

Further Education Evaluation



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Follow-up Inspection to the evaluation
of the priority skill of Computing and
Information and Communication Technology
(ICT), Construction, Electrical and Electronic
Engineering and Mechanical and
Manufacturing Engineering at level 3 in
Belfast Metropolitan College

May 2011

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF BELFAST METROPOLITAN COLLEGE'S FURTHER EDUCATION PROVISION AT LEVEL 3 IN THE PRIORITY SKILLS OF COMPUTING AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT), CONSTRUCTION, ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONIC ENGINEERING, AND MECHANICAL AND MANUFACTURING ENGINEERING

The evaluation report in February 2010, highlighted strengths in the outstanding quality of the provision in electrical and electronic engineering, the broad and extensive provision of full and part-time courses in electrical and electronic engineering and construction, the good links developed with industry and the good provision of craft courses in electrical and electronic engineering, and the quality and range of specialist resources in most of the areas inspected.

The evaluation identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the need for senior management to ensure that self-evaluation and quality improvement processes are informed more effectively by evidence-based judgements by the quality of the students' learning experiences;
- more effective management of the curriculum in computing and ICT, construction, and mechanical and manufacturing engineering;
- action to improve the outcomes and levels of attainment on most of the full-time courses;
- more tailored careers education, information, advice and guidance within the students' main vocational units, and the further development of work-related learning on most full-time courses;
- action to improve the quality of the teaching and learning, including the more effective use of information and learning technology (ILT) across most of the areas inspected; and
- more effective management of specialist teaching resources in construction, and manufacturing and mechanical engineering.

In the interval since the evaluation, the following action which affects the work of the college has taken place:

- the significant restructuring of management at all levels in the college and planned cuts in the deployment of lecturers and support staff in the college under the change management programme that was implemented in response to the whole-college efficiency review;
- a range of staff development activities to up-skill curriculum managers and course teams in self-evaluation and quality improvement planning in January and February 2011;
- support provided by the Learning and Skills Development Agency Northern Ireland to identify the features of good practice in teaching and learning and behaviour management;
- significant internal staff development for lecturers to make effective use of ILT in teaching and learning;

- the establishment of effective links with two colleges of further education in Holland to identify and share best practice in these priority skills areas; and
- college-based staff development to identify and share best practice in course management.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out an interim follow-up visit in September 2010, and a follow-up inspection in May 2011.

The following are the most important improvements since the original evaluation:

- the significant improvement in the overall effectiveness in the quality of the provision in computing and ICT, which is now very good;
- evidence of improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and in the use of ILT, particularly in computing and ICT and in construction; and
- more opportunities for students to participate on work-related learning activities; these are particularly strong in computing and ICT.

The areas which require further development are:

- the leadership and management of the provision in construction, and in mechanical and manufacturing engineering, particularly more effective collegial work in curriculum planning and course delivery, the sharing of information and best practice, and quality improvement strategies based on rigorous and evidence-based self-evaluation in order to raise standards to meet the needs of learners;
- more effective monitoring and evaluation in construction and mechanical and manufacturing engineering to track the progress of students in their professional and technical units; and
- to strengthen admissions, pre-entry advice and guidance, and the arrangements for induction in construction and in mechanical and manufacturing engineering to ensure that students enrolled on these programmes have the relevant aptitudes and interests for these priority skills areas.

CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education and training provided by Belfast Metropolitan College remains satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The college has demonstrated some evidence of improvement but significant areas for improvement in leadership and management remain to be addressed if the needs of all learners are to be met effectively. The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the college's progress in addressing the remaining areas for improvement.

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