

# University of the West of England

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A further education teacher training  
inspection report  
2007/08

Managing inspector  
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## 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 training of further education teachers*, both published in 2004. It was conducted in two phases by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and Additional Inspectors. During the first phase, which took place in February 2008, inspectors focused on the quality of training and management and quality assurance procedures. In the second phase, inspectors evaluated the achievements of trainees through observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress during the course. Phase 2 of the inspection was completed in June 2008.

## Background

2. The university's post-compulsory education and training provision is located in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities and organised through the School of Education in the Department of Secondary Education and Lifelong Learning. The university works in partnership with five colleges in the West of England to provide two-year part-time initial teacher training (ITT) courses for 156 in-service FE teachers, working mostly in FE colleges, leading to either a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) or a Certificate in Education (Cert Ed). In addition, the university provides training for 29 trainees on a one-year full-time pre-service PGCE in post-compulsory education and training. All qualifications are within the university's academic framework and satisfy the Secretary of State's requirements for FE teacher education. The university is a member of a Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETT).

3. Teaching on the in-service course is mostly by university tutors and takes place weekly at the university's Frenchay campus and on the premises of partner colleges, either during the day or in the evening. At one college, the teaching is undertaken by the college tutors. Pre-service trainees are located at the Frenchay campus and have placements in nearby FE colleges. On completion of an induction period, trainees attend the university and placement for two days each week with one day for private study and preparation during the first and third terms. In the second term, they attend the placement for three days with one day at the university and one day for private study.

## Effectiveness of provision

4. The overall quality of provision is very good (grade 1). Trainees make very good progress throughout their training. The training combines theory and teaching practice very well and develops trainees' self-evaluative skills to enable them to reflect on and improve their teaching practice. Through highly effective tutoring and mentoring arrangements, trainees develop and apply specialist teaching skills very

well. Trainees plan and deliver purposeful lessons in which their learners make good progress and are well supported. They use a very wide range of methods, activities and resources confidently to promote good learning, complemented by good class management skills. Trainees benefit from well-qualified and highly skilled trainers who facilitate very good sessions, with strong links between theory and practice and recent research. Trainees value highly the meticulous and constructive feedback on assignments and observed lessons that enable them to make further progress. As a result of very strong programme management, the quality of training is consistent and coherent across the partnership. The partnership is strong and highly productive and benefits from very good and constructive communication. Teaching accommodation and learning resources are of a consistently high standard. The well-established, comprehensive and highly effective quality assurance arrangements result in a strong ethos of rigorous self-evaluation and a successful cycle of continuous improvement.

## Key strengths

Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- trainees' very good use of theory, reflective practice and feedback to improve their teaching skills
- trainees' very good progress
- trainees' very well-planned, well-managed and purposeful lessons
- very good development and application of trainees' specialist subject pedagogy
- very good training sessions with strong links to theory and practice
- highly effective tutoring and mentoring
- very good assessment practice
- very strong programme management
- strong and highly productive partnerships
- very good resources to support learning, teaching and research
- well-established, comprehensive and highly effective quality improvement.

## Areas for attention

No significant areas for attention were identified.

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

## Achievements of trainees

5. Both pre- and in-service trainees make very good use of theory, reflective practice and feedback to improve their teaching skills. They evaluate their performance in lessons thoughtfully and are keen to make improvements and extend their knowledge and skills. Most have developed good and accurate self-evaluative and self-critical approaches to their teaching and produce detailed and thorough evaluations of their lessons. All trainees use the comprehensive feedback they receive on their teaching to inform future lesson planning. They make pertinent links between theory and practice and, through good analysis and insight, understand well the impact of different methodologies on learning.

6. Trainees make very good progress. Pre-service trainees demonstrate considerable progress from the acquisition of basic knowledge of teaching, through to the evaluation of many teaching methods and to the identification of clear causal links between theory and practice. In-service trainees have improved their skills in writing lesson objectives, in their use of questions and in enabling learners to contribute more in lessons. All have benefited significantly from peer observation to develop their skills. Trainees include regular self-reflection as part of the lesson planning process and through this positive approach to continuous improvement have made good progress.

7. Trainees' lessons are very well-planned, well-managed and purposeful. This is because thorough and well considered lesson plans contain clear, specific and relevant learning outcomes. Plans incorporate flexibility and include explicit and coherent strategies to meet the different needs of individual learners. Most trainees make very good use of time and maintain a purposeful environment in which learners make good progress. In a minority of lessons, the pace is too slow with a lack of challenge for those students who are capable of more. Trainees demonstrate good class management skills and apply effective behaviour management techniques efficiently. Many trainees exude a calm and confident presence that is put to good use in teaching large groups.

8. Trainees use a very wide range of methods, activities and resources confidently to promote good learning. Many of these are very imaginative and exciting. Because they are not afraid to experiment with different teaching styles, often through negotiation with learners, trainees improve their practice effectively. They make good use of individual, pair and group work to add variety to the learning. Trainees regularly include the development of literacy, numeracy and

information and communication technology (ICT) as part of their planning. Most use subject-relevant ICT confidently to promote and enhance learning and to encourage greater involvement of learners in the lesson.

9. Trainees develop and apply very good specialist pedagogy. They demonstrate very good and wide subject knowledge and use this to very good effect in lessons. Many incorporate their considerable industrial and commercial experience in their teaching and expect high standards of work from their learners during practical activities. In a lesson on evaluating the accuracy, reliability and validity of computer programmes, learners devised a good series of tests that checked values, ranges and text as they analysed each other's software applications. Trainees use good strategies to improve their learners' practical skills and knowledge and ensure that lesson content is linked closely to real life examples. Many make good use of experiential learning, especially where learners have to diagnose faults and provide solutions.

10. Trainees demonstrate a good understanding of the purpose and types of assessment. They use an extensive range of assessment activities to monitor their learners' progress. Some have devised initial and diagnostic tests to help them meet the needs of their learners more effectively. Trainees use direct questioning and observation well to check learners' understanding and progress. Many trainees promote successful self- and peer-assessment. Trainees maintain good documentation which tracks learners' progress and records assessment decisions. Feedback on marked work is generally good with suitably evaluative and constructive comments.

11. Both pre- and in-service trainees provide good individual support in lessons. They work closely with learning support assistants and include them in their planning. Most trainees use their specialist subject knowledge well to identify further opportunities for learners to extend their skills. In-service trainees provide good pastoral and academic support and understand clearly when they need to refer learners to wider additional and specialist support.

## Quality of training

12. The structure and content of the PGCE/Cert Ed combine well to provide highly effective training programmes that meet national qualification requirements for teaching in the post-compulsory education and training sector. All trainees benefit from the very good balance between theoretical elements and practical teaching experience. For pre-service trainees, in particular, the well-designed full-time programme provides a productive blend of placement and university learning. The university places a strong emphasis on developing trainees' knowledge and skills across a broad range of contexts including FE provision for 14-16 year olds, work-based learning and teaching HE in FE. The university makes clear reference to trainees' understanding and application of literacy, numeracy and ICT throughout the programme modules.

13. Trainers across the partnership are well-qualified and highly skilled. They demonstrate very good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and display very good subject knowledge. They act as good professional role models and set high standards. A shared understanding of good practice is apparent from the consistent use of differentiation, reference to research and wider reading in training sessions. Reading lists are comprehensive, include a very good range of texts and contain very recently published work and research.

14. The quality of training is high across the partnership. Trainees benefit from very good training sessions with strong links between theory and practice. The planning and preparation of training sessions are very good and supported by an equally good range of teaching and learning methods, techniques and resources. Teacher trainers make good use of ICT in their training sessions. Close links exist between education theory and practice and trainers draw on their trainees' previous and current teaching experience to strengthen these links. Sessions that concentrate on the socio-political context of further education challenge, stimulate and inspire trainees as they discuss the impact of education policy on their curriculum area.

15. Trainees' access to the university's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is insufficient across the partnership. Some trainees in partner colleges did not have passwords to access VLE and find the menus difficult to navigate, preferring to use their own colleges' VLEs. The university has recently reissued guidance to trainees on the use of this resource. It has also completed a survey to identify the reasons behind the low usage.

16. Tutoring and mentoring are highly effective and develop trainees' specialist subject knowledge and related skills particularly well. Arrangements for tutoring and mentoring are well-established on the pre-service course. They have improved significantly for in-service trainees over the last two years. Mentoring handbooks are clear and detailed. Induction of new mentors on the pre-service course is particularly good. Trainees make very good use of their tutors and mentors to develop subject specific skills and to improve specialist teaching techniques. Many have also benefited from tutor and mentor support to extend their class and time management skills. Tutors and mentors engage in frequent and useful discussions with trainees and regularly share good practice. Both tutors and mentors demonstrate good awareness of trainees' progress. For a minority of trainees, specialist support for the teaching of numeracy is insufficient.

17. The university meets the needs of both pre- and in-service trainees well. Initial assessment of in-service trainees' literacy, numeracy, ICT and teaching skills takes place at recruitment across the partnership, the results of which contribute to the development of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs).

18. The university has improved the recording and monitoring of progress on ILPs significantly. ILPs are now integral to assessment and together with the professional development record provide a very clear measurement of trainees'

progress. Greater emphasis is now placed on developing in-service trainees' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in the workplace. Support for trainees with dyslexia is good.

19. Assessment practice is very good. Trainees' progress is assessed very well through the teaching practice observations, assignments and tutorials across the partnership. Tutors provide very detailed feedback on all written assignment work with meticulous and constructive comment that identifies the level of progress made between assignments. This provides a good basis for further research or study. Feedback from tutors and mentors on teaching practice observations is very detailed and of a very high standard. The tutor or mentor monitors the subsequent action plans carefully through the tutorial process. The university makes particularly good use of video assessment to evaluate trainees' teaching practice and to maintain consistency across the partnership. Feedback on these sessions is very useful and links well to theory. Trainees' own assessment of their teaching practice is insightful and correlates well with that of the observer.

## Management and quality assurance of provision

20. The integration of initial teacher training, continuous professional development and human resources is very good across the partnership. Recruitment and selection procedures are very thorough for both the pre- and in-service courses. Good arrangements are in place for the accreditation of trainees' prior experience and qualifications.

21. Very strong management of the programme has resulted in consistent and coherent high quality training across the partnership. Roles and responsibilities are very clear with well-established and very effective systems to manage and evaluate the training. Each partner college has a liaison tutor who reports in detail on quality, progress, support and delivery to the regular programme committee meetings. Clear action plans result from these meetings that concentrate on refining the delivery of training and maintaining consistency between centres.

22. Partnership arrangements are strong and highly productive. The partnership is long established and benefits from very good and constructive communication. Collaboration to develop new programme content in response to the recent changes to teaching qualifications has been very effective and draws on the skills of trainers across the partnership. Through the CETT, the university has successfully bid for and carried out a number of post-compulsory research projects. The partnership benefits from the dissemination of this research that trainers use to enhance their teaching. The partnership builds capacity well through ensuring that new teacher trainers shadow more experienced trainers before they work with trainees.

23. Resources to support learning, teaching and research are very good across the partnership. Trainees benefit from high quality learning and research resources including good ICT facilities, very good library and learning resource centres and



well-equipped classrooms. Interactive whiteboards are installed in all classrooms and trainers use them well.

24. Quality improvement arrangements are well-established, comprehensive and highly effective. A strong ethos of quality improvement exists among course team members. The very clear and well understood quality assurance cycle complements the good arrangements in partner colleges. Partner colleges produce highly evaluative annual self-evaluations that inform the comprehensive self-evaluation documents for both the pre- and in-service provision. The university has recently started to observe the quality of the training sessions to inform its own judgements and to share best practice.

25. Arrangements for standardisation and moderation are effective. Moderation processes are rigorous with good guidelines for partner colleges. The partnership uses the feedback from external examiners well to maintain high standards.

26. The monitoring and implementation of policies on equality of opportunity and the promotion of good race relations meet statutory requirements. Analysis of recruitment and achievement data takes place with actions identified to improve areas of weakness. The recruitment of trainees from minority ethnic groups is low. The university has recently taken the lead in analysing the composition, training and qualification levels of staff in partner colleges. It has established a project among senior leaders in each college to raise the profile of black and minority ethnic staff in employment and training. The promotion of equality of opportunity features prominently in the design of the new programmes. Much focus is placed on ensuring that trainees are prepared to teach in culturally diverse settings. Trainees' research assignments include a good range of highly relevant topics about diversity.

## Appendix list of colleges

The following colleges were members of the partnership at the time of the inspection:

City of Bath College  
Filton College  
Gloucestershire College  
Hartpury College  
Stroud College