to be used by trainees in need of extra support and guidance. Individual lesson observations are usually constructive and provide helpful advice about how trainees can improve their teaching, but they do not combine with tutorials, reflective journals and assessment of assignments to create a comprehensive and coherent strategy for individual development.

18. Trainees based in colleges are usually assigned a mentor. In one college mentors have all attended training and funding is provided for them to carry out their role, as part of the college's major focus on improving teaching and learning. This represents a good beginning and some mentors are already providing constructive and helpful guidance, including through lesson observations. The development of mentor handbooks is helping to clarify the training and assessment roles of mentors. Nevertheless, the quality of specialist subject support for trainees from mentors has been very variable.

19. Trainers at both colleges teach on the City and Guilds and Cert. Ed. / PGCE courses. They know the great majority of their trainees well and have a good informal understanding of their training needs at the start of their programme. Various means are used to track the progress of trainees and address their developing needs. These are generally successful but less so with regard to practical teaching. Trainees do not receive sufficient guidance about how to embed the development of literacy and numeracy skills in their lessons, and this is a general weakness in their planning.

20. The course assignments generally make a helpful contribution to consolidating and developing trainees' knowledge, understanding and reflective skills. Assignments are assessed conscientiously by trainers, but the quality of feedback is variable. The least successful examples lack diagnosis, rigour and fail to set clear improvement targets for trainees. Assessors do not always correct grammatical errors. Unlike the taught elements of the course, marking does not present a model of good practice for trainees.

21. The assessment of trainees' competence in practical teaching is variable in quality. Trainers frequently provide assessments with helpful and constructive comments, rarely comment on subject specialist expertise. The mentor role in providing the support of a specialist practitioner is now developing, but systems to ensure collaboration between mentors and trainers are not fully established. Lesson observations are also not always spread across the year in a way that allows regular monitoring of the trainee's teaching.

## Management and quality assurance of provision

22. The university has not coordinated its equal opportunities policies with those of their partner colleges and is only now collecting statistics about recruitment of minority ethnic and other under-represented groups. Funds have been allocated to address both these issues next year. A formal review of the student profile, in relation to both admissions and achievement, is now included within the annual review and evaluation of provision.

23. The training programmes in the two colleges are managed well by small dedicated teams who devote a great deal of time and energy to them. Trainers are very clear about their roles and responsibilities and carry them out very effectively. Mentors have a more variable understanding of their roles and responsibilities, but where they have had training, they are clear and generally enthusiastic about their function.

24. The accommodation and ILT resources in colleges to support teaching are at least satisfactory. Library resources are more variable and not all the books on recommended reading lists are available. Trainees have access to the on-line resources of the university library, but this took some time to arrange this year and trainees have been slow to advantage. This has been recognised and arrangements are well advanced to ensure that trainees have

expeditious access next year and are encouraged to use the facility to its full potential.

25. During the academic year 2004/05, staffing difficulties disrupted the smooth running of the partnership. The recently appointed course leader at the university, in cooperation with partner colleges, has developed a number of initiatives that are moving the relationship towards a full and meaningful partnership. A key feature has been the work of the development group, made up of the BCUC course leader and college representatives. This is a forum for discussing issues and sharing ideas, giving college staff some ownership of course development. The course leader has visited colleges regularly and sought the views of trainees as well as staff. Some collaborative working across colleges has begun, with planned visits by trainers and some trainees. All of this augurs well for the future, but it is at an early stage of development.

26. Internal and external moderation procedures of trainees' assignments are thorough and appropriate. They include cross-college moderation of assignments and trainers find being part of this process valuable in supporting their own development.

27. The procedures for dealing with unsatisfactory teaching are also clear and very appropriate. The course leader is involved immediately there is an unsatisfactory observation and carries out a further observation. An action plan is then agreed with trainee and monitored closely and combined with detailed support and guidance. More generally, the colleges' own monitoring processes provide sound internal moderation of teaching, but there are no procedures for the systematic moderation of the consistency of judgements on trainees' teaching across the partnership. In addition, only this year has the external examiner began to formally provide external moderation.

28. At the beginning of the year the procedures to ensure that all trainees achieved level 2 in literacy and numeracy skills by the end of the course were not clear, but these are now secure. It is now a requirement for entry onto the course and will become a pre-requisite for the new two year course that is being introduced.



## Appendix list of colleges

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

- Amersham & Wycombe College
- Aylesbury College
- East Berkshire College
- Uxbridge College