



A report by HM Inspectors on behalf of the
Scottish Funding Council

Cumbernauld College

A summary of the main report

17 August 2007

The review process

HM Inspectors undertake an independent review of the quality of provision in further education colleges on behalf of the Scottish Further Education Funding Council under a service level agreement between the council and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE). Review teams include HM Inspectors, associate assessors and a lay member.

Each review, based on a proportionate model, has inter-related phases: *review phase one* and the *follow-through phase*. During *review phase one*, review teams evaluate the *learning and teaching process*, *learner progress and outcomes* and *leadership and quality management*. The outcome of this phase informs the scope of the *follow-through phase*. During the *follow-through phase*, review teams explore good practice that may have potential for wider dissemination across the sector. They also explore further as appropriate, the causes, impact and extent of significant weaknesses identified in *review phase one*.

During reviews, members of review teams observe learning and teaching and hold discussions with learners and staff. They examine information on learner attainment and evaluate learner progress and outcomes. They meet with members of the Board of Management and obtain feedback from community groups, partners and employers that work with the college.

This report contains confidence statements that express the review team's overall evaluation of *learning and teaching process*, *learner progress and outcomes* and *leadership and quality management*. It also contains grades for particular aspects of provision.

The primary purpose of this report is to convey a summary of the main outcomes arising from the review.

This report uses the following word scale to make clear the evaluations made by review teams.

very good	major strengths
good	strengths outweigh weaknesses
fair	some important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

The report also uses the following words to describe numbers and proportions

almost all	over 90%
most	75-90%
majority	50-74%
more than a few	15-49%
few	up to 15%

A separate report has been published simultaneously to convey fully the main outcomes arising from the review, to acknowledge the college's strengths and to provide a clear agenda for future action to improve and enhance quality.

Both reports are available on the HMIE website www.hmie.gov.uk. The website will give you easy access to review and inspection reports and a wide range of other publications. It will also provide you with more information on the work of HMIE and its role in Scottish education.

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1. Introduction

The college and its context

In carrying out the review of Cumbernauld College, HMIE took the following college context fully into account.

Cumbernauld College was established in 1976 and provides education and training in both North Lanarkshire and East Dunbartonshire through its campuses in Cumbernauld and Kirkintilloch. The college's main building is next to Cumbernauld town centre. A £10m new build and refurbishment of the Cumbernauld Campus was opened in October 2006. The college promotes wider partnership working to ensure it best meets the needs of the communities it serves. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) awarded the college additional growth funding for the period 2006 to 2009 to promote further participation in learning by people in both Lanarkshire and Dunbartonshire. This coincided with the college's acquisition of the campus in East Dunbartonshire in April 2006, which is now known as the East Dunbartonshire Campus of Further and Higher Education.

Learner provision at the college is largely part-time with less than 20% of learner enrolments on full-time programmes. Strategic partnership working in both North Lanarkshire and East Dunbartonshire has allowed the college to shape the curriculum to best meet the needs of local communities. The varied provision includes the part-time BA in Management, run in conjunction with Heriot-Watt University, a wide range of NQ and HN programmes, and work with the unemployed on the *Get Ready for Work* and *Training for Work* programmes run in partnership with Scottish Enterprise Lanarkshire, Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire, Careers Scotland and Jobcentre Plus. The college works with the education department of both local authorities and has expanded programmes for school pupils through partnership agreements. In particular, the college's close links with Our Lady's High School in Cumbernauld have led to a shared approach to the S3/S4 *Skills for Work* agenda. Pupils study both at college and in school in areas such as care and hairdressing.

The college's *Serious about Learning* initiative aims to improve services for learners and ensure that staff in curriculum teams and support areas are clear about the contributions they make to the overall learning experience. *Serious about Learning*, the new college strapline, is intended to highlight the progress the college has achieved to date, and to signal its vision for the future with the new facilities and the additional growth funding.

Innovation and effective partnership working are priorities for the college and key drivers in achieving the aims and objectives identified within its strategic plan. The college works closely with community planning partnerships in both North Lanarkshire and East Dunbartonshire. It compares its performance with a group of partner colleges including John Wheatley College, Langside College and North Glasgow College to improve efficiency and effectiveness. More recently the college has extended its comparative studies outwith Scotland and has signed a memorandum of agreement with Armagh College in Northern Ireland.

The principal was appointed interim chief executive of the Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU) in April 2006. He divided his time between SFEU and the college in roughly equal proportions and shared his responsibilities as principal with the depute principal. Senior managers shared some of the depute principal's responsibilities.

The college's revenue budget for 2006-07 is £9.8m with grant-in-aid from SFC accounting for 70% of the total.

The review

The review by HMIE took place in two phases in the weeks beginning 19 February 2007 (*review phase one*) and 30 April 2007 (*follow-through phase*).

The review team examined key cross-college functions and processes that have a direct impact on the quality of the learner experience. The review also covered seven subject areas in the college, together with a focus on core skills and flexible learning, as follows.

Business, management and administration

Care

Computing and ICT

Electronics and music technology

Hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies

Social subjects

Special programmes

These areas, in which the provision ranged from levels 2 to 9 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), accounted for more than 60% of the college's work.

The review involved scrutiny of documentation provided by the college and interviews with senior and middle managers, Board members with a responsibility for overseeing the work of committees concerned with educational issues, staff, learners, employers, external agencies and other users of the college. During *review phase one*, the review team focused on learning and teaching, learner progress and outcomes, and leadership and quality management. During the *follow-through phase*, the review team explored a number of issues requiring further scrutiny and discussed fully the examples of sector-leading and innovative practice identified in this report.

2. Executive summary

The following are holistic judgements made by HMIE on the basis of review activities which took place in February and May 2007. These judgements relate to the key areas of learning and teaching process, learner progress and outcomes, and leadership and quality management.

2.1 HMIE is confident that:

- **the college has in place effective learning and teaching processes.**
- **learners are progressing well and achieving appropriate outcomes. However, the college needs to address low attainment in a few programmes.**
- **the college is managing well and improving the quality of its services for learners.**

2.2 HMIE identified a number of ways in which the college demonstrated its ability to deliver quality provision and services, and sustain and enhance them.

- The learning and teaching process was very good in five subject areas and good in the other two areas.
- Learner progress and outcomes were good in five subject areas.
- The college's Board of Management worked well with the senior management team to give effective strategic direction to college activity.
- The principal and senior staff provided effective educational leadership and direction.
- The college's approach to partnership and networking was comprehensive, innovative and highly effective.
- The college's business and community development unit managed very effectively the delivery of programmes to support economic regeneration, workforce development and personal development.
- The college planned and delivered guidance and support effectively, and used external partners and additional resources to provide a comprehensive range of expertise and services to the learner.
- The college's clear and dynamic estates strategy had given rise to a major transformation of the Cumbernauld campus.
- The college had developed an effective *Serious about Learning* initiative, which had led to improvement in several key areas of college activity.
- College managers and staff identified and adopted good practice from other colleges in the UK and abroad and made improvements based on the findings of published reports on education.

2.3 The college should seek to improve:

- attainment levels in business, management and administration and in computing and ICT;
- the setting of specific targets in faculty operational plans and the link between operational plans and the quality improvement plans of programme and curriculum teams;
- its arrangements for flexible learning to reach under-represented and hard-to-reach learners;

- the evaluation of the impact its equal opportunities policies have on staff recruitment;
- college-wide evaluation of the impact of staff development on learning and teaching;
- the coverage of school link programmes in its self-evaluation and internal monitoring processes; and
- programme team analyses of the underlying reasons for weaknesses in retention and attainment, and the setting of targets for improvement by programme teams.

2.4 Summary of grades awarded

Subject area	Learning and teaching process	Learner progress and outcomes
Business, management and administration	Very good	Fair
Care	Very good	Good
Computing and ICT	Good	Fair
Electronics and music technology	Very good	Good
Hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies	Good	Good
Social subjects	Very good	Good
Special programmes	Very good	Good

Cross-college elements	Grade
Educational leadership, direction and management	Very good
Access and inclusion	Very good
Guidance and support	Very good
Resources and services to support the learner	Very good
Staff	Good
Quality assurance	Very good
Quality improvement	Good

3. Overall findings in subject areas

This section of the report summarises our overall findings in subject areas. A full version of our findings in each subject is available in section 4 of the main report, available from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

3.1 Learning and teaching process

HMIE is confident that the college has in place effective learning and teaching processes.

- Across the subject areas, almost all learners were well motivated and engaged well with their learning activities. They used a variety of appropriate resources to develop their skills and knowledge.
- Most learners reflected on their progress effectively and developed independence in their learning.
- Across the subject areas, almost all staff applied their subject knowledge effectively to engage learners and enhance the learning process.
- In most subjects, staff used an appropriate range of learning and teaching approaches to promote effective learning. They encouraged learners to express their views and justify their answers in class, resulting in high levels of participation.
- In most subjects, staff contextualised learning well and used relevant examples to prepare learners for employment or progression to more advanced programmes.
- Teaching staff used a range of resources including ICT to support learners and enhance the learning experience.
- Positive staff-learner relationships across all subjects created a purposeful learning environment which stimulated participation by learners.
- In almost all subjects, teaching staff planned lessons well. They incorporated relevant learning activities to help learners develop a broad range of skills including core skills.
- Across the subject areas, staff set standards for learners that were consistent with the levels of the programmes.

However:

- In a few subjects, the timekeeping and attendance of a few learners was poor and disrupted the learning process for themselves and for other learners.
- In more than a few subjects, staff did not use questioning techniques effectively enough to engage all learners and develop their knowledge and understanding.

3.2 Learner progress and outcomes

HMIE is confident that learners are progressing well and achieving appropriate outcomes. However, the college needs to address low attainment in a few programmes.

- In most subject areas, learners improved their self-confidence and self-esteem through their studies.
- In most subject areas, learners developed employability skills and these skills were enhanced by periods of work experience in the majority of subjects.
- In almost all subject areas, learners made good progress in achieving a range of core skills particularly *problem solving*, *working with others* and *information technology*.
- In the majority of subject areas, learners developed appropriate vocational skills.
- In most subject areas, learners enhanced their citizenship skills, often by participating in a range of activities such as fund-raising events, community-based projects and class discussions.
- In most subject areas, retention levels were high.
- Attainment levels were high in a majority of full-time programmes and in most part-time programmes.
- In most subject areas, learners progressed onto further study or employment on completion of their programme.
- In a few subjects, learners achieved success in national competitions.

However:

- Retention levels were low in more than a few full-time programmes at FE level.
- Attainment levels were low in a few full-time programmes at both FE and HE level.

3.3 Other significant factors

The purpose of this section of the report is to summarise other factors which had a significant impact on the learning and teaching process, and learner progress and outcomes.

The college's comprehensive range of programmes met the needs of learners very well. In more than a few subject areas, there were examples of changes to programmes to improve the experience for learners. In care, staff used their analyses of learner outcomes to develop new introductory provision that more appropriately met the needs of particular learner groups. In computing, staff had improved learner motivation and attendance by introducing computer-build projects as part of the programme. However, a few design features of programmes diminished the overall experience for learners. The programme at NQ level in business, management and administration (SCQF level 6) did not meet the needs of more than half of the learners. In computing and ICT, the design of full-time HE programmes (SCQF levels 7 and 8) did not reflect the career aims and capacities of the majority of learners. The special programmes team had not developed opportunities to establish partnerships to promote access for young people not in education, employment or training and provide a curriculum that combined vocational skills, core skills and guidance for these young people.

The high standards of accommodation and resources enriched the learning experience. Learners had good access to computers and reliable computer networks. They were able to access online resources from the learning centres and from home. The ready availability and reliability of ICT resources helped maintain learner enthusiasm and supported independent learning. The college's sound studios were well equipped to industrial standards, and encouraged learners to gain appropriate practical skills on commercial sound equipment. In almost all lessons in hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies, the physical environment for practical activities met the requirements of the curriculum well. However, the beauty care room at the college's East Dunbartonshire campus was cramped and there were too few clients for learners to develop their practical skills. The use of the college's lecture theatre for more than a few timetabled classes in social subjects inhibited the range of learning and teaching approaches that could be used.

All staff were committed to supporting the learners very well. They participated in a wide range of staff development activities to support their continuing professional development. Staff had demonstrated impressive creativity in their use of ICT to support the learning of mature adults with few computing skills. Almost all music technology and media staff worked regularly within the music and sound recording industry, and they used this experience to enrich their teaching and to contextualise learning activities. Staff had developed a thorough pre-entry guidance and interview process to ensure that the learners were on appropriate programmes. Guidance tutors used the college's electronic progress reporting system to identify learners' support needs and to provide support where needed. Teaching staff provided high levels of support to learners. They made themselves readily available and learners appreciated the advice they received on a range of matters.

4. Findings on leadership and quality management

This section of the report summarises our overall findings in cross-college areas. A full version of our findings is contained in section 5 of the main report, available from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

HMIE is confident that the college is managing well and improving the quality of its services for learners.

4.1 Educational provision: design, planning and management

Educational leadership, direction and management

- The college's Board of Management worked very well with the senior management team to give clear direction to college activity.
- The principal provided highly effective leadership, building on an extensive range of national and local contacts and networks.
- The well-motivated and mutually supportive senior management team used their collective and complementary strengths very well to support the principal in providing effective leadership and direction.
- Staff at all levels understood and expressed strong support for key objectives in relation to inclusion, learner support, partnerships and CPD.
- The college had developed an effective Serious about Learning initiative, which had led to improvement in several key areas of college activity.
- The college's approach to partnership and networking was comprehensive, innovative and highly effective. It provided well-designed learning opportunities for people throughout North Lanarkshire and East Dunbartonshire.
- The college's business and community development unit managed very effectively the delivery of programmes to support economic regeneration, workforce development and personal development.

Access and inclusion

- The principal and senior staff maintained highly effective strategic partnership arrangements with schools in the North Lanarkshire and East Dunbartonshire areas.
- The college's inclusion group provided strategic leadership for policy and decision making for diversity, access and inclusion, as well as the duty to promote equalities.
- Partnerships between the college and community groups in North Lanarkshire and East Dunbartonshire were highly effective and proactive.
- The college's inclusion group and the business and community development team made good use of participation, retention and performance data to monitor for equality and target under-participation.
- The college's East Dunbartonshire Campus and its partnership arrangements with Careers Scotland, East Dunbartonshire Enterprise Trust and East Dunbartonshire Council provided very good support to disengaged and hesitant learners in Kirkintilloch and the surrounding area.
- The college had established strong links with the local business community and worked effectively to provide support for small businesses.

- The college had effective arrangements for monitoring learner progression in community-based and adult literacy programmes.

4.2 Learner services, resources and staff

Guidance and support

- The college had developed effective strategies involving external partners and additional resources to provide a comprehensive range of expertise and services to learners.
- Managers communicated the college's approach to induction and academic guidance effectively to staff and full-time learners.
- The college's effective approach to profiling learners' core skills enabled staff to be confident about placing learners on programmes at the correct level, to plan appropriate literacy or core skills support and to monitor progress.
- Staff in learning support, extended learning support and academic guidance provided an effective service to learners. They dealt with referrals quickly and ensured there were only minimal delays in responding to identified needs.
- The location of a number of agencies at the college's East Dunbartonshire campus provided a comprehensive range of guidance, training and career planning services tailored to suit individual learner needs.
- The college's partnership and positive working relationships with Careers Scotland established a flexible and responsive service for learners.
- The college's involvement in the SFC-funded Routes to Learning project had encouraged a high uptake of college and other learning opportunities.

Resources and services to support the learner

- The college's clear and dynamic estates strategy had led to a major transformation of the Cumbernauld campus.
- The Cumbernauld campus extension provided excellent facilities for learning and a particularly attractive and spacious walkway called The Street, which housed the reception desk, four PCs for student access, a mix of social and eating areas as well as a college shop.
- The library and learning centre at the main campus was an attractive and supportive environment, and well used by learners.
- An innovative SLICpod room within the learning centre enabled staff and students to practise using new learning technologies such as the SmartBoard, MP3 docking stations and podcasting software.
- The college had a comprehensive health and safety policy, thorough procedures and detailed recording of audits for college campuses, work placements and outreach centres.
- The college's ICT infrastructure was up to date and well resourced in most areas.
- There was good access to facilities at both campuses for learners with impaired mobility and for wheelchair users.

Staff

- The college had sufficient teaching and support staff with appropriate qualifications and experience.
- The college was committed to ensuring staff had appropriate ICT skills. The majority of staff supported enthusiastically the college's comprehensive programme of staff development for ICT.

- Staff at all levels worked very effectively within and across curricular and support teams and they had established valuable networking links with other colleges and organisations.
- The college's recently revised staff development and career review process was clear and well-documented. It identified individual staff development needs and required staff to evaluate the impact of staff development undertaken on their work and personal development.
- The extensive and flexible college staff development programme covered sector and national priorities. It included informative and well-attended awareness raising development sessions for staff on Monday evenings.
- All staff used and maintained a user-friendly online CPD log to record their personal development and to update their qualifications profile.

4.3 Quality assurance, improvement and enhancement

- The college had comprehensive quality assurance policies and procedures for all major areas of activity within curriculum areas and cross-college support services.
- The college had embedded self-evaluation effectively within its quality improvement processes for both teaching and support areas.
- The college had clear and systematic processes for coordinating and reporting on quality issues in key areas impacting on the learning experience through its Serious about Learning initiative.
- The college had robust procedures for collecting statistical data on enrolments and learner outcomes. A wide range of current data was readily available to staff through the college's computerised management information system.
- Senior managers monitored closely the outcomes of self-evaluation and the progress that both teaching and support teams had made on quality improvement plans.
- Teaching staff at all levels carried out internal moderation systematically across all certificated units.
- Staff had produced comprehensive accounts of learning and teaching in most programme team reports.
- Staff in all areas of the college were committed to quality improvement.
- Staff worked effectively in teams and communicated well with each other to address the needs of learners.
- College managers and staff identified and adopted good practice from other colleges in the UK and abroad and made improvements based on the findings of published reports on education.
- All programme teams carried out annually systematic self-evaluation of learning and teaching and other significant factors that impacted on the learner experience.
- The college's Serious about Learning initiative provided a strategic overview of quality and coordinated effectively the work of a number of sub-groups focused on quality issues. This underpinned a positive and responsive quality culture focused on the needs of learners.

5. Main points for action

Educational provision: design, planning and management

- The college should set measurable and time-bound targets within faculty operational plans and ensure that these are linked specifically to the outcomes of course team and curriculum area activity.
- The college should extend its arrangements for flexible learning to reach under-represented and hard-to-reach learners.

Learner services, resources and staff

- Managers should ensure that the college's *ICT acceptable use agreement* is promoted and used throughout all its outreach centres.
- The college should evaluate the impact of its equal opportunities policies on staff recruitment.
- The college should undertake a college-wide evaluation of the impact of staff development on learning and teaching.

Quality assurance, improvement and enhancement

- The college should extend its self-evaluation and internal monitoring processes to include school link programmes.
- Programme teams should analyse in more depth the underlying reasons for weaknesses in retention and attainment.
- Programme and faculty teams should produce quality improvement plans with specific and measurable targets for improving retention and attainment.

6. Examples of sector-leading and innovative practice

Examples of sector-leading and innovative practice identified during the review may be found in section 7 of the full report, available on our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

7. What happens next?

The college should address weaknesses in subject areas and the main points for action associated with the findings on leadership and quality management in this report. SFC will consider the report and write to the college indicating the scope and nature of further engagement by the college with SFC and HMIE.

8. How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the principal and college staff, the Chair of the Board of Management and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA or by telephoning 01506 600272. Copies are also available on our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

HMIE feedback and complaints procedure

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of further education reviews, you should write in the first instance to Dr Wray Bodys, HMCI, at the above address.

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management Unit, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA. You can also email HMIEcomplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 (fax 0800 377 7331) or e-mail ask@spsa.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.spsa.org.uk.

Mitchell J Brown
HM Inspector

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Appendix

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF levels	SQA National Units, courses and group awards	Higher Education (HE) qualifications	SVQs	SCQF levels
12		Doctorate		12
11		Masters	SVQ 5	11
10		Honours degree		10
9		Ordinary degree		9
8		HND	SVQ 4	8
7	Advanced Higher	Diploma of HE HNC Certificate of HE		7
6	Higher		SVQ 3	6
5	Intermediate 2/ Credit S Grade		SVQ 2	5
4	Intermediate 1/ General S Grade		SVQ 1	4
3	Access 3/ Foundation S Grade			3
2	Access 2			2
1	Access 1			1

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework brings together all Scottish mainstream qualifications into a single unified framework. The framework includes: degree provision, HNC and HND, SQA National Qualifications, and SVQs. There are 12 levels ranging from Access 1 at SCQF level 1 to Doctorate at SCQF level 12. Each qualification whether a unit, group of units or larger group award has also been allocated a number of SCQF credits. Each credit represents 10 notional hours of required learning. Doctorates based on a thesis are an exception to this.

Other learning may be credit rated and included in the framework provided it leads to a clear set of learning outcomes and has quality assured learner assessment. In 2006, all of Scotland's colleges acquired powers to credit rate provision that meets these criteria.

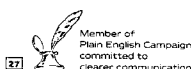
The positioning of SVQ in the table gives an indication of their place in the framework. Work is ongoing to allocate SCQF credits to them.

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) works to improve education in Scotland. HM Inspectors review the quality of education in further education colleges under a memorandum of understanding with the Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SFEFC). HM Inspectors also inspect pre-school centres, primary and secondary schools, special schools, community learning, initial teacher education, local authorities, and the care and welfare of learners in both day and residential schools. We publish the findings of our reviews in short, clear reports and put them on our website. We identify and promote the good practice we find. We draw on our overall knowledge to provide independent advice to Scottish Ministers, SFEFC, relevant departments of the Scottish Executive and others.

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