

## 10. APPLIED SCIENCE

**Performance Level:** Satisfactory

### **Areas Inspected:**

- Full-time further education level 2 and level 3 applied science courses.

### CONTEXT

10.1 The College provides seven full-time courses for learners in applied science. Three diploma courses are provided at level 2 and four extended diploma courses at level 3. At the time of the inspection an acting head of school was in place. There are currently 42 learners enrolled on the level 2 courses and 98 learners enrolled on the level 3 courses.

**The quality of the leadership and management is satisfactory.**

10.2 The acting head of school and the curriculum area manager are committed to improving the quality of the learners' experiences and the standards they achieve. They lead and manage the applied science courses in a collegial manner and have analysed a range of qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision. The course co-ordinator role is not defined clearly enough and, as a consequence, there is inconsistency in the approaches taken by the co-ordinators when monitoring and evaluating the quality of the provision. While the quality of the leadership and management, including the self-evaluation arrangements, is satisfactory overall, more needs to be done by curriculum managers to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.

**The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.**

10.3 The quality of the teaching and learning is too variable. Just over one-third of the sessions observed were very good or better but one-quarter of them were satisfactory. It is a concern that over one-half of the sessions observed in the level 2 courses were just satisfactory. A significant feature in all of the courses is the range and quality of the practical experiences provided for the learners, particularly in the opportunities provided for them to engage in extended investigative work. The lecturers are mostly hard-working and committed to ensuring the learners achieve to their potential. Although they undertake some planning for teaching and learning, the quality of this planning is insufficient to ensure that all of the learning needs of the learners are met effectively and consistently across all of the courses. The planning needs to identify a wider range of teaching and learning strategies, in addition to the practical activities, particularly those which engage the learners more actively in their learning: it will be important to ensure that these strategies are implemented consistently.

**Achievements and standards are satisfactory.**

10.4 Over the past two years, the achievement rate on the level 2 courses is very good at 82%. Over the same period, whilst the retention rate on the level 2 courses has been outstanding, the more recent trend is not as positive. For the current cohort of learners, enrolment onto the level 2 courses offered in the Castlereagh Campus is low and the retention rate is unsatisfactory at 30%. While the achievement rate for the level 3 learners who complete is high, the retention rate is inadequate. The College needs to ensure that the learners enrolled have the necessary skills and capabilities to meet the demanding requirements of the applied science courses or are able to acquire these skills and capabilities within a reasonable period of time after enrolment.

**Table of Achievements (over the last two years)**

Course Type	Completion Year 2011			Completion Year 2012			Two Year Average		
	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)
Full-Time Courses at Level 2	89	86	77	93	78	72	92	82	75
Full-Time Courses at Level 3	47	98	46	54	94	51	50	96	48
Overall	60	93	56	69	86	59	64	89	57