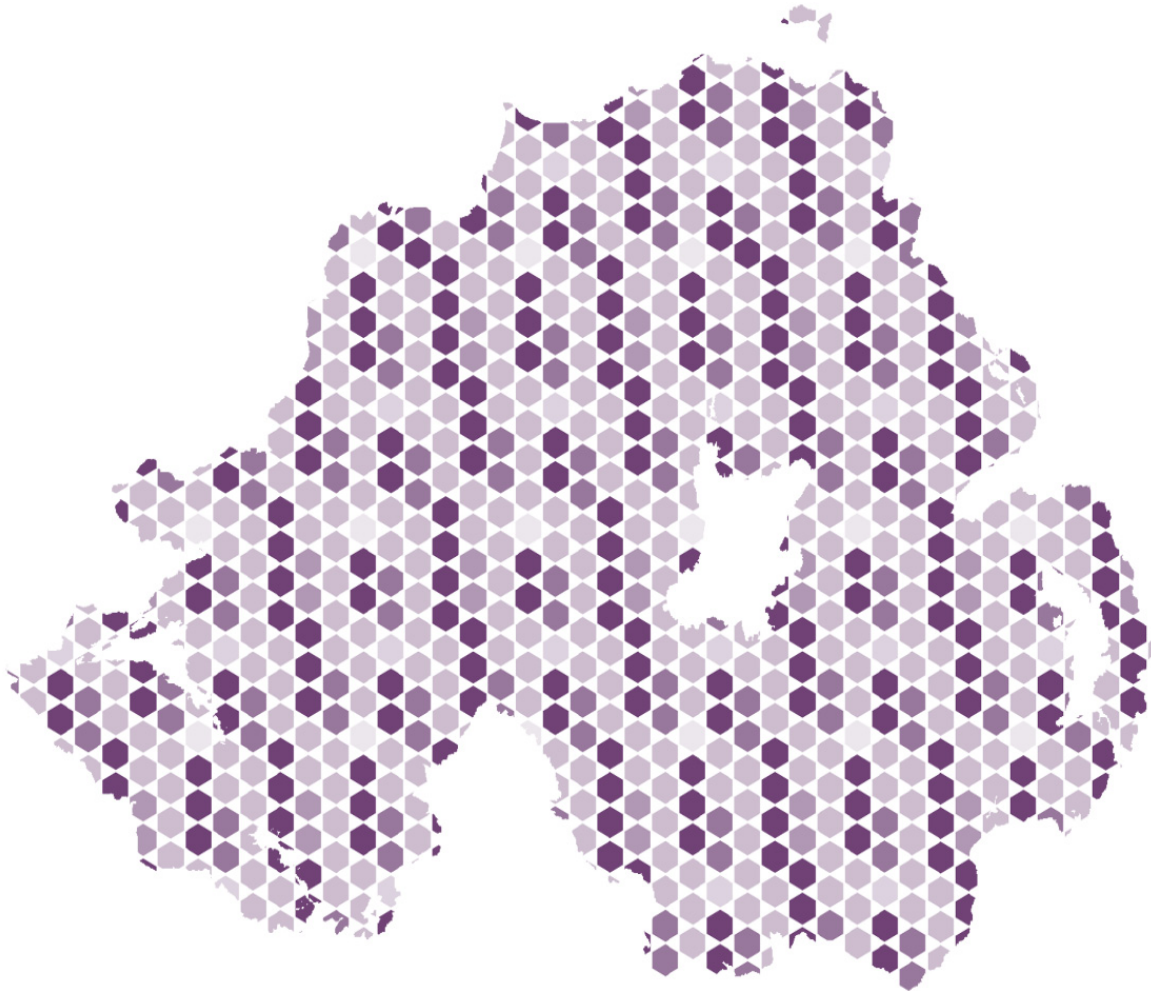


# Further Education Evaluation



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Report of the follow-up inspection to  
the evaluation of the priority skill of  
Information and Communication  
Technology (ICT) and Computing at  
level 3 in North West Regional College

December 2010-May 2011



## **FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE'S FURTHER EDUCATION PROVISION AT LEVEL 3 IN THE PRIORITY SKILLS OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) AND COMPUTING**

The evaluation of the priority skill of information and communications technology (ICT) and computing at level 3 in January 2010 highlighted strengths in the good or better quality of teaching and learning, the good standards of work produced by most of the students, the good hardware and software resources available to students, and the good overall self-evaluation report and improvement plan produced by the course teams. The evaluation identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- under developed use of work-related learning, including the use of live case studies, industrial visits and guest speakers, across the curriculum and in the assessment process on national diploma courses;
- lack of a formalised programme for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG), linked to tutorial support, for students on full-time courses;
- limited range of programme options within the level 3 provision to support the wide variation of ability levels amongst students entering full-time courses, particularly those with weak entry grades; and
- poor levels of achievement on full-time courses, particularly in the main campus.

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

- the college has been re-structured with the provision of ICT and computing now within the school of Science and Technology;
- the full-time level 3 ICT and computing provision has been reviewed and a pilot programme implemented to facilitate the re-structuring of the curriculum, including the introduction of qualifications on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF);
- excellent accommodation and computing resources have been provided for ICT and computing programmes;
- good opportunities have been provided for the continuous professional development for staff through designated curriculum projects and other internal and external training events;
- the deployment of staff on the full-time programmes has been reviewed with staff now delivering across campuses;
- the assessment process have been revised and is now standardised across the campuses, with lecturers sharing the delivery of units and learning resources;
- blended learning has been used effectively to deliver on-line learning materials to ICT and computing students;
- the entry criteria for students has been reviewed and made more rigorous;

- the induction process for students has been reviewed and improved to provide more opportunities for students to get to know each other through the completion of short collaborative tasks;
- an Information Technology (IT) careers academy has been established which facilitates the establishment of an advisory board for industry related careers visits, the provision of careers talks, use of guest speakers and guru lecturers, the use of workplace mentors, and a paid internship for careers academy students;
- an employer liaison group has been established, comprised of a good range of local and locally based international ICT companies, to advise on skills development, and curriculum provision in the context of industry trends and developments;
- entrepreneurship has been developed within the curriculum, through the appointment of one course co-ordinator as a designated enterprise champion, and more effective links to the local enterprise agency have been developed;
- video conferencing has been introduced to facilitate communication across both campuses; and
- the acting Head of School of Computing, the Head of School of Science and Technology, the course teams, and in particular the course co-ordinators, have worked hard to address the areas for improvement identified in the original inspection.

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

The improvement plan produced by the college in response to the evaluation findings was of very good quality and was adjusted appropriately in light of feedback given by the Inspectorate during the monitoring visit.

The following are the most important improvements since the evaluation:

- a more appropriate range of programme options has been provided for students on full-time ICT and computing programmes, with clear career progression pathways available to them at each level;
- more effective links to industry have been established to support the development of the curriculum, work-related learning, the assessment process, and the career development of the students;
- a more effective programme for CEIAG has been developed and processes established to facilitate the dissemination of more relevant and focused careers information to all computing students;
- more effective processes have been developed to support students and track and monitor their progress, including improved channels of communication between staff and students;

- the good achievement rate for those students who completed in June 2010 (89%); and
- the improved overall retention rate (75%) for current first year and second year students.

The area which requires further development is:

- the need to sustain the progress made to date through the further strengthening and embedding of collaborative working and collegiality between staff and students across the campuses, and develop opportunities to effectively integrate ICT and computing with other professional and technical areas across the school of Science and Technology.

## **CONCLUSION**

In ICT and computing, the quality of education provided by the North West Regional College is now very good. The college is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the students; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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