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University of Exeter

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**Better  
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A secondary initial teacher training  
short inspection report  
2006/07

Managing inspector  
Anne Wellham HMI

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## Introduction

The University of Exeter works in partnership with 127 schools to provide secondary PGCE initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers training in art, citizenship with humanities, dance, design and technology, English with media or drama, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education, religious education and science. At the time of the inspection there were 434 trainees.

## Context

The inspection was carried out by a team of inspectors in accordance with the *Ofsted Handbook for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Training (2005-2011)*.

This report draws on evidence from a short inspection of the provision and an inspection of the management and quality assurance arrangements.

Grades are awarded in accordance with the following scale

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Main inspection judgements

Management and quality assurance: Grade 1

The overall quality of training is at least good.

The provider will receive a short inspection in three years.

## Key strengths

- the highly effective and systematic quality assurance procedures
- sustaining improvement in provision that is already outstanding
- the coherent, high quality training, which is well matched to individual trainees' needs
- a supportive and collaborative partnership
- highly efficient management at all levels
- strategic and proactive leadership which is committed to continuous improvement.

## The quality of training

1. The quality of training provided throughout the partnership remains high. It has been adapted and enhanced extremely well in response to national initiatives and trainees' needs. There is very strong coherence between all elements of the programme, both in the training provided centrally and in the links between central training and the work carried out in schools. An impressive example of this is the way that trainers throughout the partnership have addressed the *Every Child Matters* agenda. The professional studies programme is particularly well supported by recently developed online materials, which give trainees opportunities to catch up on work missed, to reinforce their understanding by watching well chosen video extracts and to extend their knowledge by undertaking additional reading.

2. The programme is under continuous review to ensure that trainees receive expert, up-to-date high-quality training. Central training is enlivened and enhanced very well by the expertise of visiting speakers, by field work opportunities and by the active involvement of partnership schools in the taught subject programmes. Trainees also have access to recent high calibre and relevant research undertaken by the university trainers, which enriches the quality of the subject training, and to additional lectures which extend their knowledge and understanding. One trainee aptly described the training as one of 'research-led excellence.'

3. A particular strength of the training is the commitment to address the individual needs of the trainees which is embedded in all elements of the programme. This is underpinned by a rigorous approach to the identification of needs, action planning for improvement and regular reviews of progress. Subject tutors employ a broad range of different teaching styles which meet the particular needs of the subject and the trainees. Particularly good use is made of peer teaching in the early stages of the central training: this allows trainees both to practise in a safe environment and to share expertise with their peers. The partnership has made rapid progress in the development of activities to meet the needs of those trainees who are deemed to have met the Standards before the end of the course. In the first year of this initiative, many schools developed creative, stimulating activities to extend the trainees' professional development and to stretch their working beyond the Standards. The partnership is aware that more work needs to be done in sharing this best practice to make sure that activities truly enrich rather than merely reinforce the trainees' experience. Excellent achievement of individual trainees is identified and celebrated through awards in each subject area.

4. There is a clear and shared understanding of, and a very strong commitment to, the recognised excellence of the Exeter model of training throughout the partnership. Trainers in school are enthusiastic and well informed about their part in the development of trainees' ability to reflect upon and evaluate their teaching. They provide the necessary support enabling trainees to identify specific skills to be developed. The assessment systems are rigorous and robust, and validated by the external examination process.

## Management and quality assurance

5. Rigorous and robust procedures for recruitment and selection result in the enrolment of very high calibre trainees. Retention and completion rates are high. Increasingly, the partnership is strengthened by the employment of former trainees as mentors and principal subject tutors in partner schools.
6. The systematic monitoring of enrolment takes place at programme and subject levels throughout the year. Careful analyses of data, including a monthly report to tutors of the current status within their subject, are used to inform quick and effective responses to any areas of potential low recruitment. This has resulted in high levels of recruitment even within shortage subjects. The provider continues to make substantial efforts to improve recruitment from minority ethnic groups. Arrangements for monitoring applications to the Criminal Records Bureau are rigorous and effective.
7. The excellent quality of management has been sustained. Aspects have been strengthened by the increased involvement of partnership schools in the management structure, the development of cross-phase meetings and the dissemination of good practice. A strong collaborative and supportive relationship exists between the provider and the partner schools. For example, there is a high level of partnership involvement in reviewing and evaluating provision, and in contributing to the decision making processes.
8. Management at an operational level is very effective. Members of the partnership office team and the partnership director fulfil their roles efficiently, and this enables the head of initial teacher education and secondary PGCE programme director to focus on strategic leadership at programme level. As a result, a set of well-planned and forward-thinking initiatives has been introduced to improve even further the quality of the programme. These initiatives include a thorough review of all elements of the Exeter model to coincide with the introduction of the new Standards, the use of improved analyses of data to inform development, and the extension of learning through electronic means.
9. A particularly impressive example of strategic and proactive leadership is the appointment of three teacher education research fellowships in priority subject areas. This initiative is designed to address the potential difficulty of recruiting well qualified staff to lead courses and carry out subject-related research in the future.
10. The excellent quality assurance procedures reported at the time of the previous inspection have been strengthened and impact directly on course development. For example, the revision of the external examiners' handbook makes clearer distinctions between the role of the chief external examiner and the subject external examiners. There are very clear requirements and expectations of school-based training which allow for and recognise autonomy and innovation. Examples of

good practice are disseminated in order to raise the quality of training to that of the best.

11. There is a commitment to continuous improvement at all levels. Programme managers are accurate in their self-evaluation and rigorous in planning for improvement. A well-designed common template encourages subject leaders to evaluate progress in detail, choosing relevant evidence to support their judgements and then to use that analysis to inform subsequent targets for improvement. There are some exemplary plans which reflect very well the cyclical nature of review and development planning. Managers are aware of the need to develop other areas further so that all plans are of the standard of the best.