

# University of Bolton

## Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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Provider address	Deane Road Bolton Lancashire BL3 5AB
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Inspection dates	9 – 13 March 2009
Lead inspector	Vincent Ashworth HMI

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## Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors supported by a team of specialist inspectors in accordance with the *Framework for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Education (2008-11)*.
2. The inspection draws upon evidence from all aspects of the provision to make judgements against all parts of the inspection evaluation schedule in the framework. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of the training in supporting high quality outcomes for trainees and the capacity of the partnership to bring about further improvements. A summary of the grades awarded is included at the end of this report.

### Key to inspection grades

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

### The provider

3. The University of Bolton works in partnership with five colleges of further education and two private training providers. The partnership provides initial teacher education (ITE) leading to the professional graduate diploma in education (PGDE level 6) or the professional diploma in education (PDE level 5). The qualifications meet statutory requirements and are endorsed by Standards Verification UK (SVUK). Of the 680 trainees on PGDE/PDE courses across the partnership, around half are located at the university. There are around 195 trainees on full-time courses leading to generic qualifications and around 70 trainees on full-time courses leading to specialist skills for life qualifications. In addition there are around 360 trainees on the part-time generic pathway and 50 trainees on the part-time skills for life pathway (numeracy, literacy or English for speakers of other languages). Provision at the university is organised into three skills for life and six subject specialist groups. The university has developed and validated a suite of 'interim awards' which support flexibility and credit accumulation so that part-time trainees can step off and return at appropriate points. Leadership and management of ITE provision at the university has been re-structured since the last inspection; the Teacher Training Management Team has been in place in May 2007 and includes members from partner organisations.

## Initial teacher education for the further education system

### Key strengths

4. The key strengths are:
  - the good progress made by the majority of trainees
  - the very good personal and specialist support for trainees
  - the highly inclusive provision and the good promotion of equality and diversity
  - the good development of pre-service trainees' subject specialist pedagogy
  - the good skills for life provision at the university that meets the specific needs of both trainees and employers
  - the systematic use of trainees' views to improve the quality of provision.

### Required actions

5. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment the provider must:
  - ensure greater consistency in the quality of trainees' experience and development in the workplace, through closer monitoring and evaluation of mentoring
  - ensure more effective use of trainees individual learning plans, by setting clear, stretching and measurable targets to underpin their development.

### Recommendations

6. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment the partnership should:
  - consider ways of extending the most able trainees so that they can attain the very highest professional standards.
7. In order to improve the quality of training the partnership should:
  - consider how management information can be used to better monitor trends, underpin incisive self-assessment and inform plans for improvement for the partnership as a whole.

## Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

8. The overall effectiveness of the partnership in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is good. Standards attained by trainees are good, and the large majority make good progress as a consequence of the excellent personal and specialist support they receive from their trainers. Consequently, they gain in confidence, ambition and determination. This level of motivation was summed up by one employer who said 'they are cracking teachers with a can-do attitude'. Employers and placement providers speak highly of trainees. Trainees with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress because of the outstanding support which is matched closely to their particular needs. Progression rates for pre-service trainees into employment or to further study are good. Employment prospects for the skills for life trainees is particularly good as the courses at the university meet the recruitment needs of a wide range of local and regional employers.

9. Those trainees who achieve particularly well, show an ability to make their lessons sparkle. They take calculated risks and experiment with new approaches to capture their learners' interest and imagination. This is invariably underpinned by a sound understanding of their learners' individual needs. In planning their lessons, they select a range of teaching methods to enable the greatest impact on their students' progress and enjoyment. Students invariably respond well to trainees' high expectations and to the stretch and challenge provided by well-designed learning activities. Trainees' use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a teaching and learning aid has improved significantly since the last inspection. There are many instances of trainees being particularly creative in using ICT and specialist resources to reinforce learning. For example, one trainee has produced an e-learning quiz which the host college intends to upload to its virtual learning environment (VLE) for other students to use.

10. Pre-service trainees at the university have a particularly good awareness of their role and responsibility in relation to safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults. These issues are covered in-depth within centre-based training as well as trainees' induction into their placement. Similarly, trainees have a very good understanding of issues relating to equality of opportunity, inclusion and diversity and this is reflected in their planning, teaching resources and classroom practice.

11. Those trainees who achieve less well, develop as competent teachers but show only a fundamental awareness of assessment for learning. For example, some trainees do not draw systematically on information from their own students' initial assessment, or the content of their individual learning plans. Consequently their lesson plans are flawed by learning objectives that are insufficiently differentiated to secure their students' progress. A small minority of trainees demonstrate relatively weak classroom practice in tackling the challenging behaviour of young disaffected students.

12. Most trainees are reflective about their teaching; the strongest trainees make good use of feedback from their teaching observations and assignments to produce perceptive evaluations of their progress. Inspectors identified outstanding practice in one college where trainees made excellent use of the college's VLE as a forum through which they shared their reflections with their peers who actively offer their own advice and support.

13. Recruitment and selection procedures are thorough, well-understood and adhered to. This results in the recruitment of good quality trainees who understand the demands and challenges presented by the course. Where applicants are judged not to be ready for the course, providers give helpful and supportive advice on alternative provision. Trainees' individual needs are identified at an early stage and arrangements to support those trainees who need to develop their numeracy skills are much improved since the last inspection.

14. The quality of centre-based training and assessment is consistently good. Trainees on the skills for life pathways at the university are both challenged and enthused by the high quality of their training sessions. They systematically draw on the good practice demonstrated by their trainers in their own classroom practice. In-service trainees in partner colleges speak highly of their trainers; they respect the advice they are given as they see it comes from competent and experienced professionals. The strong support trainees receive from their trainers contributes significantly to the progress they make. Trainers know their trainees well; they are accessible, approachable and responsive to requests for extra help. The quality and effectiveness of tutorials is variable but satisfactory overall.

15. The quality of written feedback on trainees' written work has improved. Trainees develop good academic study skills and generally produce good assignments. Partnership policy on assessment only requires markers to tell trainees whether they have been successful or unsuccessful in their work; no grades are given. Consequently trainees have little awareness of how well they have achieved or how they might set their sights even higher than a threshold level. This frustrates the most able trainees, who aspire to attain the very highest standards. Trainees speak highly of the professional dialogue which follows their teaching observations; it helps them to reflect on their progress and plan for improvement.

16. The effectiveness of procedures to monitor trainees' progress is very variable. Targets and actions agreed between trainees and their trainers are not specific or sufficiently robust. The individual learning plans that result from this process do not emulate best practice in the further education system. They are not used consistently well and their potential to enhance trainees' learning experience is underdeveloped.

17. Pre-service trainees gain a good breadth of experience from the work based element of their training. Skills for life trainees particularly benefit from the different levels and groups of students they teach. This breadth of experience helps trainees develop their specialist pedagogy by extending the range of teaching and learning strategies they employ. In the case of a minority of in-service trainees, their breadth of teaching is too narrow.

18. The quality of trainees' experience in the workplace is satisfactory, but continues to be variable. A minority of mentors are unclear about their role and consequently have only a minimal impact on trainees' progress. Nevertheless inspectors identified an outstanding model of mentoring in one of the colleges; excellent communication between, tutors, observers and mentors provided a clear structure to facilitate trainees' development and progress in the workplace.

19. Trainees have access to a good range of resources which are deployed well to meet their individual needs. The university has been successful in attracting external funding to enhance resources available to students on the skills for life pathways. Trainers are well qualified and highly experienced in their field.

20. Quality assurance procedures are embedded and follow up action is taken to address issues arising from external examiners' reports. Although university support tutors undertake initial joint observations of mentors or partnership trainers, there is no systematic ongoing monitoring of the consistency of judgments made in relation to trainees' teaching. However inspectors agreed with the accuracy of providers' judgements in relation to trainees' achievements.

21. The partnership's promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Partners' active involvement in community groups has meant that many trainees are recruited from groups that are under-represented in further education teaching. Partners are particularly successful in removing barriers to learning so that all trainees can make progress. Trainees are positive about the warm and harmonious learning environment established in each provider, this makes them feel safe and valued. There are clear and understood procedures for handling bullying and harassment on placement; these are used effectively to deal with the very few concerns raised.

## The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 3

22. The partnership has satisfactory capacity to sustain high outcomes for trainees and to take the actions required to secure improvements where needed. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in embedding new management structures, systems and procedures; whilst at the same time, strengths relating to trainees' good progress have been maintained. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood. The Teacher Training Management Group has had an impact on bringing about improvement through its regular meetings and more rigorous standardisation and moderation of trainees' coursework. Improvement have been made in securing the consistency of centre-based training across partners, however the consistency of the work-based element of training provides an on-going challenge to all partners. Partners have benefited from opportunities for joint staff development sharing of good practice. Partnership meetings are valued and well attended. Since the last inspection there has been a significant improvement in the partnership's framework for collaborative working and quality assurance. Partner colleges are highly committed to working collaboratively with the

university. Most of the weaknesses identified have been addressed but weak mentor support in the workplace and insufficient challenge for the most able trainees remain areas for development.

23. Programme teams respond positively to feedback from trainees and external examiners. This has had a positive impact on the quality of provision as well as ensuring the coherent implementation of national reforms in further education teacher training. The partnership gives a very high prominence to the 'learner voice'. Trainees' views are actively sought and action is taken based on what they say. Trainees are able to cite many examples of where they have been listened to and how improvements have impacted on their training.

24. Self-evaluation is satisfactory and improving. The partnership has clearly articulated its strengths and weaknesses. However there is insufficient focus on evaluation and actions for improvement. Leadership and management at individual course and provider level are strong; self-assessment processes in colleges are robust and reliable. The collation and use of data to inform self-assessment and improvement planning at partnership level remains underdeveloped. Consequently inspectors did not agree with the partnership's judgement that its capacity to improve was good. The partnership has yet to identify key performance indicators against which it can monitor and evaluate its progress against agreed objectives. Data have not been disaggregated and evaluated at provider level. Consequently the link between individual partner and university data systems is weak. Data relating to headline success rates and recruitment trends is provided in December each year. This is too late to contribute in any meaningful way to action planning for improvement which starts much earlier in the year. Consequently judgements made in the partnership's self evaluation document are not always founded on accurate data. The ensuing analysis therefore tends to focus on evaluating processes rather than the impact of action taken on outcomes for trainees. There has been insufficient evaluation of data relating to the recruitment, progress and attainment of different groups of trainees in terms of gender, ethnicity, age or disability.

25. The university's leadership and management of the partnership are good. The university senior management team has been proactive in developing the profile of teacher training for the further education sector, both within the university and across the region. The university team, led by the Teacher Training Manager, has been proactive in developing links with private training providers. This has opened reciprocal opportunities for enhancing the experience of trainees and developing the local skills for life workforce. The university has undertaken this expansion with integrity and has supported new partners well in developing provision that aligns to both university and statutory requirements. Senior managers in these organisation report very positively on the university's responsiveness and the good quality of communication between the university and its partners. Change is managed sensitively and conscientiously; implementation of the national reforms have been implemented successfully. The partnership has identified the need to address the full ramifications of the national 14-19 agenda and its impact on trainees. Course content is revised regularly to reflect national priorities in post-compulsory education and training.



## Annex: Partnership providers

The partnership includes the following providers:

Bolton College  
Bury College  
Cirencester College  
Isle of Man College  
Salford City College  
Skills Solution (Manchester)  
Training 2000 (Blackburn)

## Summary of inspection grades<sup>1</sup>

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding; grade 2 is good; grade 3 is satisfactory; grade 4 is inadequate.

### Overall effectiveness

		ITE for FE
How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?		2
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	2
Factors contributing to trainees' attainment	To what extent do recruitment / selection arrangements support high quality outcomes?	2
	To what extent does the training and assessment ensure that all trainees progress to fulfil their potential given their ability and starting points?	2
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	2
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	2
Promoting equalities and diversity	To what extent does the provision promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination?	1

### Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

	ITE for FE
To what extent do the leadership and management at all levels have the capacity to secure further improvements and/or to sustain high quality outcomes?	3
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?	3
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?	2
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?	3

<sup>1</sup> The criteria for making these graded judgements are in the *Grade criteria for the inspection of ITE 2008-11*; Ofsted July 2008; Reference no: 080128.

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