

13. COMPUTING, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Performance Level: Very Good

Areas inspected:

- Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand of Training for Success, ApprenticeshipsNI programme in IT services and development at levels 2 and 3 and full-time further education provision at levels 2 and 3 in computing, Information Technology (IT) and creative media production (games development and interactive media)

CONTEXT

13.1 The College offers an extensive curriculum provision in computing, IT and digital media, with good progression opportunities provided for learners to further and higher education and/or further training and employment. Enrolments on further education courses are good and have remained steady over the past two years; during the inspection, 300 learners were enrolled on full-time courses and 220 on part-time courses. Enrolments, however, on the level 2 creative media production course decreased from 33 in 2009/10 to 20 in 2012/13. Enrolments on work-based learning programmes are low but have increased in the current year through the provision of a pilot public/private apprenticeship programme in IT services and development at levels 2 and 3; with the exception of 10 privately funded apprentices and a small number who in-fill from another provider, 43 apprentices and 4 Programme-Led Apprentices are currently registered with the College.

The quality of the leadership and management is outstanding.

13.2 The computing, IT and digital media programmes are very well-managed and co-ordinated; the head of school has a clear strategic vision for the on-going development of the provision across the College. Outstanding, sector-leading links have been established with a wide range of local, national and international software, computing and media companies, and these have been used well to inform and influence the development of a broad, relevant curriculum which reflects well the needs of industry. The staff are well-qualified and experienced and are provided with good opportunities to undertake continuous professional development. The quality of the accommodation is good or better across the College campuses. While the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes identify the main areas for improvement, they need to be developed further to include more effective evaluation of the quality of teaching, training and learning.

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

13.3 The quality of the teaching, training and learning was good or better in all of the sessions and workplace assessments observed in work-based learning, and in most (84%) of the sessions in further education. In the good or better sessions, the lecturers planned well, used an appropriate range of teaching and learning methods and provided appropriate support and challenge for the learners. In a small number of the sessions in further education, the planning was weak, the learners did not engage well in their learning, and the sessions did not support the development of the industry-recognised skills and competences the learners require to progress in their learning or career pathways. Across almost all of the sessions observed, there was only limited evidence of the innovative use of ILT or the interactive features of smart boards to support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. While the computer infrastructure is adequate, the operating software is dated and in need of a refresh to align it to current industry standards. The provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance and support for the learners is very good, they

are knowledgeable about career pathways and progression opportunities. The use of guest speakers, master classes, and input from industry is well developed across the provision and valued by the learners. In addition, the digital media and IT learners are provided with good opportunities to develop further their employability skills through the provision of additional, industry-recognised vendor qualifications.

The quality of the students' achievements and standards are very good.

13.4 In work-based learning, the apprentices are progressing well in their learning; they have completed a number of appropriate vendor-specific qualifications, have good technical knowledge and skills and are benefiting from very good experiences in their workplaces. In further education, the learners are also making good progress and developing good levels of skills and competences which are relevant to industry needs. The quality of work produced by most of the learners is good or better. Over the past three years, the retention rate on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand and ApprenticeshipsNI programme at level 2 is satisfactory at 62%, but very good on the level 3 ApprenticeshipsNI programme at 82%. Retention rates have improved considerably for the current cohorts of apprentices. Over the same period, achievement rates across the work-based learning provision are very good or better. Over the past two years, the overall retention rate on further education programmes is good at 73%, this has also improved and is very good or better for the current learner groups. Over the same period, achievement rates across the further education provision are outstanding.

Further Education: 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	92	88	82	77	100	77	85	94	79
Full-Time Courses at Level 3	63	96	61	69	98	67	67	97	65
Overall	76	92	70	72	99	71	73	96	70

Work-Based Learning: Table of Achievements (over the last three years)

Programme/Strand	Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training	Retention rate %	Achievement rate %	Progression rate for those who achieved full award %
Programme-Led Apprenticeships	26	62	100	94
ApprenticeshipsNI Level 2	29	62	89	100
ApprenticeshipsNI Level 3	11	82	100	100