



INSPECTION REPORT

Initial Teacher Training (Further Education)

New College Durham Partnership

**(Provision accredited by the
Open University Validation Services)**

A 2004/05 Inspection

Managing Inspector: V Ashworth HMI

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BACKGROUND

1. This inspection was carried out in accordance with the Framework for the inspection of initial training of further education teachers and the guidance in the Handbook for the Inspection of initial training of further education teachers, both published in September 2004.

2. The Open University Validation Service (OUVS) currently accredits New College Durham and Northbrook College in West Sussex, to deliver ITT qualifications for teachers and trainers in post-compulsory education. Northbrook College was not included in this inspection. New College Durham received 'delegated authority' from the OUVS in 1995, which allows the college to validate its own programmes.

3. New College Durham established a partnership in 2001, which now includes three other colleges of further education (FE) in the north east. As the lead partner, New College Durham has overall responsibility for the management and quality assurance of the Certificate in Education (Cert Ed) and the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) delivered across the partnership. During the course of the inspection New College Durham, with the agreement of its partners, decided to dissolve the partnership. As a consequence, each provider is developing its own links with other partner universities, intending to deliver qualifications, validated by the respective higher education institution (HEI), from September 2005. Appropriate steps have been taken to ensure that trainees who are currently working towards an OUVS qualification can transfer on to an equivalent HEI validated qualification next year.

4. Approximately 260 trainees study on the courses across the three associate colleges inspected. All trainees work within the post-compulsory education sector. Many within settings outside further education colleges. The majority of trainees start the intermediate stage of the Cert Ed having already achieved a City and Guilds 7407 qualification. In practice the Cert Ed and PGCE trainees are taught together and differentiation is achieved through the completion of an additional unit assessed at higher education (HE) level 3.

5. Data on trainees' entry qualifications provided by the colleges indicate that approximately 55% of Cert Ed and 75% of PGCE trainees have attained at least a level 2 qualification in English language. The levels of prior attainment in mathematics are much lower. Approximately 33% of Cert Ed trainees and 59% of PGCE trainees have achieved a qualification in mathematics at level 2 or above.

THE INSPECTION

6. The inspection was carried out in two phases by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), supported by a full-time inspector from the Adult Learning Inspectorate and specialist additional inspectors. Inspectors evaluated provision run by New College Durham in partnership with Newcastle College and Middlesbrough College. Inspectors focussed on the quality of training and management and quality assurance procedures during the first phase, which took place in November 2004.

During the second phase, inspectors concentrated upon evaluating the achievements of FE trainees through observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress during the course. Phase 2 of the inspection was completed in June 2005.

A EFFECTIVENESS OF PROVISION

7. The overall quality of provision is adequate (**grade 3**). Trainees make good progress in developing both their generic and subject-specific teaching skills. Most trainees ensure that they make effective use of their professional expertise and experience to enhance learning. They provide good role models for their students. However, a significant proportion of trainees give insufficient consideration to their students' abilities, in literacy and/or numeracy, when planning and teaching their lessons, and in their marking of written work. Typically, teacher-educators set high standards for their trainees and often model best practice. A high dependence is placed on trainees and their mentors, to ensure coherence between the generic and subject-specific dimensions of training. In practice this works with varying degrees of success. Individual learning plans are not used consistently well to monitor the development of trainees' skills in literacy and/or numeracy, or to provide higher levels of challenge for the more able trainees. There have been recent improvements to management and quality assurance procedures; however it is too early to judge the impact of the actions taken. Although arrangements for quality assurance are generally rigorous at individual provider level, there has been insufficient collaborative working to ensure consistent practice and good quality across the partnership as a whole.

KEY STRENGTHS

8. Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- good self-evaluation and reflective practice demonstrated by trainees
- good classroom management skills demonstrated by trainees
- trainees' confidence in using a wide range of teaching strategies to enthuse and motivate their students
- good role-modelling by teacher trainers
- good personal and academic support for trainees
- strong links between individual college human resource departments and teacher education teams
- rigorous moderation of in-course assignments.

AREAS FOR ATTENTION

9. The partnership should address:

- underdeveloped arrangements to develop trainees' literacy and numeracy needs
- insufficient monitoring of trainees' subject-specific teaching skills
- frequency and timing of assessed observation of trainees' teaching practice
- insufficient use of equal opportunities data to inform planning
- lack of procedures and policies at partnership level to support collaborative working.

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

B ACHIEVEMENTS OF TRAINEES

10. Trainees demonstrate a strong commitment to raising students' achievements. They set and maintain high standards. Dedication and enthusiasm ensures they provide good role models and gain the respect of their students. The best trainees plan their lessons carefully to ensure that the needs of individual students are met. They have a good understanding of students' preferred learning styles, as well as their abilities. This is used well to ensure that their teaching enables most students to realise their potential.

11. Trainees are committed to continuing professional development and often benefit from the wider staff development and enrichment opportunities offered to them within their place of employment. In many cases, these activities provide good opportunities for trainees to develop their subject-specific teaching skills. For example, a number of trainees work within particularly supportive subject teams, in colleges with high expectations of the quality of teaching. Trainees play a full and active role in wider aspects of college life and some take on additional management and curriculum responsibilities. For example, one trainee is an information and learning technology champion for her department and has contributed learning materials to a national initiative in sharing good practice in teaching and learning.

12. Trainees improve their performance through systematic and detailed analysis of their lessons and the formative feedback they receive on their teaching. Self-evaluations are honest and self-critical. The most effective evaluations focus on the impact of the trainee's teaching on students' learning. The majority of trainees give a great deal of attention to evaluating the development of their teaching and classroom management skills over time. For example, in describing the progress they have made since starting the course, and in providing good examples of improvement in areas previously identified as weaknesses.

13. Many trainees have a good command of their specialist subject or vocational area and the associated pedagogical knowledge required to teach effectively in the FE context. Trainees make good use of their professional expertise or industry background to make their lessons interesting and develop students' skills to a high standard.

14. Trainees are usually well organised and prepare thoroughly for their lessons. They produce learning resources, handouts and PowerPoint presentations of a high quality. Many are confident in constructing detailed lesson plans that identify learning outcomes, often matched to the needs of individual students. However, a significant proportion of trainees give insufficient consideration to their students' differing levels of ability in literacy and numeracy, or how they might create opportunities to develop these within the context of their lessons. Lesson plans produced by a few trainees contain objectives that are insufficiently specific and do not relate clearly to the learning activities.

15. Most trainees make effective use of a wide range of teaching strategies and resources, including ICT. Activities are varied to engage students and ensure that lessons are appropriately paced and challenging. Practical workshops are often very well organised, reflecting industry standards. Trainees manage practical demonstrations competently and students are well-briefed about the tasks they need to perform.

16. In the best lessons, trainees ensure that all students make a full and valuable contribution. Skilful use is made of questioning, discussions, role play and presentations. In these lessons students' learning is monitored frequently and teaching strategies are adapted, to ensure that all students are able to make good progress. Conversely, in the less successful lessons, these aspects of teaching and learning are not well managed. For example, in one lesson, the trainee insisted that students moved on, through all the various activities planned for the lesson, regardless of whether or not they completed the task they were working on.

17. Trainees organise and manage their classes confidently and safely. They develop good working relationships with students, which effectively supports their learning. Many trainees are efficient in maintaining a high standard of student behaviour. These trainees are successful in re-engaging disruptive students' interest and attention, with minimum disruption to other students' learning. They make full use of the learning environment and the resources available to them.

18. Trainees often use the outcomes of diagnostic assessment of students' vocational competence to inform planning and set challenging learning goals. In contrast, trainees' use of individual learning plans, to monitor and evaluate the development of students' literacy, numeracy or key skills, is less effective. Trainees generally mark students' written work well and provide helpful suggestions for improvement; although many trainees fail to correct students' grammatical or spelling mistakes.

19. Trainees have a good understanding of the learning support services available in their respective organisations and actively guide students to make full

use of them. Where support teachers are present in lessons, trainees collaborate with them effectively to ensure that students with specific needs are able to play a full and active part in the lesson.

C QUALITY OF TRAINING

20. The content of the courses meet the national requirements and support effective progression through each stage. The FENTO standards are integrated through taught sessions and assignments. Observations of trainees' teaching tracks progress against the standards where relevant evidence is provided. Course content includes up-to-date and specialist input on recent developments in FE teaching, for example e-learning, the 14-19 curriculum and recent research on learning styles. However, the providers have made slow progress in addressing the requirements of the minimum core curriculum specifications for language, literacy and numeracy. Trainees are insufficiently prepared to address students' skills in these areas through their own teaching.

21. The quality of training sessions is good across the partnership. Trainers are very well-qualified. They engage in continuing professional development and have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Trainers act as good role-models and regularly demonstrate examples of best practice in post-compulsory teaching. Within each college, a strong ethos of collaboration exists between trainers. Training plans are clear and comprehensive with well-developed aims and objectives that build on trainees' previous learning. Joint team planning has led to a common session plans demonstrating a shared understanding of good practice. The content of sessions is matched well to the qualification requirements.

22. Trainers use a wide range of teaching and learning methods and training activities are matched well to the objectives of the session. A strong feature of most sessions is the linking of theory with practice. Trainers are skilful in drawing on the wide range of backgrounds and experience that individual trainees bring to the groups. Trainees are constantly encouraged to consider how to apply the learning outcomes of the session to their own specialist subject teaching. In many lessons observed, trainers took the opportunity to extend learning through frequent references to, and discussion of, wider reading.

23. Each provider has developed their own arrangements for the initial assessment of trainees individual learning needs at the start of their course. The rigour of these arrangements varies between providers. Where individual support needs are identified, trainees are usually referred to specialist support units within the college or to independent learning materials on the college's intranet. The extent to which trainees access or benefit from literacy and/or numeracy support is not adequately tracked or monitored. Individual learning plans are not used consistently well. Consequently, good practice is not modelled for trainee teachers. Learning plans lack explicit targets or actions for the development of trainees' specialist subject pedagogy. This has been recognised by the providers who have recently agreed a more coherent approach.

24. Mechanisms for tracking the development of trainees' subject-specific teaching skills are weak. Coherence between the generic and subject-specific dimensions of training is wholly dependent on the skills of the mentor. The implementation of the mentoring system is at an early stage and many mentors remain unclear of their role and responsibilities in supporting trainees. However, most mentors have responded supportively to trainees' needs for guidance, and have met these through ad hoc meetings, joint planning and informal lesson observation. Meetings between mentors and trainees are not documented systematically. There are no arrangements to quality assure mentor support. Links between course tutors and mentors are too informal. For example there are currently no joint observations carried out between mentors and course tutors.

25. All trainees have a personal tutor who provides a stable reference point and continuity of contact during each stage of the course. Trainees speak highly of the academic and pastoral support they receive from their tutors and find tutorial meetings particularly helpful in dealing with matters relating to coursework. Arrangements for tutorials are sufficiently flexible to enable trainees to meet with their tutors at a time which is convenient to their needs. Tutors know their trainees well and have a good understanding of their individual working contexts.

26. The assessment of trainees' written work is rigorous, timely and appropriate. Criteria and objectives for assessment are explained clearly and comprehensively in the student handbook. The assessment schedule is well-structured and challenging. For example, assignment briefs are developmental and allow trainees to demonstrate their acquisition of teaching skills in an incremental way. Trainers expect high standards and give clear direction on the need for trainees to focus their coursework on their own work context and subject specialism. Trainees are encouraged to submit first drafts of their written work so that advice can be given to enable them to present an improved final submission. Feedback on their written work is detailed and constructive; although insufficient attention is given to the routine correction of trainees' errors in grammar and spelling.

27. The feedback offered to trainees, following an observation of their teaching practice is thorough and gives them a clear understanding of how they can improve. However, in year 2 of the course, trainees are only observed by their tutors on two occasions. Even though the course document states that there will be an additional two observations undertaken by a subject specialist, these observations do not result in an assessed outcome and, in many cases, the observations are not undertaken in a planned or timely way. Two of the trainees observed by inspectors had not been observed by their tutor, even though it was a very late stage of their course.

D MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF PROVISION

28. Trainees are well-informed about the demand of the course and progression routes open to them during selection. Providers have been successful in developing links between ITT and the human resource and continuing professional development functions within their respective colleges. Guidelines on the requirements for teachers to undertake a teaching qualification are clear and effective. Attendance and completion of course work by trainees employed by individual colleges are

rigorously monitored by the human resource departments. Where problems with trainees do occur, these are resolved sensitively and collaboratively between the trainee concerned, ITT staff and the trainee's line manager. College probationary reviews also take into account the progress trainees make on their course and the views of their assessors. In some cases teacher trainers are actively involved in wider staff development and mentoring initiatives within their college.

29. Trainers from the associate college participate fully in partnership meetings. These meetings generally focus on operational matters and there has been little attention given to planning for curriculum developments or developing partnership-wide policies. Opportunities to share good practice or to make best use of the individual strengths that each provider brings to the partnership have been missed. This has resulted in duplication of effort or divergent approaches to issues such as the development of learning resources, 'Blackboard' software developments, the use of individual learning plans and approaches to literacy/numeracy support. More recently, individual providers have become actively involved in significant curriculum developments in preparation for their roles within different partnerships

30. Although individual providers have race equality policies, the procedures they have put in place for monitoring their impact do not extend sufficiently to the ITT courses. The OUVS has a clear expectation that accredited institutions monitor the effectiveness of their equal opportunities policies. The OUVS's policy statement requires that institutions collect and use data on ethnicity, gender and disability to monitor the impact of policies at departmental and programme level. However this has only recently been undertaken. Data relating to the performance and achievements of different groups of trainees on ITT courses are accessible at individual college level, but the data are not used in any systematic way to monitor trends or inform action planning and decision-making processes. Similarly, there is no aggregation of data on gender, ethnicity and disability at partnership level. There have been no explicit efforts to recruit trainees from minority ethnic or other under-represented groups.

31. There is a clear procedure for the moderation of trainees' course work which is applied with rigour by all partners. Coursework is double marked and significant attention is given to the moderation of assessed work between different providers. Until recently there were no formal procedures for moderation of judgements made about trainees teaching practice at either individual provider level or between providers. A partnership manager has recently been identified and joint observations have started to take place.

32. It is intended that the outcomes of the partnership manager's monitoring visits to individual providers will be used to inform the annual report for the current year. However annual reports produced for OUVS have not paid sufficient attention to the outcomes of course review and evaluations produced by each provider. The annual report is predominantly a commentary of provision at New College Durham, rather than an evaluation of provision across the partnership as a whole. External examiners' reports which contribute to the annual report have provided only limited basis for self assessment and improvement planning. There are no opportunities for mentors to contribute to course evaluation and review or to the annual report.