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Dr Anne Murdoch
Principal
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Dear Dr Murdoch

Ofsted inspection of ITE provision leading to Awarding Body qualifications in the lifelong learning/further education sector

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your provision on 18–20 January 2012, and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my particular thanks to Fadia for organising the inspection visit.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and to a published national overview report. This report will identify the overall quality of provision leading to Awarding Body qualifications and identify the overall strengths and areas for development. However, in line with previous practice, inspectors will not make graded judgements of the quality of the provision in each centre; they will evaluate and feed back identified strengths and any points for further development. These are outlined below for your centre.

The published overview report will list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text.

Outcomes for trainees

For the provision overall, it is difficult to discern clear trends in trainees' outcomes because of weaknesses in data management that led to inaccuracies in the recording of Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) achievements in the past. These issues have now been resolved. Ten trainees enrolled for the DTLLS in 2010, with the intention of completing in summer 2012. Of these, at the time of the visit six were still on the course, of whom five were likely to complete in time. This low success

rate is attributable mainly to the number of trainees who lose their employment during the course, compounded by a small number who struggle to fulfil the required teaching hours because of reductions in their teaching contracts. As the college recognises, these are national concerns currently because of the financial constraints in the further education sector. The college also runs DTLLS provision for the army at a centre nearby, for service personnel teaching specialised courses in geographical information. Success rates are high on this provision, with most trainees completing successfully in autumn 2011. A further cohort is due to commence training later this year. Success rates on the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) course are generally high, although progression from this route to further teacher training courses is relatively low.

Once trainees complete the DTLLS qualification, they are encouraged to pursue full qualified teacher status and are supported in this through effective professional development. Most trainees either achieve, or intend to achieve, qualified teacher status in a short timescale.

Trainees who complete the DTLLS course make good progress. Trainees speak highly of the impact of the training on their practice, and those interviewed during the visit provided cogent evidence of their progress in becoming thoughtful practitioners who try out new ideas. For army-based trainees, the training is responsible for a radical change in their practice. Whereas previously they had been ingrained in a culture of teaching that was didactic and instructional, they have now transformed their practice by adopting much more active and interactive pedagogical techniques. Trainees' reflections are evident when speaking to them and watching them teach; they are less adept at keeping written testaments of their progress. The development of trainees' subject specialist pedagogy is hampered by the absence of coherent mentoring arrangements; many trainees do not benefit from the support of a subject specialist mentor.

For a minority of trainees, the breadth of their teaching experience is too narrow. For external candidates in particular, it can be difficult for the college to ensure that trainees experience a range of teaching on different courses at different levels. Trainees do not benefit as much as they could from observing others teach, both within their subject specialisms and in other curriculum areas.

Teacher trainers provide very good personal support for trainees, and do all they can to remove any barriers to success arising from trainees' personal and professional lives. Trainees receive regular feedback both on their written

work and their teaching. The focus of feedback is developmental, and commentaries are often helpful and perceptive. In the second year of the course, trainees benefit from identifying specific aspects of their practice as a focus for lesson observations. However, arrangements for measuring trainees' progress throughout their training are underdeveloped. Although trainees have individual learning plans that are informed by initial assessment, these are not used effectively to chart trainees' progress against the professional standards. The quality of trainees' lessons is not judged explicitly, and developmental targets tend to focus on specific objectives without providing a clear overview of exactly what trainees need to do to improve as practitioners.

The key strengths are:

- the progress that trainees make in improving their teaching skills through thoughtful reflection of the impact of their practice on students' learning; this is a particularly strong feature for the army-based trainees
- the high proportion of army trainees who complete the DTLLS programme successfully
- high success rates on the PTLLS programme
- the very good personal support for trainees that helps them to overcome any barriers to successful completion
- the quality of much of the training, including the focus on current issues in the lifelong learning sector that features strongly in many sessions
- the strong focus on inclusive practice and meeting individual learners' diverse needs
- the good links between the teacher training team, staff development and human resources, that are effective in encouraging trainees to progress to full qualified teacher status
- very good partnership working, particularly with the army, and the effective strategy to recruit more trainees from external organisations, in response to the falling demand for training in the college sector.

The key areas for development are:

- ensuring that trainees recruited to the programme have the opportunity to experience a broad range of teaching and that their work status is sufficiently secure to guarantee enough teaching hours
- the introduction of a more formalised mentoring scheme so that trainees receive more consistent support in developing their subject-specific teaching skills
- improving the rigour with which trainees' progress from their starting points is monitored against the professional standards, so that trainees know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve,

and so that teacher trainers have a clearer overview of trainees' achievements

- encouraging all trainees to make better use of their individual learning plans and their reflective journals, so that they engage in even deeper thinking about their practice and how it can be improved, and to strengthen the dialogue between trainees and trainers on the impact of the training
- improving resources by developing discrete materials for teacher training that can be accessed by all trainees on the college's virtual learning environment
- giving greater emphasis in the training to preparing trainees to teach in a diverse, multicultural society, recognising that this is a key aspect of promoting equality and diversity through the training
- strengthening self-evaluation by drawing on a broader and more objective range of evidence to make judgements about the provision and what needs to be done to improve it; make sure that self-evaluation focuses not just on trainees' completion rates but also on the progress they make during the training.

As explained in the inspection guidance, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next inspection.

Yours sincerely

Alan Hinchliffe

Her Majesty's Inspector