



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection
Northern Regional College's
Further Education Provision at
Level 3 in the Priority Skill of
Construction

November 2011



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



FOLLOW- UP TO THE INSPECTION OF NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE'S FURTHER EDUCATION PROVISION AT LEVEL 3 IN THE PRIORITY SKILL OF CONSTRUCTION

The evaluation report in May 2010, highlighted the very good standards in computer aided design, the extensive construction provision delivered in local post-primary schools, the innovative use of information and learning technology (ILT), the good practice on the Coleraine campus, and the good links with industry through the Carbon Zero Northern Ireland and Connected Two projects funded under the Innovation Fund: Employer Support Programme.

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

- the deployment of staff to meet the needs of the national diploma programme, particularly in the Newtownabbey campus;
- the quality of the teaching and learning in the Farm Lodge campus, including the limited use of the college virtual learning environment; and
- to provide more opportunities for staff to work together collaboratively across the campuses, to promote collegiality and share best practice.

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

- a new teaching team has been deployed into the Newtownabbey campus;
- a new lecturer in construction has been appointed;
- cross-campus staff development events have been provided to develop the lecturers' skills in delivery of level 3 programmes and to share good practice;
- the college quality improvement unit introduced support for inexperienced course co-ordinators;
- lecturers have been provided with additional ILT resources, such as a personal computer and data projector in each classroom, and flip videos;
- a new accommodation block has opened in the Newtownabbey campus for the priority skills areas, including construction;
- the introduction of the level 2 diploma in construction in the Coleraine campus;
- the school links provision in the Newtownabbey campus has been strengthened; and
- the introduction and implementation of a retention strategy, which includes a students' progress tracking sheet and the prediction of the students' grades.

The Education and Training Inspectorate carried out an interim follow-up visit in February 2011, and a follow-up inspection in November 2011.

The action plan submitted was of a good quality and was adjusted appropriately in light of the feedback given by the Inspectorate during the interim follow-up inspection visit.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the original evaluation:

- the good deployment of the teaching staff across the three campuses which now meets the needs of the students;
- the effective strategies put in place by the management team to revitalise the provision on the Newtownabbey campus;
- the strengthening of links with the local post-primary schools particularly on the Newtownabbey campus;
- the very good standards of work attained by the full-time students across the three campuses;
- the clearly defined role of the course co-ordinator to track students' progress and support and retain students; and
- the stronger and more collegial approach across the three campuses, to share best practice in curriculum development, including the effective use of ILT and appropriate assessment strategies.

The areas which requires further improvement are:

- the quality of the students' learning experiences in the Farm Lodge Campus; and
- the further strengthening of the provision on the Newtownabbey campus.

CONCLUSION

In construction, the quality of education provided by Northern Regional College is now good. The college has important strengths in most of its educational provision. The follow-up inspection has identified some aspects of the areas for improvement still to be addressed but equally the college has demonstrated the capacity to address these.

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