

WORK-BASED LEARNING INSPECTION

Training for Success Provision in the Southern
Regional College

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in June 2022



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Follow-up inspection to Southern Regional College

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection of the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI provision in the Southern Regional College in November 2018¹ which concluded that the organisation needed to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all of the trainees and apprentices. The Training for Success programme was evaluated as having important areas for improvement. The quality of provision for the professional and technical areas of construction, engineering and transportation operations and maintenance were evaluated as having important areas for improvement. The provision for the essential skills was evaluated as requiring significant improvement.

The inspection identified the following areas for improvement.

- Improve the quality of the provision on the Training for Success programme, including more effective action to address the achievement of all targeted qualifications by the trainees and the persistently low overall retention rate.
- Address the shortcomings in the provision for construction, engineering, essential skills and transportation operations and maintenance, including improving the effectiveness of the learning, teaching and training.
- Improve the process for tracking and monitoring the overall progress the trainees and apprentices make in their learning and training, including more effective arrangements for on-going and timely work-based assessment.
- Improve the processes used for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning to ensure a more in-depth analysis of the reasons for the key issues and ensure that appropriate, closely monitored actions are put in place to support sustained improvement in the quality of the provision.

The ETI carried out interim follow-up inspection visits in November 2019 and May 2022 and a follow-up inspection in June 2022.

In the interval since the original inspection, the following key actions or changes which affect the work of the organisation have taken place.

- A high priority was placed on improving the quality of the work-based learning provision and a recovery planning process was implemented. This was closed out in June 2021 and the quality improvement planning process was subsequently used to further improve the quality of the provision.
- A revised management structure was put in place for the work-based learning provision, to include particular arrangements for the management of the essential skills; a new head of faculty and three new curriculum area managers were appointed and a new operations manager post was created within the Building Technology and Engineering faculty. Six new professional and technical lecturers and two essential skills lecturers were also appointed.

¹ [Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI provision in Southern Regional College \(etini.gov.uk\)](https://www.etini.gov.uk)

- The roles of the curriculum area managers in each faculty were reviewed, resulting in them having more time for their management responsibilities. They now have specific responsibilities for quality improvement and for the provision of the essential skills.
- The support arrangements for management and staff across the work-based learning provision continued to be developed, including coaching and mentoring for the middle management team and a pedagogy support programme for lecturers.
- The curriculum was further developed to better meet the needs of the trainees and industry, including the introduction of new programmes in all three professional and technical areas evaluated as having important areas for improvement.
- Delivery arrangements were adapted to facilitate the continuation of learning and training during the lockdowns as a result of the pandemic.
- Significant investment was made in the provision for construction, engineering and transportation operations and maintenance, with new equipment and resources for the workshops and classrooms.
- The processes for tracking and monitoring were improved and the data reporting procedures for work-based learning were reviewed and refined. A bespoke essential skills portal was implemented to better monitor and track the progress of the trainees.
- A new pre-entry advice process was implemented, and the induction process and delivery models were revised.

Views of trainees and staff

- Forty-three percent of the trainees responded to the questionnaire and those spoken to in a focus group, in directed training and in the workplace reported that: their programme is well managed; the induction process prepared them well for their learning programme; and, they found their programme both interesting and challenging. They reported that they are kept up-to-date with how they are progressing and feel well supported.
- Eighty-five percent of the staff responded to the questionnaire. They reported that they have been provided with and availed of appropriate professional learning opportunities and are supported to deliver both face-to-face and online learning. They also reported that they are given regular feedback on how to improve their work. They know who to go to if they have a problem or concern and they feel well supported.

Key Findings

The overall quality of the Training for Success programme is now good.

The outcomes for learners are now good.

- The process for tracking and monitoring the overall progress the trainees make in their learning and training across the frameworks has improved. It now includes a risk register to ensure interventions are put in place, as required; as a result most of the trainees are making good progress in their learning.
- There has been sufficient progress in improving retention. The overall retention rate² is now good (77%), taking into account the positive progression in-year for an increasing number of trainees from Training for Success to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme.
- The achievement rates for all of the essential skills areas are now good: Information and Communication Technology (ICT) 80%, literacy 87% and numeracy 82%.

The quality of provision is now good.

- The curriculum has been reviewed across the professional and technical areas followed up, resulting in a more appropriate curriculum offer that provides a better, coherent progression pathway for the trainees.
- The pre-entry and initial assessment process has been improved to identify those trainees with learning support needs or requiring additional support. Appropriate support mechanisms are put in place for them, including working with a number of external support agencies to support them to overcome barriers and enhance their personal and social development.
- The induction programme has been redesigned to develop a culture of high expectations and to include skills assessments and activities, resulting in the trainees being placed on the most appropriate career progression pathway to match their learning and employability needs.
- A pedagogic improvement programme has been established, focused on improving the learning experiences of the trainees. This provides an appropriate framework for the teaching and learning advisors and includes observation of sessions and continuing professional learning focused on effective pedagogy, action planning and the use of data, and the appropriate use of technology-enhanced learning.

² All performance data used in this report is for those trainees who started in the year 2019/20 and was provided by the organisation.

- Most (89%) of the sessions observed were good or better. They were well planned, with a well-considered range of strategies to engage the trainees in their learning. An appropriate focus is being placed on project-based learning.
- A more effective, collaborative tracking and monitoring process has been developed to monitor the progress of the trainees across all aspects of their learning and training programme and the essential skills. It is linked appropriately to the trainees' personal training plans, the learner review process and the e-portfolio system and is accessible by all relevant staff and management.
- An enhanced focus has been placed on employer engagement. As a result, the work placement rate has improved and more of the trainees progress early to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme.

The quality of provision in construction is now good.

- The carpentry and joinery curriculum has been reviewed to include a more relevant offer of site joinery to better meet the needs of employers and trainees. The timetable has been revised to ensure an appropriate balance of training and essential skills across the day and a skills development programme has been introduced for those trainees who are exempt from the essential skills.
- The focus on employer engagement has increased and as a result, all of the wood occupations trainees are in a work placement and two-thirds of the 2020/21 trainees progressed early to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme.
- New lecturers have been effectively supported by their peers and management. Planning for learning has been improved and standardised across the sites; features include the integration of personal and social development and the essential skills and the use of a wider range of learning strategies. There has been a good start in implementing project-based learning to enhance the learning experience for the trainees. The quality of the learning, teaching and training observed in carpentry and joinery has improved and is now effective, with most (86%) being good or better.
- While the achievement rate of the professional and technical qualification in wood occupations decreased to 83% in 2021/20 there has been significant progress in improving the retention rate (83%). This reflects the positive progression in-year for an increasing number of trainees from Training for Success to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. The achievement rate on the trowel occupations has increased significantly to 86% in 2019/20. The self-evaluation and quality improvement planning process should ensure that there is a particular focus on improving achievement rates in wood occupations.

The quality of provision in engineering is now good.

- Sufficient progress has been made in improving the retention rate (66%) on the Training for Success programme. The progression rates for the trainees have improved with significant numbers (51%) of the 2019/20 cohort progressing to the level 2 ApprenticeshipsNI programme in year. For the small numbers who have completed the full traineeship, the current progression rate is high. There should be a continued focus on further improving retention and achievement of the full framework.
- The links with engineering companies have been strengthened and used well to review the curriculum. This has resulted in the introduction of a multi-skilled delivery plan that provides opportunities for skills development in electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, fabrication and welding, and engineering machining that meets better the needs of the trainees and the employers. In addition, two additional pathways to the higher level apprenticeship and a new level six Bachelor of Engineering top-up have been developed.
- Standardised schemes of work have been introduced which incorporate the key development milestones for the trainees. Lesson planning is well structured, with an appropriate range of learning strategies to suit a range of learning styles. There is effective use of technology-enhanced learning. Significant progress has been made in implementing project-based learning to enhance the learning experience for the trainees. Almost all of the learning and training sessions observed were good or better.

The quality of provision in transportation operations and maintenance is now good.

- The curriculum offer has been reviewed to better meet the needs of the trainees. It now includes a vehicle fitting progression pathway and relevant industry related project-based learning activities have also been introduced to further support their skills development.
- Following revision, a more appropriate induction process has been implemented, resulting in the trainees being placed on the most appropriate career progression pathway to match their learning and employability needs.
- Sufficient progress has been made in improving retention on the Training for Success programme (76%), reflecting the positive progression in-year for an increasing number of trainees to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. There should be a continued focus on further improving the overall retention rate.
- The work experience placement rate for the Training for Success programme has been significantly improved, with all of the trainees currently recruited undertaking a work experience placement.
- Appropriate action has been taken to improve attendance rates. Trainees causing concern are placed on a risk register, which is closely monitored by management and staff. During the follow-up inspection process attendance in classes has improved and was good (82%).

- The quality of learning and training has improved. Almost all of the lessons observed were effective and characterised by good engagement by most of the trainees, effective use of technology-enhanced learning, and contextualisation of the learning to the work being undertaken by the trainees in their work experience placements. Most of the trainees are making good progress in their learning and training.
- Good opportunities have been provided for staff to undertake continuous professional learning including, in hybrid and electric technology; most of the lecturing and support staff have availed of level 3 training in electric vehicles, with a small number planning to progress to higher level training.

The quality of provision in the essential skills is now good.

- The outcomes for all three of the essential skills have improved to 87% for literacy, 82% for numeracy and 80% for ICT for 2019/20. The outcomes for those trainees who achieve numeracy at level 2 have also improved to 88%.
- More rigorous monitoring of the attendance and progress of the trainees was enabled by the development of an online tracking system. The system is used by staff to identify earlier those learners at risk of not achieving their targeted qualifications and also to provide opportunities for fast track delivery, where appropriate. Importantly there is the opportunity for trainees to progress through the levels of the essential skills. Ongoing monitoring of the progress and outcomes in the essential skills should focus on learners attaining achievement of the full framework.
- The quality of the learning experiences for the trainees has improved. All of the sessions observed were good or better, with the learning contextualised and well-matched to their professional and technical areas. Schemes of work have been standardised. The use of meaningful and more relevant information and learning technology has been integrated into the revised long-term planning for the essential skills.
- The college has placed a very high priority on the leadership and management of the provision for essential skills. This has resulted in greater clarity of roles and responsibilities and areas of accountability. A revised management structure has been implemented with each essential skill area being placed in an appropriate faculty. This approach allows the staff greater opportunities for deployment to match their skills set and career aspirations. In addition, a curriculum area manager has been identified in each faculty, with specific responsibility for the essential skills being delivered across the faculty. There are monthly meetings that focus on the quality of the essential skills provision.
- An essential skills working group comprising of key stakeholders across the college reviewed and implemented the essential skills operating guidelines to ensure consistency of approach to all aspects of management and reporting for each essential skill. Interim arrangements have been put in place at present for the management of the numeracy provision to further improve the

outcomes for this area. The essential skills teaching and learning advisor has worked collaboratively across all the faculties to ensure a consistent and standardised approach to essential skills delivery, assessment and evaluation.

The leadership and management is now good.

- The well-established senior leadership team demonstrated commitment to successfully effect improvement. A high priority was placed on the development of the leadership and management of the work-based learning provision. There has been substantial change and restructuring of the middle management team, with a number of recent appointments. There is a need to continue to support these new staff in undertaking their roles and responsibilities, in order to allow the senior managers to move from their current operational involvement to a more strategic oversight role.
- Staff have been well supported and are provided with good opportunities to undertake relevant continuous professional learning, including a focus on effective self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes. As a consequence the quality and impact of the processes used for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning have improved for the professional and technical areas followed up and for the essential skills; these are linked well to the wider self-evaluation reporting processes of the college's faculties.
- The quality improvement plans scrutinised during the follow-up inspection were of a good quality. A good range of data and feedback from trainees and staff is better used to identify the strengths of the provision, the areas for development and improvement and the actions needed to address them. There is, however, a need to continue to build the capacity of the staff to sustain and further improve the provision through embedding effective, learner focused self-evaluation and quality improvement planning with clearly prioritised, time-bound milestones.

Overall Effectiveness

Southern Regional College demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners.

To continue to sustain and improve further the provision, the college needs to:

- establish more permanent arrangements for the management of the essential skills numeracy provision; and
- further improve the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes to ensure that the improvements made to date are sustained and embedded going forward.

The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.

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