

# University Campus Suffolk

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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 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 two members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate and two specialist Additional Inspectors. Seven Additional Inspectors joined the team for part of phase two. Pre-service provision at the university and in-service provision at three colleges were evaluated as part of the inspection. Account was also taken of provision in other partnership centres. During the first phase in January 2008, inspectors focused on the quality of training and management and quality assurance procedures. During the second phase, inspectors reviewed the achievements of trainees, through observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress during the course. The second phase of the inspection was completed in June 2008.

## Background

3. University Campus Suffolk (UCS) works in partnership with five colleges of further education (FE) to provide initial teacher training (ITT) courses for FE teachers in the post-compulsory sector. The management of initial teacher training programmes is located within the Faculty of Arts, Business and Social Sciences at the UCS campus in Ipswich. The provision leads to the UCS Professional Graduate Certificate/Certificate in Education qualifications, awarded jointly by the University of Essex and the University of East Anglia. These are endorsed qualifications which satisfy the Secretary of State's requirements for FE teachers. At the time of inspection, UCS was delivering the second year of its legacy Professional Graduate Certificate in Education programme (PGCE)/Certificate in Education (Cert. Ed.) programme. In addition, UCS was delivering the first year of PGCE/Cert. Ed. qualified teacher learning and skills programmes, which are programmes endorsed by Standards Verification UK (SVUK) as meeting national requirements.
4. Two main training routes are available: a full-time pre-service course on which 20 trainees were enrolled, and a part-time in-service course on which 59 trainees were enrolled on the second year of 'legacy' awards. Some 65 trainees are enrolled on the new awards. In addition, UCS runs a programme leading to the Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sectors (CTLTS), on which 18 trainees are enrolled. Most in-service trainees work in FE colleges; around 26% of trainees work in other contexts, such as in adult and community learning.
5. The pre-service course lasts for one academic year. On completion of an induction period at the university, trainees spend two days a week in a college placement during the main programme and attend the university for two days; a further day is set aside for self-managed learning and preparation for teaching. The

in-service course is a two-year programme for teachers and trainers employed in post-compulsory education and training. In-service trainees attend weekly sessions, either during the day or in the evening. All training is delivered by university or university-approved teacher trainers. All trainees undertake the same programme of study with differentiation between awards determined by the assessment criteria.

## Effectiveness of provision

6. The overall quality of provision is adequate (grade 3). Trainees demonstrate a strong personal commitment to their own students and a particularly responsive approach to improving their professional skills. Programmes are well-structured and take appropriate account of key national issues and trainees' needs and interests. Teacher trainers develop trainees' practical teaching skills well and provide a high standard of personal support for them. Mentors provide extensive support for trainees in the workplace, but do not always focus sufficiently on the further development of trainees' skills in teaching their specialist subject area.

7. Managers have a positive approach to improving the partnership and to the establishment of professional working among partner institutions. Links between partners are productive, and are becoming more firmly established. Well-embedded university and college quality assurance systems address any areas identified for attention. Some aspects of quality assurance are underdeveloped, for example, the evaluation of equality and diversity policies and procedures for the partnership. The quality monitoring of mentoring arrangements is not implemented consistently across partner centres. Managers are responsive to feedback and are introducing planned improvements, some of which have already begun to impact positively on the quality of trainees' experience.

## Key strengths

Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- trainees' strong personal commitment and responsive approach to improving their professional skills in teaching and learning
- well structured training programmes which respond to key national issues and address trainees' needs and interests
- good teaching by teacher trainers to develop trainees' teaching skills and understanding of the FE sector
- high standard of personal support for trainees by tutors productive partnership working.

## Areas for attention

The partnership should address:

- insufficient consistency in the support given for the development of trainees' minimum core skills in literacy, numeracy and Information Communication Technology (ICT)
- insufficient focus by mentors on developing trainees' skills in teaching their specialist subject area, and on setting targets to help trainees improve
- insufficient access to resources by some trainees
- insufficient evaluation of equality and diversity policies and procedures at partnership level
- underdeveloped implementation of quality monitoring arrangements.

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

## Achievements of trainees

8. Trainees reflect critically and thoughtfully on their teaching. They are very receptive to guidance, and are active in seeking advice from tutors and mentors on how they can improve their practice. Most trainees have a clear view of their future development needs and show a strong commitment to the students they teach. Most pre-service trainees make a significant life change to enter initial teacher training for the post-compulsory education and training sector. Trainees are very enthusiastic about their subjects. They are keen to use their skills and experiences of working life to help learners overcome barriers and to make the transition into further study or employment. This is typified in their commitment to developing the practical skills of vocational learners to industry standard. A few trainees have not extended their ability to reflect on their practice and on the feedback they receive from teacher trainers and mentors. Consequently, they do not always evaluate the impact of their teaching on learning as well as they should.

9. Trainees have a good understanding of general principles of teaching and learning and are able to link theoretical concepts appropriately to their practice. They use a range of strategies and activities to suit the abilities and interests of individual students, drawing on their contributions effectively to support learning. Most trainees have good class management skills and gain in confidence as a result of their training. For example, a move from a teacher-centred to a more learner-centred model during the programme encouraged trainees to try out new approaches to meet individual learners' needs. Trainees respond especially well to teaching the practical elements of vocational courses. They establish good working

relationships with learners, and create a positive and safe learning environment. A minority of trainees are less confident, with a narrow range of teaching strategies providing insufficient challenge, especially for learners who are capable of more. Occasionally, they lack the skills to work with younger groups of students or in using information learning technology (ILT) and they do not always make best use of learning support assistants in their lessons.

10. Trainees are well qualified and have good subject knowledge, often linked to extensive industrial or commercial experience. This is usually applied well in their teaching to enhance lessons and give greater relevance for learners. Most are clear about the need to develop their students' literacy and numeracy skills in the context of their subject area. A minority of trainees do not use the full range of strategies appropriate to their subject specialisms, tending to rely too much on one approach such as workshops or didactic presentation. Sometimes they overestimate the acquired understanding of their specialist subjects, and pitch their teaching at too high a level, with insufficient checks on learning.

11. Lessons are generally well planned, with appropriate aims, learning objectives and activities. Trainees take care to identify resources and materials which are suitable and relevant to the learning group. They are not so thorough in identifying assessment activities clearly in their planning. A minority of trainees do not take sufficient account of learners' initial assessment or the different needs of learners in the same group. For example, they do not plan systematically for differentiated activities and outcomes which challenge all learners or allow learners' achievements to be measured. Most trainees do not plan sufficiently, or explicitly, to develop the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information communications technology within the context of their specialist subject.

12. The training equips trainees with a broader understanding of assessment practice and they value this. Most of them have a clear idea of their learners' overall progress and track and record this effectively. Trainees generally monitor practical work well and provide encouraging verbal feedback to learners. A minority of them do not check learning in lessons sufficiently; for example, through questioning or other formative assessment strategies. Not all trainees correct grammar and spelling errors on written work, or provide sufficient feedback and clear targets to help their learners to improve.

13. Most trainees are generally well aware of progression routes and the support and referral services available within their organisation. They provide good, informal academic and pastoral support for their students and refer them where necessary to specialist support services. A few trainees, often in more limited teaching roles, are not sufficiently aware of the broad range of services or progression routes available and this restricts their capacity to provide secure advice and guidance.

## Quality of training

14. The course structure is comprehensive and well planned, and meets national requirements for endorsed qualifications. Programme design enables theory to be linked closely with practice through group teaching sessions and assignments. Key national issues are addressed. The combination of mandatory and optional modules allows for a more personalised approach to learning. However, individual module guides do not always provide clear guidance for trainees on the minimum core requirements.

15. Teacher trainers are well qualified, enthusiastic and dedicated, and have a clear understanding of their own responsibilities. They plan and resource teaching sessions well, and model good practice through a wide range of learning activities which engage and help trainees to develop their teaching skills. Effective use is made of specialist guest speakers to help trainees extend their understanding of the wider FE sector. Pre-service trainees also benefit from a second placement opportunity, which broadens their experience of post-compulsory education and training settings.

16. Trainees receive good support from tutors and benefit from dedicated and helpful teacher-training teams. Workplace support provided by mentors and workplace colleagues is valued by most trainees. However, mentoring arrangements are not yet fully developed, and are not sufficiently linked to the teaching programme. Not all trainees receive the same degree of mentor support, particularly in the enhancement of their subject specialist teaching skills. Well-advanced plans to address this variation in trainees experience include participation in a national on-line association of learning communities. UCS has recently offered the first of a number of subject specific workshops which brought together trainees in similar subject areas. Early feedback indicates that trainees found this valuable, and UCS aims to run similar workshops twice a year from September 2008.

17. Initial assessment of trainees' literacy and numeracy skills is thorough. Clear support is provided for the development of trainees' skills in literacy and numeracy. A minority of trainees do not always receive timely support following this initial assessment of their development needs. Literacy and numeracy support does not always focus sufficiently on trainees' professional roles, and the programme does not yet plan sufficiently to meet trainees' individual development needs in ICT.

18. Assessment arrangements are appropriate and well documented. Tutors provide helpful and constructive feedback on assignments and teaching observations. Their assessment of trainees' progress and achievements is accurate. Feedback is generally clear and well structured, with specific detailed advice on areas for improvement. Tutors' feedback on trainees' written work does not always model good practice in correcting errors in spelling or punctuation. The use of individual learning plans (ILPs) is underdeveloped. The quality and value of these documents varies between partner institutions. For example, targets set for trainees are sometimes too broad and do not enable them to develop clear plans to assist

them in evaluating their progress. Some mentors do not fully understand their role in the assessment of trainees and they do not always record sufficiently detailed information on individual trainees' development of subject specific teaching skills.

## Management and quality assurance of provision

19. UCS has established productive partnership working and good professional relationships with its partner institutions. The management of the partnership is open and responsive to change. College representatives are fully involved in the development of all operational aspects of the provision.

20. Marketing of the newly endorsed courses is effective, and candidates receive detailed and accurate information about the programmes and progression opportunities. Selection processes are thorough, resulting in the choice of suitable trainees. Detailed arrangements for the accreditation of existing teachers' experience and qualifications are still being developed for newly endorsed programmes. In partner colleges, initial training is very well integrated with other aspects of staff management, leading to coherent strategies for recruitment, selection and identification of teacher training needs.

21. The introduction of a partnership policy for equality and diversity has been slow, although the UCS partnership has a strong commitment to equality of opportunity and diversity and individual partners have their own well established equality and diversity policies. Procedures for monitoring equality and diversity data and subsequent action planning for the partnership as a whole are underdeveloped.

22. Programmes are well managed, with effective and comprehensive course planning. A well-structured mentoring programme has been developed to support trainees' subject specialist teaching, although UCS recognises that the training of mentors is still patchy and attendance by mentors has been poor at some training events. Access to resources for trainees is generally satisfactory, although resources across the partnership are variable, in particular, access to the UCS Virtual Learning Environment and the standard of some teaching accommodation.

23. UCS has clear overarching systems and policies for quality assurance, including procedures for validation, approval, re-approval and annual evaluation of all the courses. Issues identified through feedback from trainees and external examiners are dealt with systematically. In addition to the UCS quality assurance processes, partner colleges have their own well established quality improvement systems. They routinely conduct their own annual self assessment and contribute to the moderation of individual modules and the annual review of the Cert Ed/PGCE programme. Good use is made of external examiners appointed and their role is being extended to include the moderation of observations of teaching and learning. Effective cross moderation arrangements are in place to assure the accuracy of assessment of units and written coursework.



24. UCS is aware of the need to improve some quality monitoring processes at operational level, for example, the monitoring of the quality of mentoring and subject specialist support. Actions to bring about improvements have been identified at partnership meetings but are yet to be fully implemented.

25. The partnership demonstrates a strong commitment to self-evaluation and improvement. UCS has developed a detailed action plan covering areas for attention identified through a range of feedback, and has already taken positive steps to address these issues. For example, partners have begun to implement a system of joint observation between teacher trainers and moderate mentor observations. UCS has begun to share good practice across the partnership more routinely. Some actions are already beginning to have a positive impact on the experience of trainees. Further changes will be incorporated into programmes offered from September 2008.

## Appendix list of colleges

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

Great Yarmouth College

Lowestoft College

Otley College

Suffolk New College

West Suffolk College