

# University of East London

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A secondary initial teacher training  
inspection report

2007/08

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## Introduction

The University of East London works in partnership with 70 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers training in English, mathematics, science, physical education, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), modern foreign languages, music and religious education. At the time of the inspection there were 180 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 combines the judgements from a short inspection of the provision and of the management and quality assurance arrangements in 2008, with the judgements from the scrutiny of further evidence submitted to Ofsted in February 2008.

Grades are awarded in accordance with the following scale

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

## Main inspection judgements

Quality of training: Grade 1

Management and quality assurance: Grade 1

## Key strengths

- the university's strong and effective commitment to inclusion and to schools in east London and the region
- the exceptionally strong and cohesive partnership
- the inspirational leadership and management of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course
- the imaginative development of innovative practices such as the use of virtual environments and web-based learning
- the close attention given to trainees' individual needs
- the good use made of booster and subject enhancement courses
- the weekly training plans which help secure the course's overall coherence.

## The quality of training

1. The quality of training is outstanding. The programme is very well designed to help trainees achieve the new Standards and become enthusiastic, committed teachers. University and school-based trainers have worked hard to ensure that training takes fully into account government initiatives and new developments in education. A particular strength is the focus on inclusion, cultural diversity and preparation for working in local schools. Subject training is well balanced by a carefully planned professional studies programme which gives appropriate prominence to key areas such as *Every Child Matters*, assessment and behaviour management. There are many innovative aspects to the programme. For example, an on-line 'virtual school' provides a stimulating framework within which trainees, in mixed subject groups, can discuss and explore how educational theories and subject issues might play out in practice.
2. All aspects of the course complement each other well and the close and productive links which have been developed between the university and partnership schools are a very significant strength. The timing and pattern of the placements are well considered and trainees appreciate being able to return to university for one day a week during the second half of the autumn term, allowing them time to reflect on their early school experiences and share good practice with their peers. The weekly training plan the university provides for schools aids this coherence. These training plans are of high quality and incorporate well-considered targets that follow through from one week to the next.
3. Centre-based training is of a high quality. Trainees engage very well with the training and appreciate the way in which tutors model good classroom practice. The expertise of visiting lecturers, many of whom are teachers in partnership schools, is used to very good effect. Some aspects of the training are particularly innovative such as the imaginative use of e-learning to complement and supplement university sessions and to enable trainees to share resources and ideas. In ICT all trainees have the use of personal digital equipment to help them plan lessons.
4. School-based training is carefully planned and tied in with the overall programme. The quality of mentoring is very high. Well-targeted, clear course documentation contributes to the quality of school-based training and trainers in schools are impressively clear about what is expected of them. As a result, in all subjects, trainees' lesson plans are detailed and of high quality.
5. The level of support for trainees is very high. Trainees come from a wide variety of backgrounds and the university is painstaking in the way it takes account of their individual needs. There is an extensive programme of specialist support, and the dyslexia and disability unit is represented at PGCE meetings. Subject enhancement is very thorough, with booster and enhancement courses being made a condition of acceptance for many trainees. This gives them an excellent start to their training. Throughout the course there are good systems to support trainees as they continue to develop their subject knowledge. Subject leaders ensure that training programmes build on trainees' previous knowledge and experience, for

example by placing trainees with previous classroom experience in more challenging schools.

6. Tutors and school-based trainers monitor trainees' progress conscientiously. Written reports contain detailed feedback and are sharply focused on the progress being made by individuals. Trainees' teaching is observed on a regular basis and feedback from trainers invariably includes perceptive comments which help trainees to understand the key features of the lesson. Weekly mentor meetings are successful in ensuring the regular review and evaluation of trainees' targets. Half-termly reports, carefully referenced to the Standards, clearly identify trainees' strengths and areas for development. Assessments are used very well to identify subsequent training priorities. Trainees deemed to be at risk of failing are very well supported with additional monitoring and tutoring; some are offered training in communication skills. Procedures for identifying these trainees are robust.

7. Internal and external moderation arrangements are rigorous and effective, with good use of joint observations to ensure the accuracy and consistency of judgements about the quality of teaching. Mentors and tutors are very well supported in their assessments of trainees' progress by clearly written, progressive assessment criteria and 'pen-portraits' showing what might be expected from trainees at different stages of their journey towards the Standards.

## Management and quality assurance

8. The vast majority of trainees come from London or its immediate environs and the recruitment of Black and minority ethnic trainees is far higher than the London average. The academic calibre of trainees has been rising steadily since the last inspections. The profile of successive cohorts and their success in gaining jobs in the partnership amply demonstrate the course's commitment to east London and its schools.

9. Good pre-course information fully reflects the university's commitment to inclusion and the pack inviting candidates to interview is comprehensive and clear. A number of initiatives have been taken to increase recruitment where it has been below target, such as the approaches made by the modern foreign languages course leader to French universities. The university also runs a taster course, with several partner schools, to help potential applicants decide if they want to be teachers.

10. The selection process is very well designed and implemented with good practice consistent across subjects. There are clear guidelines, with standard questions, at both application and interview stages, and interviewers have been well trained in selection procedures. Full regard is taken of legislation on equality and diversity and the university's own charter for inclusivity. Good use is made of teacher fellows and mentors during interviews.

11. Once they have been accepted, trainees receive very good pre-enrolment support. Personalised acceptance letters record any conditions and advised tasks.

The development of web-based technology allows trainees to complete on-line tasks and get to know each other, and their tutors, before the course begins. Trainees participate enthusiastically in this virtual community and group cohesion is established early.

12. The PGCE course is inspirationally led and managed. A clear sense of purpose and direction is balanced by a respect for professional autonomy, experience and expertise. The professional tutor from one school commented: 'UEL listens - they value our opinion'. All operational systems are of a high standard. At the same time, when it comes to the development of new and imaginative schemes to enhance the quality of training, the course management is prepared to take risks. Links between the different levels of management and the various committees are clearly understood. At a strategic level, there is a consultation group of head teachers and an effective Partnership Committee which includes teachers from partner schools and representatives from east London's local authorities.

13. The partnership is exceptionally strong and cohesive and the university spends much time and energy on its support and development. The seconded teacher fellow scheme, for example, has been one way of involving mentors more closely in the running of the PGCE course. In 2007/08 there are teacher fellows working alongside tutors in ICT, maths and science. The collaborative training agreement clearly lays out the roles and responsibilities of all those involved. Not wishing to over-extend itself in an already crowded educational landscape, the university is moving towards the establishment of a core group of even more closely allied 'partnership plus' schools.

14. In all areas, the quality of documentation and communications is excellent. Regular correspondence, visits and training ensure that mentors have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to carry out their role well. Increasingly effective use is made of the virtual learning environment and web-based exemplar materials for the training of mentors have been introduced. Mentor training is thorough and carefully targeted. Well-observed procedures ensure that those mentors missing training are brought up to date by visiting by tutors.

15. Quality assurance processes are thoroughly documented and effective in operation. Good use is made of trainees' feedback and large quantities of data are collected. There are appropriate criteria for the selection and de-selection of schools and comprehensive action plans for both the provision and the partnership. Procedures for assuring the quality of school based training are good with much joint observation and effective scrutiny by professional tutors. Visiting subject tutors have a clearly defined quality assurance role and carry it out rigorously.

16. The moderation of the assessment of trainees' progress is rigorous. Subject leaders submit subject level reviews as part of the annual 'review and enhancement' process. These are tightly structured, requiring detailed responses to external examiner reports and to data provided by the university and a list of action points.

17. Course managers take external reports very seriously and responses to previous inspections have been very thorough indeed.