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Mr J Mutton  
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Dear Mr Mutton

Ofsted Subject and Survey Inspection Programme 2006-07

Sector Subject Area 15: Business, Administration and Law

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 6 and 7 February 2007. I am particularly grateful to your staff for all their hard work in preparing the programme and background documentation and giving up a great deal of their time during the visit. Please pass on my thanks to them and to learners who gave up their time to talk to me.

The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice survey in business administration and law. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but should we wish to cite specific aspects of practice we will contact the college first.

The evidence used to inform judgements included: interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of learners' work and observation of four lessons.

I agreed to provide a summary of my observations of good practice seen in business and to suggest some areas for development.

Good practice observed

- Effective Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) course. Success rates by AAT learners taking NVQs in accounting are above the national average. Good practice by the college includes the arrangements for encouraging timely completion of the technician stage. Learners are required to start work on their project before they complete the intermediate stage. Early enrolment for level 4 enables the college to liaise with employers before teaching starts to ensure

good progress is made with the project. Plans are well in hand to offer AAT foundation to 14 to 16 year olds and taster sessions have been held for local school pupils.

- Good examples of vocational enrichment to develop learners' skills. GCE A/AS level law students' involvement in a mock trial at Nottingham crown court in competition with some high performing schools has had a significant impact upon their levels of confidence and their knowledge of the subject and career opportunities. The close working relationship with a practising barrister is a positive feature. BTEC first diploma students' involvement in a 10 week enterprise activity was both commercially successful and very educational. Students developed practical business skills as well as raising money for charity.
- Good focus on local business. GCE applied business students undertake a range of assignments which involve visits to, and research with, local small and medium sized enterprises and these students will also undertake work placements later this year. Students demonstrate good achievement in analysing ways in which resources could be deployed more efficiently.
- Very good monitoring of the progress of learners on full-time vocational business courses and part-time management courses. The arrangements for ensuring that full-time learners carefully plan their work on a weekly basis are thorough and systematic. Close and frequent monitoring by staff helps learners to make good progress. Innovative methods of helping adult learners gauge their own progress have been introduced into leadership and management courses.
- Highly responsive and successful strategy for employer engagement, particularly with local authorities. In the provision of management courses the college has a very professional approach to gaining contracts and assuring quality in a competitive regional and national market. Success rates are very high. Very productive partnerships exist with some local universities. A very effective blend of college and distance learning provision is available in marketing courses. The college has responded well to LSC changes in funding priorities by significantly expanding the extent to which employers fund their own management training.
- Good arrangements for sharing best practice. The teaching observations highlight good practice in the business studies area which are shared across the team. This leads to appropriate professional development for staff.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- improve success rates in GCE AS and A-level accounting, business studies and law, by paying particular attention to pass rates

- the proportion of high grade passes in GCE AS and A-level business studies and law which will also lead to an improvement in learners' value added
- the retention rates on full-time vocational business courses. The early signs of improvement this year need to be further built upon.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop business courses in the college.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your LLSC and will be published on the Ofsted website in due course. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Bernard McDonald  
Adult Learning Inspectorate