

London Metropolitan University

Department of Education
Tower Building
166 - 220 Holloway Road
London
N7 8DB

A further education teacher training
inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
Richard Beynon HMI

© Crown copyright 2008. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date are stated.
Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The inspection

1. The inspection was carried out in accordance with the *Framework for the Inspection of initial teacher training of further education (FE) teachers* and the guidance in the *Handbook for the inspection of initial teacher training of further education teachers*, both published in 2004.
2. The inspection was carried out in two phases by a core inspection team which comprised of two of Her Majesty's Inspectors. A specialist Additional Inspector joined the team for phase two. During the first phase of the inspection in February 2008, inspectors focused on the quality of training and the management and quality assurance of provision. During the second phase, inspectors concentrated on the achievements of trainees, observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress during the course. Phase 2 of the inspection was completed in July 2008.

Background

3. London Metropolitan University (London Met) does not directly offer any FE teacher training courses, but has developed an associate college relationship with Croydon College. Under this arrangement, London Met devolves responsibility for the delivery and day-to-day quality assurance of its validated FE teacher training courses to Croydon College. The university provides strategic guidance and oversight of quality assurance and equalities arrangements for programmes.
4. There are around 250 trainees currently on programmes at the college. Approximately 40% of trainees are staff from the college. The courses also have significant numbers of trainees from local adult and community learning services, and from colleges in neighbouring boroughs.
5. Initial teacher education courses at Croydon College validated by London Met, and endorsed by Standards Verification UK (SVUK), include: Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CTLTS), a generic Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS), and specialist diplomas in each of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and literacy and numeracy. The Certificate and Diploma courses have been run for the first time from September 2007, and were developed from existing Certificate in Education and national awarding body subject specialist skills for life (level 4) programmes. All courses are endorsed by Standards Verification UK (SVUK) and meet the Secretary of State's requirements for FE teachers.

Effectiveness of provision

6. The overall quality of provision is adequate (grade 3). Trainees make satisfactory progress. Programmes are well designed and ensure a clear focus on developing trainees' literacy, numeracy and language skills. The wide range of

provision supports both local and regional training needs well. Trainees are highly motivated and committed to raising their students' achievements, though many do not effectively manage their students' poor attendance. Trainees' use of individual target setting is weak and their use of individual learning plans is underdeveloped. All trainees demonstrate a clear commitment to equality of opportunity. The quality of training is satisfactory overall, and theory and practice are well integrated.

7. Teacher trainers are generally well qualified; although some teacher trainers on the specialist diplomas lack appropriate literacy, numeracy and language qualifications. Accommodation and resources for teacher training are improving. A lack of information and communication technology (ICT) resources has meant that teacher trainers have been unable to model best practice in the use of learning technology. Teacher trainers maintain good levels of professional development and research activity. Arrangements for interview and initial assessment are good and ensure that prospective trainees are clear about what the training will require of them. Trainees benefit from good personal support from their mentors and teacher trainers. Trainees' personal development plans are not effective enough in shaping and supporting and recording their progress. Links between the college and university are strong. Staff and professional development are appropriately supported by both the university and the college. Quality assurance processes are adequate but do not always pinpoint key weaknesses. Nevertheless, rapid and effective action has been taken to deal with weaknesses identified during phase one of inspection.

Key strengths

Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- strong links between the college and the university
- good arrangements for interview and initial assessment
- enthusiastic and highly motivated trainees
- strong focus on developing trainees' literacy, numeracy and language skills
- good personal support for trainees.

Areas for attention

The partnership should address:

- limited opportunities for trainees to teach and assess at different levels and in different contexts

- underdeveloped use of personal development plans to track trainees' progress and missed opportunities to model best practice in this aspect of teaching and learning
- trainees' insufficient attention to managing their own students' poor attendance
- insufficient modelling of best practice in the use of information and learning technology (ILT)
- the accuracy of quality assurance processes in highlighting key weaknesses in provision.

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

Achievements of trainees

8. Trainees have strong commitment to their training and generally make satisfactory or better progress. Most have a good understanding of workforce development reforms and are keen to achieve professional recognition for their work. Typically, trainees have a good awareness of diversity and equality issues in the context of teaching and learning. This was exemplified in lessons observed where trainees made successful use of thoughtfully prepared materials to develop and deepen their own students' understanding of equality and diversity.

9. The majority of trainees demonstrate good reflection on their professional practice and a willingness to act upon feedback from trainers. Most are able to cite improvements in their teaching as a result of the training and self reflection on the feedback offered. In many cases, trainees are receiving very good subject-specific support from line managers and mentors, and are able to articulate ways that the course and workplace guidance has helped them improve their teaching. Nevertheless, some trainees are not meeting requirements to keep up-to-date reflective logs.

10. Trainees know their own students well and have good knowledge of their individual needs. Trainees have satisfactory awareness of the requirements of the minimum core curriculum of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Most have an understanding of ways they could improve their students' skills in these aspects. However a minority are unable to express clear strategies to support their students in this way.

11. In their lessons, most trainees engage students in a broad range of practical activities which they thoroughly enjoy. Trainees make good use of praise, direct questioning, variation in pace and tone in their teaching, and they plan to do this well. Constructive criticism of students work and progress is clear and helpful.

12. A minority of trainees lack strategies to encourage more student involvement in lessons, and tend to rely upon teacher-led or activity-based lessons. For example, in one engineering lesson, students were not encouraged to speak enough, and often gave single-word answers to questions or failed to complete sentences fully, even in an informal conversational mode. Where trainees have the confidence to encourage students to participate and take responsibility for their own learning, they are usually adept at managing this.

13. Most trainees do not make sufficient use of ICT to enrich students' experiences in lessons, nor do they have sufficient awareness of the latest information and learning technology resources available to them.

14. Too many trainees lack strategies to deal with poor attendance, and a minority are accepting of very poor attendance in their lessons. Neither teacher trainers nor mentors provide sufficient guidance on ways that trainees can check and adhere to institutional policies and expectations for attendance by students. For example, in one lesson, only four out of twelve students attended, and the trainee was unaware of ways to report this or track students' attendance in other lessons.

15. The majority of trainees have extensive and relevant industrial experience and are teaching students with whom they can utilise vocational experience and expertise. Trainees' extensive industrial experience improves their own students' confidence and enhances their subject-specific skills. For example, at one college, students on joinery courses became confident in undertaking small paid work in carpentry and joinery after a very short period with the trainee teacher. Some trainees, however, do not gain sufficient breadth of teaching and assessing across different age ranges and qualifications. In one case, a trainee was teaching only courses with no external assessment or end qualifications, and was therefore unable to develop sufficient strategies for devising formative assessments or preparing students for final external assessment.

16. Most trainees play only a limited part in developing students' Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) to monitor progress and set measurable targets. Generally, trainees lack confidence or awareness of how to make best use of target setting as a tool for improvement.

17. Trainees' records show a growing grasp of the importance of planning. Some vocational lessons were very well planned, well paced, and contained a good range of practical, stimulating activities. For example, in one ESOL class a trainee made very good use of a carefully organised sequence of sound recordings, images and group activities to stimulate discussion and develop students' understandings of job roles and career paths open to young people.

18. Trainees demonstrate a satisfactory awareness of progression routes within their own institution. Many provide appropriate advice and guidance to their students and make appropriate links with specialist support services when appropriate.

Quality of training

19. Initial teacher training operates effectively within a culture of improving teaching and learning across the college. The teacher training team is closely allied to the work of the advanced practitioner team and contributes significantly to plans for overall workforce reform and continuing professional development within the college.
20. Teacher trainers know their trainees well and engage them effectively. A dynamic environment for learning is maintained in which trainees readily share ideas and experiences and challenge and support each other in discussion. A few teacher trainers have insufficient understanding of other sector contexts. Too many teaching references are located within the FE sector, and there are too few attempts to draw on trainees' backgrounds or working practices in some sessions.
21. Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are effectively embedded in the course structure; they are mapped to assignments and incorporated into trainees' reflective and evaluative documentation. The development of teaching skills to identify and support literacy and numeracy needs in trainees' own lessons is given a high profile and trainees have a good understanding of its importance for their students' academic progress and future employability. However, not all trainees are equipped with appropriate strategies to improve their students' literacy, numeracy and language skills in lessons.
22. The theoretical and practical elements of the courses are effectively integrated. Trainees bring significant research skills into their work and build a strong cognitive and analytical base for their application of teaching strategies. They are encouraged to consider the theoretical and conceptual aspects of teaching and learning and the sharing of experiences in this regard is prominent in lessons.
23. Generic feedback on work submitted and on lessons observed is often detailed, specific, supportive and astute. Trainees are given clear actions to reflect and work on in order to improve. Subject-specific feedback on trainees' written work, however, is inconsistent and is only given orally if trainees invite their mentors to proof-read essays or journals. There is little specific opportunity for trainees to develop further their subject-specific knowledge or pedagogy.
24. Trainees' accumulation of evidence against their achievement of each separate assessment standard is recorded and commented upon. This system is overly burdensome, and distracts from the proper assessment focus on how well trainees' skills as reflective and knowledgeable teachers are progressing.
25. Teacher trainers successfully identify and address the different learning needs and academic levels of their trainees. They show appropriate awareness of the particular ways in which individual trainees might be best stimulated, challenged and supported. The college runs both group and individual support sessions on a wide range of topics from academic writing to specific aspects of numeracy and literacy. These are well attended and much appreciated by trainees.

26. References to how teaching and learning points might be applied in different settings and at different levels are infrequent. Teacher trainers make too few explicit references to what they themselves are doing in the way of modelling good teaching. Trainers thus miss opportunities to invite trainees to reflect on how well they are being taught or how successful teaching strategies might be utilised in their own teaching.

27. The use of Personal Development Plans (PDPs) to set targets and monitor trainees' progress remains underdeveloped, though improvements have been made during the year. PDPs are currently of limited value as a continuous evaluative narrative of a trainee's progress to which all parties may contribute. Mentors do not yet effectively contribute to PDPs. Trainees do not yet experience a secure, good model on which to base their own practice of using PDPs or individual learning plans with students.

28. ILT is used adequately but with varying levels of competence in training sessions. A range of teaching resources are used, but for most of this year there have been very few interactive white boards available in teaching rooms and some equipment is unreliable. Equipment levels have been reviewed since the phase one visit, and new inter-active whiteboards installed. Teacher trainers are undergoing training in their use, but best practice in the range of technologies available to teachers is currently not modelled.

29. All course materials are available for remote access from trainees' home computers through the college virtual learning environment (VLE). However, this resource bank is not yet a fully interactive VLE and trainees are unable to populate it with materials of their own. Few trainees make use of the VLE or regard it as a useful resource. Few teacher trainers regard the VLE as a useful teaching and learning tool.

30. Almost all external, and all internal, trainees have mentors who give them good personal support. They carry out lesson observations and the majority liaise appropriately with the teacher trainers. They are clear about their role in helping to enhance the subject knowledge of trainees. Although mentors external to the college have not had sufficient contact from teacher trainers and are unaware of how best to advise their mentees. The enhanced role and value of the mentor has been explored and further developed by the college over the course of the year. Much has been done to ensure that mentors meet minimum standards, are fully briefed and trained, can operate and meet in geographical clusters, and can have access to a range of on-line training and illustrative materials.

Management and quality assurance of provision

31. The university and college have worked together successfully to develop and validate new suites of programmes to match the reforms in FE teacher training.

Work has been swift and, in general, thorough. The course team operates effectively and supportively and good practice is shared.

32. Provision of specialist and additional diplomas in literacy, numeracy and ESOL in addition to a range of generic diploma, certificate and preparatory courses makes a good contribution to meeting local and regional training needs. The college currently provides training for many literacy and numeracy trainees across the southern region

33. The college had insufficient specialist qualified staff for delivery of additional and specialist diplomas at the start of the inspection. Delivery in some additional and specialist diploma sessions is too generic, often covers matters already dealt with in trainees' previous qualifications, and fails to develop sufficient specialist skills. At the close of phase two, a number of new, qualified, trainers had been appointed to teach on specialist programmes.

34. Good interview and initial assessment processes are in place. Requests for specific forms of support are dealt with discreetly and promptly.

35. Applicants receive a quick response to enquiries and have appropriate access to specialist trainers. Marketing and course leaflets provide sufficiently detailed and relevant information. Prospective trainees and employers are clear about the need for trainees to have the required number of teaching hours when undertaking the diploma programme. However, insufficient information is provided to trainees and employers about the need to experience more than one group, level or context in their teaching practice in order to meet the professional standards for FE teachers.

36. Trainees in general have no involvement with the university, and have a poor understanding of its potential to enrich their education. Trainees have not visited the university, did not have easy access to university library or other resources, and most had a very poor understanding of possible progression routes at the university. The university and college have put in place a comprehensive package of measures to deal with this area for attention in the coming year.

37. A minority of rooms provide poor accommodation for courses. Two rooms are particularly shabby and poorly decorated, and there are no displays in any rooms. Work has now begun to improve the quality of accommodation for the next academic year.

38. Teacher trainers are supported to develop their own skills, and to undertake postgraduate and research degrees. The university makes a range of development programmes, including a Master's level available to staff from the college.

39. Very good links exist between the university and the college. There are strong individual working relationships between key staff in both institutions. Good strategic working occurs between the senior managers at the university and the college. Careful consideration has been given to ways of bringing the two institutions into closer partnership in future.

40. Teacher trainers receive effective support from the university's Partnerships and Audit Office (PAO). The PAO played a major part in preparing new programmes for validation, and assisted Croydon staff in mapping previous qualifications to new frameworks. The college course co-ordinator and other staff have good communications with the PAO.

41. The university has devolved day-to-day quality assurance functions to the college, according to its associate college status. The college is experienced in the delivery and management of HE programmes, and has an adequate range of measures in place for quality improvement. Monitoring of the quality of provision within the college is carried out by the university's Academic Quality Monitoring Group. However the systems and procedures in place are not sufficiently robust to identify and address key weaknesses in the provision.

42. Moderation practices are generally satisfactory; however no additional comments are entered on, or about, the work by second markers. It is not clear how a second marker might have initially arrived at a different final mark from the first marker, prior to the discussions that result in the consensual mark. Other internal moderation practices, such as those around teaching practice observations, are thorough. However there is insufficient external moderation of judgements made about the quality of trainees' teaching practice.

43. An appropriate range of equality and diversity measures are in place, with clear statements for trainees about rights, responsibilities and specialist sources of support or information. These are reported upon and adequately monitored by the university. A culture of respect and equality is vigorously promoted at the college.