University of Cumbria

Re-inspection report

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Information about the provider

1.   The University of Cumbria was formed in August 2007 from St Martin's College in Lancaster & Carlisle, the Cumbria Institute of the Arts (CIA) at Brampton Road in Carlisle and the Cumbrian campuses of the University of Central Lancashire at Newton Rigg and Carlisle. At that time further education (FE) provision was organised with FE in arts in the new Faculty of the Arts at Brampton Road, whilst that at Newton Rigg went into a new Faculty of Science & Natural Resources.

2.   Mainly at Brampton Road in Carlisle, advanced level provision is offered in visual and performing arts and media, while at Newton Rigg the provision covers land-based subjects. To address the 14 to 19 entitlement in Eden, a broad range of other courses are offered, including childhood studies, health and social care, sport, outdoor education and Skills for Life. The university offers FE provision in 10 of the 15 sector subject areas, with the majority of learners in land-based and the arts. Work-based learning is offered mainly in land-based provision. In partnership with local schools the university offers provision for learners aged 14 to 16. The university recruits mainly from Cumbria but more widely for specialist provision in land-based subjects. Residential accommodation is provided and learners are assisted with transport beyond the travel to learn area.

3.   Carlisle city has an FE college and several maintained secondary schools with sixth forms. Unemployment in Cumbria is below average, although a significant proportion of employment is low-waged. Newton Rigg is in a rural area with poor transport and communication links. A very small proportion of the population is from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils achieving five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics in 2009 was just below the national average.

4.   FE provision at the university was inspected in February 2009. Overall effectiveness, achievement and standards, teaching and learning and leadership and management were all found to be inadequate. Capacity to improve, quality of provision and equality of opportunity were judged to be satisfactory. Of the six subject areas inspected agriculture and horticulture was judged to be good, two areas were found satisfactory and three, animal care and equine, performing arts and media and visual arts were judged to be inadequate. At the focused monitoring visit in September 2009, seven judgements of reasonable progress were given and two of insufficient progress.

5.   Since the last inspection the university has created a school of FE across both campuses. The head of the school of FE and a new school leadership team manage across both campuses, aligned to one faculty. There is a new governance and committee structure and a new framework for FE staff contracts has been agreed. A review of FE has been carried out by the university looking at the future of FE provision and estate efficiency.

6.   The university provides training on behalf of the following providers:
- Cumbria Colleges Ltd – Train to Gain

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to16	131 part-time learners
Further education (16 to18)	493 full-time learners 106 part-time learners
Foundation learning	92 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	159 full-time learners 434 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	172 learners 182 apprentices
Informal adult learning	320 learners

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3

Capacity to improve	Grade 3

	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3

Subject Areas	
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	2
Arts, media and publishing	3

Overall effectiveness

7.   The overall effectiveness of FE provision is satisfactory and improving. Actions put in place to address areas for improvement arising from the last inspection have had a positive impact in all areas of provision. Learners make satisfactory progress in their courses and examination achievements are improved. Staff are working hard to embed improvements. Learners enjoy their studies, get on well together, feel safe and are well prepared for the next step in their career.

8.   Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. The university recognises that further work is needed to ensure that all learners are challenged in lessons and that information and learning technology (ILT) is used well across all areas. The lesson observation system has improved with further developments planned to ensure maximum impact. The quality of target setting for learners has improved but needs further work to ensure consistency. The university provides an appropriate range of programmes for learners and employers. Partnerships between the university and a wide range of other providers and organisations are strong and productive. The support that learners receive, through a variety of means, is good and learners feel that it helps them to succeed.

9.   Significant progress has been made in improving leadership and management, which is now satisfactory and developing strongly. Leaders have a clear vision for the future and robust lines of accountability. Management at all levels within FE provision has improved. Self-assessment processes are satisfactory but need further development as do the use of data and target setting, performance monitoring and the use of stakeholders' feedback to inform improvements at strategic level. Governance arrangements have improved significantly. Safeguarding processes and procedures are satisfactory. The university is planning further work to implement good practice and strengthen e-safety controls. The FE provision does not provide satisfactory value for money. The university is working diligently to address this matter.

Main findings

■   Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates improved in 2008/09 and this has been consolidated in 2009/10 with a significant increase for in-year retention. However, the overall success rate for learners aged 16 to 18 in 2008/09 was 4 percentage points below the comparable specialist college rate and the rate for adults was in line with the comparable specialist college rate. Success rates for apprenticeships, Train to Gain provision, learners aged 14 to 16 and short courses were high.

■   Learners now make the progress expected of them and are increasingly making good progress in lessons. They produce work of the expected standard, with many examples of good quality work. Learners enjoy their studies and work well together in teams. The attendance of learners is satisfactory and improving.

■   The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving. In the best lessons, planning is good. Learners enjoy a wide range of interesting activities and progress well. In the less effective lessons, learners are not always engaged or challenged appropriately and there is too much input from teachers. Teachers and learners use ILT and the virtual learning environment with varying degrees of success.

■   The quality of learners' target setting is too variable. In the best examples, targets inspire learners to aim higher and learners are well aware of their progress. In other cases, target setting and progress monitoring are insufficient to enable learners to improve.

■   Managers have improved the rigour and value of the lesson observation system. Most observations are accurate, but a few judgements are over-generous. Action plans arising from each observation enable teachers to improve the quality of their lessons, as evidenced through re-observations. Peer and work-based learning observations are insufficiently established.

■   The university offers a wide and appropriate range of programmes that takes good account of learners' and employers' needs. Although the university has a comprehensive learner engagement strategy, learners report that they do not

feel fully involved in strategic decisions. However, concerns raised by course team representatives are quickly resolved at course team level.

■   Strong, well established and productive partnerships exist between the university and other providers, schools, employer organisations, local agencies and the 14 to 19 partnership.

■   Learners value the good range of support that they receive from tutors and the additional learning team. They cite good support as a major contributory factor in their progress and success.

■   Leadership and management are satisfactory. Significant progress has been made since the last inspection. New staffing and governance structures are in place giving good direction and clear lines of accountability. Good progress has been made in improving the availability and use of performance data at all levels. Action planning derived from strategic considerations is insufficiently developed.

■   Self-assessment processes are satisfactory. Some areas for improvement are not given sufficient weight and actions are not clearly rooted in self-assessment. Self-assessment does not sufficiently analyse differences in performance of different groups of learners. Divisional self-assessment reports are well written, judgements are accurate and action planning closely links to areas for improvement.

■   The safeguarding of learners is satisfactory. Safeguarding officers are in place in each faculty and on each site. They have received appropriate training. Most staff have been trained and those that remain are prioritised to receive training. Learners feel safe. More work is needed to ensure that the university complies with good practice in safeguarding and tightens controls in relation to e-safety.

■   The delivery of FE provision is inefficient. Success rates have improved but staff costs are high and the FE provision does not cover its overheads. Estate costs are a significant drain on resources. The university is taking appropriate steps to ensure the viability of its FE provision.

What does University of Cumbria need to do to improve further?

■   Further raise success rates by embedding improvement strategies, such as the enhanced monitoring of learners and the increasing use of data, so that they are applied consistently across all areas. Particularly improve monitoring of the performance of different groups of learners and use this information to inform targeted action planning.

■   Increase the range of stimulating learning activities and the effective use of ILT, so that all learners are challenged and motivated to learn and progress.

■   Improve the consistency of the quality of learners' target setting and progress monitoring, so that all learners are aware of their progress against inspirational targets and know how to improve.

- Further develop the accuracy of lesson observation judgements and develop the process to include peer and work-based learning observations, so that all teachers benefit from subject specific observations and action plans.

- Ensure that all safeguarding processes are in line with good practice recommendations and that the plans to improve the controls for e-safety are implemented.

- Further develop self-assessment processes ensuring that areas for improvement are appropriately addressed and given sufficient weight. Use feedback from users more systematically at a strategic level to inform improvements.

- Ensure that the FE provision meets the needs of learners in Cumbria in a financially sound manner.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- how well the provision meets their needs

- the quality of teaching and high level of inclusion

- how they are effectively challenged in some lessons

- the academic and personal guidance, such as one-to-one support

- the practical skills that help prepare them for employment

- the specialist resources

- how well additional learning support meets their needs.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the input they have on how provision is developed

- the slow response to concerns at university level

- cover arrangements for staff absences

- the lack of library facilities at Brampton Road

- the very slow computers.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- how well the provision meets their needs

- the good communication and support

- the regular on-site visits

- the good links between practical and academic provision

- their significant role in reviews of progress

- the good standard of work and progress made by learners
- the contribution that the university makes to the local community.

What employers would like to see improved:
- no areas for improvement were identified in the responses received from employers.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement   Grade 3

10. There has been marked improvement in all aspects of provision since the last inspection. Subject areas re-inspected were judged to be satisfactory and better. Inspectors found improving success rates, satisfactory and improving teaching and learning, and satisfactory and improving leadership and management. The university has developed a clear vision for FE provision, which is effectively communicated to staff. The new structure provides clear lines of accountability and there is more consistency in practice across subjects and sites.

11. The overall self-assessment report is detailed and covers most aspects appropriately although some areas for improvement are not given enough prominence. Links between the self-assessment report and actions within the quality improvement plan are not always sufficient. Divisional self-assessment reports are accurate and action plans link closely to areas for improvement. Targets and data are being used more effectively.

12. Governance arrangements have improved significantly. The structures are new but are already having a positive impact. Learners' and other stakeholders' views are gathered well but not always used effectively to promote improvement. At present value for money is inadequate. The university is aware of this and significant work is taking place at all levels to improve the financial viability of FE provision.

Outcomes for learners   Grade 3

13. Success rates for learners are satisfactory; the improvements seen in 2008/09 have been consolidated in 2009/10. In 2008/09 the overall success rate for learners aged 16 to 18 on Advanced level programmes was at the comparable national rate for specialist colleges. The success rate for adult learners on A-level programmes declined and was below the comparable rate. This decline has been addressed as evidenced by much improved retention in 2009/10. The same pattern is found for learners aged 16 to 18 on intermediate programmes, where a decline in 2008/09 has been reversed in 2009/10. The success rate for adult learners on intermediate courses has been relatively static over the last few years and above comparable rates. On foundation programmes, success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 increased by nearly 20 percentage points in 2008/09, and this gain has been consolidated by improvements in retention in the current year. Success rates for adult learners on foundation programmes also increased significantly. Comparisons of retention data for all learners show an increase from 87% in 2008/09 to 94% in 2009/10 for the same period.

14. Success rates on apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships show strongly improving trends, for both the overall and timely success rates. There was a

major increase in the timely success rate from 12.5% in 2006/07 to 64.4% in 2008/09. Overall and timely success rates were both above comparable national rates in 2008/09. Success rates for Train to Gain qualifications were high and for some subjects were excellent, with rates above 90%. Success rates on short courses were high in 2008/09, as were success rates for learners aged 14 to 16. Key skills success rates were satisfactory.

15.   In 2008/09 there were no patterns of underachievement in the performance of different groups. Minimal differences are evident in the achievement rates for male and female learners, with successful action having been taken to improve the success rate of adult males on advanced courses. Learners aged 16 to 18 with additional learning support needs achieved better results than their peers and adult learners achieved as well as their peers.

16.   The progress learners made in lessons in previous years was weak in some subjects but this issue has been addressed and learners now make at least satisfactory progress in lessons and an increasing proportion make good progress. The standard of work produced by learners has improved. It is at the expected level and there are many examples of high standards of work being produced. Learners develop the skills that they need to succeed in their studies, including literacy and numeracy skills. They enjoy their studies, behave very well, respect their environment and work well in teams. The attendance of learners overall is satisfactory and improving and punctuality is good.

17.   Learners make good progress in developing the skills necessary for their future economic and social wellbeing and progress well onto the next stage in their career. The university provides good opportunities for work experience, a clear focus on citizenship and a strong emphasis on entrepreneurialism and managing finance. Learners feel safe in the university; health and safety practices are used well in lessons and learners feel staff will support them with any concerns. Currently there are insufficient controls in relation to e-safety, about which the university is aware, and has plans to address.

18.   Learners are given useful information to make informed choices about their health in induction and through the tutorial programme. There is strong personal and pastoral support from staff. However, healthy foods are not well promoted and there are low rates of participation in sporting activities. Learners make a strong contribution to the local community through a range of activities. These include working with young people, the elderly and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a very strong focus on sustainability, with the biodiesel plant and willow plantation, and a good range of activities to support community cohesion.

The quality of provision   Grade 3

19.   The quality of teaching, training and assessment to support learning has improved and is satisfactory. Lesson planning is good; teachers include a wide range of different activities to meet learners' needs. The implementation of these plans,

however, is not always as effective as intended. In the best lessons, learners enjoy a wide range of interesting activities, are fully engaged in learning and progress at a good pace. Their skills, knowledge and self-confidence increase significantly. Learners appreciate the way teachers relate learning to their industrial contexts. Teachers encourage learners to be self-reliant and to aim for higher standards, especially in their practical activities.

20.   In the less effective lessons, teachers expect learners to listen at length to their presentation and direct proceedings excessively. Learners are not involved fully and those who complete tasks early are not challenged to progress further. The rate of progress is slow and learners have to rush end of lesson activities.

21.   The quality of learners' target setting is too variable. In the best examples, teachers motivate learners to aim for higher grades and learners are aware of their individual targets. In other cases, learners' targets are too general, progress monitoring is weak and learners are unsure of how to improve. The use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) and ILT by teachers and learners to aid understanding is variable. In some areas, teachers use them frequently and effectively to enliven learning. In other areas, their use is infrequent and occasionally hinders learning. Most staff have the appropriate teaching qualifications for their role or are on training courses; a small number are due to begin training in the next six months.

22.   Most assignment briefs are clear and detailed and indicate precisely the requirements for the different grades. Internal verification is thorough. Most assignment marking and feedback are detailed and helpful. In a small minority of assignments, the requirements, grade criteria and feedback are too brief and do not support learners' improvement. Work-based assessments are good and relate effectively to industry standards. Reports to parents and guardians are detailed, constructive and personalised. Workplace review and progress summary notes involve employers, apprentices and assessors appropriately.

23.   Managers have improved the rigour of the lesson observation process significantly since the last inspection. The new system is comprehensive and relates well to internal systems and external requirements. Most observations are accurate, but a small minority are over-generous. Managers have improved the moderation of observation judgements. Clear action plans inform staff development very appropriately. Peer and work-based learning observations are being developed.

24.   The university offers a wide range of programmes that takes good account of learners' and employers' needs. Increasing numbers of apprenticeships, Train to Gain and occupationally specific short courses provide a suitable work-based alternative to the university-based provision. Part-time vocational awards, a successful 14 to 19 Diploma in environment and land-based and young apprenticeships provide a good range of provision for Year 10 and 11 pupils. The university effectively promotes an inclusive curriculum through a variety of widening participation programmes with the local community, the probation service and the National Health Service.

25. Frequent contact with employers successfully contributes to curriculum planning. The university has recently formalised the collection of employer evaluations. Learners monitor their programmes frequently but there is little evidence that evaluations result in formal improvement plans. Although the university has a comprehensive learner engagement strategy, learners report that they do not feel fully involved in strategic decisions. However, concerns raised by course team representatives are quickly resolved at course team level.

26. The majority of programmes have a rich and varied selection of additional activities to widen learners' occupational experience. Learners benefit from guest speakers, external visits, occupational placements and involvement in a wide range of imaginative projects. However, in a minority of programmes learners do not have enough access to an enriched curriculum. The university insufficiently monitors the level of additional provision offered. Access to evening enrichment activities available to residential learners has improved since the last inspection but learners' take-up of cross-university activities is low.

27. Well-established and productive partnerships exist between the university and other providers, schools, employer organisations, local agencies and the 14 to 19 partnership. Through collaborative working, the university has developed good learner progression routes while reducing programme repetition. Close links with employers and employer organisations helps maintain and update staff occupational skills. Collaborative initiatives with schools are improved and include sharing of good practice, good levels of communication and clearly defined academic and pastoral roles. Success rates on the university's school programmes have improved significantly. The university is at the initial stages of planning a blended curriculum that will extend pupils' Year 10 options.

28. The university provides prospective learners with access to open days, taster activities and information. Learners understand well the programme content and their responsibilities for home study. Learners value the very effective advice and guidance they receive from their tutors. A much improved and supportive tutorial programme provides learners with good personal development opportunities that link effectively to the Every Child Matters themes. The university offers a satisfactory range of personal advice and guidance through specialist staff in counselling, finance and health.

29. Learners value the good range of support that they receive from tutors and the additional learning team. They cite good support as a major contributory factor in their progress and success. Improved initial assessment has significantly increased the number of learners identified as requiring additional support. Staff respond quickly to identified needs, very effectively matching additional support to learners' personal preferences. Specialist staff develop learners' study and assignment writing skills very effectively through weekly timetabled sessions. Course teams monitor learners' support needs frequently with good and effective interventions taken for those learners identified at risk of falling behind or withdrawing.

Leadership and management   Grade 3

30. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Significant progress has been made since the last inspection. New staffing and governance structures are in place giving clear lines of accountability. Good progress has been made in the availability and use of performance data at all levels. Targets are appropriately set and monitored. Staff speak highly of the clear direction they receive and say that they are empowered and consulted in a variety of ways. Leaders are accessible and communication is effective with a good focus on the learners' experience. Staff value the investment made in training. They are clear that the vision is to provide a strong and high quality FE provision for Cumbria and have seen improvements in the consistency of approach between sites and across the new school of FE. Managers acknowledge that action planning derived from strategic considerations is insufficiently robust and staff appraisal systems are still in development.

31. Members of the new FE committee of the university board are experienced and know the provision well. The committee has appropriate learner representation. Governors are keen to hold FE managers to account, reporting significant changes since the last inspection. The governance structures ensure that the board fulfils its statutory responsibilities. Committee members are very aware of safeguarding requirements and are fully involved with the current review of FE provision. The structures are new but governors believe that they are making a real difference in raising the profile of FE and positively influencing the capacity to improve.

32. The safeguarding of learners is satisfactory. Safeguarding officers are in place in each faculty and on each site. They have received appropriate training. Most staff have been trained and the minority that remain are prioritised to receive training in regular updates that take place. Learners feel safe. Risk assessment is thorough, and differentiates between different groups of learners and individuals; health and safety is monitored well. Policies are up-to-date and a single central record in place. The university is undertaking a re-check of the Criminal Records Bureau status of FE staff and risk assessments are in place for those staff awaiting clearance. More work is needed to ensure that the university complies with good practice in safeguarding. Currently controls on e-safety are not rigorous.

33. The university actively promotes equality and diversity. The single equality scheme is in draft, compliance is monitored effectively and appropriate impact assessments have taken place. Staff have received training and useful good practice updates for teaching and learning are provided. Staff are surveyed about discriminatory practice. Complaints are monitored effectively. Learners' induction emphasises respect for others, and good work has taken place with minority groups to encourage staff and learner applications. Recruitment of staff and learners reflects the community profile but women are under-represented on the university board and FE committee. Learners aged 16 to 18 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities perform better than their peers. Adults with

disabilities perform as well as their peers. There are no patterns of underachievement for any specific group of learners. Self-assessment does not sufficiently focus on the performance of different groups of learners at university or curriculum level. Lesson observations indicate that equality and diversity are not always given sufficient attention.

34. The views of users are captured well in a variety of ways. A wide range of productive partnerships inform course development and improvement. Employers have benefited from bespoke courses and value the contribution that the FE provision makes to the area. Learners have benefited from community links and the training opportunities these bring. The university plays a key role in planning 14 to 19 provision based on future needs. Feedback from learners is used to inform change. However, learners report that some of their concerns have not been addressed and they do not always know why. Learners' and employers' feedback is not used effectively to inform quality improvement at a strategic level.

35. The new structure facilitates improved quality assurance. An annual quality cycle is in place and curriculum teams are involved in regular course review. Procedures improve consistency between curriculum areas. The university self-assessment report is detailed and sets measurable targets but some areas for improvement are not given sufficient weight. Actions are not always clearly derived from self-assessment. Divisional self-assessment reports are well written, judgements are accurate and action planning closely links to areas for improvement. Self-assessments for support areas are insufficiently developed. Progress has been slow in ensuring that all staff are appropriately qualified.

36. The delivery of FE provision is inefficient. Success rates have improved but staff costs are high, and average class size and room utilisation are relatively low. FE provision does not cover its overheads. Estate costs are a significant drain on resources. The university is taking appropriate steps to improve the viability of its FE work. There has been an external review of the FE provision, and work on full economic costing and course viability. A-and AS-level provision is to be discontinued as a result. Departments have been merged to secure efficiencies and budgets are managed closely. Changes have been made to FE staff contracts which will improve efficiency of provision. Curriculum managers are aware of the need to manage class sizes and staff utilisation closely. Learners have benefited from the significant investment in resources.

Subject areas

Agriculture, horticulture and animal care   Grade 2

Context

37.   The range of courses includes agriculture, game keeping and countryside management, horticulture, animal care, equine studies and forestry from foundation to advanced level. There are currently 498 learners following land-based courses. Some 52% are aged 16 to 18; 27% are on employer responsive courses; and 73% are on agriculture, game keeping and countryside, forestry and horticulture courses.

Key findings

■   Learners' achievement is good. Success rates on agriculture, horticulture and countryside management courses are high. Success rates on most equine and animal care courses are satisfactory but rates are low on the first diploma animal care and the national diploma animal management. Retention on animal care courses has improved significantly this year and learners are making good progress towards agreed targets. Learners' attendance and punctuality are good.

■   Timely completion of apprenticeship frameworks has improved significantly for learners aged 16 to 18 and is now good. The framework achievement rate for adult apprentices is low but improving. Success rates on Train to Gain programmes and provision for learners aged 14 to 16 are high.

■   Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. Good lessons are well planned with a variety of learner-centred activities, good use of ILT and effective use of visits and practical lessons to reinforce theory. However, too many lessons lack challenge, are too teacher led, do not include checks on learning frequently or effectively and do not use ILT imaginatively.

■   Assignment briefs are well written and contain good guidance or suitable tasks to help learners meet the criteria. Assessment decisions are accurate and consistent. Assessors give clear and comprehensive feedback linked to grading criteria and clear indications of how learners can achieve better grades. There is good evidence of resubmission, remarking and internal verification of new decisions.

■   There is inconsistency in assessment planning and quality assurance in work-based learning. Assessment practice is good and makes excellent use of naturally occurring evidence in the workplace. Assessment methods are limited and there is little use of diverse evidence.

■   Learners enjoy university, they feel safe and value and benefit from the care and support provided by teachers. Good attention is paid to health and safety during lessons and assessments. Safeguarding and equality and diversity are not yet effectively monitored in individual tutorials and workplace reviews. Teachers miss opportunities for reinforcement of these issues during lessons.

- A wide range of additional vocational qualifications is available and are achieved by learners. Enrichment is satisfactory and most courses include vocational trips and outside speakers. The range of provision is good, with some specialist provision such as game keeping and droving, which meets the needs of learners.

- There is a wide variety of good, supportive work placements to suit learners' needs on all courses. Employer links and school partnerships are well established and successful. The support learners receive while on work placement varies; not all learners are visited although they are contacted by email.

- Individual tutorials make good use of learners' targets and assignments to set targets that encourage timely completion of appropriate grades. Learners are aware of their targets and progress. They value the encouragement that teachers give them to do better. Teachers use the new review systems to improve their understanding of learners and to intervene in a more effective manner to help improve retention.

- Management is good and roles and responsibilities are clear. Management actions to address low success rates include a tracking system that highlights at risk learners, who then receive additional support. Low success rates on the national diploma in animal management are being addressed through the introduction of a separate national award for learners in year one.

- Teachers feel that their voice is now better heard and they are taking greater ownership of the changes. Communication between staff and curriculum managers is good and there is greater access to a range of resources across the division. Teachers are all involved in course review and the self-assessment process. Self-assessment is broadly accurate and has led to significant improvement in some areas.

- Vocational resources are good and used well to support teaching. The use of the farm as a teaching resource is now more geared to learners' needs and its use by animal care learners is encouraged. Development of sustainability options involved learners in both the design and building. Computers in the library are too slow.

What does University of Cumbria need to do to improve further?

- Embed the improvements in retention and success rates. Ensure that course data are used well to set clear plans and targets for improvement, with regular reviews of progress to further support effective interventions, especially where there is underperformance.

- Further raise the standard of teaching and learning by ensuring that learning activities challenge more able and advanced learners and develop their analytical and evaluative abilities. Ensure strategies from good and better sessions are disseminated effectively across the land-based subject area.

- Reduce the inconsistency in assessment planning by monitoring the progress of apprentices frequently and rigorously. Develop strategies for assessment planning and internal verification to support assessors.

Arts, media and publishing   Grade 3

Context

38. The university currently has 286 learners on full-time FE programmes in art and design, photography, media, film studies, performing arts and music. Most provision is at advanced level including AS and A levels, BTEC national diplomas and access to higher education courses. The one intermediate level course will be discontinued after September 2010 and AS and A level provision is being phased out by 2011. The majority of learners are aged 16 to 18 and 51 are adults.

Key findings

- Success rates in 2008/2009 were low, with many courses having rates below the national average, some significantly so. More effective course monitoring systems are in place this year, and in-year retention rates are much improved. There are good progression rates to higher education.

- The quality of learners' practical work is good. Learners generate effective, vocationally relevant press interview simulation in music, and sensitive mark making and life drawing in foundation art and design. Learners have high concentration levels and confidence in performing arts and create thoughtful and well edited work in media production. Work is well presented in photography. ILT is embedded well in most lessons.

- Learners feel safe and secure and feel that there is no bullying on the premises. They are confident that staff would respond appropriately if they were to report any concerns. They enjoy coming to the university and have a strong commitment to wanting to learn.

- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Staff produce thorough lesson plans and assignments with systematic internal verification. Assignments are clear and relate to exam board criteria. However, too many lessons are overly teacher directed. Teachers miss opportunities to encourage learners to participate more or lead activity. Staff give feedback of satisfactory quality which tells learners how to improve work.

- Learners' target setting and monitoring are insufficiently robust. Tutors' use of individual learning plans and reviews are regular, however, targets are not consistently set based on entry data. Teachers review progress separately but do not compare ongoing assignment grades to target grades or identify accurately and quickly where a learner is underperforming. Learners have no opportunity to record self-evaluation on the learning plan.

- Resources are generally good. The learners share the higher education resources and facilities of the university and benefit from seeing the work of higher level learners. There are, however, some noise transference problems in drama and music accommodation and there is no longer a library at the Brampton Road campus. Some accommodation is unsuitable for people with mobility difficulties but timetabling can be adjusted to cater for this.

- A good range of creative courses is offered at Advanced level for learners aged 16 to 18. Foundation art and access to higher education art courses cater for adult learners. Course enrichment opportunities are good for foundation art learners but weaker for those on other courses.

- Staff have developed effective partnerships with employers and industry professionals who help to set live briefs for the learners and give specialist talks. Work is also carried out in collaboration with schools, community partners and arts organisations. Learners collaborate with undergraduates on projects, and regularly hold performances and exhibitions in community venues.

- Support for learners is good. Learners receive good specialist subject support from their teachers and personal tutors provide good links to university support mechanisms. When learning support is identified it is promptly provided, and is highly valued by learners.

- Cultural diversity is well promoted through the curriculum via different genres of film and music, and the use of a variety of cultural influences. Music learners participate in workshops on disability awareness and drumming skills. Media learners completed a documentary about a hospital in India and performing arts learners produced a 'Bollywood' musical. Representatives from the charity Mind deliver talks and raise learners' awareness of mental health issues.

- Leadership and management are good. The new manager is addressing underperformance effectively and the changes are showing evidence of success. It is too early to judge the full impact of these activities, however, there are already improvements, for example, in teaching and learning and in-year retention. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and quality improvement plans clearly identify actions being taken to lead to improvement in key areas.

- Management information data is insufficiently established. Improvements are being made to data availability and staff usage of them. New software was installed last November and data are starting to be used more consistently. However, their use is not yet fully embedded. Staff are positive about the new changes in data availability and performance management.

What does University of Cumbria need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates. Strengthen pre-course advice and guidance. Use data frequently to check retention, attendance and in-year performance rates and intervene early where targets are not being met.

- Increase learners' participation in learning. Hold focused classroom management training sessions for staff on methodologies and ideas to vary teaching methods and involve learners more fully in the learning process.

- Improve the individual learning plans by developing a strong, unified approach to target setting and monitoring. Combine existing documentation into one robust plan. Formulate an agreed method of working out target grades based on GCSE grades and other diagnostic data, and include assignment grades.

■ Further develop data availability and electronic systems to help staff to manage resources and data effectively. Ensure that the timetabling system shows the availability of the full resource and that the assessment tracking system used at Newton Rigg is rolled out promptly on the Brampton Road and other arts sites.

Information about the inspection

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the University of Cumbria's head of further education, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the university's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.

Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the university. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the university offers for FE provision.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
University of Cumbria
Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners Full-time learners Part-time learners	644 754	0 123	550 52	94 316	0 263
Overall effectiveness	3	2	3	3	2
Capacity to improve	3				
Outcomes for learners	3	2	3	3	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3				
How well do learners progress?	3				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	3				
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	3				
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	2				
Quality of provision	3	2	3	3	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	3	3	3	3	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	3				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	4				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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