



# University of Southampton

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A further education teacher training  
inspection report  
2006/07

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. The inspection was conducted in two phases by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and specialist additional inspectors. Provision at the university and at one of the partner colleges was evaluated. In the first phase of inspection in January 2007, inspectors focused on the quality of training, management and quality assurance procedures. During the second phase, inspectors concentrated mainly on evaluating the achievements of trainees, through observing their teaching and gathering evidence about their progress during the course. Phase 2 of the inspection was completed in June 2007.

## Background

3. The University of Southampton works in partnership with five colleges of further education (FE) across the south of England and in the Channel Island of Jersey. The partnership offers part-time, in-service, post-graduate certificate in education (PGCE) and certificate in education (Cert Ed) courses for FE teachers and trainers in the post-compulsory sector. One college offers only the first year, whilst the other four colleges offer both the first and second years of the programmes. The university's PGCE/Cert Ed is offered at two sites in Southampton. Most of this provision is for second-year trainees. The partnership has around 240 trainees enrolled on its courses.

## Effectiveness of provision

4. The overall quality of the provision is good (grade 2). Trainees teach competently and have a strong commitment to the academic success of their students. Their ability to plan lessons and manage their classes is good. They use a range of teaching strategies effectively but their skills in addressing students' literacy and numeracy needs in teaching their specialist subject are less well-developed. The quality of training, particularly at the university, is good. Teacher trainers are well-qualified and have appropriate experience. They support their trainees very well. Assignments are designed well to help trainees to reflect thoughtfully on their teaching, as well as on theoretical concepts and policy issues. Trainees make good progress but their individual learning plans (ILPs) are not used effectively to track this progress and to set challenging targets for further improvement. Mentors across the partnership provide good guidance, although the contributions they make are not sufficiently integrated into other aspects of the training. The partnership is well managed and the university has a close working relationship with its partner colleges. Quality assurance arrangements are rigorous.

## Key strengths

Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- good teaching skills demonstrated by trainees
- well-developed ability of trainees to improve their teaching practice through reflection and response to feedback
- good training by teacher trainers at the university
- very good support and guidance for trainees
- meticulous quality assurance arrangements, particularly in relation to the moderation of written assignments

## Areas for attention

The partnership should address:

- trainees skills in addressing their own students literacy and numeracy needs in teaching their specialist subject
- under-developed use of individual learning plans (ILPs) to track trainees' progress
- insufficient integration of mentors' contribution with other aspects of the training

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

## Achievement of trainees

5. Trainees reach a level of teaching competence that is at least satisfactory, and often good. They make good progress in developing their teaching skills and have high expectations of their own students. Many make a very positive contribution to their workplace and demonstrate particularly good skills in working with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They evaluate their teaching well, particularly in the second year of their programme. By analysing their lessons carefully, they become increasingly adept at identifying ways of improving their practice.

6. Lesson planning is thorough. Trainees organise their lessons well to ensure that time is used wisely and that the pace of learning is brisk. A small

minority do not provide sufficient detail in schemes of work. Trainees make good use of a range of teaching strategies, taking into account the differing needs of their students. They use demonstrations well in practical lessons. Questioning is often used perceptively to check students' understanding and progress. Trainees are fully aware of the need to develop their students' literacy and numeracy skills, but achieve mixed success in doing it in the classroom. This aspect of their teaching is less well developed than other aspects.

7. Trainees produce good quality resources to support their teaching. Most use information and learning technologies (ILT) effectively, but a small minority do not make sufficient progress in developing their knowledge and skills of how technology can support learning.

8. Trainees have a good understanding of assessment issues. They use a range of assessment methods effectively. When marking work, they provide students with encouraging and constructive comments but, in a few instances, fail to explain clearly how students can improve their work.

## Quality of training

9. The PGCE/Cert Ed programme is well designed and meets national standards. It has been carefully structured to ensure that trainees make progress across the two years, particularly as some trainees progress directly to the second year from a City and Guilds 7407 Stage 2 course.

10. Although all trainees have level 2 qualifications in literacy and numeracy, the induction process includes diagnostic assessments for these aspects and for ICT. Specialist, additional support, to address identified needs, is provided where necessary. Support available for trainees with dyslexia is good. In one case, for example, a trainee made considerable progress and felt sufficiently confident to offer his own students similar support.

11. Training provided at the university is good. University teacher trainers are experienced further education practitioners, with relevant research interests. In lively and productive training sessions, they draw very effectively on the experience and knowledge of trainees. Their use of questioning to explore ideas and consolidate understanding is exemplary. However, the quality of teaching at one of the partner colleges is not as good. The university has provided substantial support to bring about improvement.

12. Mentors provide trainees with good guidance and this is valued highly by trainees. Mentors support the development of trainees' subject or vocational specialism and undertake subject specialist lesson observations. As much of the feedback is informal and not recorded, the valuable contribution

made by mentors is not sufficiently integrated with other aspects of the training programme and overall assessment of trainees' progress.

13. Resources are used well to support trainees. The university's virtual learning environment (VLE) is becoming an increasingly valuable resource for trainees, tutors and mentors, although it not used systematically across the partnership.

14. Assignments are well designed, enabling trainees to consolidate ideas and concepts discussed in training sessions, as well as analyse various aspects of their own teaching. The course addresses the requirement for trainees to have a minimum core of understanding and skills in relation to literacy, numeracy and language, although not all trainees embed these aspects systematically into their teaching.

15. The use of ILPs to track trainees' progress is under-developed. Trainees benefit from constructive feedback in a number of different ways, such as comments on assignments, discussions during tutorials and feedback on lesson observations. However, teacher trainers and mentors do not consistently follow up on targets or comments from earlier observations, assignments or trainees' evaluations. The ILP is, therefore, not an effective vehicle for recording and tracking this type of progress. The partnership has recognised and responded rapidly to these failings. It is revising the ILPs so that they track trainees' progress more effectively, and has introduced more tutorials for this purpose. Lesson observations next year will also require observers to comment upon the extent to which trainees have achieved previous targets.

## Management and quality assurance of provision

16. Recruitment, selection and induction are good. At the partner colleges, these are increasingly integrated with other human resource activities, such as continuing professional development.

17. The partnership is well managed, with all institutions working effectively together to deliver the programmes. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and carry them out effectively. Resources are deployed well to support training.

18. Most aspects of quality assurance are comprehensive and effective. The university conducts annual monitoring and review visits to partner colleges. These visits cover a range of issues, from recruitment and retention, accommodation and resources to the observation of trainers' teaching. The university also reviews monitoring and evaluation data, staff development and trainee evaluations. Implementation of the previous year's action plan is reviewed. External examiners provide rigorous and constructive external

quality assurance and the partnership responds expeditiously to any criticisms that they raise.

19. The university takes appropriate action to address identified weaknesses. In one college, for example, recent staffing problems created significant concerns. Visits were made by the external examiner and university course leader to assess the situation. Extensive support was then provided and responsibilities were clarified to ensure that the quality of training at this college was improved.

20. Although mentoring is generally good, the extent to which mentors' expertise is used effectively to support trainees' specialism is not monitored systematically. Mentors are selected by the trainee and the university or college reviews each mentor's qualifications and experience to ensure suitability

21. Moderation of written assignments is particularly thorough. Within partner colleges and the university-based course about a quarter of assignments are second marked and a similar proportion is moderated at the regular moderation meetings of the partnership. One assignment for every trainee is also moderated in each year group across the partnership. In addition, a sample of all the work of particular trainees is scrutinised towards the end of the course. During annual review visits to partner colleges, university staff scrutinise a sample of trainees' work and interview trainees. External examiners are similarly thorough in their scrutiny of assignments.

22. In line with the university's comprehensive equal opportunities policy, the partnership monitors recruitment and completion rates of trainees from minority ethnic and other under-represented groups. Recruitment of these groups is in line with local populations and there are no significant differences in completion rates.

## List of colleges in the partnership

Bournemouth and Poole College

Cricklade College

Highlands College

Isle of Wight College

Southampton City College