

# The University of Lincoln

Focused reinspection monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Pippa Francis HMI

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Address: Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Animal  
Sciences  
University of Lincoln  
Riseholme Campus  
Lincoln  
LN2 2LG

Telephone number: 01522 895313

## FOCUSED REINSPECTION MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

### Context and focus of visit

Riseholme College is the University of Lincoln's specialist college for the land-based and food manufacturing industries. It is medium sized and delivers further education (FE) provision from two campuses: the Riseholme campus, on the outskirts of Lincoln, and Holbeach, situated south of Boston. The Riseholme campus specialises in land-based provision. Its substantial estate includes a farm, an animal centre, an equine unit and a horticultural unit; residential accommodation is also provided. The Holbeach campus was developed in partnership with the food manufacturing industry and provides specialist training for the industry.

The college's main catchment areas are Lincolnshire and Rutland but its specialist provision recruits learners more widely from the East Midlands. The socio-economic environment around both campuses is favourable with low rates of unemployment, although some pockets of deprivation exist. The college offers FE provision in eight subject areas, with most learners studying in land-based subjects, food manufacturing and on courses in skills for life. The college provides work-based learning in land-based and food manufacturing subjects, which are Lincolnshire's major employment sectors.

The college was last inspected in March 2009. Its overall effectiveness was judged as satisfactory. All aspects and subject area grades were judged satisfactory with the exception of leadership and management which were judged inadequate. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in improving self-assessment and planning for improvement? Reasonable progress

Self-assessment and planning procedures have improved. The formation of the FE Academic Committee provides the college with a sharper focus for assessing the quality of its provision and closer monitoring of progress against targets. Self-assessment procedures are clearly documented and understood well by staff. Procedures have been strengthened to include more training for staff and improved external moderation of the final report. However, self-assessment sections relating to teaching and learning, and in particular evaluation of the progress that learners are making, lack sufficient detail to support the college's judgements.

Learners' views are not reflected sufficiently in self-assessment at any level in the college. The learner questionnaires which are currently in use do not ask the right

questions to elicit evaluative responses from learners about the quality of provision. Response rates are low.

The quality improvement plan relates closely to areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and identifies targets, milestones and staff responsible for actions. However, there are some gaps in its coverage; the plan does not address the declining retention on long courses for learners aged 16 to 18 between 2006/07 and 2008/09, the declining success rates on short courses, or the relatively low success rates of learners who find learning difficult.

### Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving learners' outcomes since the last inspection? Reasonable progress

Success rates on long courses for adult learners have increased at all levels and are above average. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 do not demonstrate such consistent improvement. The success rates have improved on courses at foundation and advanced level; however, the success rate at intermediate level has declined and is now below average. Retention has declined over a three year period for long courses at all levels for learners aged 16 to 18. However, college data showing retention of current learners indicate that in-year retention has increased. Key skills qualification success rates have increased significantly at foundation and intermediate level and are now satisfactory. Learners aged 14 to 16 achieve well. Short course success rates for all learners have declined.

Apprenticeship success rates are above average, but timely completion rates have declined to well below average. The college has extended the length of these programmes to provide learners with more realistic opportunities to complete their frameworks within the given time. Current attendance rates are high. The college has not evaluated fully its performance in addressing other broader outcomes and has few measurements of the impact of its actions to support its grades in the self-assessment report.

### Quality of provision

How much progress has been in made in developing the use of initial and diagnostic assessment? Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection the arrangements for initial and diagnostic assessment have been reviewed and considerably strengthened. Initial assessment information is used effectively to identify additional learning support needs and the level of key skills' study. Further diagnostic testing is now undertaken thoroughly by the university's specialist disability team, a member of which is now based once a week at the Riseholme campus.

However, of approximately 117 learners identified as needing various levels of support, only just under two thirds are currently receiving this, partly because the college does not insist on the take up of support. This incomplete take up raises the risk of under achievement for those in need. Approximately 60 learners have undertaken further diagnostic testing either as a result of the initial screening or through self or teachers' referral. This represents a considerable improvement in the level of specialist support offered compared to the limited availability at the last inspection. Procedures for evaluating the impact of learning support are being considered but limited evaluation takes place currently.

Quality of provision

How well are individual learning plans used in support of learners' achievement? Reasonable progress

The revised and comprehensive individual learning plans are used consistently across the college. Teachers' expertise in their use is developing quickly. However, a college audit of the use of these plans is accurate in its assessment of much variation in the quality of the content. Some good practice is evident but other less strong aspects include a tendency to use over-general short term targets. The rationale for setting target grades is unclear and some grades are unrealistic. The correlation between prior attainment and the level of key skills studied is sometimes weak.

Learners value the one to one support they receive and most acknowledge the value of individual tutorials in helping them to succeed. Their feedback about the broad range of support they receive from teachers is almost all of a positive nature. They do not rate group tutorials on more general themes as highly and do not see these as influential in supporting their personal and social development. Employers and work-based learners are very positive about the support, help and guidance they receive.

Quality of provision

How much progress has been made in developing the curriculum at foundation level? Significant progress

Courses are offered at foundation level in the main land-based subjects at the Riseholme campus and provide a good foundation level curriculum. Broad-based foundation level courses in literacy and numeracy are now offered at the Holbeach campus. These courses meet learners' needs and most are popular. Progression from foundation to intermediate courses in land-based subjects is high.

Courses for pupils aged 14 to 16 include the Diploma in land-based and environmental studies at foundation and intermediate level. The college is the lead partner in the consortium of regional providers in delivering this provision. Progression to college for pupils aged 14 to 16 on foundation level courses is high.

Managers have undertaken a comprehensive mapping exercise of foundation and entry level provision in the college's specialist subjects across the county. This has allowed managers to review the college's provision and assess accurately where gaps exist. Although the college does not provide entry level provision in land-based studies it has strong links with local or regional providers who do offer this level of study and this arrangement works well. The college works closely with several specialist providers who cater for vulnerable learners.

### Leadership and management

What improvements have been made to the quality assurance arrangements of teaching and learning and to what extent have these been implemented? Reasonable progress

Significant and thorough revisions have been made to the arrangements for the quality assurance of lessons. A detailed implementation plan of revised lesson observation procedures is in place. Revisions include a much-needed prompt and more detailed approach to identifying and providing staff development linked to observation findings. More rigorous moderation is planned, however, the potential time gap between undertaking observations and the moderation of records is too great to ensure that observers maintain their rigour, improve their practice and give accurate grades.

Observers are developing in confidence and have benefited from training but they do not always place sufficient emphasis on evaluating progress in learning seen in lessons. The promotion and evaluation of equality and diversity in lessons is underdeveloped, partly because evaluation of this aspect has only recently been added into the lesson observation scheme. The gathering of learners' feedback about the quality of teaching and learning is at an early stage in effectiveness. Feedback about lessons received during the inspection visit included evidence of a high rate of enjoyment and learners' appreciation of teachers' knowledge and expertise.

How well is management information used to evaluate and improve learners' performance? Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection the college has invested in software to enable it to analyse information on learners' performance. Training is being provided to ensure that managers can use the improved data systems effectively. Because of managers' lack of experience in using data the college is currently providing reports for managers, but this situation is expected to change once training has been completed and managers will be able to use online systems to analyse data fully. Analysis of data about the performance of different groups of learners does not have a high enough profile.

Target setting procedures at course and institutional levels are much improved and now take into consideration the age of learners and length of course, but the

absence of trend analysis reduces the effectiveness of some targets. Some targets are set for different groups of learners, but these are not comprehensive.

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
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