



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
Belfast Metropolitan College

Manufacturing Skills for Industry

Report of an Inspection in
March 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

Belfast Metropolitan College (Belfast Met) is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Manufacturing Skills for Industry (MSfI) European Social Fund (ESF) project. The overall aim of the MSfI project is to equip the long term unemployed, and the economically inactive participants with pre-employment skills relevant to the manufacturing industry that can be developed further when the participants progress to employment. The programme is an employer-led sector employability initiative of up to 26 weeks. Participants can choose from a range of manufacturing skills including bench fitting, sheet metal working, welding, foundry engineering and/or composites. For those clients who are furthest from progression to formalised training or employment, many of whom have significant barriers to engagement including addictions, homelessness and health related issues, Belfast Met provides a wide range of support and referral services to help participants to sustain their engagement.

The project is situated within Belfast Met's business development unit, led by the innovation manager, and its curricular content is managed by a dedicated programme manager who works alongside other key management staff including the head of department for science, engineering and construction and the curriculum area manager for engineering and electrical services. This project is open to all ages (16 years upwards) and offers participants the opportunity to achieve and progress in line with their aspirations and the needs of industry. The participants are required to attend for approximately 36 hours for 26 weeks during which time they attend formal practical skills training, they also benefit from a four week industrial placement, in addition to which they have access to help with job applications and interview preparation.

2. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all participants, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to evaluate the:

- the outcomes for participants;
- the effectiveness of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes;
- the quality of provision for learning and development; and
- the quality of the leadership and management.

3. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Outstanding

KEY FINDINGS

4. Outcomes for learners

The programme aims to engage 150 participants¹ and the project promoter has achieved its recruitment targets to date. In 2015/16 30 participants were enrolled reflecting the programme's first year agreed start date (October). In 2016/17 60 participants were enrolled and a further 60 are planned to register in 2017/18. The standards achieved by the participants in the development of their practical skills are mostly very good. Participants demonstrate that they can use a range of hand tools and equipment competently and safely to measure and cut material accurately, fabricate basic components using a range of techniques and weld using metal active gas (MAG) processes. The outcomes for almost all of the participants are very good, of the 30 participants who started in year one, 23 have achieved a level 1 qualification against a target of 15.

Most of the participants demonstrate high levels of commitment to progress in their learning, and to achieve employment. Retention is consistently outstanding at 90% in 2015/16 and 90% in 2016/17 to date. Of those who complete their training, all achieve the required level 1 units. The progression and achievement beyond level 1 is outstanding. Sixteen participants have progressed to further education against a target of 8, and one participant has been progressed into higher education. Of those who have progressed, 14 of the 16 in 2015/16 achieved a level 2 and one participant has moved to level 3. To date, in 2016/17, 25 participants have progressed to further education against a target of 14. Progression into employment is outstanding. The target set of progressing six participants into employment in 2015/16 has been exceeded with 18 participants successfully gaining employment. The target figure for into employment for 2016/17 is 14, and, to date, 19 have been progressed to employment.

Most of the participants demonstrate high levels of commitment to overcoming significant personal challenges. They engage well in the training and learning programmes and those who progress to employment engage very well in their workplace. The regular participant reviews capture well the progress that participants make in their personal development. In addition, all of the participants interviewed provided positive feedback about their experiences on the project to date and could identify the progress they had made and the range of tailored and individualised support they had received. This included, for example; improved employability skills and access to employment routes that would not be available to them outside of the project. Participants appreciated particularly the very good opportunities to avail of employment in a range of engineering firms including Creative Composites, Qualmet and Hanover Systems and most of the participants are keen to access employment as quickly as possible.

5. Quality of provision

The provision is matched well to the needs of the participants. The programme is well designed and participants have the opportunity to avail of a range of training and support opportunities including an effective induction programme and appropriate careers education, advice, information and guidance from trained college staff, to inform the participants and to help them to self-select onto the programme. Once participants have decided to register for the programme, they can undertake a level 1 NVQ in performing engineering operations which includes both mandatory and optional units relevant to the industry and to the participants' career aspirations. A range of appropriate enhancements are offered to participants including: the opportunity to achieve the construction skills register card; a qualification in computer aided design; visits to employer sites; access to employment

¹ All performance data in this report was provided by the ESF project promoter at the time of the inspection.

related information from a range of guest speakers; and opportunities to undertake an essential skills qualification in literacy and numeracy up to and including level 2. A key strength of this project is the access that each participant has to the college's well-planned qualifications progression route, beyond the project, from level 1 up to and including level 3 qualifications. A further strength of the provision is its highly individualised approach which enables all of the participants, from a diverse range of backgrounds to realise their ambitions to source training leading to employment.

The guidance and support offered to participants are informed effectively by a detailed initial assessment process and an opportunity for participants to sample the programme through a taster week opportunity. There are regular review and support sessions, every 4 weeks, that have a strong focus on progressing the clients to employment and include a range of effective work preparation support and help with curriculum vitae writing and interview skills. The holistic Belfast Met support, including the support offered by the learning success officers and the staff from the Belfast Met Inclusive Learning Centre, builds successfully on the work of the project. The project model is flexible and identifies and supports each individual participant to progress at his/her own pace, this flexibility is highly valued by the participants.

The quality of the directed training provided is very good and is characterised by a supportive learning environment, access to an appropriate range of engineering training facilities and tools and very good opportunities for the participants to develop the practical application of their skills. The tutors use a broad range of strategies to progress the participants' learning and to develop their personal capabilities. Each directed training session provides well planned opportunities for suitable stretch and challenge, underpinned by high expectations, which are matched well to the varied profile of the participants. There are also good opportunities within the programme for peer learning.

The processes in place for care and welfare are impacting positively on the participants. The participants interviewed stated that they are very well supported by staff, that the project is delivered in as flexible a manner as possible to meet their individual needs, and that they are actively encouraged by staff to take responsibility for their own personal development. The college also provides the participants with a range of very good advice services, including access to "better off" calculations to support their progression to paid employment.

6. Leadership and management

The senior Belfast Met management team and the project's industrially led Steering Group are highly committed to the development and delivery of the project. It is kept under regular review to ensure it is fit for purpose and the senior staff have been flexible and responsive to change, particularly in the light of the recent loss of employment opportunities from some of the larger engineering employers. All of the management roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and all of the project staff are committed to addressing the wide range of learning, training and employability needs of the participants.

The management and delivery of the project is enhanced significantly by the excellent links Belfast Met has developed with a wide range of key employers, including a range of small to medium enterprise engineering employers, and links with the Citywide Employers Forum which acts as both a generator of jobs to meet the needs of industry and a support mechanism for those individuals who struggle to achieve sustainable employment.

The continuing professional development provided for staff is impacting positively on the delivery of the programme including the insights to pedagogy gained by those completing the certificate in teaching qualification. The range of professional development is appropriate and provides current updates in industrial practices, a notable example of which was a recent visit organised for staff to the research facilities in Siemens Training Centre, in Newcastle Upon Tyne, to develop approaches to project based learning and work-readiness skills.

The self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes are well developed and benefit from the wider systems and processes within Belfast Met. These processes have been strengthened by the introduction of surveys conducted three times per year for the participants.

The project promoter continues to take account of feedback from previous ETI visits to bring about improvements.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding participants reflect broadly the guidance from the Department. However, the project promoter needs to:

- update the language of the range of the policies to reflect current practice.

7. Overall effectiveness

The Belfast Metropolitan College demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the participants.

A. Project registrations

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
MSfI ESF project 2015/2016	30	100%
MSfI ESF project 2016/2017	60	100%

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website www.etini.gov.uk.

Three ETI inspectors observed 49 participants in a range of settings including six directed training sessions and two focus group meetings. Discussions were held with the MSfI management team, six tutors, three employers, a referral agency, the learning services support team, three key staff from the range of college support services and a representative from the steering group. The management information system, including the tracking and monitoring systems, individual learning plans, progress reviews and relevant planning documents were examined. The project promoter's self-evaluation report, quality improvement plan and other related documentation were scrutinised.

C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on Outcomes for learners, Quality of Provision and on Leadership and Management.

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the organisation:

The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

Key Performance Indicators and Definitions	
Retention	The percentage of enrolments measured over the full duration of their programme.
Achievement	The percentage of participants who completed their targeted individual outcomes.
Progression	The percentage of successful completers who achieved positive progression.

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